

**Post-war Tourism in the Tendring District and Beyond: The Rise of
the Holiday Caravan Park, c. 1938-1989**

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Summary

This study addresses the history of the static holiday caravan site in Britain. Commercial holiday camps, such as Butlin's and Warner's, have been seen by many to be the epitome of UK post-war working-class holiday making. But despite some shared characteristics and developmental roots, it is argued that static caravan sites were and are essentially a separate phenomenon, and this study analyses how they quickly became a significant and substantial aspect of post-war domestic tourism. This study also demonstrates that unlike commercial holiday camps, they spawned organically as a result of the agency of the post-war working-class, who were empowered by a growing sense of confidence, assertion and economic security, against the vision of the state-approved holiday camp model. Arising as they did as an affordable and more individualistic alternative (despite strict planning legislation that in its formulation had no concept of their future development), it is shown that static caravan sites continued to develop (with the benefit of key legislation) in a way that was not in many respects typical of other aspects of UK domestic tourism in the second half of the twentieth century, but did reflect wider patterns of working-class consumerism. This study also argues that as a major aspect of domestic tourism, static caravan parks did not follow the well-documented pattern of decline experienced by many domestic resorts and holiday forms, but exhibited a distinct tendency to adapt and change in a way that allowed manufacturers and parks to offer an up-to-date and enticing product in times of economic growth as well as times of recession. This has resulted in the static holiday caravan park becoming a significant aspect of British domestic holiday making.

Glossary

Camp/Camp site: An area of land upon which camping in tents and/or holidaying in caravans or makeshift accommodation is practised.

Commercial holiday camp: A purpose-built, for-profit holiday establishment, mainly with chalet-type accommodation, fully catered meals, entertainment and on-site amenities, as first established in Britain by Billy Butlin during the 1930s.

Double unit: Two static holiday caravan units constructed to be joined together side-by-side in order to make one wider unit.

Ground rent: The annual fee payable by a static holiday caravan owner to the **Park Operator** upon which the caravan is sited, as rent for the space that it occupies.

Holiday home: A caravan, building, hut or structure that is permanently or semi-permanently sited for use as a temporary home for holiday and recreational purposes (capable of supporting overnight occupancy), as opposed to permanent habitation.

Mobile home: A generic term for any mobile structure which can be used for multiple, overnight occupancy, but is essentially mobile such as any caravan or motor-caravan.

Non-serviced unit: A static holiday caravan with no permanent mains water supply or connection to a sewer.

Park: Term used from the mid-1980s to refer to caravan sites, after the terms site and camp fell from favour; hence caravan sites or camps became caravan parks, or simply parks.

Park operator: Term used from the mid-1980s for the **Site operator** (see below).

Pioneer holiday camp: A holiday establishment with accommodation (either tents or huts) established for non-commercial, philanthropic or political motives.

Pitch: An individual plot for a static holiday caravan, see **Site**, below.

Plotland holiday home: A hut, shack or bungalow, generally self-built, established as a holiday home on land without formal planning consent.

Residential unit: A caravan designed and used for all-year-round accommodation.

Serviced unit: A static caravan holiday home with mains water and sewage connection and facilities.

Site: An area of land designated for the use of static holiday caravans, or alternative term for a **Pitch**, *i.e.* an individual plot for a static holiday caravan.

Siting: The act of placing a static holiday caravan onto its **Pitch** or **Site**.

Site operator: The owner or proprietor of a static holiday caravan park.

Site licence: A licence issued by the local authority allowing a static holiday caravan park to lawfully exist with a specified number of **pitches** under the terms of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, 1960.

Static: Abbreviated term for a **Static Holiday Caravan**, see below.

Static holiday caravan: A caravan designed and built as a holiday home for seasonal and/or holiday use. It is not designed to be towed on a public highway.

Tourer: Abbreviated term for a **Touring Caravan**, see below.

Touring caravan: A caravan for holiday use that is designed and built to be legally towed behind a motor-vehicle on the public highway.

Introduction

1.1 Aims and rationale

Static holiday caravan sites emerged rapidly in Britain during the second half of the twentieth century. They became and remain a popular holiday choice for large numbers of people. By examining the birth and development of the static holiday caravan site, focussing upon the Tendring District in north-east Essex, this study aims to gain an understanding of how and why the static holiday caravan sites developed. It also seeks to understand how earlier social, economic and political factors and developments in domestic holiday taking contributed to the subsequent physical, social, and economic development of static holiday caravan sites and their associated manufacturing industry.

The growth and development of static holiday caravan parks and their associated industries has had little direct scrutiny from academic historians. Any serious analysis that has been made generally features as a marginal narrative within the scope of a wider study, or one that has focussed on a related or parallel topic. The British commercial holiday camp from the mid-twentieth century, usually perceived by academics and the wider public as a purpose-built venue with chalet-type accommodation, dining halls, Redcoat-led entertainments in bars and theatres, organised daytime games, competitions and child-minding services, epitomises the dominant view of English post-war domestic holiday taking. The prominence of such phenomena in the media, particularly in films and television series such as *Holiday Camp* (1947), *Holiday on the Busses* and *That'll be the Day* (1973), *Tommy* (1975), *Confessions from a Holiday Camp* (1977), the BBC's highly successful comedy *Hi-de-Hi* which ran from 1980 to 1988 (filmed at Warner's camp, Dovercourt, in the Tendring District) and the 2001 ITV documentary *Redcoats* (filmed at Butlin's Bognor and Minehead camps), has helped to consolidate this impression. The caravan site, the other successful post-war domestic 'holiday camp' format, seems to

have remained largely ignored except within the collective memory of the many thousands who have worked in them, and the millions who have patronised them. Studies of the commercial holiday camp, seaside resorts (both individual and in general), tourism, and even the caravan itself, whilst providing a context within which it should be viewed have almost ignored the caravan site; as indeed do studies of plotland holiday homes: the self-built huts, shacks or bungalows that were established informally as a holiday homes on land without formal planning consent, particularly in the south-east of England during the inter-war years. This observation is also true of studies within wider themes in domestic twentieth-century social and economic history such as working-class consumerism and tourism, which began to surface during the widening of access to higher education in the second half of the twentieth century.

In addition, what has remained largely undemonstrated is that whilst the commercial holiday camp proprietors were placed in a highly advantageous position at the end of the Second World War to capitalise on the demand for affordable holiday accommodation and facilities, the commercial holiday camp model would never really dominate this particular market. In 1951 the holiday camp was estimated to account for only three percent of overall holiday accommodation (these statistics do include holidays abroad), rising to a peak in 1970 of around six percent (not including foreign holidays). But in 1970 caravans (this would mean touring and static) accounted for eighteen percent of the accommodation for British holiday makers, second only to staying with friends or relatives at twenty four percent. Forty-three percent of UK holidays in 1972 were self-catered.¹ This study aims to show how the static holiday caravan site fits into the story of post-war domestic tourism and holiday taking. It also seeks to understand which

¹ Statistics from Digest of Tourist Statistics No. 2, in A. Burkart and S. Medlik, *Tourism: Past, Present and Future* (London: Heinemann, 1981), p.84; Statistics for domestic tourism can be problematic: See J. Walton, *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: MUP, 2000), p. 38; J. Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday, 2nd. ed.* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1976).

developmental factors it shares with its counterparts, such as commercial holiday camps, camping, the self-built, unregulated plotland holiday homes and other forms of holiday accommodation, and how these factors influenced the formation of the caravan sites themselves.

1.2 Historiography

This study seeks to position the static holiday caravan site within the wider context of leisure and domestic tourism in an historical sense. It seeks to fill the gap that currently exists in the historiography in this regard, as discussed above, by considering what social, political and economic phenomena have direct influential associations with the birth and development of static holiday caravan sites. A key theme that arises from this is the agency of the working class to originate change and to create for themselves solutions to problems and needs outside of the orthodox or state-approved realm. This is an area that has been considered by historians in other contexts, especially in the fields of leisure and tourism, but not directly in relation to the origination of static holiday caravan sites. Given the popularity and social and economic significance of this form of domestic holiday making, it should be likewise considered; ultimately a formal historical study of static holiday caravan sites should sit clearly within the history of twentieth century domestic working-class leisure, tourism and the wider context of UK post-war working class social and economic history.

Although the static holiday caravan site has had little if any academic attention, the commercial holiday camp, as described earlier, has been the subject of more detailed enquiry. Apart from a range of pictorial and nostalgic publications², commercial holiday

² Amongst these, works such as: J. Drower, *Good Clean Fun: The Story of Britain's First Holiday Camp* (London: Arcadia Books, 1982) which gives an overview of Cunningham's Camp, tell the stories of individual venues.

camps came under serious scrutiny by Pradeep Bandyopadhyay in 1973³ and Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward in 1986.⁴ Bandyopadhyay's chapter provides a brief sociological analysis of the commercial holiday camp as an institution, and suggests some comparative connections with the caravan site. Other aspects of the camper's experiences there seem more specific to commercial camps only. In particular, the relationship between staff and clients appears complex and fluid in this study. This appears to be as a result of the high level of on-site organisation and client dependency; whilst this would probably not typically be experienced on a caravan site, it is an area that merits further investigation. More broadly, when this paper is read directly after Barrie Newman's 'Holidays and Social Class'⁵ which immediately precedes it, some key questions arise. Newman cites Opinion Research Centre data to suggest that the holiday camp, as described by Bandyopadhyay as a 'good example' of the working-class holiday, is 'characterised by a high degree of organisation, collective orientation and passivity.'⁶ He goes on to report the decreasing popularity of the highly-organised commercial camp experience in favour of family-centred, informal self-catered holidays. In the further analysis, several examples of alternative holiday options are mentioned (including camping, package tours and even motorised-caravan touring), yet there is no mention of the static caravan site, despite its popularity in Britain at this time. Questions as to how these seemingly well-supported and argued observations on the relationship between domestic holiday taking and social class may relate to the caravan site (and even why such sites were ignored in these studies) beg attention.

Hardy and Ward's study sees the origins of the holiday camp emerging in the latter stages of the nineteenth century, and credits figures such as Thomas Holding and Robert

³ P. Bandyopadhyay, 'The Holiday Camp' in M. Smith, *et al. Leisure and Society in Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), pp. 241-252.

⁴ D. Hardy and C. Ward, *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (London: Mansell, 1986).

⁵ B. Newman, 'Holidays and Social Class' in *Leisure and Society in Britain*, pp. 230-240.

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 235-6.

Baden-Powell as instrumental in introducing working people to camping and outdoor recreation; the precursors to camp sites, and the later holiday camps. Early philanthropic 'pioneer camps' and later key legislation such as the Camps Act and holidays with pay are considered as important developmental landmarks, but again, in this work caravan sites as such are scarcely mentioned. Much more recently, Sandra Dawson's work *Holiday Camps in Twentieth-Century Britain: Packaging Pleasure* approaches the subject from a more academic perspective, but does not address caravan sites other than in passing.⁷

Dawson's study considers the progress of the campaign for holidays with pay as a catalyst for the expansion of post-war holiday camps, and this emphasises the importance of this legislation for the other areas of post-war holiday-taking that are not considered. Themes of gender, class and consumerism are also examined in Dawson's work, and again many parallels with the development of post-war caravan sites emerge, but are not addressed. Kathryn Ferry⁸ does make a clear distinction between caravan sites and holiday camps when briefly discussing the increasing popularity of the former over the latter during the 1960's in her 2010 publication *Holiday Camps* for the Shire series.⁹ However, none of the above publications give any satisfactory, specific analysis of the development of caravan sites as a separate phenomenon, and indeed seem to marginalise them despite their undoubted popularity and the clear possibility of shared developmental aspects. Factors seen as precursors to the growth of pioneer camps, and later commercial camps, are identified and analysed, but there is no consideration of the subsequent development of caravan sites from these shared developmental relationships. Some instances of selective inclusion of the caravan site, either intentionally or unknowingly may also be detected in the above analyses: for example Newman sites

⁷ S. Dawson, *Holiday Camps in Twentieth-Century Britain: Packaging Pleasure* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

⁸ Kathryn Ferry also produced a thorough and useful study of beach huts: K. Ferry, *Sheds on the Seashore: A Tour through Beach Hut History* (Brighton: Pen Press, 2009).

⁹ K. Ferry, *Holiday Camps* (Oxford: Shire, 2010), pp. 55-60.

Willmott's oral evidence published in 1966 regarding a family going to a 'holiday camp on Canvey Island'. This was, in all probability, a caravan site.¹⁰ The academic silence with regard to the static caravan site seems all the more remarkable given the close relationship it appears to have with the commercial holiday camp, and indeed other simple forms of domestic holiday taking.¹¹

Caravans themselves, both static and touring, have had occasional journalistic publications under the historical banner, with the salient exception of William Whiteman's scholarly *The History of the Caravan*, published in 1973.¹² Whiteman, for many years editor of *Caravan* magazine, was a key figure in the post-war development of the caravan industry and the setting up of the National Caravan Council (NCC). His knowledge of the subject is laid out clearly in this book, which sheds much light upon specific developments during and after World War Two, when materials for manufacture were scarce. Importantly, some key indications of how and when the static caravan first appeared as a distinctly separate form within the context of post-war caravan manufacture are offered. This work does not, however, relate the subject to wider contextual themes to any significant extent.

More widely within the historiography of tourism and leisure, as part of the post-war emergence of social history in a period of increasing social democracy, Britain's coastline and seaside resorts have further become a focus for academic study. J. Pimlott's pioneering study *The Englishman's Holiday* was first published in 1947; a second edition was published in 1976.¹³ The early development of the seaside resort and the impact of the coming of the railways are considered, but the first edition was published before the

¹⁰ P. Willmott, *Adolescent Boys of East London* (London: Routledge, 1966), p. 70, in Newman, 'Holidays and Social Class', p. 238.

¹¹ This is an area touched upon by John K. Walton in his March 2013 lecture at University Campus, Suffolk, when he observed that the static caravan site 'awaits its historian'.

¹² W. Whiteman, *The History of the Caravan* (London: Blandford, National Caravan Council, 1973).

¹³ Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday*.

author could have had any concept of the caravan site as a major aspect of domestic post-war tourism. The development of the commercial holiday camp comes under analysis and some of the predictions made for the coming decades are worthy of note. In the introduction to the later edition it is noted that the government's 1942 estimate that there might be around forty-five million holidaymakers after the war - some ninety percent of the population - were seen by the author as excessive. In this case he was largely correct, but the effects of the popularisation and availability of the car, hire-purchase and increasing working-class consumerism were amongst the factors that Pimlott had not foreseen.¹⁴ Geographer E. Gilbert produced a study of Brighton in 1954, adding to a number of resort studies published in that decade, which established a standard for academic study of individual key resorts; these works would remain as the only serious enquiries until John K. Walton's work, discussed further below, heralded the start of a more sustained and in-depth series of studies.¹⁵

The caravan, or more specifically the 'caravan problem' (discussed later in this thesis), is addressed critically and widely in Anthony Smith's 1972 book *Beside the Seaside*. This was published after the author and his team made a survey of Britain's 6,000 miles of coastline by sea, air and land.¹⁶ As a result of their work, a useful picture of the coastal strip is described and three fundamental issues are identified and suggestions to resolve these are offered. Ownership of land beyond the foreshore is seen as problematical; despoilment and restrictions of access to what is seen by the author as 'an obvious national asset' could be resolved by the nationalisation of a strip 100 yards deep from high water mark around the entire British coastline.¹⁷ Secondly, more investment in the coastline is called for to improve access, remove military and industrial remains and to

¹⁴ J. Myerscough, in Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday*, p.6.

¹⁵ E. Gilbert, *Brighton, Old Ocean's Bauble* (London: Methuen, 1954); Gilbert engaged with resorts and tourism earlier in his career- see 'The Growth of Inland and Seaside Health Resorts in England' in *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Vol. 55 (1939) and 'The Growth of Brighton' in *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 114 (1949).

¹⁶ A. Smith, *Beside the Seaside* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.252.

purchase land for public benefit. Finally, a plea is made for recreation to be the focus for Government when legislating for the coastline. A call for caravan legislation to be drastically altered should, it is argued, form a core part of a national coastal plan. Many aspects of the coastline are considered in this book, both physical and social; commercial holiday camps, oddly, are virtually ignored. The ‘caravan problem’ was not a recent issue when this study was published, it had been brought to prominence over a decade earlier before the 1960 Caravan Sites (Control of Development) Act was passed, but its inclusion and sustained discussion demonstrates that the subject was still controversial in some quarters.

Two key works were published in 1978 which examined significant aspects of domestic holiday taking. John Walton’s study of the Blackpool landlady, the legendary proprietor of the northern seaside guest house, examined this subject critically for the first time.¹⁸ James Walvin’s *Beside the Seaside* acknowledged that the story of the English seaside holiday had by now been told many times and told well by Pimlott- but that this earlier work was due for revision.¹⁹ Both Walton and Walvin break new ground here, not by reaffirming the causes of the dramatic growth of the resorts during the nineteenth century and the effects of rail and improved travel, but by considering the emergence of the popular seaside holiday as being part of the wider experience of the working classes in an industrial society. These are developmental factors that are shared by other aspects of twentieth-century holiday taking. Walvin briefly discusses caravan sites in critical terms, describing ‘the rash of caravan parks which erupted around the coast’ as symptomatic of the growth in car ownership, and creating ‘still further difficulties for those concerned about the slow erosion of the shoreline by urban development.’ As with Smith’s study, the caravan site is depicted here as a problematical manifestation of

¹⁸ J. Walton, *The Blackpool Landlady: A Social History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978).

¹⁹ J. Walvin, *Beside the Seaside: a Social History of the Popular Seaside Holiday* (London: Allen Lane, 1978).

another, more acceptable phenomenon; in this case the growth of car use and ownership. It is hardly given the status of an independently originated holiday choice, even though it is also acknowledged here that caravans had created new dimensions in holiday making, not least by significantly increasing accommodation at seaside resorts. Importantly, the phenomenon is linked more generally to widening choice and the growth of consumer power amongst working people.²⁰ The agency of working people to formulate their own solutions to holiday needs, by originating (in collaboration with suppliers, landowners and operators) the static holiday caravan site is clearly a factor worthy of exploration. This self-formulated approach also has significant parallels with the activities of the inter-war plotland holiday home builders and users: agency is a significant theme which will be developed further within this thesis.

One of the problems to emerge from the historiography of tourism and holidays in post-war Britain is the inclusion of static and touring caravanning in the same classification when considering the caravan as a holiday choice, at worst simply making no clear distinction between the two, despite the obvious differences. A. Burkart and S. Medlik do, however, albeit briefly, make the distinction in *Tourism: Past, Present and Future*, a wide-ranging study of UK tourism (both domestic and foreign) published in 1981, but the problem of a lack of distinction in available statistical data becomes all too obvious.²¹ Some useful statistical data for domestic tourism is given in chapter eight, but tables of collected figures in particular highlight the problem. Accommodation for UK holidays between 1951 and 1970 for example, is categorised into hotel or motel (licenced or unlicensed), holiday camp, friends or relatives, self-catering and other. Static caravan holidays seem to fall within the self-catering category (a figure which rises from twelve to thirty-five percent over the period), rather than holiday camp (rising from three to six

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 146-9.

²¹ Burkart and Medlik, *Tourism*, p. 110.

percent), but it is unclear as to what else might fall within this category.²² The authors do emphasise the wider problems and uncertainties of twentieth-century UK tourism data and its sources, an issue further discussed by Walton in his later work.²³ In addition to some useful but limited data regarding the growth of the caravan site, the problems of statistical inadequacy are further emphasised in a later work of similar theme: *British Tourism: The Remarkable Story of Growth*.²⁴

A detailed and comprehensive analysis of the development of England's seaside resort towns, *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History, 1750 – 1914*, was published in 1983.²⁵ In this work, Walton demonstrates clearly the agency of the working-class holidaymaker in the popularisation and development of the seaside resort during the later stages of the nineteenth century. This was not always an easy process. Until the end of the nineteenth century the seaside is suggested to have brought the classes together more in conflict than in harmony. But Walton sees this as changing around the turn of the century, as resorts gradually provided 'a valuable safety-valve, a legitimised escape from some of the more irksome constraints of everyday behaviour, for the Victorian middle classes as much as for their social inferiors.'²⁶ This was an important factor in the development of twentieth-century working-class holiday taking, as the often-described liminality and license of the seaside resorts encouraged workers and their families to gradually move from visiting as day-trippers, to eventually gaining a more permanent stake in the seaside. This would take the form of either plotland holiday home or caravan accommodation as the century progressed. Whilst Walton's work extends only to 1914, he acknowledges

²² *Ibid.*, Table 12, p. 86.

²³ See Walton, *The British Seaside*, pp. 41-44, 58, 63-70.

²⁴ V. Middleton and L. Lickorish, *British Tourism: The Remarkable Story of Growth*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Elsevier, 2007), pp. 16, 204.

²⁵ J. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History, 1750 – 1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

that the later expansion of the holiday industry does take the form of caravan, chalet and camping provision, rather than urban development at resort towns.²⁷

The sheer scale of the popularity of the resort in Britain during the twentieth century is emphasised by further work, particularly that which focuses on the key northern pleasure-capital, Blackpool. Gary Cross examined Mass Observation data derived from the group's study of the community of Worktown (Bolton) and their relationship with Blackpool, publishing his work in 1990 in *Worktowners at Blackpool*.²⁸ The limitations of the Mass Observation data are stressed, yet this 'snapshot' of Britain's most populous holiday resort is nevertheless revealing.²⁹ The agency of the working class in the establishment of Blackpool's huge holiday economy in the early and mid-twentieth century is, again, clear; a factor shared with the static holiday caravan industry as a catalyst for development in the post-war years. Cross's work in concert with Walton's later *Blackpool*,³⁰ illuminates the nature of development at the resort during the early and mid-twentieth century, in particular highlighting the factors that created the appeal for the northern working families and individuals. However, Walton's work here also details the later decline in post-war years; a phenomenon shared by most UK seaside resort towns as visitor numbers fall with traditional forms of accommodation such as the guest house and hotel becoming increasingly unpopular. Local social problems were exacerbated by high seasonal unemployment, crime and the high population of social security claimants in former holiday accommodation. Resorts also became very popular as places for the retired to live in the post-war years. Such themes receive further detailed examination in a collection of essays brought together in *The Rise and Fall of British Coastal*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.71.

²⁸ G. Cross, *Worktowners at Blackpool* (London: Routledge, 1990).

²⁹ The difficulties with Mass Observation data have been discussed in other work: see P. Gurney, "Intersex" and "dirty girls": Mass-observation and working-class sexuality in England in the 1930s', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 8/3 (1997), pp. 256-90, and B. Beaven, and J. Griffiths, 'The Blitz, Civilian Morale and the City: Mass-Observation and Working-Class Culture in Britain, 1940-41' in *Urban History*, 26/01 (1999), pp. 71-88.

³⁰ J. Walton, *Blackpool* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

Resorts: Cultural and Economic Perspectives, published in 1997.³¹ Of key importance in this collection is Julian Demetriadi's chapter, in which the author briefly discusses the growth of the static and touring caravan industry in the post war years to the mid-70s. Distinctions are made between the two forms of caravanning, and their popularity is contrasted with the decline in other forms of holiday accommodation. Some areas of growth are shown to have a high proportion of accommodation other than hotels and guest houses: the counties of Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall are suggested to have had 32 holiday camps, 487 static caravan sites, 398 touring caravan sites, 177 camping sites and 31 hostels by 1969.³² The reluctance toward encouraging the establishment of caravan sites around resort towns is seen as symptomatic of the view of such places as unsightly and destructive to the traditional accommodation industries. This consideration of the caravan site in the post-war years represents a tantalisingly brief and rather isolated insight into the phenomenon, within a wider study.

The historiography of UK domestic tourism from the twenty-first century continues to include the seaside resort in work such as Walton's *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century*³³, but the focus now also shifts from place to activity. Claire Langhamer's *Women's Leisure in England, 1920-60* throws some light upon the wider context in terms of gender, drawing upon primary sources in the form of Mass Observation data and oral histories. Whilst useful when considering notions of portable or transferrable domesticity and of gender roles and rituals in the holiday environment, the holiday camp is briefly considered but the caravan holiday is not mentioned. This is intriguing, as Langhamer avers that as the commercial holiday camp allowed freedom from the daily domestic routine of cleaning, washing and meal preparation, it 'was

³¹ G. Shaw, and A. Williams (eds.), *The Rise and Fall of British Coastal Resorts: Cultural and Economic Perspectives* (London: Mansell, 1997).

³² Data from the *Catering Times*, 1969, cited in J. Demetriadi, 'The Golden Years: English Seaside Resorts 1950-74', in Shaw and Williams, *Coastal Resorts*, p. 62.

³³ Walton, *The British Seaside*.

particularly popular among working-class women who could afford it.³⁴ This particular analysis is unsatisfactory for much of the post-war experience, given the relative popularity of the self-catering holiday. As this popularity was predominantly with working-class families, then there were necessarily a large proportion of women in this group who did take holidays in which cleaning, washing and meal preparation were not catered for as part of the holiday. This is an important point which is further considered in Chapter Five.

The nature of consumerism within tourism itself is considered in more depth by Hartmut Berghoff in *The Making of Modern Tourism: The Cultural History of the British Experience, 1600-2000*.³⁵ This is a collection of essays which, whilst concerned with international aspects of tourism as well as domestic, adds some further contextual understanding of the wider phenomenon. Much of that which the tourist consumes is identified as intangible, and therefore difficult to quantify. Inasmuch as this is the case within the domestic self-catering holiday, it is certainly one of the causes of the difficulties that the researcher of such issues is confronted with when trying to access reliable quantitative data. Wider aspects of UK tourism (including travel abroad and domestic cultural tourism) are illustrated to have experienced growth during much of the second half of the twentieth century, and have served to provide alternatives to established forms. Yet we must remind ourselves that it is the caravan site that also appears to maintain growth, however discretely, during this period of ascendancy, despite such alternatives. Much more broadly, tourism as a whole is seen as the 'world's largest single industry'.³⁶ This single industry is a collective which encompasses many rather more disparate activities; unfortunately this approach can often obscure more

³⁴ C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920-1960* (Manchester: MUP, 2000), p. 39.

³⁵ See H. Berghoff, 'From Privilege to Commodity? Modern Tourism and the Rise of Consumer Society' in H. Berghoff, *et.al. The Making of Modern Tourism: The Cultural History of the British Experience, 1600-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2002), pp. 159-179.

³⁶ Berghoff, *The Making of Modern Tourism*, p. 1.

discrete forms when they are collected together and analysed under more generalised headings.

The caravan site experienced growth during a period which saw significant expansion of working-class affluence and consumption in Britain after the war. The wider context of post-war consumerism and affluence is illuminated by the works of Lawrence Black and Matthew Hilton from 2003.³⁷ Black's *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-64* demonstrates and analyses political and social issues as working-class affluence increased under unprecedented levels of advertising, high employment and regulated yet readily-available hire-purchase arrangements. Hilton's *Consumerism in Twentieth Century Britain* similarly considers the post-war situation, and in particular looks consumerism as a new force in society that had the potential to liberate the new consumer from the institutional ties of employers, manufacturers and unions. Both works analyse the roles of institutions, legislation and of key figures in the establishment of consumer protection initiatives, considering the effectiveness of such schemes. Black's later work, *Redefining British Politics, Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70*,³⁸ further explores the relationship between the consumer and political engagement, and the changing nature of society in Britain at this time. These works, whilst again not specifically addressing working-class domestic tourism, do illustrate the wider social and political context in which the new static caravan-using consumers and producers operated. This, in turn, urges consideration of where and how the static caravan users, site operators and manufacturers sit within this wider picture, particularly during this period when their relationships are significantly changing. This is explored further in Chapter Six.

³⁷ L. Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-64: Old Labour, New Britain?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); M. Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³⁸ L. Black, *Redefining British Politics: Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

The wider industry is scrutinised more closely in John Urry's *The Tourist Gaze*, first published in 1990 (with a second edition published in 2002), this time from a sociological perspective. Urry emphasises tourism's social and economic significance whilst arguing that the activity is essentially a visually-led experience, analogous to Foucault's theories of visual classifications, discussed in his 1970 study *The Order of Things*. Whilst this work does indeed shed some new light on the nature and significance of tourism generally, it considers English working-class holidaymaking in the immediate post-war period (1945-59) as virtually synonymous with the commercial holiday camp. Whilst acknowledging change from the 1960's in terms of movement toward self-catering and cheap foreign holidays, static caravan holidays are unfortunately not considered specifically within the discussion, leaving the reader to make their own connections in this regard.³⁹ This is unfortunate, because the agency of the working classes as demonstrated by the avoidance of state-approved and widely advertised holiday opportunities in the form of the commercial holiday camp, and the trend to initiate and originate alternative forms as exemplified by the early static holiday caravan sites, is ignored. This agency is indeed, as mentioned above, worthy of further exploration as it will be argued to be a key aspect in the development of the post-war self-catered holiday. Its impact upon the environment in the post-war period was tangible and controversial: the reported appearance of haphazard groups of caravans that 'littered' particular stretches of coastline and various inland locations gave rise to references from more middle-class individuals and environmental groups to the 'Caravan Problem'. This, in turn, catalysed the Arton Wilson enquiry and subsequent Caravan Sites (Control of Development) Act of 1960. It will be argued that this balanced and

³⁹ J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2002), pp. 34-7, 138-9, 146-7. This resonates with more general problems and limitations of Foucault-influenced works such as T. Bennett, *Culture: A Reformers Science* (London: Sage Publications, 1998); such problems are also highlighted in S. Gunn, 'From Hegemony to Governmentality: Changing Concepts of Power in Social History', *Journal of Social History*, 39/3 (2006), pp. 705-20, pp. 708-10.

thorough enquiry and subsequent legislation helped to undermine the judgemental attitudes of earlier years and move the recreational use of static caravans to an era of greater establishment and development.

In contrast, Susan Barton considers the role of the working class in creating and securing opportunities for holidays and instigating the ultimately successful campaign for paid holidays in her 2005 publication *Working-class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840-1970*. Within this study the manifestation of working-class agency is considered and parallels with the birth of the static holiday caravan site, whilst not specifically mentioned, nevertheless become evident. Barton also acknowledges and illustrates the real nature of the shift to self-catering holiday accommodation; not least in her analysis of the developments between Cleethorpes and Skegness on the Lincolnshire coast.⁴⁰ From this more recent study, the proliferation of the static holiday caravan in the post-war period starts to be more accurately reflected and set in context, but this is as an aspect of a related, yet separate theme. Insight is also given into the nature and significance of earlier makeshift holiday accommodation such as self-built plotland huts, which in turn invites more in-depth analysis of its relationship with the later static holiday caravan sites. However, Barton's focus is primarily the relationship between *collective* organisation and popular tourism, and whilst some brief insight is given, the origins of the static holiday caravan site, its relationship with working-class agency and the holiday plotland phenomenon are not explored any further.

Discrete aspects of tourism are studied in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, a collection of essays edited by John Walton.⁴¹ In particular, the study of inter-war Frinton and Clacton is useful and revealing. In an essay which focusses upon beach

⁴⁰ S. Barton, *Working-class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp.166-72.

⁴¹ J. Walton, (ed.) *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict* (Clevedon: Channel View, 2005).

huts and their immediate, yet contrasting, surroundings, Laura Chase convincingly shows the beach hut to have evolved into a kind of portable domestic space. In contrast to the more commercial delights of the resort in which they exist, beach huts are shown to have evolved into private spaces to which the owner-occupiers can return, and conduct their relationship with the resort on different terms to the day-trippers and hotel guests. Such insightful analysis invites further study of the relationship of this phenomenon with later forms of small, private self-catered holiday accommodation.

A number of themes emerge from this historiography which seem worthy of further investigation from the perspective of static holiday caravan site development. The agency of the working class in originating and promoting domestic holiday forms, how legislation such as the Holidays with Pay Act and planning laws were originated and how they impacted upon post-war holiday taking, the popularisation of camping, the rise of pioneer holiday camps, the effect of plotland holiday development (early self-catered holiday forms) and the wider perception of caravan sites all warrant attention. Moreover, the caravan site holiday also needs consideration within the wider themes of post-war consumerism and economic history. In 2002 Walton observed that the ‘underdevelopment of tourism as a mainstream theme in modern British historical writing is an interesting indicator of the cultural conservatism of the historical profession’, whilst in the same paper he also notes that ‘broadly defined’, the current state of tourism history in Britain ‘is lively and expansive’.⁴² By 2009 he testified that ‘the history of tourism is now a rapidly expanding field in its own right, complete with dedicated journal (*Journal of Tourism History*, Taylor and Francis, from 2009)’.⁴³ Whilst more and more studies in this area are beginning to emerge, the continued discussion of the commercial holiday camp in the historiography of tourism and popular media with

⁴² Walton in Berghoff, *The Making of Modern Tourism*, pp. 109, 126.

⁴³ J. Walton, ‘Histories of Tourism’ in T. Jamal, and M. Robinson (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Tourism Studies* (London: Sage Publications, 2009), p. 116.

limited mention of, or distinction with, the caravan site is problematical; not least as any assumption that caravan sites and commercial holiday camps essentially share the same overall identity and historical development would be misguided. Of course, many developmental factors are shared, but this study aims to demonstrate how these and other factors serve to presage a phenomenon that has a distinct identity, and evolves into a wholly separate form. Just as the academic studies of commercial holiday camps discussed above have considered contributory developmental factors that pre-date their formation, so this study will consider such factors, whether shared or otherwise, in order to demonstrate a clearer developmental lineage and contextual position. As an integral aspect of this, the static caravan itself and the industry that evolved to construct it will likewise be considered.

1.3 Geographical and spatial parameters.

Studies of tourism published in the post-war period have established centres of activity, particularly with regard to working-class holiday making. It is fortunate that much pioneering work has been carried out, for example, by John Walton and Gary Cross looking at the relationship between Lancashire industrial workers and the seaside resort of Blackpool. Key texts such as *Worktowners at Play* and *Blackpool* have established a northern centre of tourism study which tells us much about the particular working-class culture associated with that locus, and the holiday industry that develops around it. English seaside resorts themselves have likewise received the benefit of academic scrutiny in the post war period; studies have illuminated the Derbyshire mine workers use of the Lincolnshire coastal resorts and similar relationships with Welsh industrial workers and the resorts of the south west. These studies all indicate individual traditions and characteristics within these relationships, and separate cultural identities: the Wakes Weeks and factory shutdowns being largely a northern phenomenon, for example.

The relationship between the industrial workers in and around London and the holiday resorts of the east coast, whilst touched upon in studies of resorts in general, has had little if any specific, more detailed attention. This study, within its central aims as detailed above, should also address this through examining the birth of post-war static caravan sites in the Tendring District, an area favoured for holidays by working-class Londoners. The relationships between workers and their favoured resorts has been seen to be specific to geographical areas, in terms of holiday rituals, travel, entertainments and accommodation; the south-east is no exception to this and will be shown to exhibit specific characteristics. In addition to specific details such as accommodation and entertainments, holiday makers in this part of the country may be seen to exhibit differing holiday choices and rituals to their northern and western counterparts. For the workers in and around London the favoured seaside resorts were Southend in Essex and to the north of the county, the resorts of the Tendring District as detailed below.

Tendring is an administrative district in the north-east corner of the county of Essex, in England. Once forming the ancient Tendring Hundred, it takes its name from the tiny village of the same name which lies at its geographical centre. The northern boundary is formed by the River Stour; this also forms the county boundary with Suffolk. The southern boundary is formed by the River Colne. Between the estuaries of these two rivers to the east is the coastal strip and the western boundary lies against the towns of Wivenhoe and Colchester. Clacton-on-Sea is the district's largest town, and is now the administrative centre. This seaside resort dominates the coastal strip, with the resort towns of Frinton-on-Sea and Walton-on-Naze to the north where the port of Harwich lies at the mouth of the Stour. South of Clacton lie the smaller resorts of Jaywick, Saint Osyth beach and Point Clear. The port of Brightlingsea lies at the estuary of the Colne, forming the south-west boundary of the district.



Figure 1: The Tendring District of North-East Essex.

The resort towns are the population centres of the district, and are the major areas of employment. They are also the centres for the tourist trade within the district, since the late nineteenth century one of its major socio-economic features. At the heart of this are the static caravan sites. The two commercial holiday camps are now closed and their sites redeveloped; the hotels and guest houses are now in significant decline, the plotland holiday homes are locked-down from further expansion and camping is still witnessed, but not at the same level as during the mid to late-twentieth century.

1.4 Methodology and Structure

The birth and growth of the static caravan site after 1945 did not happen spontaneously, without any influence from earlier events and trends. In order to understand the formative elements and the nature of the growth of the static holiday caravan sites as discussed, a research methodology has been formulated. This, after advice and further

consideration, takes the form of a thorough investigation and analysis of all accessible and relevant primary and secondary evidence. The nature of these sources is detailed below.

Primary sources of data and information are ordered into three broad categories: documentary, oral history, and physical. Primary documentary evidence in the form of company accounts and minutes, local authority licensing records, contemporary factual publications (such as newsletters and guides), contemporary photographs, government reports and minutes, Acts of Parliament, maps and other official publications fall into the first category. Recorded and transcribed discussions with persons who are or were involved with static caravan sites, either on the supply or consumption side form the second. These individuals were recruited via advertisements in the specialist and more general press. Mass Observation data is also contributory in this respect. The third category comprises physical evidence such as the artefacts and structures at relevant sites and places; these are recorded photographically and in annotation. The recruitment of credible individuals for oral history interviews, despite extensive site visits, lobbying of representative bodies, telephone canvassing and appeals through local press and national journals ultimately yielded comparatively few subjects, especially for static caravan users from the 1950s and 60s (who at best would now be quite elderly); but more responses were forthcoming from the children of early static caravan users and those who were active in the 1970s and 80s. However, those that were recruited and agreed to be interviewed did provide a good deal of useful insight. Indeed, the subjects that came forward cover a broad cross section of users. They have ultimately brought valuable depth to the study, further exemplifying the observations made during the analysis with the introduction of their first-hand witness accounts.

Secondary evidence examined consists largely of any published material that focuses upon caravan sites, caravan manufacturing, domestic tourism and the wider context. This includes, but is not limited to, publications discussed in section 1.2., above: books and journal articles that consider the history of resorts, domestic tourism and holiday-making, working-class consumerism and twentieth-century UK social and economic history. Other useful secondary and primary materials include informal guides and histories relating to specific sites or resorts. Company brochures, contemporary newspaper reports, magazine articles and advertisements are also analyzed.

A picture of how and why static holiday caravan sites emerged as they did in the Tendring district can then be constructed, based on analysis of the available evidence from these sources, and consideration of the development of similar or related forms such as camping, pioneer holiday camps, plotland holiday homes and commercial holiday camps. Early forms of low-cost domestic self-catered holiday activity are examined in order to establish any developmental, evolutionary connections with later static caravan sites. Particular legislative reforms in planning and paid holidays are seen as fundamental to such development, and are, therefore, scrutinised. Social and political trends, particularly during the 1930s and 40s are likewise analysed to establish how and why they relate to the central theme. Holiday caravan sites in Tendring are examined, from their formation after the Second World War up to 1989. Primary and secondary sources are used to build a model of development, assess growth and provide a picture of the nature of life on the caravan sites in the district during the latter half of the twentieth century. This will be considered, albeit with caution, against a background of some twenty years personal working experience within the industry. The static caravan manufacturing industry will also be analysed, in order to more fully understand its role in the growth and development of the static holiday caravan site and its wider place in UK manufacturing in the twentieth century.

The analysis that is informed by the sources discussed above is structured essentially into a chronological format and laid out in progressive chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter Two will examine the early precursors to static caravan site development, and examine phenomena that contribute to its character and establish a precedent for low-cost self-catered holiday options in the UK, up to just after the end of the First World War. The next chapter considers the inter-war years in terms of consumerism, legislation and developments in domestic holiday taking (with specific focus on plotland holiday homes) that also have developmental relevance to the post-war rise in static caravan sites. Chapter Four examines legislation, wartime social changes, the wartime activities of commercial holiday camp developers and developmental factors relating to post-war consumerism and domestic holiday provision. Chapter Five examines the development of the first caravan sites in the Tendring District from 1947 to 1960, and the passing of the Caravan Sites Act. This is set in context with the social and political background of the period. The following chapter examines the birth and development of the UK static caravan manufacturing industry, and considers the evolution of its product. Chapter Seven then examines the further development of static holiday caravan sites from 1960 to 1989. It is from this date that the industry sees more dramatic changes as many privately owned static caravan sites are taken over by larger companies, and thus seems to indicate a sensible boundary for this study and perhaps the start point for a future enquiry. The concluding chapter brings together the findings and establishes what has ultimately been demonstrated by the research.

Chapter Two

Shaping twentieth-century domestic holiday making

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine factors that have contributed to the establishment and character of post-war static holiday caravan sites, and that established a precedent for low-cost self-catered holiday options in the UK. The movement to provide plots for caravans to be located on a campsite on a more or less permanent basis, that broadly resembled a holiday camp, is unlikely to have come about in the manner that it did had a number of significant factors not occurred from the late-nineteenth century onward. The self-reliance, adventurism and portable domesticity that were the essential characteristics of camping and, more substantially, the plotland holiday homes (discussed further in Chapter Three) are examples of contributory ideals that have their roots in this earlier period. This chapter will explore examples of these earlier factors and will consider and demonstrate their relevance and significance or otherwise to post-war static caravan sites. By taking a longer view, examining earlier factors that may or may not have been influential, a comprehensive contextualisation, and therefore fuller understanding, of the post-war phenomenon should be achieved.

Contributory factors considered will include the development and promotion of the concept of camping in tents as an earlier and fundamental form of self-catering holiday and, therefore, a forerunner of later caravan-based holiday activities. The establishment of the first campsites and holiday camps in Britain is discussed, as is the development of the caravan itself as a form of temporary holiday accommodation. The first holiday camps appeared in the UK sometime after the popularisation of leisure camping and the appearance of early camping grounds formed by social, political and philanthropical

organisations during the mid- to late-nineteenth century. This is significant, as these first camps established a precedent for affordable holiday provision in simple accommodation on a site in or near an established resort. In turn, working families were enabled to take holidays at such places, rather than the more traditional boarding houses. A growing interest in finding or acquiring a personal, private domestic living space in a holiday location at reasonable cost, in contrast to hiring impersonal, often expensive temporary accommodation becomes apparent from this time. Although it has been practised in various forms, the enduring nature of this desire is one of the key factors that underpin the on-going popularity of the static holiday caravan.

The significance of the bathing machine and beach hut to the evolution of later self-catering holiday accommodation is considered as structures which, on the face of it, would seem to suggest a certain kinship. They too were low-cost structures which established the provision of basic, personalised accommodation at a resort or by the sea which would in turn establish and enable independence and self-reliance. The role of political and philanthropic movements and individuals as well as early legislation that helped lay the foundations for the progression toward the ultimate establishment of the post-war static caravan sites is also considered. Chronologically, this process will be examined up to the hiatus of the First World War. The continuing developmental process that these factors catalyse (mainly centred in the inter-war holiday plotland phenomenon) will then be covered in the following chapter.

2.2 Tendring District before 1914

Most static holiday caravan sites in the UK have formed at or close to seaside, or at inland resort locations. Tendring District's transition into a resort location is, therefore, part of the formative process for it becoming a centre for a considerable number of static caravan sites. The last decades of the nineteenth into the early twentieth century saw a rapid development of resort locations within Britain; England and Wales alone had acquired some one hundred and fifty new resorts during this period. Census data illustrate this growth nationally, and it is revealed that 'Southend's successful (and sharply contrasting) neighbours at Clacton, Walton, Frinton in the Tendring district, and Canvey Island further south, made the Essex coast the most expansive resort district of all, growing by more than 150 per cent to nearly 200,000 over the period 1911 to 1951.¹ Within the Tendring district the resorts of Frinton, Walton and Clacton in particular became very popular with day-trippers and holidaymakers after 1880, and the growth in demand for accommodation and facilities continued until the outbreak of the First World War.

Tendring had seen some more informal tourism prior to this, however: John Harrison of Great Bromley Hall is reported to have used Little Holland Hall as a holiday retreat for his children and servants in 1799. In 1811 a farm and cottage at Little Holland advertised sea-bathing facilities, whilst the Ship Inn at Great Clacton was equipped with a bathing machine in 1824.² Tentative and informal usage of this section of coast continued until the development of the resort of Clacton-on-Sea was begun in 1871, after land was purchased close to Great Clacton by Peter Bruff, a developer, in 1865. The original

¹ J. Walton, *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 33.

² K. Walker, *The History of Clacton* (Clacton: Clacton Urban District Council, 1966), pp. 27–9;

forty-eight acres of land comprised only a limited sea-front area, but after an agreement was negotiated with W.P. Jackson, chairman of the Woolwich Steam Packet Co. in 1870, works began which included coastal defenses to protect the eroding shoreline and an access cut, known later as Pier Gap, through the low cliffs down to the expansive beaches.³ Subsequent developments, including the extension of the railway line in 1882 (after several abortive schemes had failed), and the construction of a pier, were the catalyst for Clacton-on-Sea's irrevocable establishment as one of the south-east of England's most popular seaside resorts during the early twentieth century.

The scattered and sparsely populated agricultural settlement of Frinton underwent a similar process of acquisition and development during the latter stages of the nineteenth century from about 1885; with the opening of the railway station and establishment of a fresh water supply in 1888 this process was accelerated. By the outbreak of the First World War the seaside resort of Frinton-on-Sea had been established. The very few original inhabitants were overwhelmed by the influx of visitors and residents; but this new resort was of a much different character to neighboring Clacton-on-Sea. Largely due to the influence of those who acquired the majority of the available land at Frinton at this time, the resort took on an exclusive character, which persists to the present day.⁴

The resort of Walton-on-the-Naze, just north of Frinton-on-Sea, could be considered to be the 'founding' resort on this coastline. Whilst smaller than Clacton-on-Sea and less exclusive than Frinton-on-Sea, Walton-on-the-Naze was establishing as a resort before either of these two. The soft geology of this section of coastline (London Clay with

³ ERO, Q/RUm 2/174; H. Eiden and C. Thornton (eds.), *VCH Essex Vol. XI Texts in Progress (Clacton c.1870 to 1914)* (London: University of London, 2010).

⁴ H. Eiden and C. Thornton (eds.), *VCH Essex Vol. XI; Texts in Progress (Frinton to 1914)* (London: University of London, 2009).

deposits of Red Crag) has ensured that for centuries the settlement of Walton had suffered from the effects of coastal erosion. Despite this, a substantial village community had grown up, and considerable sums were spent on the provision of coastal defences. With reasonable road links to Colchester and beyond, the area was visited on a regular basis during the early nineteenth century, and with the arrival of the railway in 1867 visitor numbers grew. After the construction of a pier, steamers running between London and Ipswich would stop at Walton, further enhancing the resorts holiday status. Walton-on-the-Naze never quite achieved the exclusivity of Frinton-on-Sea, or the growth in terms of size and visitor numbers of Clacton-on-Sea. This may well be due to the significant problem of coastal erosion discouraging investment in building close to the shoreline. But, again as will be discussed further, the resort opened up the surrounding areas as potential holiday destinations, prompting developers and entrepreneurs such as Peter Bruff to set in motion a process that would, during the mid-twentieth century, transform the coastline of north-east Essex in a way that they could scarcely have imagined.⁵

The pre-war years of the twentieth century saw the Tendring District as a growing holiday destination dominated by its three resorts. With the developing rail and steam-packet links from the capital, visitor numbers grew accordingly. Clacton started to attract many working-class day-trippers as well as those who would stay in the new hotels and guesthouses. Frinton-on-Sea would remain a venue for middle-class visitors and holidaymakers; Walton-on-Naze attracting a combined clientele. As John Walton observes of resorts in Britain more widely, the district overall had begun to gain popularity with Londoners from a wide range of ages and social classes as a relatively

⁵ H. Eiden and C. Thornton (eds.), *VCH Essex Vol. XI; Texts in Progress (Walton to 1914)* (London: University of London, 2009).

easy to reach resort that promised fun and distraction from the routine of working life.⁶ This popularity, as it established the resorts as holiday destinations positively in the collective consciousness, thereby firmly laid the foundations for the later development in such places of static holiday caravan sites.

2.3 Camping

In order to further understand the origins of English post-war caravan sites (or camps, as their patrons more familiarly knew them),⁷ the question of how and why the first examples of self-catering recreation and leisure at pre-designated areas or campsites, in portable or temporary accommodation emerged, begs attention. It is also important to try to establish who these pioneering holiday-makers were. The word camp has been defined in the general sense as temporary quarters, formed by tents, vehicles or other portable forms of shelter, or a place with temporary accommodation of huts, tents, or other structures, typically used by soldiers, refugees, or travelling people.⁸ The term probably acquired a more general usage after the popularisation of camping and the establishment of holiday camps in Britain during the twentieth century, when it would become further associated with notions of fellowship and sociability.

The practice of setting up temporary accommodation in the form of tents or portable huts as a base for a holiday or recreational activity began to become popular during the mid- to latter part of the nineteenth century. Ward and Hardy argue convincingly that

⁶ Walton, *The British Seaside*, pp. 33-4. The popularity of resorts during this period with all classes and in particular increasingly with the working classes was emphasised during John Walton's lecture at University Campus, Suffolk, on 13th March 2013.

⁷ During the 1960's and 70's most clients, and indeed staff, referred to their caravan sites simply as 'The Camp'. This was generally true for the most 'Camps' in the Tendring district from anecdotal evidence and memory. Terms of reference such as 'caravan camp' and 'caravan site', in common usage up to this point, were deliberately and purposefully discouraged during the 1980's as the industry in general strove to re-brand and re-package. This is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933).

stories of military exploits and conquest from the empire, romantic fiction glamorising Gypsies, travellers and itinerant workers and their pastoral lifestyles, and stories from the new-world émigrés all helped to foster the view that ‘camping’ in tents or some form of temporary accommodation could provide adventure, recreation and fun.⁹ Such influences are, of course, far removed from the nature of later holiday camps, but as individuals and groups were quick to spot the potential of this activity at this stage, camping soon became a popular pastime for young working- and lower middle-class men, urban boys and later young women and girls.

George Williams’ Young Men’s’ Christian Association (YMCA) had set a precedent for creating philanthropically originated holiday centres with their first such centre established at the Isle of Wight in 1873; a further twenty-five centres were eventually opened. But it is the Boys Brigade in particular that should be seen as highly influential in the popularisation of camping and outdoor leisure, as it provided opportunities for urban boys to enjoy the freedom and adventure of the campsite for the first time, thus providing childhood memories which would help establish the popularity of holidaying at campsites in future years. With the founding of the Brigade in Glasgow in 1883 by William Alexander Smith, a semi-military regime was utilised to promote fitness, discipline and ‘Christian manliness’ in boys and young men. Amongst its range of activities, summer camps were seen as an important part of this vision. Despite initial reservations from parents, the first camp under canvas was planned to run for one week at the beginning of July 1886 in the Kyles of Bute. Such was the success of this venture that the 1st Glasgow Company of the Boys Brigade returned to this camp on an annual

⁹ D. Hardy and C. Ward, *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp*, 2nd ed. (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2010), pp. 18-20.

basis until 1974 when building plans were sanctioned for the area, and since then have continued to attend a camp-site close by.¹⁰

The process of fostering and promoting the ideas and ideals of camping for boys was given a further boost by stories of the exploits of Maj. Gen. R. Baden-Powell at the defence of Mafeking in South Africa during the Boer War. Baden-Powell's book, *Aids to Scouting*, published in 1899 was becoming widely read. A working association with William Smith of the Boys Brigade on his return to Britain later prompted him to re-write the book for a younger readership, and publish it as *Scouting for Boys*. In 1907 Baden-Powell held an experimental camp on Brownsea Island near Poole in Dorset to see how his ideas would work with the young. He recruited 22 boys, some from working-class backgrounds and some from public schools for his first Scout Camp. The successes of these endeavours led to the establishment of the Scout movement, and in due course the Cubs, Girl Guides and Brownies. Baden-Powell's initial ideas for a youth movement, however, may well have had less to do with bringing the benefits and pleasures of camping to the wider youth than with his more militaristic vision of setting up groups of local boys, led by public schoolboys, to train in military skills and prepare themselves for military service should their country call on them. This view runs contrary to many of the officially-sanctioned histories of the Scout Movement, but is revealed in a letter written by Baden-Powell, published in the Eton College *Chronicle* of the 22nd of December, 1904. In this letter, Baden-Powell describes England as a 'small country, surrounded by nations far stronger in arms, who may at any time attempt to crush us' and uses Japan's 'soldierly spirit and self-sacrificing patriotism' as recently witnessed in that country's conflict with Russia as an example for emulation. A core part of the training for these groups of boys would be how to aim and shoot with a miniature

¹⁰ D. McFarlan, *Summer Camp First for Boys* (London: Collins, 1983), pp.15-18.

rifle, how to judge distance, how to scout and how to drill, skirmish and take cover, *etc.*¹¹ This early vision was, however, substantially modified; later pronouncements from Scout headquarters emphasised the non-military nature of the movement and any training with arms was excluded from the programme.

The Scout Movement was subsequently described as an organisation primarily concerned with making good citizens. Although there were some groups in Britain in the early years of the twentieth century that argued for conscription as an answer to the threat of invasion from an increasingly hostile Germany, as well as an antidote to social ills, this view was generally unpopular. Baden-Powell himself was not a supporter of conscription; and was probably ultimately aware that most parents would be wary of any overtly military youth organisation. *Scouting for Boys* offered a ‘rag-bag book of hints, stories and instructions’ which reflected Baden-Powell’s enthusiasm for scouting, camp-craft and self-reliance.¹² Much of this modification was aided by Baden-Powell’s meeting with Ernest Thompson Seton, an artist and naturalist who had studied American Indian culture and crafts, and was attempting to set up woodcraft groups in England and America. The two men subsequently corresponded, and Baden-Powell was probably influenced by Seton’s book *The Birch Bark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians*, in which Seton laid down a manifesto for his organisation. This included ‘promotion of interests in Out-of-Door Life and Woodcraft, the preservation of Wild Life and Landscape, and the

¹¹ The letter published in the *Eton College Chronicle* is analysed and discussed in M. Rosenthal, ‘Knights and Retainers: The Earliest Version of Baden-Powell’s Boy Scout Scheme’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 15/4, (Oct. 1980), pp. 603-617; see also Item Code FS 295301 Mar/08 Edition no 1, *Baden-Powell: Chief Scout of the World*, London: The Scout Information Centre.

¹² E. Boehmer, *Robert Baden-Powell: Scouting for Boys, a Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship, re-print of 1908 original edition* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), reviewed by A. Warren, in *The English Historical Review*, 121/493, (Sept. 2006) pp. 1191-1192; see also A. Warren, ‘Sir Robert Baden Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920’, *The English Historical Review*, 101/399 (April 1986) pp. 376-398.

promotion of Good Fellowship among its members [*sic*].¹³ Seton's Woodcraft Indians paved the way for the American Boy Scout movement, and in Britain the Scout movement, once divorced from its earlier military leanings, became extremely popular with children and adults. Seton's ideas had further influence after the First World War with the establishment of the Woodcraft Folk in Britain.

As far as post-war caravan site development is concerned, these early beginnings seem so different and very far removed from later developments. But, importantly, they created a new holiday environment for young people that fostered adventure, fun, socialising with peers and recreation at campsites, often close to holiday resorts. This is significant because these activities set a precedent for, and provided experience in, low-cost and often self-catered holidays which would further develop, stripped of earlier ideologies, to adopt a number of forms (including touring caravans and static caravan sites) throughout the twentieth century. As a result of the ideas and activities of Williams, Smith, Seton, Baden-Powell *et al.*, the Scouts, Guides and church youth organisations introduced countless numbers of individuals to camping. Therefore, with the popularity of camping being promoted by such organisations throughout the country and enjoyed by its participants (both young and old), its future as a leisure and holiday activity was ultimately assured. The focus at first was to provide opportunities for adolescent boys from working-class and urban environments. But with growing awareness of the demands for equality and equal opportunities, girls and young women would eventually be included in these activities. Although the motives for the inclusion of camping in their programme of events were largely altruistic and public-spirited, the activities of these organisations undoubtedly introduced thousands of boys and eventually girls from varied backgrounds to the many enjoyable and positive aspects of being away from home in a

¹³ E. Seton, *The Birch Bark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1907), p. 7.

rural or coastal environment, in makeshift accommodation for the first time. The notion that rural and coastal locations could, and should, be seen as places where this sort of recreation could be enjoyed by all strata of society was to become thereby further embedded in the minds of working people (and as discussed below, would be further affected by political and philanthropic figures), and it would subsequently develop into the various branches of their domestic holiday pursuit. But crucially to the later development of caravan sites, is the fact that camping grounds began to be established at resort locations to accommodate these activities. These camp sites laid the foundations for small scale commercial development which can be seen to subsequently develop into caravan site activity in the post-war period. This is discussed further in Chapter Five.

It was not just the major youth movements that organised working-class boys and initiated them into camping as a beneficial recreational activity during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century. Ward and Hardy draw our attention to Thomas Hiram Holding, a journeyman tailor who had in his youth travelled widely in the American Prairies with his parents on a wagon train, as an example of one individual who also promoted the idea of camping for leisure and recreation in Britain. As the Safety Bicycle superseded the less forgiving 'Pennyfarthing' bicycle, it was now possible to carry camping equipment in a haversack on a bicycle. In 1897 Holding published *Cycle and Camp*, in which he urged working men to take to the idea of cycling with camping equipment in order to explore the countryside and have holidays there, enjoying rural England and the experience of sleeping out in a tent and cooking on a camp fire or stove:

The only excuse the Rational Cyclist can have for bothering with a camp outfit on a tour is either, that he is poor, or has too much of the savage remaining in his composition. Rationally speaking he need not be ashamed of either.¹⁴

Holding was keen to advocate cycle-camping as an activity which would allow working people to enjoy the freedom of recreation away from the town and workplace; indeed he pursued the idea with almost missionary zeal. He neatly summarises the appeal of the activity, an appeal which arguably still relates to modern caravan holidays:

It is now clear the poor clerk or workman who wishes to see fresh countries at home or abroad may gratify his whim and have a fine holiday on the weekly expenditure o[f] his pocket money and be independent of weather, distance or to him the prohibitive tariff of hotels!¹⁵

He went on to publish the *Campers Handbook* in which he further promoted the activity, discussing for the first time the possibilities and practicalities of using a horse-drawn caravan for holiday recreation. Again, here, his principles are clear, in that although he saw for the first time the use of the caravan as a practical and sensible option for some, he did not wish to devote too much of his narrative to the subject as it was a ‘newer and a more luxurious and costly method of Camping [sic] than is possible to the majority of men.’¹⁶ Thus Holding’s concern for the democratisation of self-catering holiday or recreational possibilities is also significant, in that he is clearly one of the individuals who did much to foster the popularity of the activity from its beginnings. Holding was also active in the founding of The Association of Cycle Campers and thus of organising the activity on a wider basis. The Association had several hundred members by 1906 and in that year opened its first dedicated campsite at Weybridge, now a popular caravanning

¹⁴ T. Holding, *Cycle and Camp* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1898), p. 9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11.

¹⁶ T. Holding, *The Campers Handbook* (London: De Vere & Co., 1908), pp. 353-366.

centre. In its official history, the Camping and Caravanning Club (the present day incarnation of these earlier associations) maintains that some members urged for a widening of the scope of the association's activities, which in turn led to the forming of The Camping Club. In 1907 the newly-formed Caravan Club, the Camping Club and the Association of Cycle Campers formed the short-lived Camping Union, under the chairmanship of Harris Stone, with shared offices at Charing Cross, London. Holding allegedly in turn severed his connection with the Association of Cycle Campers and formed the National Camping Club. This was followed by the dissolution of the Camping Union and the amalgamation of the Association of Cycle Campers and the Camping Club, reforming as the Amateur Camping Club in 1909. The following year the National Camping Club combined with this organization, unifying the disparate groups and providing a national framework which, again, further promoted camping to a wider public.¹⁷

It seems clear that Holding saw the horse-drawn touring caravan as a specialist concern, out of the reach of the pockets of the working people that he felt he was addressing. He was, nevertheless, obviously aware of the potential of a portable structure that was far more substantial than a tent as portable holiday accommodation. In fact he went as far as providing working drawings for such a caravan in the *Campers Handbook*.¹⁸

¹⁷ P. Bassett, 'A Brief History of the Caravan Club of Great Britain and Ireland' in *A List of the Historical Records of the Caravan Club of Great Britain and Ireland* (1980), Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham & Institute of Agricultural History, University of Reading; National Archives: NRA 24464; see also <http://www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/aboutus/history/>; accessed Nov. 2013

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

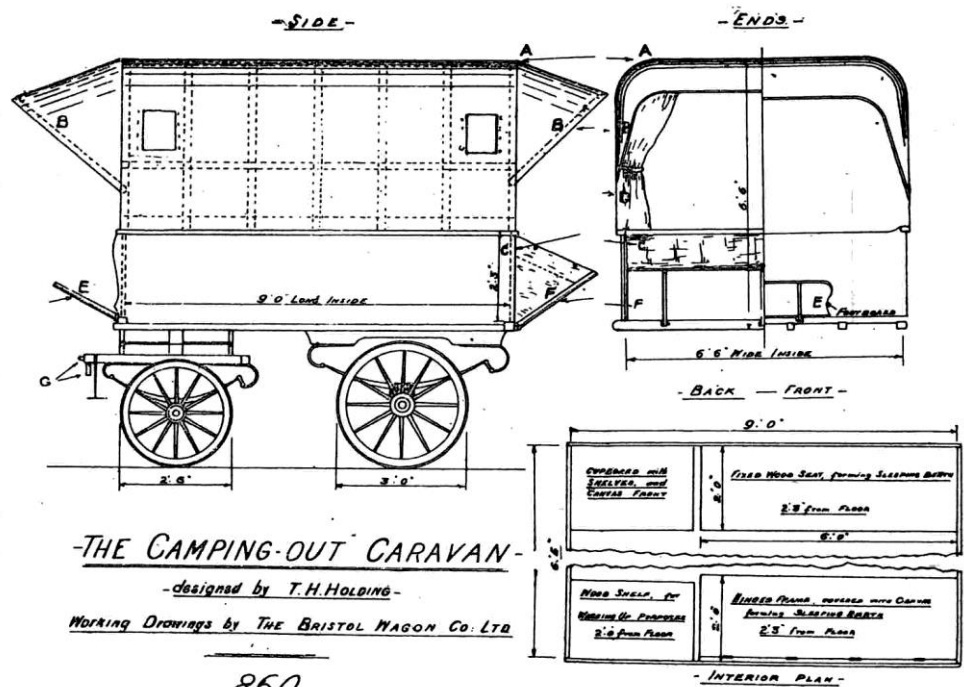


Figure 1: Holding's Design for a 'Camping Out' Caravan, c. 1908.

Such horse-drawn touring caravans, based on the more traditional stage-wagons and traveller's caravans, and the covered wagons that Holding had travelled in during his time on the American Prairies, were produced in Britain around the turn of the century by companies such as the Bristol Wagon Co. Ltd. Their appeal was limited in terms of recreational use, however, as those who could afford them tended towards more traditional forms of hotel accommodation for their holidays. But they were the forerunner of the motor-drawn touring caravan that would gain popularity during the inter-war years, again with those middle-class families who could afford them. And it is examples of this motor-drawn touring caravan that would be first seen on the post-World War II caravan sites, as working class families obtained cheap second-hand, pre-war models and sited them on the new caravan sites as static holiday homes. Thus, the contemporary static holiday caravan, seen in its many thousands on dedicated parks at resorts throughout the UK, first came into existence as an unforeseen adaptation of the

touring caravan, but sharing many of its characteristics. Touring caravans developed directly and relatively quickly from the horse-drawn caravans described above. Therefore a meaningful study of the development of the static holiday caravan scene cannot ignore this developmental pathway, if only to establish or refute any further significant factors from this time which have shaped its present form.

Holding acknowledges the caravan as a vehicle suitable for camping and recreation but the vehicle itself, even then, was not a new concept. It was not, as is often thought, invented or even used by gypsy travellers prior to this. There is apparently no word for it in the Romany language.¹⁹ In Europe and farther afield such portable accommodation has a more established history. During the seventeenth century in Britain the term caravan was used to refer to any wagon or coach that was used to transport people (usually as fare-paying passengers) and goods over relatively short distances. The term 'van' in use today is probably a contraction of this.²⁰ Since the fourteenth century, shepherds would commonly make use of a small hut mounted upon four wooden wheels, which would provide them with moveable accommodation as they moved with their flock. Romany and Gypsy travellers did not take to using caravans as sleeping quarters until at least the mid-nineteenth century, when they gradually moved away from tented accommodation. Travelling showmen and their families were moving around the country during the latter part of the nineteenth century between fairgrounds using caravans, very similar in design to Holding's model, above, as mobile accommodation. Particular details of this activity from this time are given to us in accounts of the Sanger family's touring circuses, 'Lord' George Sanger later became president of the Van Dwellers Protection Association (the forerunner of the Showmen's Guild of Great

¹⁹ W. Whiteman, *The History of the Caravan* (London, Blandford/National Caravan Council, 1973), p.9.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p.10-11.

Britain);²¹ as we shall see, the travelling showmen would come to have a strong association with post-war caravan sites. The type of caravan used in this regard is referred to in contemporary literature; in *The Old Curiosity Shop* published in 1840-1, Charles Dickens gives a convincing and clear description of the inside of the caravan of Mrs. Jarley, proprietor of a travelling waxworks show:

One half of it-the moiety in which the comfortable proprietress was then seated- was carpeted, and so partitioned off at the further end as to accommodate a sleeping place, constructed after the fashion of a berth on board ship, which was shaded, like the little windows, with fair white curtains, and looked comfortable enough, though by what kind of gymnastic exercise the lady of the caravan ever contrived to get into it was an unfathomable mystery. The other half served for a kitchen, and was fitted with a stove whose chimney passed through the roof. It held also a closet, or larder, several chests, a great pitcher of water, and a few cooking utensils and articles of crockery.²²

This description, whilst suggesting a rather cramped environment, hints at a cosy, personalised domesticity (a notion that he seemed to relish in general) that may be easily discerned in later touring caravans and early static holiday caravans. Here, then, we find at least one characteristic that informed the nature of post-war static caravans at least until the mid-1970s. This was an almost tangible atmosphere, a cultural sensibility that transferred through from these earlier times until the caravan manufacturers' later marketing policies, postmodern designs and the changing aspirations of caravan buyers dissolved it. Although the aluminium clad static holiday caravans were constructed at a much later date, Dickens' description still evokes much of the sense and feel of the interior of the early post-war touring caravans and first static holiday homes. We must, therefore, consider this (albeit difficult to quantify) quality as a formative and fundamental aspect of the first static holiday caravans; it was sought and embraced by those that first established static caravan holiday homes.

²¹ See G. Sanger, *Seventy Years a Showman* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1926).

²² C. Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Vol. 1, (London: Caxton Ltd., originally published 1840-1), p.150; see also Whiteman, *Caravan*, p. 14.

During the early 1900's the early horse-drawn caravans had become more established as recreational vehicles, and a short 'golden age' of popularity developed between the late 1880's lasting to just before the outbreak of the First World War. A retired naval surgeon and author of boy's books, Dr. R. Gordon Stables, laid claim to be the first practitioner of leisure horse-drawn caravanning, although this cannot be verified. His enthusiasm was, however, persuasive and encouraged others to participate. Images of his original caravan, *The Wanderer*, (see Fig. 2, below) show the elaborate and therefore expensive construction of such units.



Figure 2: Dr. R Gordon Stables Horse Drawn Caravan *The Wanderer*.

Their popularity was further boosted by the publication in 1907 by the *Bazaar Exchange and Mart* of *The Book of the Caravan* by L. C. R. Cameron, after he had published a number of articles on the subject of caravanning in journals such as *Field*, *Countryside* and *The Bazaar*. With caravans now being built especially for the holiday market, and with the formation of the Caravan Club of Great Britain in the same year sharing offices in London with the Camping Club and the Association of Cycle Campers, it had become

firmly established as a popular, if still somewhat idiosyncratic, form of holiday accommodation. Nevertheless the appeal of the caravan prior to 1914 was, for the time being, still limited to the more bohemian middle-classes who could afford them.²³ But here further key factors become apparent. The demand for such units created a new and moderately substantial manufacturing base, and subsequent design developments would ultimately secure the touring caravan as a permanent feature of UK domestic self-catering holiday making. During the inter-war years companies such as Eccles began to develop a caravan capable of being towed by a motor vehicle, and as these units began to be produced on a more affordable basis, more and more people took to them as a holiday choice. This, crucially, provided enough second hand units in the post-war years for those on the most basic incomes to afford as static holiday homes. This was the basic model from which the static holiday caravan, as will be further discussed, would directly and clearly evolve. Thus, the development of the touring caravan from this time is fundamental to the birth of the static holiday caravan, not just in terms of physical characteristics, or its atmosphere of cosy, portable domesticity, but because it also presented an important opportunity for appropriation and adaption, under the agency of working-class holiday makers, in the immediate post-war period.

2.4 The first holiday camp sites

It has been suggested that cycle-camping was possibly the first answer to the problem of the limited range of affordable holiday accommodation for working-class people; including northern factory workers wishing to escape the restrictive routine of the boarding house. It is probably Holding in 1898 who gives us the first list of ‘campsites’ (or at least places, usually farms, where camping was accepted for a small fee), some

²³ P. Bassett, ‘Caravan Club’; Whiteman, *Caravan*, pp. 18, 31.

ninety-eight in all, in *Cycle and Camp*. The socialist and religious philanthropists concerned with providing holidays for working families had one key factor in common at this stage: a desire to draw working people away from what they considered to be the bawdy, consumerist delights of resorts such as Blackpool, and introduce them to more wholesome, rural educational and ‘improving’ experiences in communal centres, or camps.²⁴ Susan Barton emphasises the claim made by Harvey Taylor that the National Home Reading Union (NHRU) was ‘the real progenitor of the concept of rational and improving holidays at prices working people could afford.’²⁵ From 1887, assemblies held by the NHRU would promote the ideas of affordable holidays offering what it described as ‘rational recreation’: communal living, education, fitness and the ‘outdoor life’. Although not a unified movement as such, rational recreation was part of a wider concern with how the working-classes occupied their leisure time: Brad Beaven describes how, between 1880 and 1914, the labour movement and the Salvation Army attempted to intervene in working-class leisure patterns, although with differing objectives. The socialists and Salvationists were, however, united in concern for the degenerative effects of the urban environment, and saw their respective ideologies or creeds as a way of life that once understood and embraced, would save the urban worker from such degradation. Their anti-urbanism further fuelled the need to establish places or camps at rural or coastal locations for ‘improving holidays’.²⁶

Peter Bailey details the origins and motivations for rational recreation as twofold: firstly, proceeding ‘from a basic humanitarian sympathy with the plight of the urban masses’

²⁴ J. Pimlott, *The Englishman’s Holiday*, 2nd. ed. (Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1976), p.

²⁵ H. Taylor, *A Claim on the Countryside: A History of the British Outdoor Movement* (Keele: 1997), p. 195, in S. Barton, *Working-class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.143-4.

²⁶ B. Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 33.

and although not simply ‘an old-fashioned exercise in placating the mob’, ‘practical considerations of social stability’.²⁷ The latter concern was fuelled more by a middle-class fear of the working classes embracing radical, even revolutionary ideas or attending Chartist meetings *en masse*, once enticed away from the usual more base delights of their leisure hours, and encouraged toward more educational activities. But it was difficult, at first, to change the holiday habits of northern workers who had enjoyed the various delights of the early resorts such as Blackpool and Skegness, orientated as they were to cater to the wants and needs of a specific clientele. Perhaps, as Barton suggests, the rational regime was a little too rational for workers who had spent months prior to their brief holiday labouring in the factories.²⁸ By 1914, the zeal for rational recreation amongst socialist reformers had waned; Chris Waters argues that this decreasing interest in popular culture ‘can be measured by charting the decline in the number of articles devoted to a discussion of the matter in the more important of the monthlies and quarterlies.’²⁹ Although rational recreation did not ultimately succeed to any great extent in this quest, it did, however, add impetus to the establishment of campsites and ‘pioneer holiday camps’ around the country.

The publication in 1890 of *The Clarion* newspaper by Manchester journalist Robert Blatchford is also significant in this process. A Socialist weekly, it included in its coverage the promotion of cycling clubs and eventually holiday camps. An association of Clarion Cycling Clubs arose from this coverage, with membership being open to both sexes.³⁰ As the cycling and camping movement grew, the idea of utilising more permanent campsites

²⁷ P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 35-7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ C. Waters, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 183.

³⁰ D. Pye, *Fellowship is Life: The Story of the Clarion Cycling Club* (Bolton: Clarion Publishing, 2004), pp. 4-8.

in locations favoured by the members (such as those used by the Scouts and Boys Brigade) gained support and by the early 1900's a number of locations were used on a regular basis. Blatchford, however, whilst acknowledging the ideals of the early socialist holiday movement, did advocate a 'sociable socialism'; he was concerned that workers on holiday should have their fair share of fun and relaxation as well as activities designed to educate and improve participants.³¹

In 1897 the newly-formed Co-operative Holiday Association took up the challenge of providing affordable holiday accommodation, recreation and enjoyment away from the commercial distractions of the developing holiday resorts. T. A. Leonard, a Congregationalist minister, provided the impetus for the association's formation, later becoming its permanent secretary. His membership would only last until 1913, however, as his desire to keep holidays as simple as possible, essentially little more than comradeship in rural locations, began to lose favour with fellow members.³² Although the societies organised accommodation and camps, and attempted to avoid commercial influences and distractions, day-trips to established commercial resorts were provided to satisfy increasing demand for a little holiday fun. For example, in 1900 the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society sent over 1,200 members to Folkestone and Dover; two trains were needed to accommodate them.³³ Essentially, local Co-operative Societies were able to provide many workers with the only holiday they could afford, and were responsible for introducing large numbers to the pleasures of the seaside resort for the first time, ensuring that it would be an aspirational destination for theirs and the successive generation's holiday activities.

³¹ Barton, *Working-class Organisations*, p. 145.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ P. Gurney, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870–1930* (Manchester: University Press, 1996), p.74.

It is at this stage, during the early years of the twentieth century, that the seeds of self-catering domestic holidays, at first in tents, later in chalets, plotland holiday homes and caravans, begin to develop into their various manifestations. For some, the idea of simply camping in an endless variety of remote, rural or coastal locations would remain the main attraction and this would continue; tents would be replaced later for some with touring caravans, but this particular branch of the activity would mostly involve travelling to different locations. However, for others the communal nature of these new establishing campsites and the social opportunities that they presented were also highly appealing: the Caister Socialist Holiday Camp (discussed further below), for example, expanded to cater for nearly 1000 people per week during summer in the early 1900s.³⁴

As can be seen, much of the impetus for the development of early camping and the establishment of campsites was from philanthropically or politically motivated sources. Figures such as Holding, despite his efforts to perhaps reach a wider audience, appealed mainly to the young working-class. The youth movements and organisations such as the Clarion Cycling Club were striving to allow working-class youth and families to access the coast and countryside as a relief from the conditions of the larger industrial towns and inner-cities. The socialist organisations were clearly the first to promote camping and campsites for the participation of both sexes, thereby enhancing the experience for all. A growing number of smaller urban charitable organisations, such as the St. Andrew's Home and Club for Working-Boys (founded in Soho in 1866, moving to Westminster in 1885), also pioneered weekend camping for its members as the popularity of the activity grew.³⁵ As the upper-working classes joined the middle classes and began to access and enjoy seaside resorts on day trips or short breaks, the concept of spending more time at

³⁴ Anon. 'The History of Ladbroke's', in *Ladbroke's Life*, Journal of the Ladbroke Group, 2/4 (May/June 1973) cited in *Goodnight Campers!*, p.36.

³⁵ Hardy and Ward, *Goodnight Campers!*, p. 21.

such places, or making a holiday there, became more popular. In the industrial towns and cities of the Midlands and north of England, campaigning by the Labour movement and trades unions had helped secure designated holiday periods, augmenting the traditional 'Wakes Weeks' for more affluent industrial workers and their families. The practice of 'St. Monday': the absenteeism on Mondays traditional amongst specific craft trades was more-or-less extinguished by the introduction of a half-day on Saturdays.³⁶ During the holiday periods, factories would shut down and employees would make an annual excursion to resorts such as Blackpool and Skegness for their holidays. Indeed, the Lancashire cotton town workers were effectively the pioneers of the working classes in Britain in generating a substantial holiday demand.³⁷ In the south, with less formalised trades union and friendly society influence, holidaymakers were more solidly middle-class at the turn of the century, but this situation was to undergo rapid change, particularly in its effect upon the Tendring District resorts, as this working-class agency for holiday-making grew.

The culture of holiday camping and campsites, whether initiated by organisations or individuals, was of course seen generally to be a beneficial, wholesome and fun activity. In 1894 Liverpool based philanthropist Joseph Cunningham found an area at Groudle Glen near Douglas on the Isle of Man to set up a permanent campsite. He had run annual camps for working lads' institutes in the Liverpool area for a number of years, but although this campsite was still philanthropic in essence, it was to be run essentially as a business. Although the clientele were all male and strict regulations against drinking and gambling were enforced, the venture was an immediate success. The campsite became

³⁶ See D. Reid, 'The Decline of Saint Monday, 1766-1876', in *Past and Present*, 71/1 (May 1976), pp. 76-101; also D. Reid, 'Weddings, Weekdays, Work and Leisure in Urban England 1791-1911: The Decline of Saint Monday Revisited', in *Past & Present*, 153 (November 1996), pp. 135-163.

³⁷ J. Walton, *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 15, 51-2.

permanently established and despite its regulations, above all it *encouraged* a sense of fun and recreation.³⁸

Cunningham's Camp makes a fair claim to be Britain's first holiday camp; but it is interesting to note that its success (it did not cease trading formally until after the Second World War) was probably due to the fact that it was affordable, and its clientele simply enjoyed themselves whilst on holiday there. This may well be due to the fact that although such pioneer camps often had fairly organised programmes of events such as lectures or games, there was generally a sense of freedom from routine and space to relax and escape. Most significantly, what Cunningham's camp does provide is the first example of a tented campsite being established at a permanent resort location, essentially as a recreational holiday venue that was popular with an annually returning clientele. This, in turn, provides an early model for commercial holiday camps and the campsites that later evolve into static holiday caravan sites.

By 1910, members of a London branch of the Clarion Cycling Club had been regularly using an area of land at Caister, on the Norfolk coast, as a campsite. The campsite developed into the Caister Socialist Holiday Camp, fostered by members of the Clarion and labour movements. These early pioneer camps were by now becoming remarkably successful and attracted increasing numbers of visitors. Caister was pioneered by trade unionist John Fletcher Dodd in 1906, when he and a handful of fellow union activists from the East End of London made their way there equipped with camping materials. The campsite quickly developed into an organised venue, and was run on a co-operative basis by those who enjoyed its facilities. Campfire camaraderie was augmented with discussions and lectures; Caister Socialist Holiday Camp attracted notable guest speakers

³⁸ See J. Drower, *Good Clean Fun: The Story of Britain's First Holiday Camp* (London: Arcadia Books, 1982).

to its regular Sunday evening lecture sessions including Kier Hardie, George Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell.³⁹

In time, probably as a result of the growing popularity of the camps run on a more leisure-orientated basis, the initial philanthropic nature of the regime at such camps that included organised games, activities and lectures was diluted into a more recreational and carefree one that gave a greater sense of freedom than hotels or boarding houses ever could. This in due course would gradually attract a much wider clientele. From their initial establishing phase with the political ethos now crowded-out, such pioneer holiday camps grew in number and formed the basis for low-cost, self-catering holidays that would provide a sense of communal fun, but more importantly, a feeling of independence for their clientele. Although initially fostered and developed by the political and philanthropic idealists, it was these additional benefits that would surely lead to the establishment of holiday camps as a permanent feature of the domestic holiday scene. The precedent for the concept of affordable, independent holiday campsites (a model for the later caravan sites) had been established. By the outbreak of the First World War the movement was sufficiently established to be re-kindled after the cessation of hostilities, when it grew in popularity even further. The philanthropists and political pioneers had sought to create idealistic havens where the benefits of the 'healthy outdoors' could be bought to the disadvantaged. In the period after the armistice, these pioneer holiday camps would enter a period of renewed popularity, and many working families would for the first time realise the possibility of having a holiday away from urban industrial centres. But holiday camps that were set up purely as commercial

³⁹ K. Ferry, *Holiday Camps* (Oxford: Shire, 2010), p.7.

enterprises would, at this stage,⁴⁰ augment and ultimately succeed the pioneer camps in a manner similar to the pattern of the commercial music hall ultimately succeeding the rational entertainments such as the Penny Readings as a popular working-class leisure experience.⁴¹ In addition to this, some people would set about creating their own holiday accommodation by creating self-built structures to serve as temporary holiday accommodation on land purchased, rented, borrowed or even just taken and used. This phenomenon, holiday plotlands, is discussed further in Chapter Three.

One phenomenon in particular, however, was originated and pursued by working-class East-End Londoners themselves as an annual working-holiday ritual, and as such is worthy of note. It, too, sets a precedent: in this case for working Londoner's agency in establishing a form of independently originated and pursued communal holiday activity. Since the middle of the eighteenth century hops had been farmed in an area of Kent just to the southeast of London. The harvesting of the flowers in September was a labour intensive business, and local casual labour was not sufficient to cope with the harvest. East-End families made it a practice to make their way to the hop farms and join in the harvest, earn some money and enjoy the late summer sun and rural life. In 1928, the *British Medical Journal* estimated that the 15,696 acres of hop gardens in Kent attracted some 70,000 East Londoners (mainly women and children) annually for a three week period; although other later estimates put this figure at 250,000 at its height.⁴²

⁴⁰ This refers to early 'commercial' holiday camps as established during the pre- and inter-war years, before those established by entrepreneurs such as Butlin and Warner, which were often too expensive for working-class clients.

⁴¹ Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men*, p. 25; Ch. 1.

⁴² Anon. 'The Welfare of Hop-Pickers', in *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3511 (Apr. 21, 1928), p. 678; G. O'Neil, *Pull No More Bines. Hop Picking: Memories of a Vanished Way of Life* (London: Women's Press, 1990), in M. Korczynski, *et al.*, 'The Last British Work Songs: Music, Community and Class in the Kent Hop Fields of the Early- Mid Twentieth Century', *Management & Organizational History*, 3/1 (2008), pp. 81-102, p.81.

Accommodation was provided by the farm owners, but was notoriously basic. Nevertheless, this annual working holiday pilgrimage endured, lasting well into the twentieth century, prior to the mechanisation of the harvesting process. As the population grew during the nineteenth century, the demand for beer increased and the requirement for hop-pickers grew in direct proportion. After the coming of the railways, special train services were laid on to ferry families of workers to and from the hop farms. In many cases the basic accommodation offered by farm owners developed into campsites, and as its practitioners treated the nature of the hop picking excursions (despite the undoubted hard work that was involved on a daily basis) as ‘part-work, part-holiday’, these campsites developed a holiday or festive atmosphere. Indeed, singing and festive entertainment was a fundamental aspect of the hop pickers working holiday.⁴³ On the last night before returning to the city, hop-pickers would often celebrate with an ‘end of season party’.

This annual ritual had two important and significant characteristics: firstly, unlike the organised camping activities described earlier, it was originated and perpetuated by the participants themselves as an inventive and industrious way to have a break from the squalor of the urban environment of southeast London (though hop-picking was undoubtedly very hard work), whilst at the same time earning some precious additional income. Secondly, it saw the development of a communal, holiday-camp atmosphere in which the participants would revel in the rural surroundings, relieved of the drudgery and constraints of their usual urban domestic environment. Whilst the promotion of camping and rural collective recreation by philanthropic and political movements had indeed brought an awareness of its benefits to many, they had not done so exclusively. The East End hop-pickers had themselves evolved their annual working practices into a

⁴³ See Korczynski *et al.*, ‘The Last British Work Songs’, pp. 87-93.

communal, rural excursion that had some of the elements of holiday camp atmosphere, entertainment and ritual. In particular, the singing, festivities and self-originated entertainment that was an integral feature of the hop pickers camps can be seen to re-emerge in the first basic club houses on the early post World War II caravan sites. This is further analysed in Chapter Five.

2.5 Bathing machines and beach huts

As discussed, the development of post-war caravan sites in Britain was preceded by the development of the concept of securing temporary accommodation, on an affordable, self-catering basis, in a place of holiday recreation, or resort. The democratisation of British seaside resorts was at first a slow, gradual process begun during the nineteenth century. Once a series of exclusive retreats for the wealthy to take the 'bathing cure' for a wide variety of illnesses, gradually resorts would witness wider strata of society taking to the spas' and beaches of these coastal towns. Only with the availability of more affordable forms of transport, such as rail and the steam packets, did change begin to accelerate.⁴⁴ The appearance at coastal resorts of the bathing machine, which gained popularity during the eighteenth century, particularly in the south of England at resorts such as Margate and Weymouth is significant, as its popularity at Britain's seaside resorts is largely responsible for the introduction of the beach hut.

The popularity of sea bathing saw an inevitable relaxing of attitudes to dress and custom, and in line with continental trends, the bathing machine gradually became obsolete during the early twentieth century. But as a small, shed-like structure providing changing space and shelter, it did not disappear completely, see Fig. 3, below.

⁴⁴ J. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History, 1750 – 1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), pp. 196-7.

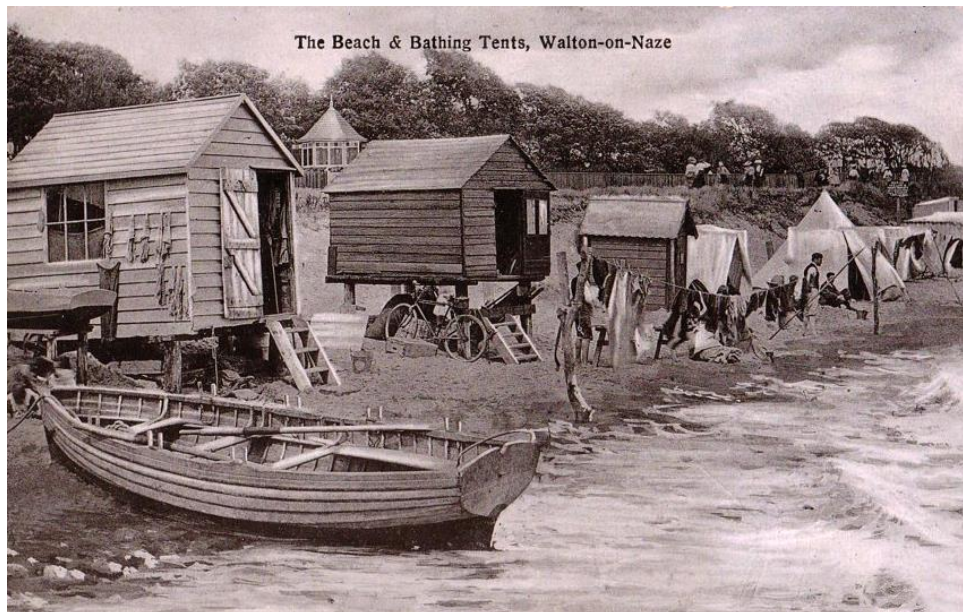


Figure 3: Bathing tents and huts at Walton-on-Naze, c. 1930's.

Its practical use as a changing space, and somewhere to keep clothes and belongings saw it positioned higher up the beach, wheels removed, in a more permanent location above high water mark. The old bathing machines became beach huts, and another English seaside institution began to develop further. This is highly significant as it starts to signal the development of further independent, more family-based units of small-scale accommodation at the seaside resorts. At first a middle-class activity, the use of the beach hut would confer on its owner's independence from local authority facilities, such as communal changing rooms and costume hire, and imply status to those who were freed from such requirements. Beach hut owners thus augmented the holiday plotland owners to become the new independent stakeholders at the seaside. Beach hut owning families could enjoy long days on the beach, with a shelter for eating, changing, or simply relaxing inside. Overnight stays were rare, but the possibilities and potential of having some form of privately owned accommodation at coastal resorts were clear. This is explored further in Chapter Three.

Beach hut users augmented the plotlanders and those who camped in tents in a growing sector of holiday makers who eschewed the hotel or guest house whilst holidaying. When the first cycle-campers and day-trippers encountered British seaside resorts for the first time they would, perhaps, have been affected by the atmosphere of freedom and fun that had developed there, and would return on a regular basis. Many such resorts (especially in, but not restricted to, the south-east of England) were, therefore, chosen as venues for camping activities that would later be augmented by plotland holiday homes and ultimately static caravan sites. In Tendring (as with many of Britain's seaside resorts) genteel, formal Frinton-on-Sea was the exception to the otherwise relaxed, liminal nature and character of the coastal strip, including Clacton, and Walton.⁴⁵ Thus, as a centre for camping trips and the establishment of beach huts, it was ideally placed.

2.6 Legislation

In this section early legislation (planning legislation in particular) is considered as the precursors to Acts which would have a more profound impact on caravan site establishment at a later stage. It will ultimately be shown that, perhaps ironically, most legislation, especially planning laws, actually enhances static caravan site development. Attempts at legislation concerning those using caravans dates back to 1884, when George Smith of Coalville attempted to promote legislation that restricted the movements of travelling people using caravans or canal boats. His motives stemmed from his experience working amongst underprivileged working children at the brickyards, and he saw Gypsies, and indeed any itinerant community as people living in 'squalor, wretchedness, poverty, dirt, idleness...'.⁴⁶ Smith claimed to be concerned for the schooling of working children and the sanitation of their living quarters primarily,

⁴⁵ R. Shields, *Places on the Margin* (London: Routledge, 1991), in Walton, *The British Seaside*, pp. 96-7.

⁴⁶ D. Mayall, *English Gypsies and State Policies* (Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press, 1995), p. 35.

but he did not seem to anticipate the huge reaction from travelling communities which ultimately defeated his proposals, via a petition to the House of Commons. His actions partly resulted in the formation of the United Kingdom Van-Dwellers Association in 1889, later to become the Showman's Guild of Great Britain; a spontaneous coming together of those whose way of life relied on travelling and living in caravans, in order to defend their liberties in the face of restrictive legislative proposals. The Showman's Guild of Great Britain has consistently lobbied against what it sees as legislation contrary to its interests. Writing in the showmen's journal, Vanessa Toulmin of the National Fairground Archive reveals:

Over the century the Guild has opposed restrictive legislations which would adversely affect travelling showpeople. During the first sixty years of its existence the Guild defeated over 268 Private Bills, included exemption clauses in over a thousand Bills of the same category and has since continued to build on these achievements. It has fought for the inclusion of exemption clauses for its members in legislations ranging from the Middlesex County Council Act, Road Traffic Act, Public Health Act, Betting and Gaming Act, Caravan Sites and Development Act, Vehicles Excise Act and the Town and Country Act, to name but a few.

But although the formation of the guild represents the earliest organised pressure group to defend caravan user's rights, it should be stressed that it was the interests of professional travelling show people exclusively that concerned the organisation. They were, in fact, very keen to differentiate between themselves and groups such as Gypsies and other travellers, as discussed by Smith.⁴⁷ The views of the Showman's Guild were later sought by Sir Arton Wilson when compiling his report prior to the passing of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act in 1960. Their main concerns were with maintaining their exemption from the Public Health controls for their winter quarters, but as they were also hampered by the current planning legislation allowing them only twenty-eight days on sites that had no 'existing use' rights, their evidence to the report

⁴⁷ V. Toulmin, 'From Van-Dwellers to Showman's Guild', in *World's Fair*, June 1997, pp. 20-26.

only strengthened the case for planning reform for caravan sites.⁴⁸ In addition to this, the later relationship between the showmen and post-war static holiday caravan site operators was enhanced by the close working relationship that developed when showmen began to provide amusement catering for site operators.

Concern for sanitation was also the impetus for much nineteenth-century legislation that impacted upon housing, as the full effects of industrialisation and a growing population were felt in the towns and cities. The first planning Act to be passed, the Housing, Town Planning, &c Act 1909, sanctioned the preparation of planning schemes by local authorities for any land 'which is in course of development or appears likely to be used for building purposes'. These schemes were to be prepared with the aim of ensuring 'that in future land in the vicinity of towns shall be developed in such a way as to secure proper sanitary conditions, amenity and convenience in connection with the laying out of the land itself and any neighboring land'.⁴⁹ A further similarly titled Act passed in 1919 dealt with the problem of building works commenced before a local scheme was prepared; interim permission could now be granted by local authorities to developers wishing to apply. Those that did not risked losing any right to compensation if their buildings did not conform to a subsequently approved scheme.

The early plans for legislation prompted by concerns for sanitation amongst itinerant communities ultimately galvanized an organized lobby against the introduction of excessively restrictive legislation. This would be an important factor, as too much restriction for temporary, caravan based accommodation at this stage may well have stifled early holiday home usage. The Showman's Guild, whilst acting essentially to

⁴⁸ 1959-60 Cmnd. 872 Ministry of Housing and Local Government. *Caravans as Homes*, a report by Sir Arton Wilson, KBE., CB. July 1959, pp. 75-6.

⁴⁹ R. Duxbury, (ed.) *Telling and Duxbury's Planning Law and Procedure, 12th Edition* (London: Butterworths, 2002), pp.4-5.

protect the way of life of travelling show people were very active in this regard, and would eventually become much more closely involved with the static caravan industry as many of its members became amusement caterers on static parks. Evidence given by the guild to the Arton Wilson committee would also help formulate legislation which, as will be shown, served to benefit the static caravan industry. The first planning Acts were essentially permissive rather than restrictive. They allowed local authorities to draw up schemes and grant permissions, but did provide a means for local government to restrict temporary accommodation purely on planning grounds. As such, they did not impede the development and growth of holiday camps or camping grounds in any significant manner at this stage.

2.7 Tendring and beyond, from the Armistice

Unlike Caister, further around the coastline in Norfolk, there is no solid evidence of any early formal philanthropic, or politically influenced pioneer holiday camp development geared toward serving the London working class, in the Tendring District at any time during the early decades of the twentieth century, despite its proximity to the capital. Camping, however, would soon become a popular and widespread activity around the district's resort areas. Camping sites became established at various points along the coastal margins and also at farms in the rural hinterland. There are no records with exact numbers for these campsites, but at least nine of the post-World War II caravan sites appear to have been camping grounds during the inter-war years; these sites were probably just a proportion of the total number of such sites in the district, (see Fig 4, below).



Figure 4: Jubilee Camp, Walton-on-Naze during the inter-war years. Jubilee Field was a popular camping area close to the beach.

In addition to tent-based holidaymaking, the resort of Clacton-on-Sea would be at the forefront as a venue for day-trippers and ‘mackintosh bathers’⁵⁰ in the Tendring District in these early decades of the twentieth century, now that the attractions were in place and the railway and steamer links had been established. Proximity to London’s East End had now ensured a ready and growing clientele of working people visiting at first as day-trippers, but looking for longer stays. As the seaside traders and local businesses sought to cater for the prevailing clientele of working-class Londoners, a carefree and gregarious holiday atmosphere became embedded in the town. And as such, with its many distractions, Clacton-on-Sea would, therefore, not be by this stage the obvious place to establish a pioneer holiday camp for the education and improvement of working people.

⁵⁰ L. Chase, ‘Public Beaches and Private Beach Huts: A Case-Study of Inter-War Clacton and Frinton, Essex’, in J. Walton, (ed.), *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict* (Clevedon: Channel View, 2005), p. 216. Chase defines ‘Mackintosh Bathers’ as those who came to bathe in the sea, but did not want to pay for changing room facilities. They wore their bathing costumes under a mackintosh or coat, and arrived ready to bathe.

Walton-on-Naze was too close by to be free from distraction; Frinton-on-Sea with its genteel, colonial holidaymakers and retired middle-class residents would be out of the question as a location: an obvious clash of cultural identity. Although there were to be no pioneer holiday camps, with Tendring District's established resorts and transport links to the capital, it was only a matter of time before the commercial holiday camps would arrive. More widely, as attitudes changed, and those that managed the earlier pioneer camps were gradually succeeded or replaced by more entrepreneurial organizers and owners, the pioneer camps would, as discussed above, evolve toward a more leisure-orientated regime. The first holiday camps to be built in Tendring during the inter-war years were built by Butlin's and Warner's on a fully commercial basis. They were attracted to an area whose holiday scene was dominated, at that time, by hotels, day-trippers camping grounds and holiday plotland developments.

The introduction and promotion of camping in tents to working class youth and adults in the decades preceding World War I, by the individuals and organisations discussed above, ensured that an inexpensive and adventurous method of taking a holiday was available to many. It provided a very basic, but personal, form of holiday accommodation that allowed its practitioners to use a greater proportion of their holiday money on daily wants and needs, freed from the expense of accommodation costs. The camping grounds that were established to accommodate the growing new wave of campers were in some cases 'proto-caravan sites', which awaited the catalyst of the 1947 planning legislation to realise their ultimate identity. Bathing machines, themselves aspects of earlier seaside liminality, lingered past their purpose and transformed into another form of temporary accommodation that appeared at the resorts: the beach hut, which allowed and also encouraged further enjoyment of personalised space and transferrable domesticity.

The reputations and attractions of resorts such as Clacton-on-Sea and Walton-on-Naze as liminal, exciting seaside holiday places ensured that many holiday-making individuals and groups came to the district for a camping holiday, and a number of campsites (the forerunners of the static caravan sites) were established to accommodate this demand. The development of the touring caravan initially had little impact upon working and lower-middle class holiday makers, but with the introduction of a motor-towable unit, another form of self-catering holiday accommodation would gain popularity. As more units were produced, older models would become available for use by those with limited funds and they began to be parked on camping grounds on an all-year-round basis. Freed from the expense of being towed around the countryside, these were the first low-cost static caravan holiday homes. The establishment of touring caravan manufacturers would ultimately lead to the establishment of static holiday caravan manufacturing in Britain.

Pioneer holiday camps established the principle of the holiday camp in Britain. This model would serve as a precedent not only for the commercial holiday camps that would be established later, but also for the campsites that, beginning with tented accommodation, would later evolve into caravan sites. This process was aided by a system of planning laws that allowed such development in more or less all its manifestations. Even after the planning Acts of 1932 and 1935, temporary accommodation, campsites and camping grounds really only had to satisfy local authority bye-laws and sanitation legislation. As a result, holiday plotland developments, as witnessed in other parts of Britain (and in the south-east in particular) would form the next phase of self-catering holiday development in Tendring, along with commercial holiday camps but prior to the static caravan sites.

Chapter Three

The inter-war years: consumerism, legislation and self-catered domestic holiday taking

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider factors that manifested in Britain during the inter-war years that may have had developmental relevance to post-war static caravan sites. These will include social trends, consumerism and legislation including the landmark Holidays with Pay Act. The social and economic trends of the inter-war years can be seen to have had some relationship with the way in which the working classes developed their own holiday solutions in the post-war years, and these factors are considered. The agency of unemployed and low-waged people at this time in the push for equality and opportunity is also seen to relate to later working-class holiday taking and is, therefore, discussed. As consumerism is also ascendant amongst some working class individual and families, as well as the middle-class at this time, its impact upon domestic holiday making is also considered.

The origins and consequences of holidays with pay legislation, a key achievement of the campaigning of the working-classes, trades unions and the labour movement have been discussed in some detail by historians, particularly by those working in the fields of leisure and tourism. But there are some further observations to be made that may yet add a little more to our understanding of the origins, nature and consequences of such a significant development in industrial law, given its impact upon post-war domestic tourism including static holiday caravan sites. In particular, the argument for the benefit to workers health and well-being in concert with the benefit of subsequent increased efficiency of the workforce as a result, is considered to be a key issue. The strength of

this argument and its acknowledgement by prominent industrial figures is also seen as highly significant in the passing of the legislation. In addition, it will be shown that whilst this legislation helped promote the commercial holiday camp as a potential post-war holiday solution for the envisaged large numbers of new working-class holidaymakers, what lacks emphasis in recent studies is that workers tended not to opt for this solution in the numbers envisaged. This, in turn, helped catalyse the further related legislative developments discussed in the following chapter. It is, therefore, an important factor in the birth of post-war static caravan sites not only as it allowed millions of post-war working families to take a holiday, but that it also set ministers thinking about how to manage the expected post-war boom in holidaymaking.

This chapter will also consider the continuing popularity of camping, which in turn creates a demand for camping grounds; in many cases these provided the sites for post-war static caravan site development. The next phase of self-catering holiday accommodation that developed spontaneously in Tendring during the inter-war years (and more generally in the south-east of England), the plotland holiday home, is also analysed. The developmental relationship between plotland holiday homes and subsequent caravan sites is explored, as an understanding of the nature of this relationship is also seen as important to fully understand and contextualise post-war static caravan site development.

3.2 Britain between the wars: social conditions, agency and consumerism

Much has been published since 1939 in the form of general and thematic histories of Britain during the 1920s and 1930s. What is revealed is a period of extremes, of polarisation, of change in some areas and stasis in others; a period of contradictions, uncertainties and yet one of progress in some quarters. The reality beneath subtitles and epithets such as *'The Deceptive Decade'*, *'The Devil's Decade'* (1930s), *'The Long Weekend'* and

'*The Twilight Years*' is, unarguably, one of economic slump and revival, of political uncertainty, vacillation and polarisation; of strikes, hunger and hunger marches, high unemployment and an unprecedented general strike; of pressure for social change and resistance to it.¹ The house building programme at home and policies of appeasement toward Germany in international affairs represent further far-reaching dimensions to a diverse and troubled period. Revisionist histories have, more recently, attempted to offer a view of more regionalised or sporadic hardship amongst a general climate of economic and social progress. This unbalanced approach seems to ignore the well-documented hardships which, whilst centred in the north, were nevertheless not restricted to that region, and were evidently more profound than has been given consideration in such works.² In contrast, James Vernon provides credible insight to the persistence of hunger in society during this period and more broadly, including an analysis of 'how and why the meaning of hunger changed over time' by arguing 'that the way people understood hunger shaped the experience of it and the systems developed to govern it.'³

Nevertheless, when one seeks to explore the agency and activism of the working classes in response to the hardships of this period, or indeed in a wider time frame, convincing historical analysis which evidences and describes the often conservative nature of the British worker should not be ignored.⁴ John Benson considers the efficacy of the coercive power of the state and its formal institutions to quell or contain wider dissent (or even revolution) as a possible answer to why there was less overall challenge to the

¹ See A. Thorpe, *Britain in the 1930s: The Deceptive Decade* (Oxford : Blackwell, 1992); R. Graves and A. Hodge, *The Long Week-end : A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939* (London : Faber and Faber, 1940); J. Stevenson and C. Cook, *The Slump: Society and Politics During the Depression* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977).

² For example M. Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (London: Bodley Head, 2008) and to a lesser extent Stevenson & Cook: *The Slump*.

³ J. Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (London: Harvard University Press, 2007); J. Vernon, response to D. Oddy, Review of *Hunger: a Modern History*, (review no. 695). <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/695> [accessed: 24 April, 2015].

⁴ See A. Halsey, *Change in British Society from 1900 to the Present Day*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 95-98.

dominant social, political and economic order of twentieth-century Britain.⁵ However, as trades union's successes in achieving higher wages and conditions during the pre-war years of the twentieth century were augmented by a strengthening of organised labour as a result of governmental efforts to ensure cooperation during the war, collective activism was seen to succeed, to an extent at least. Increasing empowerment was infused with the spread of Marxist and socialist ideas after 1917, resulting in a wave of strikes up to 1922.⁶ Whilst, as Benson describes, the state would effectively and often ruthlessly contain any wider manifestations of civil protest, a distinctive, tangible current of working-class organisation, activism and agency must surely be evident at this time.⁷

Within this wider context factors may be identified which had a marked affect upon how the working classes in Britain took holidays both before and after the Second World War. Charles Mowat refers to J.B. Priestley's *English Journey* in which the author describes the England that he 'saw and heard and felt and thought' (although he did not travel through some counties, including Essex) during the autumn of 1933.⁸ He described essentially four countries: 'Old England', where churches, inns, parson and squire inhabited the guide-book villages of the southern and home counties. 'Nineteenth-century England' of the Midlands and north (although he claimed it existed everywhere) was an England of industrial squalor, long working hours and meagre wages. 'Post-war England' is described as a land of modernism and progress: arterial and bypass roads, factories, cinemas and cafes. This list, descriptive of an age the author felt was born in America, also includes Woolworths, motor-coaches, hiking and swimming pools

⁵ J. Benson, *Affluence and Authority: A Social History of Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Hodder Education, 2005), pp. 85-110.

⁶ J. Stevenson, *British Society 1914-1945* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 196.

⁷ Organisation and activism was, of course, not restricted to the working classes: middle-class philanthropy can be seen to have 'modernised' in some respects as demonstrated by Helen McCarthy's work on the gender relations and work of middle-class 'service clubs' in inter-war Britain. See H. McCarthy, 'Service Clubs, Citizenship and Equality: Gender Relations and Middle-Class Associations in Britain between the Wars', *Historical Research*, 81/213 (August 2008).

⁸ J. Priestley, *English Journey* (London, Heinemann, 1949), p. xii.

amongst its many examples; within four years the commercial holiday camp would have been included. You needed money in this England. It was therefore out of reach of those inhabiting the fourth category, the ‘England of the dole’. As suggested above, this England existed throughout the land, but especially in the urban centres and industrial areas in the north and the Midlands.⁹

Unemployment certainly rose to unprecedented levels in Britain between the wars. After the post-war mini-boom began to falter from 1921, never were there less than one million people (one tenth of the insured population) out of work until the outbreak of World War Two.¹⁰ Poverty was, therefore, rife, but unemployment was just a partial cause of this. Fig. 1 (below) illustrates this assertion further, using Seebhom Rowntree’s analysis of families in poverty in York during the 1930’s:

Cause of poverty	Percentage in poverty
Unemployment of chief wage earner	28.6
Inadequate wages of workers in regular employment	32.8
Inadequate earnings of other workers	9.5
Old age	14.7
Death of husband	7.8
Illness	4.1
Miscellaneous	2.5

Figure 1: Analysis of families in poverty in York, mid-1930s.¹¹

Low wages and personal circumstances also had an impact, and such conditions fuelled the social unrest that is well documented. It is clear then that this section of society could not and did not set any overt trends in holiday making at this time. Many were struggling to gain a living wage following the re-privatisation of many key industries after the war,

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 397-412; cited in C. Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars* (London: Methuen, 1962), pp. 480-1.

¹⁰ J. Stevenson, *Social Conditions in Britain Between the Wars* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1977), p. 225.

¹¹ From B. Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress* (London: Longman, 1941), pp. 28-9; also cited in Stevenson, *Social Conditions in Britain*, pp. 99-100.

and at the top a political inertia, even under Britain's first Labour administration of 1924, appeared to prevail. But as the strikes and hunger marches began to fuel wider debate, it was, therefore, the agency of the unemployed and low-waged working-classes, mobilising such protest and building pressure for social change, which ultimately began to force some progress- including legislation for paid holidays. This agency, and the trend for the working class to take action is an important consideration, therefore. As will be argued, the static holiday caravan site came into being after the Second World War partly as a result of increasing working-class resourcefulness and independence, and this is further enhanced during the war, as discussed in the following chapter.

Agency, independence and resourcefulness were fuelled by inequalities and economic hardship for unprecedented numbers of people. We may also view agency as two manifestations: collective and individual. Collective agency was characterised by the influence and actions of the trades unions, the Labour Party, political organisations, co-operative societies and philanthropic organisations. This collective agency pushed for, and won, paid holidays (as discussed below), shorter working hours, development of recreational spaces, parks and sports facilities in towns and rural locations as well as fostering a culture of exploring and enjoying 'the great outdoors'.¹² The new 'Lido's', swimming-pool centred municipal leisure facilities that were conceived within this general campaign, proved extremely popular during the late 1930's. Individual agency was evidenced by the large numbers of low-waged individuals and families that embraced non-corporate forms of leisure such as resort day trips, camping and rambling during this period. The popularity and success of camping grounds (as discussed below) is testament to the fact that with a self-help approach, gratifying holiday and leisure experiences could be, and were, found for minimal expense by individuals acting outside

¹² S. Jones, *Workers at Play: A Social and Economic History of Leisure 1918-1939* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), pp. 133-40.

the state or corporate structure. As Walton observes: 'British holidaymakers did not need organising.'¹³

Yet, paradoxically, a considerable number amongst the working classes, particularly in London and the south-east of England, were beginning to become more affluent. Working-class consumerism was fuelled by new production and retailing methods and the rapid growth of hire-purchase schemes during the inter-war years. Multiple, or chain stores such as Woolworths, Liptons and Marks and Spencer expanded rapidly: almost a thousand new branches were opened between the wars. The higher-earning working class could use mail-order and credit schemes; the use of hire-purchase multiplied twenty-fold between 1918 and 1938.¹⁴ The 1930's saw the launch of new campaigns aimed at marketing a wide range of goods and services directly to working-class households, including the concept of home ownership, via new sophisticated mortgage schemes. As Peter Scott finds, such was the success of this particular campaign, the 1930's witnessed the fastest rate of growth in working-class owner-occupation during the twentieth century, and this would also further promote the general growth of marketing-led consumerism, again particularly among the working class.¹⁵

The more affluent working classes looked to emulate the consumption of the middle-classes, those living in Priestley's 'post-war England'. This would include, where possible, holiday choices; but for many working families this would remain an aspiration rather than a reality. Political and Economic Planning (PEP) reports from 1944 shed much light on this: commercial holiday camps, including the Butlin's camps established from 1937, appear to have been hugely popular. They estimated 'over 100, and possibly 200' such

¹³ J. Walton, An observation made at a lecture delivered at University Campus Suffolk, 13th March 2013.

¹⁴ J. Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880-1980* (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 40-1.

¹⁵ P. Scott, 'Marketing mass home ownership and the creation of the modern working-class consumer in inter-war Britain' *Business History*, 50/1 (January 2008), pp. 4-25; see also P. Scott, *The Making of the Modern British Home: The Suburban Semi and Family Life between the Wars*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

camps were catering in season for some 30,000 guests per week by 1939.¹⁶ But these guests were not, in reality, from the working classes, despite Butlin's claims for worker's holidays as discussed further in the following chapter. Indeed, the commercial holiday camps themselves are reported to have testified to the fact that, at this time, 'their visitors were not drawn from the factory floor but consisted mainly of the smaller salaried people, the black-coated worker and his family.'¹⁷ PEP reports further estimated that the number of 15 million holiday makers in an average pre-war year may well double after the war, and Elizabeth Brunner's detailed 1944 research found that many workers earning under £250 did go away before the advent of paid holidays. But in an occupied population of about 23 million in 1939, only some 4.5 million earned over £250. She argued: 'Even allowing these 4½ million to be supporting an average of one dependant each, or more, there is still a big gap to be closed if PEP's estimate of 15 million holiday makers a year is accepted as reasonably correct, so some millions of working-class people must have succeeded in going away.'¹⁸

In the main, working families were not visiting commercial holiday camps because they could not afford to. But let us not underestimate the popularity of Britain's seaside resorts with working class holiday makers by the 1930s: according to John Benson, 'Blackpool, Southend, Margate Skegness and Great Yarmouth gave themselves over almost completely to the new working-class holiday-maker.'¹⁹ The resorts, once the retreat for the upper classes, then the holiday destination for the middle classes, began seeing working-class day trippers before the war; between the wars day trips were

¹⁶ PEP, *Planning* No. 194, in E. Brunner, *Holiday Making and the Holiday Trades*, for the Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey, August 1944 (Oxford, OUP, 1945), p.5.

¹⁷ Brunner, *Holiday Making*, p. 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.9.

¹⁹ Benson, *Consumer Society*, p.103.

becoming weekly stays.²⁰ These weekly stays were mostly accommodated in boarding houses, especially in the north of England. But alternative forms of seaside accommodation began to be explored, especially by the middle classes. As described in the previous chapter, camping and beach huts had become popular as temporary summer seaside accommodation, yet the plotland holiday home, developing on from these basic forms, reached the height of its popularity during the inter-war years. This is explored further below in section 3.4.

3.3 Legislation: holidays with pay and planning law

As suggested above, providing workers with the right to paid holidays was one of the most significant legislative acts to impact upon post-war working-class holiday making; it is therefore considered here in more detail. The achievement of holidays with pay legislation during 1938 also presaged the arrival of a number of key Acts of Parliament that would have a significant effect upon the development of post-war static holiday caravan sites and indeed upon the domestic holiday scene in general. The Camps Act, the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and the 1960 Caravan Sites Act would further affect the process; these will be discussed in the following chapters.

Historians concerned with twentieth-century domestic holiday patterns and resort growth generally agree that the achievement of paid holidays was not only significant in terms of its impact upon domestic tourism, but also that it was only achieved for British workers after a prolonged campaign by the Labour movement, trades unions and politicians. This activity culminated in the 1938 Report of the Committee on Holidays with Pay and the subsequent Act of Parliament.²¹ More broadly, of course, such moves

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ See J. Walton, *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 58-63; H. Berghoff, 'From Privilege to Commodity?' in H. Berghoff *et.al.*, *The Making of Modern Tourism: The Cultural History of the British Experience, 1600-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave,

toward better conditions for working families in Britain were aided considerably during the inter-war years by workers themselves, both employed and unemployed, via active campaigns that raised awareness of the plight of the unemployed, and a workforce being forced to accept bad conditions and exploitation. Other sectors of society and an unsympathetic press were gradually forced to confront such social conditions as a result of well-organised and meticulously prepared actions such as the hunger marches.²²

Yet since the mid-nineteenth century the very nature of the human capacity for work had come under the scrutiny of a variety of interested parties. Progressive scientists, economists, philanthropists, social reformers and industrialists were active in this field: indeed, it has been claimed that ‘nineteenth-century European thought was preoccupied with labor [sic]: with its political and economic interests, with its diverse forms of organisation, with its intrinsic meaning, and with its productive potential.’²³ From the mid-nineteenth century, scientists in Europe were beginning to study human physiology in terms of motor efficiency. Alongside the research into muscular fatigue and tiredness in relation to nutrition and diet, the relationship between health, standards of living and productivity were also under scrutiny.²⁴ For some, the findings of such research would add further economic justification to the moral campaign for improving working conditions; by 1894 British socialist economist John Rae had claimed that the evidence clearly supported the view that reducing long working hours would have a beneficial rather than detrimental effect upon productivity.²⁵ But for others, it would encourage the

2002), p. 174; J. Demetriadi, ‘The Golden Years: English Seaside Resorts 1950-1974’ in G. Shaw and A. Williams, *The Rise and Fall of British Coastal Resorts: Cultural and Economic Perspectives* (London: Mansell, 1997), p.51-53; S. Barton, *Working-class Organisations and Popular Tourism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), Ch. 5.

²² See Vernon, *Hunger*, p. 244; Ch. 8.

²³ A. Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-145.

²⁵ J. Rae, *Eight Hours for Work* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1894), pp. 162-163.

desire to create a new kind of worker. The scientific management theory of Frederick Taylor (Taylorism), striving for maximum efficiency and linking wages to productivity via time and motion studies, and the industrial production ideas and ideals of Henry Ford (Fordism) gained some currency in Europe and the Soviet Union during the early decades of the twentieth century (although the actual extent of this is debated).²⁶ Yet by the 1930's these systems were seen by many as de-humanising, exploitative and out-of-date.

The industrial experiments in working hours, output, fatigue and productivity begun in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century challenged industrialists to consider that a workforce with a better balance between work, rest and relaxation would produce more than one which did not. As European industrialists and philosophers debated the merits of the British and American systems of half-day working on Saturdays and a rest day on Sundays in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, influential Belgian industrialist L.-G. Fromont radically altered the working pattern in his sulphuric acid plant to a system of much shorter shifts, and was able to report a substantial rise in productivity. Ernst Abbe, director of German optics giant Carl-Zeiss pioneered the eight-hour working day at their factory and workers maintained the production rates of the old nine-hour day, but with no loss of pay. The practical endorsement of these ideas by such prominent industrial leaders is at this stage, and later on, significant in the journey towards paid holidays because it signals the start of the consensus between labour and industrialists that rest and recuperation opportunities are, in fact, crucial to the health, well-being and, therefore, productivity and *efficiency* of the worker. These ideas were given

²⁶ Rabinbach, *Human Motor*, pp. 239-240.

further impetus with the support of the continuing work of prominent scientists and health experts in European industrial centres.²⁷

In Britain, the long tradition of Liberal advocacy for better working conditions and the argument for a more enlightened approach to labour relations from the factory owners' perspective was epitomised by philanthropical industrialists in the Quaker tradition such as George Cadbury and B. Seebohm Rowntree. Rowntree in particular was highly influential in this regard during the course of his career. By 1914 his published work included the assertion that increased opportunities for rest and physical and mental recreation for workers would result in greater efficiency.²⁸ Whilst pushing for a wage policy that would allow the lowest paid to live at a decent standard of health and comfort, he also argued that efficiency should be a consideration not just for the worker as an individual, but also for the employer. Citing the benefits of the 'Research Committee' set up at his York Cocoa Works, Rowntree asserted that the efficiency of all aspects of the business, its organisation, systems and premises etc., were not only vital to the interests of the shareholders, but also of the workers.²⁹ Simply put, an efficiently run business with efficient, healthy and contented workers would be more profitable. Increased profits would support better wages.³⁰ Although some aspects of this may smack of Taylorism, Rowntree was clearly influential in promoting recreation and health as key aspects of an efficient workforce; ultimately he was also clear on paid holidays: 'Payment for Statutory Holidays should, of course, be made. The minimum wage I advocate will only suffice for a family of five if it is paid for 52 full weeks every year.'³¹

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-220.

²⁸ B. Rowntree, *The Way to Industrial Peace and the Problem of Unemployment* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914), p.28.

²⁹ B. Rowntree, *The Human Factor in Business*, 3rd ed. (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1938, first published 1921), pp. 40-49.

³⁰ See also B. Rowntree, *Industrial Unrest: A Way Out* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1922), pp. 17, 18.

³¹ B. Rowntree, *The Human Needs of Labour*, new ed. (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1937), p. 134.

Rowntree's managerial methodologies may well be described as 'scientific', efficiency-driven and seeking to pacify the workforce,³² but his view of industry as 'a human thing, in which men and women earn the means of life, and from which men and women are entitled to expect the means to a life worth living', and that 'a true spirit of fellowship and co-operation between employer and employee should permeate the whole of the business'³³ suggests a more progressive mind. Rowntree's activities during the inter-war years should also be seen as contributory to the growing tide towards more enlightened, progressive management (and hence paid holidays, which he argued should be seen as beneficial to both worker and employer). In bringing together key industrialists, directors of large companies, middle-managers and foremen in a series of conferences (the Oxford Conferences) and the Management Research Groups, Rowntree ensured that progressive ideas and strategies could be circulated and disseminated and, importantly, that the evidence for the benefits to industry in terms of productivity and efficiency as well as the improvements in industrial relations that such ideas could bring could be heard.³⁴ Briggs cites evidence of this from Rowntree himself, who provides an anecdote concerning a manager promoted from the ranks within in a large Lancashire firm who, after attending a conference on the direction of his chairman, returned to instigate reforms for which the workforce 'had been clamouring for years'. The manager attended subsequent conferences, and urged that an invitation should be sent to his chairman as 'he was very backward'.³⁵ When the Amulree Committee on Holidays with Pay were considering evidence in 1937 (see p. 73, below), Rowntree was asked to give evidence. But he felt the case 'needed no bolstering'; Briggs' assertion that the Holidays with Pay Act 'merely

³² A salient example of this is Rowntree's conciliatory approach to the problems in the coal industry during the 1920's- see A. Briggs, *A Study of the Work of Seebohm Rowntree, 1871-1954* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1961), pp.253-254.

³³ L. Urwick and E. Brech, *The Making of Scientific Management, Vol. 1* (London: Pitman & Sons, 1963), pp. 68-69.

³⁴ A. Briggs, *Seebohm Rowntree*, pp. 268-274.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 271-2.

generalised what had already become the practice of the more progressive firms' is supported by the extensive list of existing collective agreements between organisations of mainly larger employers and workpeople providing for holidays with pay, acknowledged by the Amulree Committee.³⁶

There are significant milestones along the route toward improved working conditions in Britain that include actions by key politicians and public figures that were similarly crucial to maintaining the momentum towards this far reaching legislation. Notable amongst these is the Trades Union Congress's adoption of George Lansbury's 1911 motion in favour of paid holidays and his introduction of the first Holidays with Pay Private Members Bill in Parliament during 1912;³⁷ further Bills were introduced in 1925, 1929, 1936 and 1937. Lansbury was, therefore, as always, a key voice in this process; his vision for workers' holiday colonies and the influence of the Jaywick model (in which he had a keen interest) providing substance to his argument. He also maintained pressure for the reform in the left wing press, including his *Lansbury Labour Weekly*. The M.P. Guy Rowson, sponsor of the last Bill, published an article in the New Fabian Research Bureau quarterly journal in 1937 once again clearly stating the case for holidays with pay. Timing here was to prove important, with a growing international consensus in favour of paid holidays begun at the turn of the century (as described above); and as Gary Cross observes 'one of the ironies of the 1930s and 1940s was the fact that the paid vacation became an ideal everywhere in Europe and, to a lesser degree, in the US, Fascists [sic], communists, and liberals all agreed that modern work required compensatory leisure.'³⁸ Rowson's piece neatly and convincingly contextualised the contemporary debate by

³⁶ The National Archives, LAB 31/1, (Cmd.5724) *Report of the Committee on Holidays with Pay*, 1937-38, pp. 76-7.

³⁷ S. Jones, 'Trade Union Policy Between the Wars: The Case of Holidays with Pay in Britain', *International Review of Social History*, 31 (1986), pp. 40-55, cited in S. Dawson, 'Working-Class Consumers and the Campaign for Holidays with Pay', *Twentieth Century British History*, 18/3 (2007), p.5.

³⁸ G. Cross, *Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.99.

emphasising the need for Britain to keep up with the international situation, citing the benefit of recent French legislation in this regard ‘not only to the actual recipients themselves, but also to the various business people in the holiday resorts of the country.’³⁹ An area that seems to lack emphasis amongst the otherwise comprehensive recent analysis of this campaign in the UK is the importance of the promotion of a convincing argument for paid holidays which included the benefit to business as well as to the worker, to the ultimate outcome of the campaign. As will be seen in the considerations of the committee that reviewed evidence prior to legislation, this would be an argument that would add much pressure towards successful implementation.

In November 1937 the Annual Holiday Bill came up for a second reading in the House of Commons at the same time that a committee was considering the whole issue; it was defeated by 134 votes to 133. The following amendment was adopted by 130 votes to 122: ‘This House, while welcoming the development of the practice of granting holidays with pay by voluntary agreement, considers that further information is required on the whole problem and cannot assent to the Second Reading [sic] of a Bill while a departmental committee is investigating the relevant facts and has not yet reported.’⁴⁰

Although the legislation was not yet in place, the long campaign for paid holidays was nearly over.

Against a background of some sixty percent of ‘workpeople in the employment field’ not being provided with, or entitled to, ‘annual consecutive days of holidays with pay’, the committee that produced the 1938 report, chaired by Lord Amulree, heard much evidence and made key observations and recommendations that in themselves were to

³⁹ G. Rowson, ‘Holidays with Pay’ in the *NFRB Quarterly*, No. 14 (London: V. Gollancz, 1937), pp. 26-31.

⁴⁰ LAB 31/1, p.6.

have a significant affect upon post-war domestic tourism.⁴¹ Notable amongst these was the observation that accommodation for significantly increased numbers of domestic holidaymakers would be an issue. The report also conceded early on in its findings that ‘The subject is a complex one and needs detailed treatment’.⁴² The subject was indeed a complex one, the extent of this complexity was to become manifest in the overwhelming weight of evidence submitted to the committee both for and against the proposals, although the campaign by unions and politicians on the left had by now amassed much convincing and compelling evidence which complemented a very solid argument.

In the consideration of evidence for and against paid holidays, particular problems such as the financing of the scheme, whether voluntary schemes could be promoted instead, lack of accommodation for holidaymakers and the effect upon the countryside and resorts generally were tackled. But of all the observations made by the Amulree Committee, the most decisive was the acknowledgement that workers’ health, happiness and therefore productivity would be greatly enhanced by the right to a paid holiday over consecutive days. A good deal of convincing evidence was submitted to support this, with little effective argument to the contrary.⁴³ The evidence against statutory paid holidays that *was* submitted to the committee by the National Confederation of Employers’ Organisations essentially focussed upon the problems of financing the scheme, suggestions that workers could and did effectively save for holidays from current wages (using the Lancashire cotton workers ‘Wakes’ holidays as an example). It was also characterised by localised or particular concerns applicable to specific industries rather than the national workforce in general. This evidence failed, however, to demonstrate that a statutory scheme would significantly harm industry.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.21.

⁴² *Ibid*. p7.

⁴³ LAB 31/1, pp. 24, 54.

A key point here is that even prominent representatives of the employer's lobby were also convinced that a healthier national workforce would ultimately prove more productive; this was an important breakthrough. A small but significant paragraph in Part II, Section 1 of the report refers to testimony from 'certain firms' who 'testified to the value of the schemes [already in operation] in reducing absenteeism, improving efficiency and creating a favourable psychological situation from the standpoint of industrial relations.'⁴⁴ In fact this evidence was submitted by representatives of the Co-operative movement. Sir Malcolm Stewart, testifying on behalf of Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers Ltd. and the London Brick Company Ltd., by arrangement with the National Industrial Alliance testified that holidays with pay was a matter of social justice, suggesting that they should be, as a matter of right, be a prior charge on industry. Such prominently endorsed empirical evidence of this nature should be seen as highly significant: the acknowledgement of the unquestionable 'double benefit' to workers health and wellbeing in addition to increased productivity in the workplace coupled with the acknowledgement of the moral obligation to for industry to fund the scheme provided the powerful moral and economic argument needed to overcome remaining objections and the concerns regarding the complex details of implementation of the necessary legislation.⁴⁵ And this thereby ultimately helped secure legislation which would further empower working-class consumerism in the domestic holiday market.

The passing of the Holidays with Pay Act also meant that for the first time many working people were no longer reliant upon philanthropic or organised holidays. Sandra Dawson offers convincing evidence to highlight the plight of families for whom unpaid leave was a time of hardship and strain.⁴⁶ Now families who *could* take time during the

⁴⁴ LAB 31/1, p. 27, paragraph 63.

⁴⁵ LAB 31/1, p. 27, paragraph 62.

⁴⁶ Dawson, *Holiday Camps*, pp. 10, 11.

working year for a holiday but could not afford do so, were entitled to a least a week of paid leave. Dawson's work sees the commercial holiday camp as offering the affordable and obvious solution to accommodating holidaying workers, but does not consider alternative trends. It is important to note that with paid holiday entitlement came freedom of choice. Families and individuals could choose to stay at home and save the money, or take a holiday away from home in the accommodation that suited their interests and that they could afford. As demonstrated earlier, in reality the majority of worker's holidays were not initially (or even latterly) taken at the commercial holiday camp.

As suggested, the approaching reality of paid holidays caused concern amongst ministers and conservation bodies who envisaged a mass rush to the seaside by the newly liberated workers during the holiday season. The fear was that as even more working-class day-trippers became weekly holidaymakers, local facilities would be swamped, causing chaos. Susan Barton's work in this area considers how the issue was considered in detail at governmental level during the war years, and the reports that were made to committees who wrestled with the perceived problems.⁴⁷ As a result of these reports, meetings and concerns, ministers started to view the idea of commercial holiday camps along the lines of the successful model introduced by Butlin and Warner in the 1930's to have the potential to offer a possible solution. Obviously existing resort accommodation in the form of hotels and guest houses would not be able to accommodate the anticipated increase in numbers, but these new camps with their clean, modern, simple accommodation, all meals provided and a full programme of entertainment and activities to keep everyone occupied and free from boredom (and its associated problems) would

⁴⁷ Barton, *Working-class Organisations*, pp. 179-183; National Archives, LAB 31/3, Section V, paragraphs 91-94, pp.38,39; see also CAB/24/282; Cabinet memorandum: Camps for War and Peace Purposes, 25th January, 1939.

surely provide an ideal solution. It was this view that ministers held on to as potentially the main answer to the envisaged problems that would emerge once the war was over and the full implications of paid holidays would roll out. Thus, holidays with pay legislation would help steer ministers toward the notion that commercial holiday camps should be encouraged as far as was practical. The ways in which this encouragement would materialise is covered in the following chapter.

The wider implications of paid holidays for women have been considered to some extent by Susan Barton and more generally by Claire Langhamer.⁴⁸ But historians have so far not underlined the fact that amongst the evidence submitted in favour of paid holidays issues of gender *were* raised, and in this respect the Amulree Report considered the situation of the wives of workers:

A further effect it [the provision of paid holidays] would have, to which importance was attached, was that of providing a facility which would be of great benefit to the wives of workers. For every three or four men working in industry there must be some one working in the household contributing to their efficiency; such persons should, as a measure of social justice, participate in the promotion of health and recreation by holidays with pay.⁴⁹

The report's conclusions reflected this finding: 'It is plain that for full enjoyment of a holiday not only the weekly remuneration but an amount over and above that is really necessary, so that the wife or mother may receive the benefit of a change, and if practicable, of a rest as well as the actual employee.'⁵⁰ This consideration would offer support to the argument for workers holidays to be all-inclusive, and to thereby free women from the need to provide meals and perform other household duties whilst on holiday. Again, the commercial holiday camp model would appear to be ideally suited to

⁴⁸ In her comprehensive work *Working Class Organisations and Popular Tourism*, Susan Barton acknowledges not dealing with issues 'relating to gender in depth and detail' (p. 18). Whilst Claire Langhamer's work (see below) considers women's leisure from a female viewpoint, it is not specifically about holidays.

⁴⁹ LAB 31/3, p.25.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.56.

this aim by providing meals, childcare and housekeeping. It would, of course, be wrong to argue that in the post-war years (and also in the inter-war years, but to a lesser extent) many women in working households did not benefit from the commercial holiday camp experience. Claire Langhamer's work evidences this, and is illustrated with testimony from a letter written in 1955 by a working mother to the *Manchester Evening News* stating: 'We've tried caravans, but with the shopping, cooking, bed-making etc., that's no holiday for ME.'⁵¹ But the situation was, in reality, more complex. Langhamer offers evidence to suggest that self-catering holidays would still have a wide appeal amongst families as paid holidays became almost universal, as many married women saw leisure activities as 'an arena for service and duty to the family', and would therefore accept the continuation of domestic tasks on holiday.⁵²

Perceptions (however unrealistic) of women's leisure being inextricably intertwined with the usual daily domestic tasks (shopping for provisions whilst shopping for luxuries and taking varied breaks for rest and relaxation during the day, for example) may well contribute to the notion of the self-catering holiday being reasonably acceptable to many women. Also, there would of course be other family members present whilst on holiday to help with the daily tasks. The normality of life in the working household may have meant that simply 'handing over' the responsibility of preparing and serving the family meals was not always as easy as it might have been: many women may have seen this as their 'territory', their role and responsibility in family life; a function not easily given over to others. In many households (particularly in northern industrial areas and mining communities) the type and size of meal would differ within the family on gender lines: older mothers continuing the traditions of the hungry 1930's by serving a 'heavy meal'

⁵¹ Manchester Evening News, 15th February 1955, p.2, cited in C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920-1960* (Manchester: MUP, 2000), p.38.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.39; see also pp. 137-8.

for their families and a ‘mere snack’ for themselves.⁵³ The fare that was likely to be served at a holiday camp might, therefore, be less acceptable. But it is more likely that the sheer freedom to choose an independent, highly personalised holiday experience would become the more powerful motivation for a considerable proportion of working families to shun the commercial holiday camp regimentation and routine. ‘Portable domesticity’- the possibility of taking temporary or permanent ownership of the holiday parlour- could and would be an appealing concept, particularly in the unprecedented social conditions of the immediate post-war period. This will be explored further in Chapter Four.

Thus, the holidays with pay legislation created the possibility for working-class families to at last enjoy the benefit of a week or two away from home each year if they so desired, without the spectre of financial burden or hardship. It also forced many (including key politicians) to consider the problem of accommodating the new holidaymakers and to view the new commercial holiday camp model, born in the inter-war years, as a virtually tailor-made solution, ripe for adoption and promotion by the state in the post-war years. It is important to note, however that despite being seen as an obvious solution to the envisaged problem, at an ‘all-inclusive price’ of £2 12s 6d for a week’s holiday (for Butlins at Skegness in 1935)⁵⁴, the cost of a commercial camp holiday was generally prohibitive for all but the most highly paid working class families at this time. This point will be discussed further in the following chapters.

The legislation would not take full effect until the war was over, but the process had begun. With the inevitable levels of state control that the war would engender, planning

⁵³ L. Oren, ‘The Welfare of Women in Laboring [sic] Families: England, 1860-1950’, *Feminist Studies*, 1/3/4, (Winter - Spring, 1973), p. 116.

⁵⁴ Sources: tariff figures kindly supplied by Jude Rodway, Butlin’s Archive, Butlin’s Skyline Ltd., Bognor; see also *Daily Mirror*, April 30th 2011.

for the anticipated peacetime increase in demand for holiday accommodation was given extensive consideration as discussed. Whilst holidays with pay legislation has had much academic study, some aspects of its development and its consequences have thus far been given little attention. It seems surprising that, for example, there is little discussion of the fact that what was not envisaged by the Amulree Committee and campaigners was the widespread embracing of the freedom of choice to originate and select alternative forms of provision other than the state-sponsored model. In addition, the campaign leaders' eventual persuasion of those on the political right as well as business leaders of the benefit to industry from paid holidays is an important factor that should be seen as crucial to the legislation's ultimate enactment, yet it seems to lack proper emphasis in recent studies. Two further points that have lacked emphasis in other histories are also worthy of greater consideration: the timing of the legislation, and the fact that it was key individuals and politicians in harmony with the unions who initiated, kept its momentum and protected it during the war years prior to its ultimate realisation. Timing, prior to the outbreak of war, was significant for the reasons mentioned above, and additionally in that it gave working families, in most cases separated by wartime service, the hope of better holidays in peacetime and crucially the opportunity to make up for wartime sacrifice and spend more time with friends and the family. This, coupled with the effects of wartime social change as discussed in the following chapter, would have a considerable impact upon the post-war domestic holiday scene. It is also apparent that ultimately it was key politicians who saw this process through. At vital moments they acted to protect or promote the programme. Lansbury's persistent and timely proposals, his maintenance of the campaign in the press and in Parliament, coupled with Rowson's awareness of international developments and the emphasis that there were indeed benefits to business with paid holidays all served to bring the campaign to a successful conclusion.

With regard to planning, legislation prior to 1947 continued to largely ignore holiday campsites, camping grounds and such forms of temporary accommodation. It was claimed in the previous chapter that planning Acts actually enhanced the development of static caravan sites; by their permissive nature the pre-1947 Acts did nothing to endanger camp sites or, indeed, the growth of plotland holiday homes. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1932 further extended the powers of local authorities to prepare planning schemes not just for urban and sub-urban areas, but for any land in their jurisdiction. This legislation was, therefore, still essentially permissive as again it simply enabled local authorities to draw up schemes. The first restrictive planning Act came in 1935: the Restriction of Ribbon Development Act sought to arrest the trend of new building developments ‘creeping’ out into rural areas alongside roads and byways. In 1943 the Town and Country Planning (interim Development) Act extended the earlier powers of interim control for local authorities to extend throughout England and Wales; the Minister for Town and Country Planning Act passed in the same year created the post for a Minister whose responsibility included ‘securing consistency and continuity in the framing and execution of a national policy with respect to the use and development of land throughout England and Wales’. The final planning Act passed prior to the sweeping 1947 legislation was the 1944 Town and Country Planning Act; it was essentially concerned with the re-development of damaged, derelict or ageing built-up areas. It was also partly a response to the need for an approach to the re-building of areas damaged by bombing during the war.⁵⁵

Even with the creation of a ministerial post to oversee the execution of planning policy on a national basis, the rather general nature of the pre-1947 planning legislation outlined above did not impact detrimentally on early forms of holiday camp or camping ground

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-8.

establishment. But it did, by its generalized nature and omitting proscriptive detail, ensure that local authorities would overlook or simply ignore in most cases⁵⁶ any vaguely temporary buildings to be constructed in rural or coastal locations. This, in turn, facilitated the growth of plotland developments, as discussed further below. Early camp sites such as those at Caister and the Isle of Man were more or less free to establish themselves, unhindered by the authorities. Surprisingly, and as will be discussed later, it is the curtailment of these freedoms, and oversights by the 1947 Act, that are major catalysts for the establishment of static holiday caravan sites in the post-war period.

3.4 Camping, holiday plotlands and caravan sites

Camping continued to be popular in the inter-war years, and as claimed earlier in this study this is an important factor in the development of post-war caravan sites. It would be entirely understandable if many people during the years after the Armistice, including those that had served on the Western Front, had turned away from camping as a form of holiday recreation. But evidence suggests that this did not happen for long, if at all. Press articles helped promote the activity in the immediate post-war period: in May 1922 the *Daily Mail* was extolling the virtues and benefits of camping for girls. The article gave advice as to the necessary ‘paraphernalia’ that two girls would need, and broke down the costs accordingly:

Hiring of Tent.....	£1 1s 0d
Hiring of Equipment.....	£1 10s 0d
Food.....	£5 0s 0d
Railway Fares and Sundries..	£4 0s 0d
Total.....	£11 11s 0d

⁵⁶ With the exception of the Lindsey Sandhills on the Lincolnshire coast, discussed in Chapter Two.

This, the paper suggested, ‘at say £6 each for a fortnight, is surely one of the cheapest possible holidays.’⁵⁷ The fact that camping offered the opportunity for a holiday on a budget had been known before the war; it once again offered significant possibilities in peacetime. Later in the same year, the *Daily Mail* went on to claim that ‘camping is by far the cheapest form of holiday making, and if half a dozen men join together for not less than a week’s camp, they can actually do it for as little as a pound a head.’ The article also claimed that ‘Perhaps never before was there such a boom in camping.’⁵⁸ In May 1926 *The Times* reported the protests from the honorary secretary of the Caravan Club of Great Britain and Ireland against the Moveable Dwellings Bill, which if it were to become law, would put ‘the gentle pastime of camping out’ under increased vigilance.⁵⁹ Lobbying from such groups, as before, continued to keep excessive regulation at bay. In addition, the continued popularity of the touring caravan amongst the middle classes could only benefit campers, as many camp sites welcomed both touring caravans and traditional campers. By the summer of 1928 the *Daily Mail* reported from New Romney, Kent, that ‘For miles along this wonderful stretch of Kent and Sussex seaboard the green fields and shingle beaches are dotted with the tents of a civilian “army”, for the camping season has begun.’⁶⁰ In September 1930 *The Times* also reported on the ‘extraordinary increase in the number of people who are spending their holidays under canvas’.⁶¹

Camping as an activity was also actively promoted once again during the inter-war years by philanthropic, political and ideological groups. Some groups were active before the war as described in the previous chapter, and some were more recent post-war

⁵⁷ Editorial, ‘Camping out’, in *The Daily Mail* (London: 25 May 1922).

⁵⁸ C. Beck, ‘A Camping Holiday’ in *The Daily Mail* (London: 26 July 1922).

⁵⁹ Own Correspondent, ‘A Plea for Moveable Dwellings’ in *The Times* (London: 4 May 1926). This was the latest in a series of such Bills to be presented (since George Smith’s campaigns as discussed in the previous chapter) mainly concerned with Gypsies, and would be addressed in later public health legislation.

⁶⁰ Our Special Correspondent, ‘Miles of Tents’, in the *Daily Mail* (London: 31 July 1928).

⁶¹ Own Correspondent, ‘Camping Clubs: Increased Popularity of Holidays Under Canvas’ in *The Times* (London: 4 Sept. 1930).

organisations. Group agendas often included the promotion of the communal campsites infused with varying degrees of ritual to be employed as a forum for the discussion of ideals and ideas. This included themes such as camp-craft and outdoor life, greater access to the countryside and socialist and pacifist doctrines. The most prominent of these organisations was the Woodcraft Folk, a socialist and co-operative camping youth movement that is still active. It grew from a small initial group of around seventy members after separating from the Kindred of Kibbo Kift, a group which formed in 1920 disillusioned by the perceived militaristic tendencies of Baden-Powell's scouts. They disbanded during the 1950s. The Woodcraft Folk's organised and ritualised camp routine coupled with fireside recreation and debate found popularity with a growing membership. More widely, rambling and roaming the countryside was also gaining popularity and becoming an organised activity, again mainly by socialist groups, particularly in the north.⁶²

The Mass Trespass at Kinder Scout in the Peak District in June 1932 was organised in support of the Access to Mountains Bill. Campers and ramblers sought to gain rights to access the wild spaces of Britain, many of which were hitherto out of bounds, policed by gamekeepers for landowners. Such a prominent increase in public demand to access the countryside and the continuing and growing popularity of camping unsurprisingly attracted calls for legislation. The Access to Mountains Bill was to be ultimately an exercise compromise and dilution from its original aims, but a Rights of Way Act was passed in 1932⁶³. More importantly camping itself came under legislative control with the passing of the Public Health Act in 1936. But this was undoubtedly tempered by the now well-organised camping lobby, including the Camping Club of Great Britain, who

⁶² M. De Abaitua, *The Art of Camping: The History and Practice of Sleeping under the Stars* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2011), pp. 179-187.

⁶³ See J. Sheail, 'The Access to Mountains Act 1939: An Essay in Compromise', in *Rural History*, 21, (2010) pp 59-74.

provided evidence for ministers. The new legislation essentially provided that campsites may be licenced by the local authority, and that:

a person shall not allow any land occupied by him to be used for camping purposes on more than forty-two consecutive days or more than sixty days in any twelve consecutive months, unless either he holds in respect of the land so used such a licence from the local authority....⁶⁴

‘Informal’ camping, therefore, seems to have been left more or less unaffected, and more formalised campsites were now established around the coastline and rural areas of the British countryside. The popularity of camping and the organisation and agency of its inter-war adherents thus ensured a substantial and vocal lobby, which in turn went some way to help ensure that any legislation aimed at moveable dwellings, as described in the above Act (which included tents), would be tempered and ultimately moderate. In addition, the activity even attracted substantial government support in the form of financial aid: the National Fitness Council had provided some £22,950 to ‘camps and camping site’ projects by March 1939, from its inception in the wake of the Physical Training and Recreation Act of 1937.⁶⁵

The continued and increasing popularity of camping during the inter-war years is important for a further reason. It enhanced the demand for more formalised camping grounds. Any land owner who had a field or meadow, or even a stretch of foreshore, could capitalise by allowing tents and touring caravans to use it during the summer season. With the provision of a few basic amenities such as a fresh water supply, drainage or communal toilets, a profitable holiday campsite could be developed on land that may have had limited alternative value. These camping grounds, often also used by small touring caravans, would in many cases become the post-war static caravan sites

⁶⁴ Public Health Act, 1936; Part XI: Miscellaneous, section 269, para. 2. See also S. Jones, *Workers at Play: A Social and Economic History of Leisure 1918-1939* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), pp. 92-3.

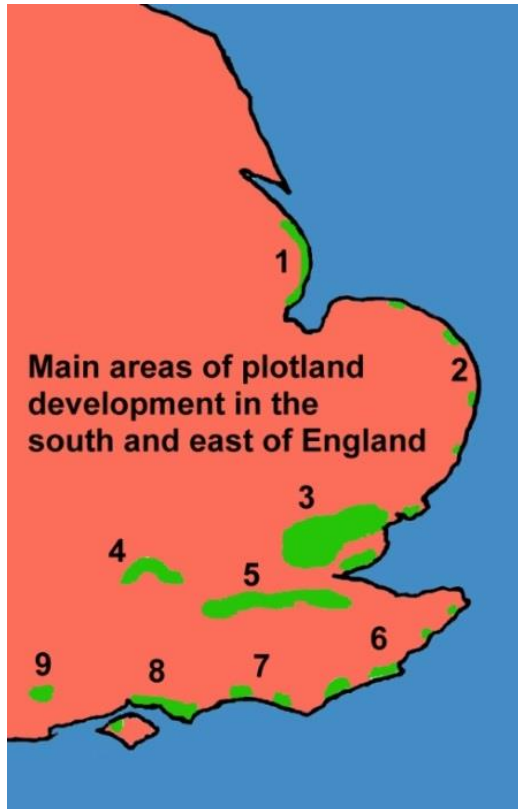
⁶⁵ National Fitness Council, *Report of the Grants Committee to the President of the Board of Education* (London: HMSO, 1939), p.8, cited in Jones, *Workers at Play*, p.92.

discussed in Chapter Five. As discussed earlier, the popularity of camping at this time also provides further evidence of the agency of people to turn to practical, simple and self-originated forms of holiday pursuit. During the 1930s the camping ethos and the sense of self-reliance that it imbued reached a high point. This is a factor which is rekindled in the post-war years; it is also a strong component of the holiday plotland phenomenon.

Holiday plotlands (self-built, often shack-like structures serving as holiday residences) were constructed during the inter-war years in rural and coastal locations, and in some industrial hinterlands throughout England. They could materialise as isolated examples or more extensive clusters. The south-eastern part of the country witnessed the largest proliferation, largely as a result of proximity to the capital, improving transport links and the activities of agents buying large areas of former agricultural land and reselling it in small plots.⁶⁶ Fig.1, below, illustrates this further.

⁶⁶ See D. Hardy and C. Ward, *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape* (London: Mansell, 1984), pp. 115-162; also S. O'Dell, 'Holiday Plotlands and Caravans in the Tendring District of Essex, 1918-2010' *The Local Historian*, 42/2 (May 2012), pp. 119-134, pp. 120-1.

South and east Essex (3) saw a particular boom; isolated examples occurred along the east coast in Suffolk and Norfolk (2). The East Lindsey area of the Lincolnshire coast (1) had a notable development (to be discussed further); the upper Thames Valley (4) and the North Downs area of Kent and Surrey (5) also had significant clusters. Along the



south coast Camber Sands, Winchelsea and Pevensey Bay (6) in the east saw extensive developments as did Peacehaven, Shoreham (7), Bognor, Selsey, the Wittering Peninsular, Cranmore on the Isle of Wight (8) and St. Leonards in south-west Hampshire (9).⁶⁷

Figure 2: plotland areas.

⁶⁷ Information on plotland locations mainly from: Hardy and Ward, *Arcadia*, p.5; C. Ward, *Cotters and Squatters: Housing's Hidden History* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2002), p. 156.

An analysis of the holiday plotland phenomenon in the South-East, specifically focusing on four key models: Canvey Island, Laindon and Dunton, Peacehaven and Lindsey Sandhills, and Shoreham Beach, also focusing in detail the holiday plotland phenomena within the Tendring District, has proved revealing.⁶⁸ The first general commonality amongst plotland holiday home developments considered in this analysis is that land was readily available for use. This, however, was not always cheap agricultural land. At Lindsey and Shoreham, stretches of coastal margin (sand dunes or shingle beach) became sites for plotland development. But these sites also became subject to the greatest pressure for the removal of the plotland structures; Lindsey being the first and only local authority to achieve this prior to the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, the instrument by which all subsequent plotland developments appear to have been brought under control. The 'righteous indignation' against the spoiling of areas of natural beauty by plotland structures, epitomised by the protestations of the CPRE in the inter-war years, appear to have had more influence at Lindsey than at areas such as Canvey and Laindon. In these areas it was only the local authorities that raised any concerns, and these were generally confined to issues of sanitation and provision of services.

The Canvey/Laindon model is characterised by the systematic re-development of the areas into modern suburban housing from 1960's onward. In this model the plotlands are completely consumed, apart from a few isolated examples at Canvey, and the preserved area at Dunton. Resort status is lost, and caravan site development is either limited in nature or non-existent. This did not occur at Lindsey, but Shoreham and Peacehaven have seen post-war re-development, which has transformed these areas from plotland to residential modern housing in a similar manner. Peacehaven offers a

⁶⁸ O'Dell, 'Holiday Plotlands and Caravans', pp. 119-134.

rare, but not unique,⁶⁹ example of a conceptual plotland development where the initial idea is realised in the short to medium term. Again, the post-war planning legislation enabled Peacehaven's 'rehabilitation', a factor common to most areas with the exception of Lindsey Sandhills. All the plotland developments detailed above flourished during the inter-war years; some originated earlier but the two decades after 1918 seems to have been the time of optimum growth and development. But it is apparent from the analysis of these wider areas that static holiday caravan sites offer a post-war alternative essentially *only* at areas that maintain the critical attributes of the holiday resort.

As to the identities and backgrounds of these pioneering self-builders, clearly Laindon, Dunton and Canvey saw large numbers of Londoners taking up plots. During the Second World War these were often refugees from the Blitz, and we have seen reflected in Deanna Walker's analysis of these sites and their occupants that many post-war plotlanders were working-class families escaping urban drudgery to find their pastoral retreat. A number of factors, however, suggest more middle-class origins for the inter-war plotlanders, including those who were active within Tendring (Jaywick, however, being more mixed). The first of these is transport. Whilst the railways did serve areas such as Laindon and Dunton well, as a means of regular transport for the more remote plotland builder rail transport was impractical. However, at the beginning of the 1930's the age of motoring had truly arrived: it is estimated that there were over two million motor vehicles on the road in Britain at this time. Half of these were private cars. But this statistic represents only one car for every forty-four persons; the 1920's saw only 'quality cars' owned by those who could afford such luxuries, and the introduction of cars such as the Austin Seven and Morris Minor by the 1930's at first only bought car

⁶⁹ Parallels may be drawn with Peacehaven and Jaywick as examples of conceptual plotland developments.

ownership to the middle classes.⁷⁰ The motorcycle was popular, but as a means of family transport was limited. Hire purchase would become accessible to the working classes, but initially motoring was a more middle-class activity.

Those motorists who could truly roam to the more remote plotland locations on an ad-hoc basis were, therefore, solidly middle-class. Accessibility to such locations was also poor, with spending in the inter-war years on road building and maintenance remaining relatively low.⁷¹ But this is not to deny that the working classes had any access to motoring at all. As the 1930s progressed, more second-hand vehicles became available, and the sharing of ownership and running costs of cars was becoming more common. The car remained, however, typically a leisure pursuit for the more affluent at this time: sales of cars to professional, business and commercial users in 1935 are estimated at between 25 and 40 percent.⁷² Working-class families that did have access to motoring would, however, scarcely have had additional funds at this stage for investment in plots at the seaside. But they would be aware of such structures as they visited the seaside in growing numbers; with the growing trend to stay for a week or two as discussed above, day trips and weekend excursions were still increasingly popular. Prolific author, journalist and sometime editor of *The Observer* Ivor Brown observed in 1935 that on the main road from the East Coast to London on Sunday evenings traffic was heavy with ‘Myriads of East Enders, packed seven or eight in an antiquated car which has been bought for a few pounds and seems almost to be held together by string and straps, are jogging home from a day at Clacton or Southend.’⁷³

⁷⁰ N. Branson and M. Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties* (London: Wiedenfield & Nicolson, 1971), p.238.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p.240.

⁷² S. O’Connell, *The Car in British Society: Class, Gender and Motoring, 1896 – 1939* (Manchester: University Press, 1998), p.77.

⁷³ I. Brown, *The Heart of England* (London: Batsford, 1935), p. 75.

The availability of paid holidays, as discussed above, is also an influential factor here. By 1939 some eleven million people were entitled to paid holidays, but at the start of that decade the figure was just one and a half million.⁷⁴ As the legislation enabling workers to take paid holiday leave would not become fully effective until after the war, for most of the inter-war years the ability to take time out to find, construct, maintain and enjoy a plotland holiday home was not enjoyed by the majority working-class families. Given the time-consuming nature of such activities and the costs involved, this was predominantly, therefore, largely a middle-class activity. Given this rationale, it seems less likely that these middle-class inter-war plotlanders were in fact somehow responding to notions of agrarianism or indeed pastoral ideals passed down from earlier generations as discussed by Hardy and Ward; more likely that visions of an ideal, portable domesticity were motivating factors along with opportunism (given the price and availability of land) and the growing trends of consumerism.⁷⁵ After the war, and in the brief period before the 1947 planning legislation and subsequent processes of sub-urbanisation came into effect, working-class families continued the exodus to nearby Canvey, Laindon and Dunton, no longer to escape the bombing, but to find holiday opportunities at these locations in the form of plotland weekend retreats and holiday homes.

Analysis of the development of plotland structures in the Tendring District reveals that the phenomenon was substantial, and occurred in a number of ways.⁷⁶ The primary and most concentrated manifestation occurred at Jaywick Sands. Other areas of development (some more marginal) occurred at Saint Osyth Beach, Point Clear, Lee-over-Sands, Wrabness, Walton, parts of Clacton-on-Sea and Frinton (See Fig. 3, below).

⁷⁴ J. Stevenson and C. Cook, *Britain in the Depression: Society and Politics, 1929-1939* (London: Longman, 1994), p.34.

⁷⁵ See Hardy and Ward, *Arcadia*, pp. 9-29.

⁷⁶ O'Dell, 'Holiday Plotlands and Caravans', pp. 121-133.



Figure 3: Tendring District, showing key holiday and plotland centres.

A considerable acreage at Lee-over-Sands was targeted for a further ‘Jaywick-type’ development, which did not fully materialise. The land upon which Tendring’s plotlands originated was largely poor quality former agricultural or ‘wick’ (marsh) land, with some later marginal in-fill around establishing holiday and chalet camps at Saint Osyth and Point Clear. Wrabness, however, has a number of weekend or holiday beach chalets on the shingle beach foreshore of the widening River Stour estuary as it approaches the sea.

In addition to these general observations, anecdotal evidence suggests that there are a number of areas where plots of land were acquired and had bungalows established upon them without the benefit of formal planning consent, as laid down in the 1947 Act. Much of this occurred in the inter-war years, or shortly after the end of the Second World War before the 1947 legislation was fully in place. These bungalows were, however, mostly established as full residential housing, and therefore should not be

misconstrued with the plotland developments described thus far. Most of the examples of this type of development occurred at Saint Osyth, and on the outskirts of Clacton and Walton-on-the-Naze.

Within the Tendring District there seems to be a very tangible link between inter-war plotland developments and the post-war holiday caravan sites. Whilst some plotland areas such as parts of Jaywick, and areas between Frinton and Walton became fully residential in the post-war period, much was either replaced by or augmented with holiday caravans, particularly at Saint Osyth Beach, Point Clear, Jaywick and Wrabness. Whilst a number of the post-war caravan sites did not originate in a former plotland locality, those that did were some of the earliest and largest in the district. Of the forty-nine caravan sites identified as having existed in the Tendring District, eight are either on or very close to former plotland locations. A further nineteen are within five miles. The 'non-plotland' sites would no doubt have been influenced by the general growth in popularity of the district as a resort, fostered in part by pre-war plotland activity, in the post-war period.

Fig. 4: Tendring District- Caravan Site locations in Relation to Plotland Locations

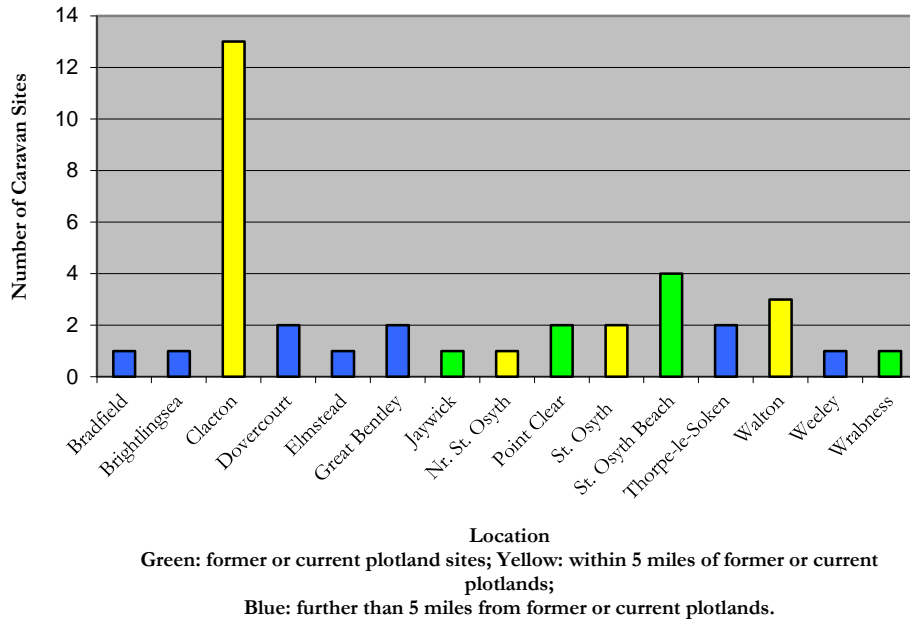
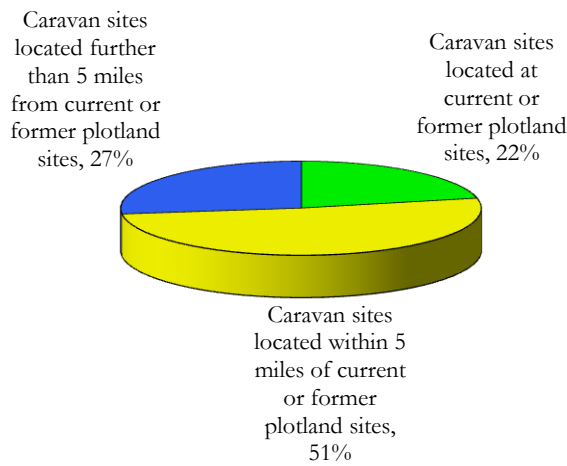


Fig. 4 (above) illustrates the relationship between the locations of caravan sites in Tendring and those of former or current plotlands; Fig. 5 (below) simplifies this further:⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Sources: Tendring District Council caravan site licence applications data (Appendix One), physical survey.

Fig. 5: Analysis of Location of Caravan Sites in Tendring in Relation to Current and Former Plotland Sites



The statistic of seventy-three percent of caravan parks that have existed in Tendring in the post-war period being at or within five miles of current or former plotland sites adds weight to suggestion of a developmental link between the two forms. But this statistic should be treated with some caution, as thirteen of the caravan sites shown as within five miles of a plotland location are, or were, at Clacton: itself a tourist resort in its own right, and an obvious location for caravan site development. Correlation does not *necessarily* mean causation.

Nevertheless, it still seems apparent that the plotland developments originating prior to 1939 in Tendring played a significant part in the re-enforcement of resort status to their immediate localities and perhaps beyond. At Saint Osyth beach, increasing numbers of casual visitors in the early 1920's prompted the further development of the area, characterised by the holiday huts and their middle-class family owners. This led to the creation of an appealing resort area that would attract further visitors and investors. It will be shown that as a consequence of the removal of huts during the war and the restrictions of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, holiday caravans became

dominant in considerable numbers there during the post-war period. Likewise Point Clear saw a transition from its pre-war plotland type development to the dominance of a large post-war caravan site. Jaywick, after any further plotland expansion was curtailed, witnessed the birth and growth of a neighbouring caravan site. Even Wrabness, discrete and exclusive, spawned a caravan site after the consolidation of its unique plotland development.

The experience at Lee Wick shows that this process would not be guaranteed, however. The areas that were establishing plotlands during the late 1920's and early 1930's would be the ones that attained permanence as resorts. By the mid 1930's, developments that were not well established would not maintain momentum, and would not develop much further.

The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act was, as will be further discussed, a hugely significant factor in the cessation of further post-war plotland development of the kind that flourished in parts of Tendring District and beyond in the inter-war years. But it did not diminish the status of the district's plotland sites as resorts areas; and as caravans were not initially subject to the Act's sweeping powers, they effectively became the replacement accommodation in the former plotland sites. The marginalisation of plotland holiday homes after 1945 created a vacuum which the static holiday caravan would ultimately fill. Holiday plotland areas were popular before the war as places of *laissez-faire* leisure activity, places where there were possibilities for establishing your own holiday home on your own terms. Working-class holiday makers returned to such areas to find sites to locate cheap, second-hand touring caravans after the war, to use as holiday homes. Thus at many resorts, camping grounds and former plotland colonies would see the advent of the static caravan site.

By the late 1930's the two forms of holiday camp were also reaching a peak in their popularity. The 'pioneer camps', descendants of the late nineteenth century campsites founded by political, philanthropic and religious groups (such as Caister Holiday Camp and Cunningham's) had been popular as holiday locations for working families. The new commercial camps such as Butlin's and Pontin's were now also gaining popularity with the more middle-class holiday makers; Clacton becoming the location for another Butlin's in 1938. But it was the commercial camps that were to become the more dominant of the two forms in the post war period, offering as they did a more up-market experience to a population weary of make do and mend, and who (in many cases) had already spent far too long under canvas or in military style accommodation. But it would be wrong, therefore, in light of the foregoing research to see these earlier holiday camps as the forerunners of the post-war holiday caravan camps in the Tendring District. It seems far more likely that the appeal of the district to the inter-war plotland holiday home makers was re-kindled in the post-war period as the early caravan sites replaced the growing trend for plotland-type holiday accommodation. The holiday plotlands were, along with the camping grounds, the primary forerunners of the static holiday caravan parks.

Ideas of links between the traditions of pastoralism and agrarianism, discussed originally by Hardy and Ward, have been considered alongside the notion of plotlanders inheriting an earlier sense of a right to enjoy the freedom to own a plot of land. This link has been argued only to be at best tentative and notional and the situation in Tendring, in analysis, offers little to counter these arguments. We need only consider the vehemence with which the Jaywick hut owners pursued their rights in the face of an often-hostile local

authority to evidence this.⁷⁸ It is less clear, however, whether this notion initially held true for those first holiday caravan owners.

A walk around any of the major caravan parks in the district today will reveal large, fully serviced static caravans, in some cases with established gardens, capable of sleeping up to ten individuals. But these are a far cry from the early post-war two or four berth units that had no toilet facilities, no electricity supply and, more importantly, did not stand in a plot that was owned by the caravan's occupants (see Fig. 6, below). In fact the vast majority of privately-owned static holiday caravans on such parks in Tendring and beyond still stand on a plot that is rented (often on an annual basis) from the site operator.⁷⁹

Figure 6: 1950's holiday caravans at Saint Osyth Beach



⁷⁸ O'Dell, 'Holiday Plotlands and Caravans', pp. 122-4.

⁷⁹ I am grateful to Steve Munro of the National Association of Caravan Owners (NACO) for confirmation of details such as these.

This is clearly a situation that does not suggest that the freedom to own a plot of land is a major motivating factor for those who have purchased such caravans, although it can be argued that the caravan owners perhaps treat such land today as their 'rightful plot'. In fact today's static holiday caravan seems, in all other respects, to be much more closely linked to the concept of the pre-war plotlands. Whereas early post-war static caravans were highly portable units differing little from touring caravans, standing in fields with little or nothing to define any boundary around them, by the mid 1980's privately owned caravans on holiday caravan parks seemed to be rapidly evolving away from any sense of being portable, and were adopting features of permanence by becoming more chalet-like in appearance and structure (this is considered further in Chapter Six). Owners of these units saw their investment as a second home, replicating the domestic parlour and with a strong sense of established permanence and personalisation. Fenced in, well-tended and ornamented gardens, with parking places and small outbuildings add to this sense of permanence and ownership. This prompts the observation that in spite of the 1947 planning legislation and subsequent Acts, the process is in many respects retreating back to earlier plotland ideals and appearances (see Figs 7 and 8, below).



Figure 7: caravan holiday homes at Bentley Country Park, near Saint Osyth, 2009. Although on a caravan site, these caravans are much more akin to the plotland chalets at Wrabness, or the pre-war huts at Saint Osyth Beach



Figure 8: plotland holiday homes at Wrabness, 2009.

In the Tendring district it has been suggested that, in common with other plotland areas, a large proportion of the inter-war plotlanders were originally from more affluent, middle-class backgrounds, unlike their post-war counterparts at Canvey and Laindon, originating as they did from London's predominantly working-class East End. This view is supported by testimony from the Hutley family, and by evidence in the form of planning applications (especially at Saint Osyth Beach, Point Clear and Wrabness) that suggest that the huts were often supplied and erected by a third-party contractor, who would also have been paid to deal with the planning requirements.⁸⁰ This is in contrast to the hand-built, improvised structures that were constructed in the post-war period at Canvey and Laindon, often on very cheap plots of land, without any formal planning consent.

The inter-war years were characterised by diversity not just in social and economic conditions, but also in attitudes to leisure and the popular perception of rural and coastal Britain. As motor transport became more widely accessible, the young middle-class would venture away from urban centres to pursue leisure activities, prompting adverse reaction from traditionalists. The growing disapproval of organisations such as the CPRE and individuals such as Professor C.E.M. Joad (writing in 1937) raging against 'hordes of hikers cackling insanely in the woods' and 'people, wherever there is water, upon sea shores or upon river banks, lying in every attitude of undressed and inelegant squalor'⁸¹ is reflected somewhat in the tone of the Steers survey of the wartime East Anglian coast. This was at odds with the aspirations of a considerable proportion of the 1930's modern middle-class, who wanted to motor through Priestley's 'Post-war Britain',

⁸⁰ For example- ERO, D/RT Pb1/2217.

⁸¹ C. Joad in R. Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), p. 302.

go camping, hiking and above all, visit the seaside. And, better still; own a holiday retreat there as well. These were the first plotlanders at Wrabness, Saint Osyth Beach and Point Clear. Jaywick on the other hand, marketed directly to Londoners, probably saw a mixture of upper working-class and middle-class holidaymakers as its first occupants.

Distance from the capital would arguably be a contributory factor here. As discussed, the plotlands at places like Canvey, Laindon and Dunton were within easy reach of the capital and became the destination for working families after the war and for those escaping the bombing of London during the hostilities. Tendring District was, prior to post-war road improvements, a little further and a more expensive journey, even by train. With Clacton-on-Sea in particular starting to appeal to a wider section of society, however, the district's popularity as a resort area was growing rapidly. The arrival of Butlin's just before the war would confirm this situation.

What little remains, then, of Tendring's plotlands in the post-war period presents a relatively more mixed picture, and one that does not have too much in common with the wider examples, or models, discussed earlier. The sub-urbanisation process that occurred at Canvey, Laindon, Dunton, Shoreham and Peacehaven only occurs in Tendring at part of the Jaywick Sands Estate. Wrabness, isolated and rural, survives to the present almost completely in-tact; the Brooklands and Grasslands sections of Jaywick remain, but in a run-down state; the plotland huts and bungalows at Saint Osyth Beach and Point Clear are largely replaced with expansive static caravan sites, with the exception of a handful of structures. With the probable exception of Wrabness, however (largely as a result of its continuity of ownership and usage, and therefore exclusivity), any post-war Plotlanders in Tendring would be much more representative of the working classes, as the holidays with pay legislation came into effect, along with widening availability of transport opportunities. Tendring's central resort towns of Clacton-on-Sea, Frinton, Walton-on-

Naze and to a lesser extent Dovercourt did not directly experience the sort of plotland developments that had developed close by. Some informal holiday bungalow development did occur within their immediate environs, but this was quickly established into formal residential development.

The beaches at these towns did witness the further growth of beach-huts, however, evolving as they did from bathing machines, to something of a thorn in the side for local authorities and traders. As discussed in the previous chapter, as public morality with regard to sea bathing and the consequent exposure of flesh relaxed through the 20th century, so the bathing machine became obsolete and the beach hut ascendant. Inter-war Frinton, exclusive and genteel at all costs, was the last to relinquish the bathing machine but then embraced the beach hut, maintaining a sense of independence and social status for its owners, who had no need for the street and beach traders and cheap entertainments. Frinton, therefore, where the ‘nanny’ ruled the roost during the inter-war years with her privileged charges, often the offspring of colonial families, did not witness any real plotland development. Clacton witnessed the growth and spread of the beach hut and ‘mackintosh bathers’, and did not welcome the phenomenon so enthusiastically. Street and beach traders, centred in Pier Gap, saw a loss in income as beach hut owners and occupiers became increasingly independent and had all their needs provided in their hut (food and refreshment, pastimes, shelter, bathing costumes and a place to change and relax). The local authority was also increasingly denied the income from the hire of costumes, towels, deck chairs and a place to change.⁸²

The beach hut as a significant aspect of the seaside environment, at odds with the commercial aspects of the seafront, has much in common, therefore, with plotland

⁸² L. Chase, ‘Public Beaches and Private Beach Huts- A Study of Inter-war Clacton and Frinton, Essex’ in J. Walton, (ed.) *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005), pp. 211-227.

holiday 'huts'. There are clearly important distinctions between the casual day-tripper or short-term visitor, and the returning, independent family or group who have gained a stake in the culture and environment of the seaside resort, but as Chase observes, 'For regular hut users, the significance of beach huts lies in their incorporation into regular summer rituals of domesticity and strictly defined social interaction, thereby reinforcing notions of class and national identity.'⁸³ This observation may also apply in most respects to the inter-war holiday Plotlanders in areas such as St. Osyth Beach and Wrabness, but this would be a temporary situation.

As has been discussed, the marketing of holiday plots and the concept of domestic holiday home ownership would at first (in Tendring at least) appeal to the middle-classes. But with working-class consumerism growing, it would simply be a matter of time before the concept of an affordable, private holiday home by the sea would form a major part of the post-war pattern of holiday choice in Britain. Camping, an activity which has been shown to be increasingly popular during the inter-war years furthered the demand for campsites. Campers had a growing lobby which, through organised groups on the leisure-centred and more ideological wings of its practitioners, saw campsites licenced and regularised in a beneficial way, this in turn would ensure that they were ideally suited to further development, including allowing touring caravans to be sited for extended periods. The 1947 planning legislation, as discussed further in the next chapter, would have a major impact upon plotland holiday home building, but not on camping, touring and campsites to any great extent. All of this would be augmented by a number of further developments that were to materialise shortly before and during the Second World War.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Chapter Four: 1938–1947: legislation, wartime social change and the development of post-war consumerism and leisure provision.

4.1 Introduction

Two distinct and significant forms of holiday provision emerged during the post-war years in the Tendring District of north Essex and more widely throughout Britain's resort areas after the huge social, political and economic changes that occurred just before, during and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. These were the commercial holiday camps that had established prior to the outbreak of war, and the static holiday caravan sites: essentially a new phenomenon. Any further development of holiday plotlands would be arrested and marginalised by wartime coastal restriction of access and use, and ultimately by the 1947 planning legislation. More widely, the pioneer voluntary, socialist, co-operative and trades union holiday camps, would generally not survive in their earlier form, either being sold to commercial operators, or in a few cases simply closing down.¹

The movement for holidays with pay had clear implications for the post-war domestic holiday scene; high numbers of holidaymakers at resorts were anticipated. Politician's and government ministers' aspirations for the post-war administration's promotion of commercial holiday camps as a working-class family holiday solution (within a wider vision of the state's role in post-war society as provider, facilitator or overseer of key services) is significant to the understanding of post-war developments in this area, as are the activities and enlightened self-interest of the commercial holiday camp entrepreneurs during the war years.

¹ S. Barton, *Working-class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840-1970* (Manchester: MUP, 2005), p. 187.

This chapter considers whether the war acted as an engine for social change, impacting upon the nature of post-war working-class social identity and assertiveness. Any social change (including the attitudes of workers and service personnel to their place and role in society) that occurred during the war would arguably contribute in some degree to the nature of society and changes in working-class attitudes toward leisure choices in peacetime. The crucial aspect here is that this affects holiday choices and may be influential in the widespread rejection of the above-mentioned commercial, state approved option. Changes in attitudes brought about not only by the impact of war upon those who remained in urban areas and contributed to the war effort at home, but to service men and women (particularly in the aftermath of Dunkirk) is considered. The depth and speed with which such change occurred is a matter of some debate; but in the post-war era of paid holidays a new mood of assertiveness and growing confidence in market choices would, nevertheless, have a significant impact upon domestic tourism- including the development of the static holiday caravan sites. This chapter will explore whether and how the new assertiveness was fostered by social and political factors that arose during the war.

The commercial holiday camp, pioneered by Billy Butlin in the 1930's, was considered by some politicians during the war to offer a solution to perceived accommodation shortages for legions of new working-class holidaymakers in peacetime.² Butlin's wartime work and the requirements of the 1939 Camps Act would, along with government planning policy, affect the nature of post-war holiday accommodation considerably; Butlin's second commercial holiday camp was built at Clacton-on-Sea in the Tendring District, opening in 1938. The district would, of course, emerge significantly affected by the war but would nevertheless re-embrace the tourist economy with its existing commercial camps being re-activated, and witnessing the spawning of new caravan sites.

² CAB/24/282; *Cabinet memorandum: Camps for War and Peace Purposes*, 25th January, 1939.

The wartime experience of the district is considered, as a precursor to the post-war phenomenon that further developed it as a resort area physically, socially and economically. In the austerity of the immediate post-war years, workers are shown to have originated forms of holiday-making that suited their budgets: this included a resumption of holiday camping, and the utilisation of caravans situated more or less permanently on sites for holiday use by their owners. Those on lower incomes therefore created their own holiday solutions to suit their needs and a market within, as these caravans could, and were, hired out to others for holiday use. These phenomena are explored more closely in Chapter Five. This chapter will explore how these factors manifested themselves during the war years and combined to create the conditions which preceded the emergence of the two separate forms of post-war holiday leisure accommodation and provision mentioned above.

4.2 Resorts before and during the war

Changes (discussed further below) that were forged on the home front in the capital and other large population centres were undoubtedly felt on a national basis; and the consequences would particularly affect the post-war economies of Britain's holiday resorts in particular. For the resorts themselves, the wartime experience was varied but generally profound: the south and east coast resorts were rightly seen as increasingly vulnerable as the war unfolded, and mass evacuations for fear of bombing significantly affected many resort towns in the south of England. As a locus for case study within the scope of domestic holiday provision generally, the Tendring District of north Essex presents a rare and significant example; in a sense, a microcosm of the national picture which has attracted little academic historical study. Physically, in addition to the usual resort hotels, guest houses and beach huts, it was the location for Butlin's second major commercial holiday camp at Clacton and Warner's second camp at Dovercourt. It had,

by 1939, numerous examples of holiday plotland development both in the estate model at Jaywick, and in the more grass roots examples at Saint Osyth Beach, Point Clear and Wrabness.

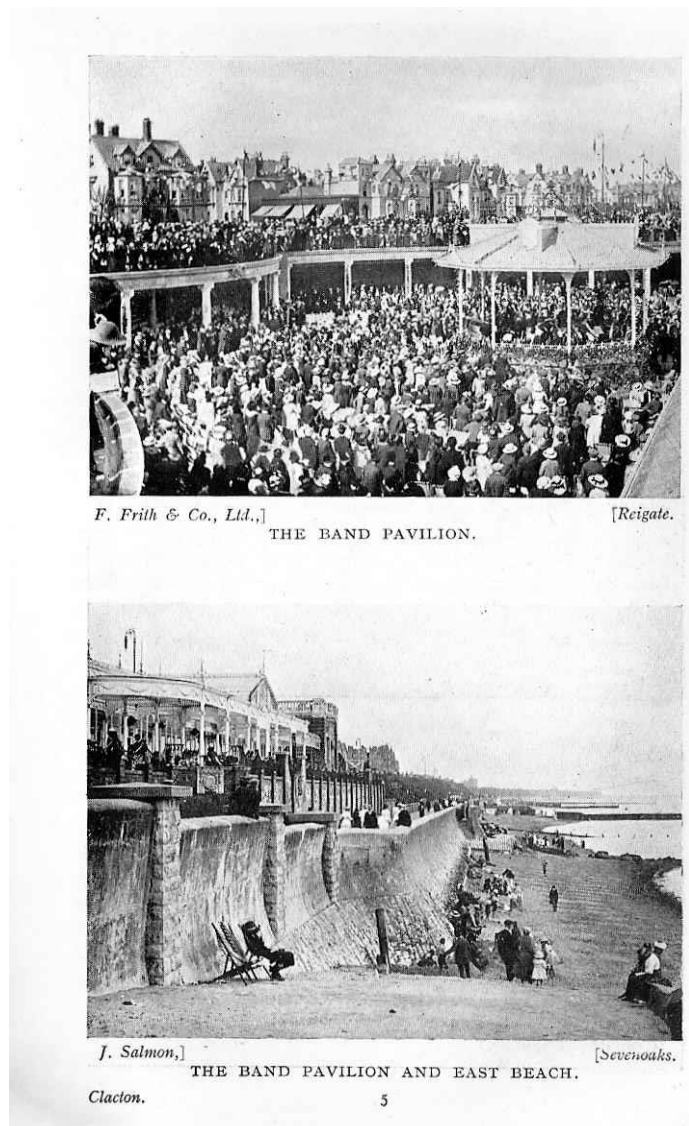


Figure 1: photographs in a 1927 tourist guide for the Tendring District showing Clacton-on-Sea's busy seafront area.

Prior to the outbreak of war, these facilities were frequented by a mix of middle-class and working-class visitors originating largely from London, with Jaywick pioneering the provision of affordable seaside holiday accommodation for middle- and working-class families. During the post-war period it would spawn some forty-nine independent holiday caravan parks in response to demand from mainly working-class families, again

largely from the capital, who sought an alternative experience to the ‘state-approved’ commercial holiday camp.

As discussed in Chapter One, the principal holiday destinations in Tendring up to the outbreak of the First World War were Walton-on-the-Naze, Frinton-on-Sea and Clacton-on-Sea. These relatively new resorts quickly re-established themselves from 1919 to become increasingly popular during the inter-war years. Proximity to the capital and the railway link directly connecting to these key towns, coupled with expanding ownership of the motorcar as discussed in Chapter Two, and availability of accommodation, ensured that more and more people came to Tendring for a holiday or excursion, particularly during the 1930’s (see Fig. 1, above). This was aided by the fact that such resorts were now actively advertising themselves. An advertising Bill, promoted before the war, was finally passed into law in 1921 enabling local authorities at resorts to ‘utilize profits from municipal enterprises up to the equivalent of a penny rate’ to advertise their attractions in the form of guide books, on posters and in the press.³

The visitors or holiday makers fell into three categories: day-trippers or excursionists, holiday residents staying in hotels or guest-houses and plotland holiday home owners. The day-trippers and excursionists were solidly working-class; the plotlanders (with the exception of many at the new Jaywick Sands Estate) and the holiday residents staying in hotels and guest houses were essentially middle-class. Although Frinton remained staunchly middle-class, Clacton in particular was divided. Whilst hotel owners were keen to appeal to the middle classes, street traders and others who earned a living on the seafront were keen to attract excursionists. The result was expansion: whilst the district was able to appeal to working and middle-class holiday consumers, growth was

³ J. Beckerson, ‘Marketing British Tourism’ in H. Berghoff, *et al.* (eds.), *The Making of Modern Tourism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp.138-140.

inevitable- Clacton in particular resembling 'Blackpool on a small scale.'⁴



Figure 2: Clacton's coastal infrastructure in the 1920's- the two piers and beach amenities.

The resort areas had in a relatively short period of time established a physical infrastructure (making the most of the beaches and coastline, see Fig. 2, opposite) that would also continue to attract visitors. This included piers at Walton and Clacton (Clacton had two at this stage, see Fig. 2), in addition to the bandstands, pavilions, gardens and theatres. Beach traders would offer boat trips and bathing facilities, donkey rides, souvenirs and consumables. Tennis and badminton courts, putting courses, croquet, bowls and ballroom dancing are all mentioned in a 1927 guide book.⁵

However, after the outbreak of war, resort areas in Britain such as those in the Tendring District saw radical physical and social change in their localities. During the first months of war Clacton saw the influx of evacuees from London, and the local population grew considerably as a result. But as the war progressed and the threat of invasion grew, the coastal area of north Essex, in common with much of the south-east coastline of Britain was seen as highly vulnerable. By late 1940 Clacton, Frinton and Walton were

⁴ An observation given by Dr. C. Thornton in a paper on Clacton-on-Sea, given at the VCH 60th Anniversary Seminar, Essex Records Office, 8th October 2011.

⁵ *Anon. A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Clacton, Frinton, Walton-on-the-Naze, Colchester, Etc.* (London: Warde, Lock and Co. Ltd., 1927), pp. 3-5.

transformed completely by wartime measures. Some eighty-five percent of Clacton's inhabitants were evacuated inland to the Home Counties and Devon; the town reportedly having one of the highest evacuation percentages in the country.⁶ The area became heavily militarised: the new Butlins camp was taken over initially as an internment camp, but shortly after in October 1939 became a base for the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps until 1941. It was used by the army until the end of hostilities.⁷ Much of the empty housing in the town was used for the billeting of troops.⁸

In addition to these developments, the whole of Tendring's coastal landscape was physically affected. As well as becoming a military zone, generally out of bounds to civilians, defensive structures such as concrete tank traps, mine fields, rows of barbed wire and concrete 'pill-box' bunkers were deployed or constructed along the shoreline. Any structure that was deemed to be of advantage to an enemy invasion force was demolished: at Saint Osyth beach the holiday huts were demolished (as detailed in Chapter Two) and at Clacton the entire pier at West Beach was removed, although the main pier remained intact.

The area also suffered considerably from enemy bombing. Clacton in particular was deliberately targeted, the town being bombed and machine-gunned by enemy aircraft on several occasions. The first casualties in mainland Britain during the war occurred when a German mine-laying aircraft crashed at Victoria Road killing two civilians and four aircrew. As well as numerous subsequent casualties, many buildings and facilities were either destroyed or badly damaged during the conflict.⁹

⁶ *East Essex Gazette*, 12 April, 1945.

⁷ It was not, as has been suggested by some historians, used as a prisoner of war camp throughout the war.

⁸ R. Kennell, *et al.*, *Clacton at War: 1939 – 1945* (Clacton: The Clacton Victoria County History Group, 2003), pp. 38-40.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 48,49.

Thus, the burgeoning tourist economy that had been developed during the 1930's in the region was, by 1940, brought to a complete standstill. The epicentre of this trade, Clacton-on-Sea, formerly popular with working-class day-trippers and excursionists as well as middle-class holiday makers would see no more of this clientele until after the war. Frinton, once popular with the middle-class holiday makers, suffered a similar fate. The developments at Walton, Dovercourt, Saint Osyth, Jaywick, Point Clear and Wrabness, beginning to thrive before the outbreak of war, were likewise brought to a standstill. The combined effects of militarisation, evacuation and the physical defence measures deployed locally effectively prevented any form of use or habitation. Inland from the coastal resorts, however, Tendring's rural agricultural economy would continue under wartime conditions.

The extended wartime hiatus in Tendring's tourism economy would have consequences for the post-war tourism picture. The physical removal of plotland holiday structures everywhere except for Jaywick and Wrabness would leave areas for potential re-development for holiday use after the cessation of hostilities and subsequent demilitarisation of coastal areas. Local entrepreneurs and landowners, as well as out of town business people, would see opportunities to provide basic holiday accommodation on redundant parcels of land within the districts coastal areas. The existing tourism infrastructure of the commercial holiday camps, hotels, bed and breakfast accommodation and holiday hutments that remained intact would help to re-establish the area once again as a popular holiday destination as they re-opened, but would ultimately scarcely be able to cope with demand. Hotels and guest houses would gradually experience diminishing popularity.

In whatever form Tendring's tourist trade would resume after the war, it would, therefore, have to be on a rather different basis to that which was in development

previously. The demand, of course, for accommodation in Tendring's resorts would resume and grow as predicted once again in peacetime. The commercial holiday camps would be handed back and would re-open for business as would the remaining hotels and guest houses. But with high demand for holiday accommodation and the marginalisation or eradication of plotland holiday homes, the time was ripe for a new form to emerge. Hotels, once the principal form of accommodation in Tendring before the arrival of Butlin's and Warner's, would struggle to achieve any level of dominance in the post-war years, as the market place would be very different with increasing working-class and decreasing middle-class customers. The passing of the Camps Act and the embracing of the commercial holiday camp as a solution for the accommodation of increased numbers of working-class holiday makers by ministers, as discussed further below, therefore marginalised the hotel traders in favour of the newer forms of accommodation that were envisaged in the post-war domestic holiday landscape.

4.3 The Camps Act and the wartime activities of Butlin and Warner

William 'Billy' Butlin has claimed in his memoirs that when he began work on the construction of the first Butlin's Luxury Holiday Camp at Skegness in October 1935 'none of us knew anything about holiday camps'.¹⁰ But he and his friend and business associate Harry Warner soon realised that it was now an ideal time to offer a new form of 'upgraded' holiday camp: a model that would alleviate the problems that had now become associated with the earlier established forms of pioneer camp outlined in Chapter One. Disadvantages such as poor sanitation, irregular water supplies, limited facilities and often very basic accommodation characterised many of these existing holiday camps. Butlin's vision at Skegness was to provide a holiday camp that had modern facilities, accommodating up to 1,000 visitors in 600 purpose-built chalets that

¹⁰ W. Butlin and P. Dacre, *The Billy Butlin Story: A Showman to the End* (London: Robson Books, 1982), p.105.

had the advantages of electricity and running water supplied to each unit. In addition to this, the camp would be augmented with a theatre, dining and recreation halls, a gymnasium, tennis courts, swimming pool, and landscaped gardens complete with bowling, golf and cricket areas. Butlin's venture was at first fraught with practical difficulties, but these were soon overcome and the camp successfully opened on Easter Saturday the following year.¹¹

Butlin's at Skegness established a new model of domestic holiday provision: one that offered comfort, cleanliness and, critically, a fully-catered experience. Visitors to this new commercial holiday camp did not have to buy and prepare their own food, make their own entertainment, endure poor sanitation or fetch and carry fresh water. As noted earlier, everything was taken care of in an 'all-inclusive price' of £2 12s 6d.¹² Thus, visitors to the new commercial camps prior to the enactment of holidays with pay legislation were able to testify that this new form could, perhaps, soon offer a real alternative to boarding house accommodation, pioneer holiday camps and camping for the working-classes. Expensive and, therefore, exclusive hotels and a sizeable proportion of holiday plotland colonies were still very much the preserve of the mainly middle-class holidaymaker. The seaside boarding houses had, despite the comic, stereotype image of the seaside landlady 'charging for use of the cruet', provided a valuable service by offering relatively affordable accommodation to working-class holidaymakers (especially in the north), particularly during the inter-war years. In Blackpool, for example, prices scarcely rose after 1920.¹³ Rooms were available for as little as 6 shillings per night in the un-licensed houses or 'Kippaxs'.¹⁴ But as far as commercial holiday camps were concerned, the hotel and boarding house trades along with the residents and local

¹¹ Butlin, *Butlin Story*, p. 105.

¹² Sources: tariff figures kindly supplied by Jude Rodway, Butlin's Archive, Butlin's Skyline Ltd., Bognor; see also *Daily Mirror*, April 30th 2011.

¹³ J. Walton, *The Blackpool Landlady: A Social History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), pp. 171-191.

¹⁴ G. Cross, *Worktowners at Blackpool* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.653-70.

authorities of many of England's seaside resorts were generally opposed to this new form of holiday provision.¹⁵ This could have proved highly problematical to the further expansion of commercial holiday camps in England, but for two factors which proved advantageous to Butlin and Warner in particular.

Firstly, as mentioned above, in due course the commercial holiday camp model established by Butlin at Skegness appeared to offer an ideal solution to ministers who would foresee problems of overcrowding by, and lack of affordable accommodation for, the new waves of working-class holidaymakers flocking to seaside resorts as a result of paid holidays. Butlin himself acknowledged that '...luck depends mainly on doing the right thing at the right time and this certainly proved to be the case with my holiday camps'. He quickly saw a huge new potential market for his camps if holidays with pay legislation could be enacted, and he actively lobbied Members of Parliament to promote the cause. As the reform became law he embraced the new situation with a bold advertising slogan: 'Holidays with pay: Holidays with play: A Week's holiday for a week's wage.'¹⁶ Butlin and his subsequent fellow commercial holiday camp entrepreneurs now had their potential market firmly identified, and it would be hard for anyone to argue that these new commercial camps would not appear to provide an ideal solution for the problems of providing new affordable holiday accommodation for working families.

Secondly, as Britain edged closer to war, the government began to foresee the need for accommodation in the form of camps for children, workers and refugees away from urban areas. In fact, the need for camps was seen as an urgent matter by at least January 1939, as representatives of Government departments including Health and Labour, Education and the Office of Works were called together to 'consider the question of the

¹⁵ S. Dawson, *Holiday Camps in Twentieth-Century Britain: Packaging Pleasure* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 123.

¹⁶ Butlin, *Butlin Story*, pp. 118, 119.

Government constructing or assisting the construction of camps to serve the triple purpose of school camps and camps for adult holiday-makers in time of peace and camps for refugees in time of war.¹⁷ Remarkably, at this time key ministers and government officials seemed to view accommodation for holiday-makers in peacetime as a pressing concern, along with the urgent need for camps as accommodation for school children and refugees during wartime. This was a significant factor for Butlin and the commercial holiday camp entrepreneurs.

This balance of priorities is echoed in the minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at the beginning of February 1939. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain seemed cautious at first, however; taking the view that ‘there was some danger in considering the use of camps in connection with too many purposes.’ He worried that ‘the evacuation of children, the accommodation of persons whose houses had been destroyed, hospital accommodation in emergency and holiday camps had all been mentioned.’ However, politically independent Sir John Anderson (Lord Privy Seal) pressed convincingly for a public/private partnership and multiple uses, arguing that: ‘when we were spending so much money on defence purposes it was attractive to find an item of expenditure which had a peace-time use.’ He also affirmed his certainty that ‘if the Government threw their mantle over this scheme for camps, private enterprise would do a great deal more to help.’ The Prime Minister ultimately conceded that ‘If arrangements could be made for the camps to be used in peace-time, that was all to the good.’ But he also continued to have doubts toward any scheme that would involve subsidising the construction of

¹⁷ CAB/24/282.

holiday camps.¹⁸ Anderson's contribution at this stage was, therefore, clearly an important and far-reaching one.¹⁹

Chamberlain's doubts did not, in fact, ultimately hold much sway in this regard. By March of 1939 the Camps Bill was drawn up, and an Act of Parliament quickly followed. Although relatively short and concise, the Camps Bill that went before Parliament secured legislation that effectively cleared the way forward and secured finances for the construction of such camps, importantly, with the concept of peace time usage included. In its preliminary explanatory memorandum, the Bill made it clear that 'The Government will assume responsibility for a share of the cost in view of the use to which the camps may be put in war-time, while intending that those who use the camps in peace time should make a reasonable contribution in respect of their use.'²⁰

Thus, objections from local residents, hoteliers or local officials regarding holiday camp, or indeed any form of camp construction, were overcome. And, in due course, Butlin and Warner were undoubtedly placed, as pioneering camp-builders, in an ideal position to give advice and ultimately take on the task of overseeing the provision of such camps, with a view to eventual peace time conversion where possible. This whole process was aided by subsequent wartime developments. The report of the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas (The Scott Report) stated that the 'establishment of National Parks in Britain is long overdue.' It further stated: 'As part of a National Parks Scheme we recommend that the coast of England and Wales should be considered as a whole with a view to the prevention of further spoliation.'²¹ If this particular recommendation were to be adopted, only facilities approved by the government would be able to

¹⁸ The National Archives, CAB/23/97, *Conclusions of a Meeting of Cabinet*, 1st Feb. 1939, pp. 1-4.

¹⁹ See also Dawson, *Holiday Camps*, p. 125; Dawson also mentions here that the Conservative MP Viscount Astor 'suggested that the camps be built immediately as holiday centres and used to accommodate workers with paid holidays.'

²⁰ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, *Camps Bill*, 20th March, 1939.

²¹ The National Archives, HLG. 80, *Report of the Committee on Land Use in Rural Areas* (Cmd. 6378) 1942, P. 59, para. 178.

establish in coastal areas. As the commercial camps were so approved, this would allow them an unprecedented opportunity to establish in coastal locations during peacetime. In due course the National Camps Corporation was set up under the Camps Act of 1939, and the construction of a planned fifty camps was underway (some 'thirty-one with dormitories, classrooms, kitchens, dining and assembly halls and accommodation for staff had been built in England and Wales' by mid-1940).²² Of these, some would present opportunities for post-war leisure development: Fred Pontin's purchase of a former military camp at Bream in Somerset was successful enough for him to buy further camps, and form the Pontins holiday group in 1946.²³

Billy Butlin would, however, at first see 1939 as a year of mixed fortune, being largely unaware of such developments. He had embarked upon the construction of a third camp at Filey in Yorkshire which, as events progressed, he believed he would now have to abandon and leave unfinished until the war was over. He saw his first camp at Skegness, and his newest second camp at Clacton-on-Sea, handed over to the armed services and he busied himself with the 'mothballing' of his amusement rides and equipment at his various amusement parks. But his fortunes would change and his opportunities become apparent when Hore Belisha, the War Minister, sent for him. Butlin claimed to have had a good relationship with the minister, partly, no doubt, as a result of helping him raise money for the Great Ormand Street Hospital, of which Belisha was a governor. The Skegness and Clacton camps had proved of much use as military establishments, and the government wanted a price from Butlin to complete the Filey Camp. Butlin recalled that Belisha confided to him that it cost the army £250 per head of accommodation to build a camp; Butlin claimed he duly quoted £175 per head, with the stipulation that he would be given the option to buy back the camp at the end of the war for three-fifths of the

²² Barton, *Working-class Organisations*, p.183.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.185.

cost. On the agreement of what was seen as a good deal for all concerned, Butlin gave his friend and associate Harry Warner the job of completing Filey. Shortly after, the Admiralty requested he search for a suitable site on the south coast, in order to begin construction of yet another camp. After Dunkirk, the choice of location for this camp moved to North Wales (the south coast now seeming too vulnerable), and Butlin found a suitable green-field location at Pwllheli.²⁴ Before this camp was finished, yet another was commissioned by the Admiralty this time in Scotland; Butlin chose a site at Ayr.²⁵ All of these sites were destined to become Butlin's Holiday Camps in the post-war period.

Butlin was later called into the Ministry of Supply by Lord Beaverbrook to assess and address the problem of the accommodation of female labour in the armaments factories. As many of the factories were located in remote areas, the problem was one of desertion from the 'hurriedly-built hostels which were dreary beyond description.' This situation was deemed to need sensitive handling, and Butlin carried out an inspection of the hostels. He soon realised that the whole atmosphere and perception of the accommodation was wrong, and made recommendations toward resolving these problems. Hostels became 'Residential Clubs', and were opened up to entertainments, activities and social functions, all of which had been previously forbidden. The numbers of workers leaving the accommodation was thereby drastically reduced.²⁶

This activity, coupled with Butlin's promotion of the Holidays at Home Campaign helped secure his standing as Britain's most experienced and capable organiser of mass leisure and accommodation strategies. Holidays at Home, an initiative to encourage rest and recuperation without the need to travel any great distance in times of fuel shortage, also allowed Butlin to recruit his 'old fairground friends Billy and Charlie Manning' to

²⁴ Butlin, *Butlin Story*, pp. 130, 131.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 133.134.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-138.

form travelling fairs and make good and profitable use of previously mothballed fairground equipment.²⁷

If Butlin's pre-war model commercial holiday camps were to be a success after the war, they would of course need a clientele that were in a position to make use of them. In this regard it may be concluded that Butlin also had an ally in the person of the wartime Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin. When Churchill appointed Bevin (then Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union) to the post of Minister for Labour in 1940, he went a long way to ensuring that the labour movement would have a strong voice in wartime politics. Bevin may well have been deeply moved on a visit to the 50th division at Portsmouth prior to their embarkation for France when he was allegedly asked 'Ernie, when we have done this job for you, are we going back to the dole?'²⁸ His determination to ensure full employment for returning soldiers and the working classes after the war would ultimately become a major priority for the post-war Labour government in a new deal for the working classes, thereby, seemingly, helping to ensure a market for the new commercial camps. In addition, Bevin, to the alarm of many Conservative back bench M.P.s, continually pushed for social reform which would eventually become a key aspect of post-war policy. His Catering and Wages Bill, which sought to lay down a minimum wage and improved conditions for those in the hotel and catering trades (which could, possibly, have worked against Butlin after the war), was voted down by Tory M.P.'s. But he nevertheless maintained his campaigning, and pushed through the Catering Wages Act of 1943. As part of this campaign he asserted his view that there was a need to plan for post-war holiday accommodation and holiday centres for a population who 'have had no holiday, no rest, no recuperation since the war broke out.'²⁹ The Catering Wages

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-140.

²⁸ P. Addison, *Now the War is Over: A Social History of Britain 1945-51* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1985), p.1.

²⁹ Barton, *Working-class Organisations*, p.185; Dawson, *Holiday Camps*, p.146.

Commission, established under the Catering Wages Act, set up the Post-War Holidays Group which would aid the conversion of government accommodation (workers hostels) to holiday accommodation in peacetime.³⁰

Other M.P.s' on the Left suggested that the way forward after the war would be to institute state-owned or nationalised holiday camps which could be fully planned and controlled. During the second reading of the Camps Bill in March 1939, Philip Noel-Baker, Labour MP for Derby expressed his support for the Bill:

we want these camps; as I have said, for their peace-time uses, and we want them soon. We want them for school camps; we want them for holiday camps for adults. We believe that the need and the demand for such camps already exists on a scale far beyond what the Government have allowed for.³¹

Responding to Blackpool's Conservative Member of Parliament Roland Robinson's assertion, that he had suggested that 'there are growing up camps and chalets and other things which are designed to meet the requirements of people with the smallest purses', Noel-Baker's response was unequivocal:

I said exactly the opposite, and that the commercial camps cannot meet the needs of the lower-paid manual workers. That is why we want holiday camps on a Government basis.³²

Although the idea seemed to have some currency during the war years, ultimately it did not become part of any manifesto for peacetime; although the view that planned commercial holiday camps would feature largely in the post-war holiday scene was popular.³³

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.186.

³¹ *Hansard*, Camps Bill, second reading, House of Commons Debate, 29 March 1939 vol. 345 cc2073-174.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ National Archives, HLG/92/1, Ministry of Works and Planning internal correspondence, July 1942, as cited in D. Hardy and C. Ward, *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (London: Mansell, 1986), pp. 122-23.

Recent works have echoed the view that the Second World War provided opportunities for commercial holiday camp entrepreneurs to capitalise on the re-facilitation of war-time camps for holiday use in peacetime.³⁴ The war did consolidate the role of Butlin and Warner as Britain's foremost mass holiday catering specialists. But, as stated in the introduction to this study, what has remained undemonstrated is that whilst commercial holiday camp proprietors were placed in a highly advantageous position at the end of the war to capitalise on the demand for affordable holiday accommodation, the commercial holiday camp model would never dominate this market: in 1951 the holiday camp was estimated to account for only three percent of overall holiday accommodation (this does include holidays abroad, however), rising to a peak in 1970 of six percent (not including foreign holidays). But in 1970 caravans (this does, presumably include touring with static) account for eighteen percent of the accommodation for British holiday makers, second only to staying with friends or relatives at twenty four percent.³⁵ The holiday caravan in either of its forms, therefore, becomes a holiday choice preferred by many. The reasons for this are complex, but may be partly attributed to the social effects of the war upon working-class consumers (which are discussed later in this chapter), the post-war planning legislation as discussed below and, of course, the achievement of statutory paid holidays for workers.

4.4 The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act

In addition to the above contributory factors, a rather complex piece of planning legislation should now be considered. The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, when its full implications and complexities were eventually fully understood by local authorities

³⁴ Barton, *Working-class Organisations*, pp.184-5; Dawson, *Holiday Camps*, p. 123.

³⁵ Statistics from Digest of Tourist Statistics No. 2, in A. Burkart and S. Medlik, *Tourism: Past, Present and Future* (London: Heinemann, 1981), p.84; Statistics for domestic tourism can be problematic: see J. Walton, *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: MUP, 2000), p. 38.

and regional planning officers,³⁶ would have a profound effect upon the domestic holiday scene shortly after the end of World War Two. The evolution of planning legislation and the landmark 1947 Act have been touched upon and discussed in previous chapters, and the implications of the 1947 Act for holiday plotland developments have been noted. It has been demonstrated in Chapter Three that in many areas, such as Saint Osyth Beach, as a direct consequence of the removal of huts during the war and the restrictions of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, holiday caravans became dominant in considerable numbers during the post-war period. It was also demonstrated in Chapter Three that in Tendring at least, once an area large or small has had some measure of plotland holiday home development it can, and often did, after the 1947 Act attract continued development with caravans either augmenting or replacing the plotland holiday homes. Further analysis of how the new planning legislation came about and how it helped create this phenomenon may now shed further light on the immediate post-war situation.

As noted in Chapter Three, the chief architect of the 1947 planning Act was Lewis Silkin. Silkin entered Parliament as Labour M.P. for Peckham in 1936. A solicitor by occupation, his interests had always centred on town planning and housing. Whilst his involvement with planning matters is evident from this time, his most influential and important period of activity was as Minister of Town and Country Planning in Clement Atlee's post-war government. The wartime government, under its emergency measures, had been enabled to exercise a level of state control and management that was unprecedented, and that would have been politically impossible, and indeed unnecessary, in peacetime. It is quite conceivable that Silkin judged that whilst the population were still used to this style of government at the end of the war, the situation could not be

³⁶ Councillors at CUDC, in common with others throughout the country had to attend training sessions on how to interpret and implement the Act.

expected to last. His view that sweeping measures would be needed to achieve the aims that he felt were necessary in terms of planning reform, housing and land use would therefore need to be spelled out and acted upon as quickly as possible.

Silkin's primary concern was essentially housing and the urgent creation of 'New Towns', but his rhetoric in 1945 clearly indicated that ideas for land use and reform were equally high on his agenda. In an essay based upon a lecture prepared for the Fabian Society in 1945 discussing the twin aims of economic efficiency and social convenience as characteristics of national planning policy, Silkin wrote:

To realise these objectives, the solutions of these twin problems, we have to do two things. We have first to remedy the defects of our towns and villages, and to get rid of the abuses which mar the countryside; and, second, we have to control new developments, not merely to avoid the mistakes of the past, but to secure new and improved living standards.³⁷

The view that the landscape was indeed marred by abuses was probably re-enforced by the reports from surveys of the rural and coastal landscape carried out during the war by Cambridge geographer J. Steers, and by the lobbying from organisations such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the National Trust. As has been discussed, the coastal landscape in particular had witnessed the building of makeshift holiday accommodation in several locations, particularly in the southeast of England. However, recent work has demonstrated that it would be too simplistic a view to see such lobbying during the early and mid-twentieth century as the result of campaigns run by marginal, elite, preservationist aesthetes, looking backward to an idealised and nostalgic view of the English landscape. Nor was the work of small groups such as the National Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising (SCAPA, a group formed to check the disfigurement of the landscape by unsightly billboards) or the

³⁷ L. Silkin, 'Our Plan for Land and Houses', in H. Morrison, *et. al.*, *Forward from Victory! Labour's Plan* (London: V. Gollancz, 1946), p. 67.

National Trust, for example, largely insignificant. They had, as Paul Readman demonstrates, widespread support in Parliament, the media and the public at large.³⁸ And so the post-war administration clearly had popular objectives in terms of new-build housing and land use, and indeed had clear views on how holiday and leisure activities should be organised, and how they would impact upon the environment. This would not include the un-regulated holiday plotland development that proliferated in the inter-war years. It can be argued that neither would it include (if it could have been foreseen) encouragement for private holiday caravan sites to develop in the way that they did, but again, this was one of the main unpredicted and significant outcomes of Silkin's plan.

The Atlee administration was much more in favour of planned, organised holiday camps along the lines of Billy Butlin's commercial model; this was, therefore, still seen as a solution to the need for increased accommodation for domestic holidaymaking and leisure; an option that had been discussed during 1939 prior to the Camps Act, as detailed in the previous chapter. Silkin was also an advocate for land nationalisation as an answer to the problems of post-war urban and sub-urban reconstruction and agricultural re-development, and was in tune with Labour thinking generally on the subject of land reform. The Report of the Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment (The Uthwatt Report) of 1942 had laid bare the complex and controversial tasks associated with the agreement of compensation for land and assessing development rights; in 1943 Silkin argued that the only solution would, therefore, be the nationalisation of all land in urban areas.³⁹ Also, as part of an overall planning policy, commercial holiday camps could be controlled and would form part of a much wider vision for the protection and development of rural and coastal Britain, as recommended by the Scott Report. Under

³⁸ See P. Readman, 'Landscape Preservation, 'advertising disfigurement', and English National Identity c. 1890–1914' in *Rural History*, 12, (2001), pp 61–83.

³⁹ C. Griffiths, 'Socialism and the Land Question' in M. Cragoe and P. Readman (eds.), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750 – 1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.250.

such a scheme, the government would be able to ensure that many more families would be able to afford a decent holiday in comfortable surroundings without the prospect of further spoiling or overcrowding at coastal resorts and holiday centres. Yet although this had been discussed during the war years, and was seen by some politicians on the left in the coalition government as a way forward after the war, the post-war reality was not to live up to wartime ideas and ideals. Although land nationalisation was committed to in the 1945 Labour general election manifesto it did not subsequently materialise, and by 1950 was only mentioned as policy in a much more limited way, with no real commitment.⁴⁰ Susan Barton's work demonstrates the parallels here with post-war state holiday planning: a report for the government's newly established British Tourist and Holidays Board bemoaned the unsatisfied demand for holiday camps. The report also feared that if provision was left to the private sector, virgin coastal areas could be at risk and existing resorts' prosperity subjected to unwanted competition. A proposal for the building of a 'Holiday New Town' between Kidwelly and Prestatyn was put to Harold Wilson, President of the Board of Trade by Lewis Silkin at the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. This plan, along with others for formal state intervention in holiday accommodation provision was effectively shelved, however, as the more pressing requirements of the post-war reconstruction were given priority.⁴¹ Any notion of state-owned and operated holiday camps was similarly not followed through. The Post-War Holidays Group, set up under the Catering Wages Commission, likewise failed to make any real impact. Its membership, including representatives from the Camping Club of Great Britain, the Royal Institution of British Architects, the Workers Travel Association, the Co-Operative Holidays Association, the Holiday Fellowship, the Miner's Welfare Association, the Industrial Welfare Society and the YMCA, collectively

⁴⁰ *Let Us Face the Future: A Declaration of Labour Policy for the Consideration of Nation* (London: The Labour Party, 1945), Section VII: Land.

⁴¹ Barton, *Working-class Organisations*, pp. 186-8.

recommended against direct governmental control, suggesting that a separate body should administer the use of existing government hostels for holiday use and provide funding for local authorities and voluntary organisations to do the same.⁴² Ultimately, these plans substantially failed to materialise.

Silkin's 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, however, was successfully enacted, and was the first major piece of planning legislation to radically affect the way in which developers and individuals could approach building and development in this country. Its architects had, within a wider agenda, sought to curtail and control unwanted and unregulated building, and create a system of application and approval that would become a universal part of the process. In short, all land would now be subject to planning control. Apart from minor development, any person wishing to develop land had to obtain permission from the local planning authority to do so.⁴³ This did, of course, deliberately target unplanned, spontaneous development that included plotland holiday homes. Silkin's frustration at the attempts to clear plotland structures from Shoreham Beach, as discussed in Chapter Three, allegedly fuelling his determination to see an end to such structures.⁴⁴

It has been discussed how government envisaged holiday camp development of the commercial, regulated variety helping to satisfy the need for domestic holiday accommodation after the war during the formulation of the Camps act and in subsequent reports and recommendations; this would thereby make individual ad-hoc plotland-style provision obsolete. And the sooner such shacks, huts and shanties could be cleared away the better, thus restoring the 'ruined' areas of rural coastal England that they had hitherto occupied. But there was an un-intended outcome: plotlands would not

⁴² The National Archives, LAB 11/2055, *Report of the Post-War Holidays Group to the Catering Wages Commission*, 1944.

⁴³ V. Moore, *Planning Law*, 7th ed. (London: Blackstone, 2000), p.5.

⁴⁴ J. Sheail, *An Environmental History of Twentieth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 41.

be comprehensively replaced (in terms of provision) by well-ordered, commercial campsites agreed and sanctioned by local and national government, such as Butlin's newly re-facilitated 'buy-back' camps at Filey, Pwllheli and Ayr, or Fred Pontin's growing chain of similarly re-vamped camps. They were much more extensively replaced by caravans on sites founded and run by local operators who, in many cases by developing camping grounds in areas where plotland activity was also evident, were familiar with the recreational wants of the former Plotlanders and working-class urban families. In north-east Essex, for example, it was estimated that in 1948 the number of 'approved caravans' on sites totalled 3,389 units. By 1958 this figure would rise to 7,397.⁴⁵ The reason for this is quite simply that although the 1947 Act was complex and detailed, it seemed to be silent on the siting of mobile structures to be used as holiday accommodation. The static caravan holiday home did not exist as such directly after the war, and the architects of the legislation could scarcely have conceived of its subsequent development. The static caravan developed as a result of demand for caravans as holiday homes to be sited on caravan sites either by individuals, or by the site operators themselves to be hired to holiday makers. As will be further discussed below, the practice of second-hand pre-war touring caravans being sited on campsites or on private fields, at first surrounded by tents and other mobile forms of accommodation marked the birth of the first caravan sites and this subsequent activity. Thus the 1947 Act should be seen as a critical factor in the development of the holiday caravan site- virtually eradicating plotland development (the existing form of independently originated low-cost holiday home), yet allowing the permanent siting of caravans on campsites for use as holiday homes and accommodation. And, as will be demonstrated further, demand for these caravan holiday homes on caravan sites was considerable after the war.

⁴⁵ ERO, C/MTp 13/1, Report, Essex County Council Caravan Sub-Committee, August 1958.

In retrospect this is, therefore, unsurprising: many post-war working-class and lower middle-class urban families and individuals sought to assert, once again but with renewed determination, an independent choice which reflected a desire to avoid a regimented, organised holiday regime and try to forge a more self-determined and original experience as the inter-war plotlanders and pre-war campers had before them. Despite the vision of the post-war planners, it was the working-class urban families in partnership with local land owners' and, as will be shown, a responsive caravan manufacturing industry, who dictated the form of post-war domestic holiday provision. The 'portable domesticity' realised by pioneering inter-war middle-class and working-class families as an ingredient to holiday enjoyment and satisfaction would be sought once again in the post-war period in a more clearly defined manner. It would not be until the Caravan Sites Act of 1960 that national planning legislation would catch up with caravan site development. In the Tendring District coastal resorts the decline of hotels and guest houses in the post-war period was considerable, with static caravans becoming the major form of self-catering accommodation. In 1951 the Clacton Town Guide featured advertisements for some fifty-five hotels; by 1971 thirty of these hotels had ceased to operate. The 1951 guide also listed some eighty-four boarding establishments, and although sixty-seven establishments were listed in 1971, it is estimated that in reality in 1971 there were only half of the actual number that were operating twenty years earlier.⁴⁶

4.5 Wartime social change and the making of the post-war consumer

Such changes in society that occurred during the Second World War which impacted upon the nature of post-war consumerism and holiday making will now be considered. The collapse of the Conservative hegemony in 1940 heralded the start of a radical shift in public opinion and attitude. This, in a sense, was inevitable given the new 'social

⁴⁶ ERO, T/Z 38/229, Seymour, A. *Patterns of Employment in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex*, un-published thesis, 1973, submitted to St. Osyth's College of Education, Clacton-on-Sea; see also Walton, *The British Seaside*, p. 158.

contract' that the state would have to enter into with the people in order to prepare for total war. Ross McKibbin's argument that this was a rapid process, and one that was symptomatic of a widespread revulsion of Chamberlain and his fellow Conservative supporter's doomed policy of appeasement, convincingly refutes notions of a more gradual but significant swing in public attitude and political opinion towards the left during the inter-war years under the influence of (and indicated by) factors such as the threat of Fascism, widespread support for the republicans in the Spanish Civil War and the situation in Russia.⁴⁷ Fielding, Thompson and Tiratsoo also suggest that 'Labour's 1945 victory owed much to the way the Second World War led many voters to regard the Conservatives in a new and critical light.'⁴⁸ With the decisive, rapid discrediting of the political right after Chamberlain's fall, reflected in publications such as the Left Book Club's *Guilty Men*, many that served in the armed forces as well as those on the home front must have re-examined their political outlook as well as their place in society.⁴⁹ The coalition government formed under Winston Churchill was, of necessity, fully representative of the labour movement and the working classes; effective leadership otherwise would have been unthinkable. These circumstances would fuel an on-going process of social change and political awareness, further paving the way forward for British social democracy and the Labour Party's landslide election victory in 1945, thereby creating the social landscape for a post-war rise in working-class assertiveness-both at work and in the market place. Although some historians argue that indifference to politics and politicians prevented further reform and change under Attlee, Geoffrey Field argues that political engagement at this time was high: the late 1940's and early

⁴⁷ See R. McKibbin, *Parties and People: England 1914-1951* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), pp.106-139.

⁴⁸ S. Fielding, *et. al. England Arise! The Labour Party and Popular Politics in 1940s Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 67.

⁴⁹ 'Cato', *Guilty Men* (London: V. Gollancz, 1940). The book's authors were in reality the journalists Michael Foot (a future Labour Party leader), Frank Owen (the former Liberal MP), and Peter Howard (a Conservative MP). It named, criticized and blamed some fifteen politicians and policy makers concerned with British defence policy and the policy of appeasement prior to Dunkirk for the disastrous failure of such policies.

1950's being a time of high election turnouts and high party membership levels.⁵⁰ But is the fact that post-war consumers are seen to make more independent, informed choice in many areas, not least in holiday provision, a clear consequence of this process of growing working-class assertiveness and empowerment being fostered during the war?

To answer this question we could start by considering Jim Tomlinson's argument that the post-war working class sought a better life that included not just decent housing, employment and social security, but freedom from over-regulation. When one considers the level of war time state control that was, of necessity, exercised over the population, this is unsurprising. Whilst high levels of control were seen as acceptable during the war years and possibly for a year or so after during an initial period of national recovery and reconstruction, the mood would inevitably change. The 'wish for a more relaxed, less regulated lifestyle – a yearning for a return to a full peace, rather than an indefinite continuation of wartime conditions' would eventually prevail.⁵¹ But as McKibbin argues, it was in fact the cautious attitude of the new Labour leaders to *excessive* institutional reform that also prevented the state to go any further, in terms of regulation and control, than the provision of the reforms outlined in the Beveridge report and a program of reconstruction and house building.⁵² This caution was, arguably, a response to the mood and attitudes of the working class and lower-middle classes that had shifted significantly during the war years.

To explore this idea further, we might consider social change in terms of how the working class saw themselves before, during, and after the war. Paul Addison cites oral history and Mass Observation (M-O) evidence to analyse the new assertiveness witnessed among some manual workers and those who would have been far more

⁵⁰ G. Field, *Blood, Sweat and Toil: Re-Making the British Working Class, 1939 – 1945* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), pp. 380-1.

⁵¹ J. Tomlinson, in N. Tiratsoo (ed.), *From Blitz to Blair: A New History of Britain Since 1939* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), pp.78-9.

⁵² McKibbin, *Parties and People*, pp. 162-3.

obliging in outlook and demeanour in the pre-war years. Witnesses speak of shop assistants, previously wary and highly co-operative with customers for fear of complaint and the subsequent loss of their jobs, suddenly becoming 'powerful people'; as the goods they served were in short supply, they were now in control. They would no longer need to feel subservient to their customers. Under the emergency transport restrictions, the 'clippies' on the busses took on a new status: they were in complete and total control of passengers in what was now important wartime work on the urban and provincial public transport network. These factors would serve to empower and enforce the status of workers who were previously given little regard by those who interacted with them. The fact that neighbours and colleagues were spending far more time together than ever before in urban areas and provincial communities gathering in air raid shelters, serving together in the home guard or ARP, serving on fire watches or sheltering in the underground in the capital may have been a catalyst for the further acceleration of the process of re-examining identity and promoting assertiveness through shared experience and increasing communication amongst working-class people.⁵³

Recent critical analysis of M-O evidence with regard to civilian morale during the blitz has proved revealing.⁵⁴ It is important to avoid attributing too much to the largely mythical notions of complete unity and solidarity amongst the working classes or indeed the extensive breaking down of social and class boundaries that were supposedly engendered by wartime experience. During the early stages of the war as London became a target for enemy bombing raids, social conditions in the large public shelters were at first far from cohesive, and those first groups who sought shelter in the capital's Underground stations or were queuing for transport on overcrowded busses were looked upon with at least indifference or even scorn by other, more middle-class tube users and car owners. And

⁵³ Addison, *Now the War is Over*, pp.7-9.

⁵⁴ See B. Beaven, and J. Griffiths, 'The Blitz, Civilian Morale and the City: Mass-Observation and Working-Class Culture in Britain, 1940-41' in *Urban History*, 1999, 26/01, pp. 71-88.

yet, still, there is much evidence of grass-roots, self-originated organizational activity (indeed, agency) in the Underground and public shelters as committees were set up, areas reserved for recreation, sleep and children's activities organized and allocated, collections for disinfectant, cleaning sundries and tips for porters organized and shelter group marshals and representatives appointed.⁵⁵ More widely collectivism amongst the working-class is evidenced by the embracing of traditional leisure institutions such as the working-man's club:

In their report on wartime Oxford, M-O noted that working-class clubs such as the Cowley Workers Social Club were experiencing 'greater demands than ever', whilst the middle-class conservative club was experiencing a decline in membership. There was a marked tendency for the middle class to retreat from their leisure activities in a time of crisis and the working class to increase their dependence on them.⁵⁶

Huge numbers of Londoners and urban dwellers in the Midlands and north of England also felt the dire hardships of homelessness and mass evacuations as a result of bombing raids; initial exoduses from the capital overwhelmed any official capacity for temporary housing. Large numbers of displaced people sought sanctuary in any vacant public or private building or shelter, being forced to improvise and make-do in the most difficult of circumstances. Amongst such people in Manchester and Hull, not only did morale suffer, 'but a sense of alienation manifested itself in outward hostility to the government and officialdom.'⁵⁷

As the war progressed, in the capital and other areas this initial chaos and disorder seemed to then have given way to grass-roots organization, improvisation and collective mutual interaction and responsibility: the Underground (which came to be used for shelter by public pressure against the wishes of the authorities) became an area of

⁵⁵ Field, *Blood, Sweat and Toil*, pp. 44-46.

⁵⁶ Beaven and Griffiths, 'The Blitz, Civilian Morale and the City', p.82.

⁵⁷ Beaven and Griffiths, 'The Blitz, Civilian Morale and the City', p. 81; Field, *Blood, Sweat and Toil*, pp. 44-46; see also T. Harrison, *Living through the Blitz* (London: Collins, 1976), pp.118-21, as cited in Field, *Blood, Sweat and Toil*, p.46.

communal shelter and living even after the bombing raids became less frequent following the German invasion of the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ Pre-war predictions of high numbers of severe psychiatric casualties caused by the strain of severe and persistent bombing in urban areas did not materialize.⁵⁹ Although there was crime, looting and vandalism during the darkest times on the home front, there was also evidence of solidarity, mutual support and grass-roots organization. Out of all of this, and evidenced by the developing stoicism, rationality and adaptability of the many who endured such hardship comes the continuing social change, assertiveness and re-evaluation of 'place-in-society' discussed above. Although this phenomenon has been documented and discussed by historians, it is, perhaps, best epitomized and visualized by Henry Moore's remarkable and moving drawings of Londoners sheltering in the underground, made at the time in his capacity as a war artist.

Despite Addison's assertion that the 'social changes of wartime were temporary', it is evident that for working families the process of increasing agency and assertion was just a symptom of a wider phenomenon that was, by now, in evidence. Field cites Stanislaw Andrzejewski's view that as modern warfare calls for the total participation of, and sacrifice from, all social groups it therefore has a levelling effect which ultimately benefits previously marginalized people by providing enhanced citizenship rights and increased social power. He acknowledges Arthur Marwick's studies which included the suggestion that the war acted more as a social catalyst, accelerating social change that was already progressing. But he also acknowledges more recent work which questions the idea of the Second World War as a 'turning point in British history' in this regard.⁶⁰ Indeed, it has been demonstrated that the notion of the lasting dissolution of class barriers and the unifying effect of the war, especially in economic terms, is

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

questionable.⁶¹ But social change had been in train since before 1939; a shift in political opinion was accelerated after Dunkirk and the hardships of war further entrenched working-class agency, reliance on traditional leisure pursuits and hostility toward officialdom.

It has also been suggested that political factors coupled with changes in perceived social status and public mood brought about by wartime hardship, necessities and obligations may have had a direct consequence upon the very nature of post-war working-class consumerism in terms of choice: this assertion, whilst it may appear to offer a plausible argument, is difficult to either prove or refute. But nevertheless the increase in post-war holiday consumerism in quantitative terms is clear. Overall, consumer expenditure in Britain reached its pre-war level by 1950, after which there was a rapid increase as a boom period began.⁶² In 1939 some fifteen million holidays of four nights or more were taken away from home by twenty-three percent of the UK population. In 1951 the figures were twenty five million holidays taken by half of the population.⁶³ Holidays with pay would, of course, have had a direct effect here, as would rising levels of car ownership, access to hire-purchase schemes and improving transport infrastructure. But the choices that these post-war domestic holiday makers would make in terms of accommodation and location, in many cases refutes the idea that they would be happy to simply buy into the state-approved commercial holiday camp model where all needs would be catered for. In fact, a considerable proportion chose a self-catering holiday in a holiday caravan- clear evidence of continuing agency, resourcefulness and rejection of official, regimented or commercial options. These choices will be examined in Chapter Five.

⁶¹ See P. Summerfield, 'The Levelling of Class' in H. Smith (ed.) *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 179-207.

⁶² See I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 52-9.

⁶³ Statistics from Burkart and Medlik, *Tourism*, pp 86-7.

Field is amongst historians who do offer support to the view of the temporary nature of social change at least with regard to the experience of women during the war, however. And this observation may offer further evidence to the suggestion that for many women after 1945, the appeal of a holiday with no domestic work such as cooking, cleaning or child-minding was not universal. Field argues that a number of anxieties generated by the war such as separation, marital breakdown, low birth rates and alarm at the rise in juvenile delinquency 'all helped strengthen society's focus upon the recreation of family life [after the war] and with it an emphasis upon a woman's priority as mother, home-maker, and the pivotal figure in the well-being of the family as conceived as a psychological unit.'⁶⁴ The discussion of the Holidays with Pay legislation, above, has suggested that the freedom to choose an independent, highly personalised holiday experience would become the more powerful motivation (over notions of working-class housewives and families dissatisfaction with the catering arrangements in commercial holiday camps) for a considerable proportion of working families to shun the commercial holiday camp regimentation and routine. The post-war desire for a strengthening and re-affirming of family life which would have included the re-working of traditional gender roles in the parlour may also, therefore, have contributed to the appeal of the portable domesticity of the caravan holiday.

Thus, the landscape for the post-war working class holiday consumer was characterized by a number of factors that either originated during the war years, or more probably were enhanced and accelerated by them. Although any levelling of social class achieved during the war was at best temporary, a new mood of working-class assertion and sense of social importance, intensified during the experience of war, ultimately led to a new self-confidence bolstered by the post-war political climate. This confidence was also re-enforced by the fact that the consumer was more aware that there was a growing choice

⁶⁴ Field, *Blood, Sweat and Toil*, pp. 376-7.

in the market place. It was not necessary now, for example, to always seek the cheapest option or the only one that was available. Post-war working-class consumers were thereby *accepted* by suppliers into a wider, more diverse market place. As a result of a desire for a return to a 'full peace' as discussed above, that eschewed too much state control and regulation, and indeed any form of regimentation or excessive organization, holiday consumers would gradually seek to exercise independent, personalized and rational choice. And so social changes that were fuelled by the war not only helped to change the way the working-class saw themselves, but the way they were viewed by suppliers and producers. This can and should be seen as a contributory factor to the growth in post-war working-class consumerism, which would, of course, include spending on leisure and holidays. As the war finally came to an end and Britain's new post-war administration steered the nation toward a greater degree of social democracy, growing levels of working-class assertion and consumerism along with further change enacted in the form of new planning controls would further help to create the conditions for the new holiday caravan sites to emerge and flourish.

Chapter Five

The Early Static Caravan Sites, 1947 – 1960

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the emergence of caravan parks in the Tendring District and beyond during the immediate post-war period, including the prevailing and contributory social, political and legislative conditions. The caravan parks initial growth, and the marginalization of the hotels, guest houses and plotland holiday homes in the same period (despite the perceived dominance of the commercial holiday camps) is considered. The identities, backgrounds and experiences of the first static caravan park users, owners and park developers are investigated, as are the physical characteristics of the new parks in the Tendring District. Early caravan park life and ritual is examined in contrast to that on offer in the commercial holiday camps, and the birth of associated, mutually-dependant industries such as amusement catering and static caravan manufacturing will also be considered. Although commercial holiday camps in the Butlin's model were advertised widely and had the benefit of being acknowledged by government as a desirable solution to the envisaged problem of increasing demand for domestic holiday accommodation outstripping supply, independent caravan sites became the more popular alternative. The reasons for this are analysed: was the caravan site a truly alternative form- a considered choice for the majority of its users, or was it simply a cheaper alternative that users defaulted to on purely economic grounds? And why should it manifest so clearly as a post-war phenomenon? What contemporaneous factors fuelled its early development? This chapter will argue that the emergence of static holiday caravan sites after the war was driven by the agency of working-class families and individuals, and that these people acted in tandem with individual small-scale

entrepreneurs. They acted to originate a form of holiday provision that provided the freedoms, values and surroundings that stem from the forms of holiday making discussed in Chapter Two and the portable domesticity of the holiday plotlands discussed in Chapter Three. The empowering factors that acted upon such families discussed in Chapter Four further fuelled this process.

Exact data for the national picture has proved elusive, and estimates vary as to the number of holiday camps (that is to say sites that offered seasonal holiday accommodation as opposed to residential camps or travellers sites) that had been established in Britain by 1939. Katherine Ferry suggests that by the summer of 1938 Britain had around 150 holiday camps; Hardy and Ward estimate that in 1939 there were some 115 holiday camps with permanent buildings, and a further sixty temporary or tent-based establishments. John Benson goes further, suggesting that by 1938 Billy Butlin, Harry Warner, Fred Pontin and ‘other less well-known entrepreneurs, had founded more than two hundred camps with accommodation for 30,000 visitors a week-half a million people a year.’¹ These would soon be augmented by numerous static holiday caravan sites: spawning informally ‘below the radar’ but ultimately outnumbering their formal, commercial counterparts. By 1960 Tendring District’s two commercial camps had been augmented by some forty nine static holiday caravan sites and further twenty two sites licenced for various camping and touring activities.² Data for numbers of caravan sites on a national basis for this period are elusive, but the ratio between commercial camps and caravan sites in Tendring may be seen as a significant indicator.

As discussed, and in common with many pre-war holiday centres, the coastal resorts of Tendring District re-emerged from the war years significantly altered in a physical sense,

¹ See K. Ferry, *Holiday Camps* (Oxford: Shire, 2010), p. 13; D. Hardy and C. Ward, *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (London: Mansell, 1986), p. 119; J. Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880-1980* (Harlow: Longman, 1994), p. 42.

² Caravan Site Licence application records, Tendring District Council archives. See Appendix One.

and local authorities prepared to re-engage with the business of tourism amongst other concerns such as housing and re-construction. The existing tourist infrastructure was centred on the two commercial holiday camps (Butlin's at Clacton and Warner's at Dovercourt), a number of hotels and guest houses at Clacton, Frinton, Walton, Dovercourt and Harwich and the holiday plots at Jaywick, Saint Osyth Beach (what was left of them), Point Clear and Wrabness. Nine other sites, besides Butlin's and Warner's, claimed in their later site licence applications to have been established by then as camping grounds in one form or another.³ However, on a national basis the political, social and legislative landscape had and was still undergoing rapid change, and these changes would directly and irrevocably affect the way in which the provision of holiday accommodation in Tendring and beyond would subsequently evolve.

5.2 Working-class assertion and consumerism

A picture of relative decline in terms of economic, imperial and military power when considered in an international context, juxtaposed with one of growing affluence, industrial change and social advances at home, reveals a dual narrative within twentieth-century British historical analyses.⁴ As Cannadine observes, despite the apocalyptic warnings of successive politicians from Chamberlain and Churchill to Thatcher, 'Britain's retreat from greatness has been remarkably stable and trouble-free- no enemy invasions, no civil wars or revolutions, no end to civilisation.'⁵ Prominent writing in the domestic post-war social, economic and political historiography reminds us that in contrast to a well-worn historical narrative of Britain's decline ('declinism'), in fact a new 'golden age' of capitalism, affluence and cultural and social progress began sometime after 1950. This new age developed with the eventual receding of austerity and the end

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See B. Supple, 'Fear of Failing: Economic History and the Decline of Britain', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 47/3 (August 1994), pp. 441-458.

⁵ D. Cannadine, *Britain in 'Decline'?* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 1997), p. 29.

of rationing, lasting at least until the oil crises of 1973, and more accurately characterises Britain's domestic social and economic history and the mood of the British people in this period.⁶ As manufacturing returned to a peacetime footing and employment increased, a sense of confidence and stability began to emerge. Despite huge difficulties in sourcing materials directly after the war, the domestic caravan manufacturing industry responded to demand and quickly began to flourish again and a new product, the static holiday caravan, emerged. Holiday makers returned to resorts and coastal areas, and despite the widespread advertising of the commercial holiday camps, a new, alternative form of holiday centre, the static holiday caravan site, rapidly developed. It is against this broad background that the emergence of the holiday caravan parks in Tendring and the identity and motivation of those that participated in that development will be considered.

Immediately after the war, however, ministers from diverse backgrounds in the new government were faced with a volatile, unpredictable economy. Also, despite the efforts of post-war reformers a strangely un-reformed social order with pre-war attitudes seemed to drag on in some quarters against the tide of social change and as a result of a political back-lash: education, for example, remained stubbornly selective and elitist.⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapter, an understandable focus on the re-affirmation of family life after the anxieties of war saw women returning to more traditional family roles, being encouraged to do so within the state's patriarchal move toward social democracy. Over seven million people were released from the armed forces and war work, many of whom would be looking for new employment opportunities. Inevitably, and despite the convictions of Bevin as discussed in the previous chapter, the winter of

⁶ See J. Tomlinson, 'Inventing 'Decline': The Falling Behind of the British Economy in the Postwar Years', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 49/4 (Nov. 1996), pp. 731-757; H. Pemberton, 'Affluence, Relative Decline and the Treasury' in L. Black and H. Pemberton (eds.), *An Affluent Society? Britain's Post-War 'Golden Age Revisited* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 107; also E. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), pp. 257-263 and J. Tomlinson, *Democratic Socialism and Economic Policy: The Attlee Years, 1945-1951* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), Ch. 13.

⁷ P. Addison, *Now the War is Over* (London: Cape, 1985), p. 6.

1946-47 was one of high unemployment and power cuts, compounded by the worst weather for decades. A programme of austerity was deemed necessary to bolster an ailing economy, and yet 1948 (partly as a result of Marshall Aid) saw a period of rapid economic growth: a boom time. But in a still volatile economy, this turned to slump by 1949.⁸

Nevertheless, Clement Attlee's post-war cabinet was united in its desire to make sweeping changes in many areas: health care provision of course, the development of a nuclear deterrent, taking over the Bank of England, along with the nationalisation of key industries and services and new housing coupled with town planning legislation, were all high on the agenda of reform. But amongst all of this was the continuing agency of working people to enhance their own patterns of consumption. During the war, austerity and rationing were broadly accepted as a necessary sacrifice, although discontent at certain aspects such as food policy was not unusual. In peacetime, however, the continuation of the austerity policy and the growing Conservative critique of rationing created popular discontent with the Attlee administration. The 'black market' was rife, and if ordinary goods were in short supply, then many would simply turn to the street traders in order to purchase restricted goods at favourable prices. This continued for some time into the early 1950s, in spite of the widely publicised 'Bonfire of Controls' of November 1948 to February 1949 when Harold Wilson, whilst at the Board of Trade, removed many controls covering industrial supplies, consumer goods, and foreign imports.⁹ Whereas the state now saw a role for itself in the nature of provision of many aspects of daily life, such as housing, transport and town planning, working families would enact their own choice in ways that were symptomatic of a desire to once again

⁸ D. Childs, *Britain Since 1939: Progress and Decline*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 83, 100-103.

⁹ I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 51-61; see also M. Roodhouse, *Black Market Britain: 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 142-3.

enjoy goods and services that were sacrificed for the greater good during the conflict, in spite of continued austerity measures. Although a growth in working-class consumerism had been evident in the inter-war years during the economic revival of the late 1930's, the experience of the war was also (as discussed in Chapter Four) a probable catalyst for the further and more independent nature of developing post-war consumerism. The sharp growth in popularity of static caravan holidays is one example of this.

Other factors would also enhance this process after 1945. With the slow, gradual receding of austerity, working-class consumers were increasingly seen by themselves, manufacturers and suppliers as more informed purchasers who had, with the benefit of increasing knowledge partly through education and experience (but also partly influenced by advertising), for some time acquired, and were further developing, tastes. This was to be exercised in the market place by the selecting of goods and services that were preferred for reasons not just of suitability and price, but for taste, fashion and preference for aesthetic reasons over other like forms. Post-war economic policy, both Labour and Conservative, did little to change this. Whilst the left feared the transition of traditional customers into consumers- the homogenising of basic, individual customers into controllable groups whose needs were governed by large scale manufacturing and controlled through advertising,¹⁰ those on the right welcomed such movements.

Labour's post-war internal struggle to come to terms with this is reflected in Gaitskell's observations upon the effect of rising living standards upon people's homes: 'people nowadays are more family and less community conscious....wondering all the time if they can do better for themselves alone'.¹¹ This trend is also clearly reflected in the decline of the cooperative movement- 'the consignment of a collective, moral alternative

¹⁰ This, as will be discussed further, is essentially how the static holiday caravan industry develops from the 1960s.

¹¹ Gaitskell cited in L. Black, 'The Impression of Affluence: Political Culture in the 1950s and 1960s' in Black and Pemberton, *An Affluent Society*, p. 90.

to the social and political margins' under the 'hegemony of an individualistic model of the consumer within the political as well as the economic domain'.¹² This study argues that as in the wider spectrum of consumerism and social trends in the post-war period, within the context of holiday choices and activities working-class families and individuals were indeed now becoming more selective in the way they consumed, and, as will be demonstrated below, were not always susceptible to advertising and corporate promotions in the short term. But the agency of the working classes discussed earlier may also be seen in action not only in the popularity of the early caravan sites as a choice in their basic, self-made form, but also in the rituals and activities of their clients on site. Whilst all of this is suggestive of a reconfiguration of the relationship between working-class individuals and the 'collective'; individualism was not at this point necessarily all-permeating.

With increasing female employment, the gaining of benefits after the roll-out of the Beveridge recommendations and despite the re-affirmation of family roles as mentioned above, women from all strata of society began to assert their preferences in the midst of this growing consumerism. This became manifest on the high street as younger women began to prefer the 'New Look' to what came to be perceived as the more traditional, the practical and the dull. Fashion again became a factor in clothing purchases for many, and cosmetic products became increasingly popular.¹³ Household products were heavily advertised, and commercial brands manufactured by companies such as Unilever began to aggressively dominate the market. Despite criticism from Labour, Conservative politicians, whilst aware that consumers may well be misled by advertising, comforted themselves with the notion that the consumer 'quickly recognises what is good and what

¹² P. Gurney, 'The Battle of the Consumer in Post-War Britain', in *The Journal of Modern History*, 77/4, (December 2005), pp. 956-987, p. 987.

¹³ See I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Body and Consumer Culture' in I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), pp. 183-5.

is false'.¹⁴ Most, therefore, saw the consumer as 'fair game' for large manufacturers and suppliers, and saw no harm in the increasing levels of such advertising. But the process of new consumer assertion contained a more subtle and deeper trend. Working-class families also began to assert a wider form of consumerism, empowered by the recent enfranchisement of all members of the household as consumers rather than basic customers, and again, this was evidenced by the steady growth of preferred choices in the market place. And so from the perspective of the commercial holiday camp entrepreneur, women and children, now having become consumers in their own right, would, perhaps, now want holidays that catered for their needs and tastes as well.

As discussed in Chapter Two, earlier generations of working-class youth had participated in holidays on camp sites run by philanthropic, political and religious organizations. The new commercial holiday camps could offer women a holiday that would liberate them from the traditional roles of cooking and housekeeping for the duration of their stay; children would have activities and games organized for them during the daytime that would keep them amused, engaged and active. Judy Giles describes how at the end of the nineteenth century middle-class wives were seen as 'the mistress of the household', responsible for dealing with domestic staff and household accounts. Working-class wives were largely ignored by reformers until the need for their education in terms of hygienic childcare and housewifery was identified after the Boer and First World Wars revealed widespread ill health amongst conscripts. Within sixty years, after the almost complete demise of domestic service and the emergence of a 'home-centred culture' these two separate identities had been 'substituted in public discourse by the "The Housewife", an apparently classless figure, whose earlier functions had been replaced with a new and

¹⁴ F. Woolton (Marquis, 1st Earl of), *The Memoires of the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Woolton* (London: Cassell, 1959), cited in Gurney, 'Battle of the Consumer', p. 975. Lord Woolton was the Conservative Party chairman, and had made money from the retail industry.

‘modern’ role as ‘Mrs Consumer.’¹⁵ If, as feminist histories from the 1970’s and 80’s describe, women who were actively engaged in public war work were encouraged back into the home after the First and Second World Wars, and were subsequently bombarded with images and advertising to create desires for ‘ideal homes’, then the desire for the ideal of a second holiday home as opposed to a regimented, fully catered holiday experience is understandable.¹⁶

The concept of ‘home’ and the provision of ‘the right sort of meal’ as the perceived territory of the housewife, coupled with the anxieties generated by the war helping to strengthen society’s focus upon the post-war recreation of family life and the woman’s place as mother and home-maker (as discussed in the previous chapter) make this choice all the more plausible. And so, as far as domestic family holidays were concerned, many were choosing to eschew the widely publicised and promoted commercial holiday camp in favour of a more independent form such as to rent or even purchase a holiday caravan on a park. Colin Fox first experienced a caravan holiday as a child at the St. Osyth Beach Estate in 1949. His three aunts and uncles owned caravans on the beach as holiday homes. Describing the extent to which the adults were involved in the various recreations that the children enjoyed there, Colin recalls:

The adults were always involved. Quite honestly, I think their main task was to look after us kids. I am a family of four children, plus the two other children. Six children are probably quite a handful to look after, so I don’t remember the adults going off. I know there was a very nice little café restaurant, but I never remember my parents going off to that.¹⁷

Eventually the choice of facilities and amenities in and around static holiday caravan sites increased and by the 1960s holidaymakers need no longer have to decide between the all-in catering of commercial camps or the self-catering static caravan. Restaurants,

¹⁵ J. Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p. 103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁷ See Appendix Four: Colin Fox interview transcription.

cafeterias, fish and chip shops and snack bars became commonplace within and close to the caravan sites. Thus, holidaymakers by this time had a choice: cook in the caravan or eat out. As Dave Maidment, who began taking static caravan holidays with his family in 1969 affirms:

On Saturday when you came down you basically unpacked. We never did a lot of cooking indoors. I'm a great believer if I'm on holiday she is on holiday. So we used to eat out. There was places to eat, nine times out of ten you would pack up a picnic, say Colchester Zoo; we would go there one day. There would be a day when we would just walk into the village and we would have lunch in the Red Lion pub. Then we would go perhaps to the Priory and have a few hours there. There were horses there and deer. And another day we would just walk into Clacton. But basically you did not get the car out once you was down here. It was nice just to do that for the whole week until the next Saturday.¹⁸

Commercial holiday camps made much of their facilities for children, and their capacity to keep children occupied and active during the day. This implied that parents were relieved of this responsibility, and were free to pursue their own activities. But a static holiday caravan holiday could also provide children with opportunities for pleasurable activities and pastimes. Colin Fox recalls:

I was too young to be able to relate all the family activities in the right sequence but, er, having once unpacked we would be just straight on the beach, whether it was to run around and walk or whether it was to sunbathe. We would be straight on the beach, of course. As we were the kids, parents had the jobs of making up the food and, of course, the significant task of having to change the caravan from day to night use. It was very much family orientated in that I could run to my aunt and uncle who had one kid two caravans up, or I could run the further distance to an aunt and uncle who had one child 20 caravans up. So we were would all get together; we also knew the family that was in between whose surname was Brown. We would say hello to those and we would go and play on the beach, er, a particularly fond memory was that we would all get together when the tide was out, and the sand was excellent, and we would play French Cricket because everybody- young, old, boy, girl, would join in.¹⁹

The choice to buy, rent or even borrow a static holiday caravan (which, as will be shown, was undoubtedly made by many) cannot, however, have been greatly led or influenced in any way by regional or national advertising campaigns for the caravan sites themselves: they have rarely engaged in large-scale mass media advertising campaigns, and when they

¹⁸ See Appendix Four: D. Maidment interview transcription.

¹⁹ See Appendix Four: Colin Fox interview transcription.

did it was during a much later period.²⁰ The commercial holiday camps, on the other hand, advertised broadly and conspicuously in the post-war period, and the most prominent figure in this was Billy Butlin.

Having created opportunities to buy back the camps that he constructed for the state during the war on favourable terms as discussed in Chapter Four, Butlin began to invest in the construction of new camps as well as re-opening Skegness and Clacton-on-Sea. He undoubtedly saw national advertising as a key element in encouraging people to holiday at Butlin's. By the early 1950's advertisements for Butlin's holiday camps were commonplace in the press, guide books, newsreels, and as posters in railway stations and municipal centres; see Fig. 1, below. They were, in fact, as ubiquitous as the burgeoning advertisements for household products and the latest fashions.²¹

²⁰ Advertisements for caravan sites tended generally to be restricted to smaller advertisements in national newspapers and local guides.

²¹ S. Endacott and S. Lewis, *Butlin's: 75 Years of Fun* (Stroud: The History Press, 2011), pp. 64-5.

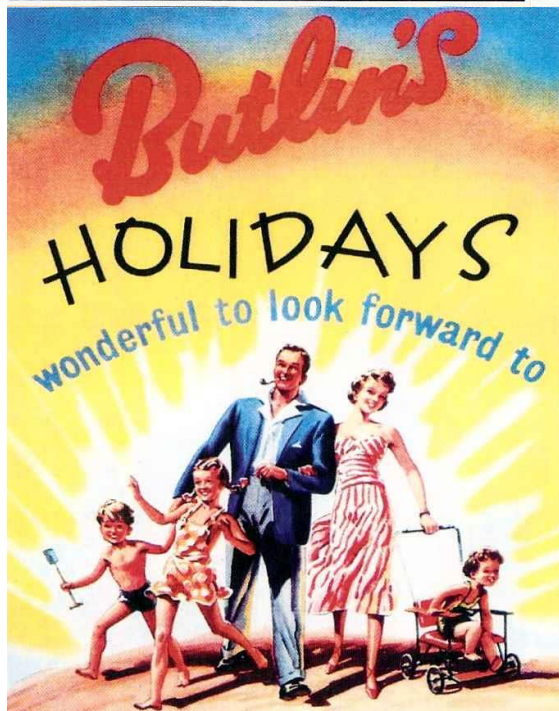
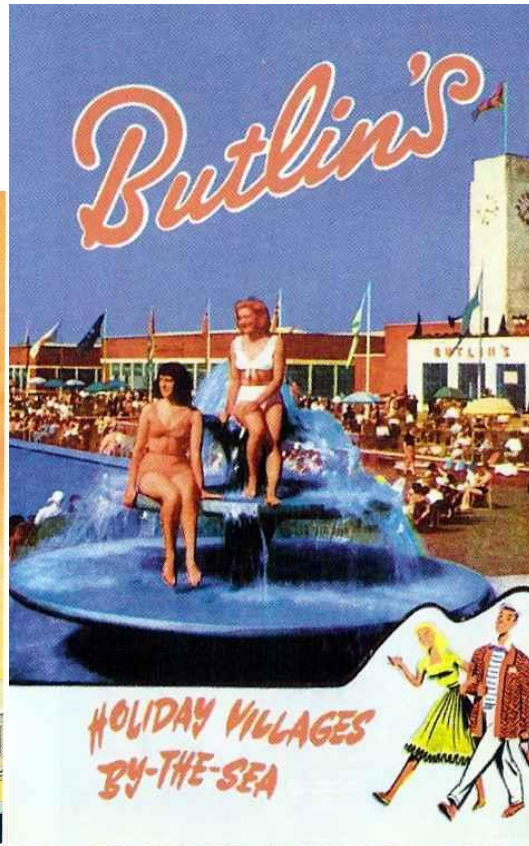
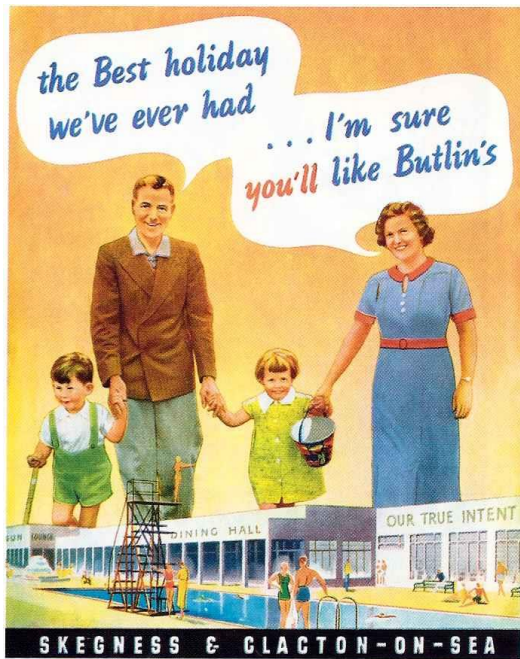


Figure 1: a selection of Butlin's advertisements from the 1950's and 1960's.



Figure 2: President Eisenhower visits Butlin's, Ayr in 1962.

Butlin's advertising campaign was just part of the promotional *tour-de-force* that the company employed to reach the market that they saw opening up once again before them. Butlin had, during the course of his career, developed a network of contacts in the fields of sports, entertainment and as a result of his wartime activities, within government. These contacts were put to good use as Butlin made sure that as many influential and well-known figures as possible were linked to his holiday camps in the media. This was nothing new for Butlin: the strategy of 'celebrity' endorsement and patronage from powerful and influential figures was a tactic with which he was familiar. During the post-war period this strategy was employed to great effect, with many figures from sport, entertainment and the political establishment who were seemingly happy to be associated with Butlin's Holiday Camps and their now famous founder. Associations and tacit endorsement of this nature culminated in visits by the American President Dwight Eisenhower, who travelled eight miles from his base at Culzean Castle in his presidential car to see campers at Butlin's Ayr (see Fig. 2, above), and a visit by Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip in 1963.

Butlin's high profile and strong media presence, aided by the widely publicised endorsements as described above, undoubtedly galvanised the commercial holiday camp into the national consciousness, and thus commercial holiday camps would seem to have become the state-approved national domestic holiday facility. And yet, despite this level of public persuasion, an alternative form, the caravan site, that was growing out of the camping sites that were as popular in the immediate post-war period as they were during the inter-war years, with little or no national advertising grew in popularity at a remarkable rate. Advertising, as the revisionist Labour MP Anthony Crosland observed, was not always wholly responsible for popular tastes; he cited a number of failed campaigns and the popularity of several trends including Marks and Spencer's clothes, Scrabble, coffee bars and skiffle music that had arisen without it.²² In Tendring, as will be shown, the two commercial camps (Butlin's and Warner's) were soon surpassed in terms of accommodation by surrounding caravan sites. This growing popularity was, however, possibly aided nationally by the ever-presence of resort advertising. Posters, with idealised and alluring visions of the resort's identity, extolling the public to visit the numerous coastal locations were common in urban locations and railway stations. Such a poster-'Come to Sunny Prestatyn' is subjected to ironic critique in Philip Larkin's eponymous poem.²³

The post-war domestic holiday scene was not only affected by the changing aspirations and affluence of working-class consumers and the advertising and promotional tactics of the commercial holiday camps. The growing availability of the motor car and an improving transport infrastructure also had a significant impact upon domestic tourism.

The Minister of Transport, the Labour and Co-operative MP Alfred Barnes, oversaw the

²² A. Crosland, *The Conservative Enemy* (London, 1962), pp. 62-7, 125, 146, 158, cited in L. Black, *Re-Defining British Politics: Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), p. 68, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-64: Old Labour, New Britain?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), p. 107.

²³ See P. Larkin, *Collected Poems* (London: Marvell, 1988).

establishment of the British Transport Commission as a key policy response to Labour's 1945 General Election manifesto pledge to coordinate Britain's transport services by rail, road, air and waterway. The Commission was comprised of the Railway Executive, the London Transport Executive, the Docks and Inland Waterways Executive, the Hotels Executive, the Road Passenger Executive and the Road Haulage Executive. Influenced by the trades unions who felt deeply that the new commission should be staffed by those with industrial experience rather than technocrats, and despite considerable opposition from MPs on both sides of the house as well as civil servants, Barnes made all the appointments to the new authority himself.²⁴ After the cessation of Marshall Aid the Railway Executive had to source components from the British manufacturing base, and a newly designed standard passenger carriage was introduced into service. As a result of this activity, by 1953 passenger miles travelled by rail in the UK rose to 21,300 million, from 20,200 million in 1948.²⁵

Barnes was always keenly aware of the need to coordinate the rail, bus and coach services to UK resorts at this early stage, in anticipation of the expected significant increase in demand for access to resort areas. Part of the solution to this challenge was seen to be the staggering of holiday weeks by large employers, so that the demand for transport could be spread over a longer holiday season, in addition to the introduction of cheaper fares at key times. These key times would include Saturdays, as it was understood that workers could often only start their holidays at the weekend.²⁶ Thus, Alfred Barnes's strategy, as part of the overall post-war Labour government's transport policy, helped secure cheaper and more accessible transport opportunities for working families and individuals to access holiday and leisure destinations throughout Britain.

²⁴ P. Bagwell and P. Lyth, *Transport in Britain: From Canal Lock to Gridlock* (London: Hambledon and London, 2002), pp. 128-132.

²⁵ M. Bonavia, *The Nationalisation of British Transport* (London: Macmillan/LSE, 1987), Ch. 8; see also Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain*, p. 132.

²⁶ Hansard, *House of Commons debates*, 20th May, 1946.

With Tendring District's established rail connections with the capital, serving Clacton-on-Sea, Walton, Frinton and Harwich, as well as other village stations locally, the region was well placed to attract holiday makers from London and further afield. But this was not Alfred Barnes's only association with Tendring: he also became the owner of the Eastcliffe Caravan Park, at Walton-on- the-Naze.²⁷

Tendring district's resort areas were also well-served from the capital by motor coach companies. Grey-Green Coaches had a regular service through the district by the 1950s. Foster Jones worked for the company as a coach driver at this time, serving the East Anglian coastal resorts as far as Great Yarmouth. He recalled:

We would leave Stamford Hill at 7.30 or 8.00 am and have three or four pick-ups on the way to the Mile End Road garage; our usual vehicles were Leyland half-cabs with seating for just 33 passengers and a boot for cases at the rear. Saturdays were very busy as changeover days and it was often difficult to fit all the cases into the relatively small boot.²⁸

With the growing availability of hire-purchase and an increasing sense of security in employment, real consumer spending on cars and motorcycles is estimated to have increased by an almost unbelievable 750 percent between 1948 and 1960.²⁹ As a result, increasing numbers of working families would have the means to travel to resort locations for holiday excursions when they had the opportunities to do so. A contemporary observer of the consequences of increasing motor car ownership noted in 1958: 'Invaluable as the car may be for business and domestic purposes, its supreme function is for pleasure and recreation. A fine weekend at almost any time of the year

²⁷ Records of Site Licence Applications, Tendring District Council Archives, See Appendix One.

²⁸ See Appendix Four: letter from F. Jones, 18th February 2015.

²⁹ Source: *Economic Trends* (London: Central Statistics Office); cited in H. Pemberton, 'Affluence, Relative Decline and the Treasury', pp. 109-10, in Pemberton and Black, *An Affluent Society*, pp. 107-127.

will bring the cars out in tens of thousands making their way to the coast and beauty spots.³⁰

For a brief period up to the mid 1950's, the British car manufacturing industry was ascendant, exporting record levels from factories in Dagenham, Cowley, Longbridge and Ellesmere Port.³¹ The rise in production, use and ownership of motor cars also saw an increase in secondary industry connected to car manufacturing: garages, spares suppliers and service stations. The motor car was not only a means of transport, but as implied above, it became in itself a means of recreation. Car owners would treat the car as a 'hobby', deriving satisfaction and pride in maintaining and caring for their vehicle and keeping it in good condition. A well-kept and attractive vehicle also implied status to the owner, and resorts that had facilities to cater for the motorist would therefore be attractive to them (the establishment of a garage, offering mechanical work and serving fuel to motorists at the Seawick caravan site at St. Osyth Beach partly for this reason, is discussed in the following chapter). For increasing numbers of individuals and families the acquisition of a car or motorcycle not only provided a recreational outlet in itself with implied status, but also freedom to access resort and recreational areas at times that suited.

And yet despite all of this, and in contrast to the notions of increasing affluence and consumerism, another factor that undoubtedly contributed to the popularity of the early forms of post-war caravan and camping sites as discussed below was, quite simply, cost. In the immediate aftermath of the war and during the years of austerity many working-class families were not in a position to afford the more formal commercial holiday camp experience, at least not on a regular basis. Butlin claimed 'a week's holiday for a week's

³⁰ C. Buchanan, *Mixed Blessing: The Motor Car in Britain* (London: Leonard Hill, 1958), p. 67; cited in D. Thoms, 'Motor Car Ownership in Twentieth-Century Britain: A Matter of Convenience or a Marque of Status?', p. 44, in D. Thoms *et. al.* (eds.), *The Motor Car and Popular Culture in the 20th Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 41-49.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 45.

pay'; Fig. 3 (below) shows how the average holiday tariffs compared to the minimum working wages before and after the war:

Figure 3: average tariff for one week for family of 4 at Butlin's holiday camps, 1936-1969.³²

Years	Holiday Tariff	Average Weekly Minimum Wage for the Year	Equivalent Tariff in 2012 (based on average 5.5% inflation, except 1965- based on 6.1% inflation)
1936-1939	£2-12s.-6d.	£1-19s.-6d.	£150.82
1945	£7-15s.-0d.	£3-12s.-2d.	£271.92
1955	£11-10s.-0d.	£6-12s.-8d.	£245.28
1965	£15-15s.-0d.	£10-8s.-0d.	£247.92

Those on lower wages could, however, afford to travel to the coast and spend time at the seaside in more basic accommodation: either camping in a tent or in a rented or borrowed caravan on a self-catering basis. This way, expenditure could be controlled: money would be spent judiciously and selectively, rather than in a larger, one-off payment at the beginning of the holiday. In the latter case, although in theory there was no need for much further expenditure on the holiday, there was also no further choice, in terms of where and how much to spend.

In addition to this, the appeal of the concept of stake-holding or ownership, and weekend and multiple uses should be considered. As discussed earlier, inter-war Plotlanders were in part motivated in their holiday home choices by the fact that they actually owned the property, and could return as many times as they were able to their holiday retreat during the year. Ownership gave the family or individual a stake in the seaside or holiday location, and the opportunity to personalise the accommodation and create the home-from-home: portable domesticity. The ability to return as many times as possible was also a powerfully appealing factor; initially, for middle-class inter-war

³² Sources: tariff figures kindly supplied by Jude Rodway, Butlin's Archive, Butlin's Skyline Ltd., Bognor; see also *Daily Mirror*, April 30th 2011; equivalents based on average inflation statistics from 'Composite Price Index' published by the Office for National Statistics; average minimum wages figures from Department of Employment and Productivity (1981), British Labour Statistics: Historical Abstracts, 1886-1968; Lund, *et al. Wages and Employment in Agriculture: England and Wales, 1960-80* (Government Economics Services Working Paper No. 52, March 1982).

Plotlanders but after the war increasingly for working-class families. The siting of a caravan on a site where it could remain on a more or less permanent basis would provide these opportunities. Deanna Walker and Peter Jackson's recent work on the Basildon Plotlands contains abundant testimony which confirms these motivating factors for the Plotlanders who retreated to the self-built 'villages' at Laindon and Dunton.³³ More generally, as David Pendleton observes 'The ultimate expression of growing freedoms offered by paid holidays and increased personal mobility was a home by the sea. Here on a whim was your personal retreat, your own arcadia.'³⁴

5.3 Caravan camps: the unforeseen grass-roots alternative.

It is suggested above that immediately after the war (and indeed for a number of years thereafter) many individuals and families took to the form of individual, low-cost, self-sufficient holiday that was probably known to them as children accompanied by their parents or in organized groups, as described in Chapters Two and Three: camping in tents. Whilst the commercial holiday camps were re-opening and receiving their share of holidaymakers, large numbers were coming to the coastal resort areas and simply pitching their tents. In common with other resorts, Tendring District's coastal landscape was now accessible once more, and many areas of cleared land were available for use.

The camping facilities that had existed before the war (see Figs. 4a and b) were mostly re-opened. In addition to the nine sites that subsequently claimed to have been in operation by 1939 as camp sites, more must have been used informally; Valley Farm near Clacton, for example, was one of a number that made no mention of pre-war use in their

³³ See D. Walker and P. Jackson, *A Portrait of Basildon Plotlands: The Enduring Spirit* (Andover: Phillimore, 2010). This work mainly focuses on the permanent residents of the estates, but does also contain details of those who used the huts on a weekend basis from the 1930's onward.

³⁴ D. Pendleton, *A Home by the Sea: from beach bungalow to static caravan, holidaymaking trends at Skipsea, Yorkshire* (MA Thesis, Institute of Northern Studies, Leeds Metropolitan University, 2010), p. 7.

later caravan site licence applications to the local authority.³⁵

VALLEY FARM

VALLEY ROAD, Clacton-on-Sea.

CAMPING

Our charges to all Campers are 6d. per night per person. Motor Cars 6d. per night, with Trailer 1/-. Main water laid on the field free. Fields high and dry and private. Ten mins. from Sea. 20 mins. Station and Town, walking distance. Motor Buses pass every 20 mins. Sanitary arrangements for small parties. Firewood can be supplied, and carting from Station at reasonable charges. Tradespeople deliver goods. Terms for Scout Parties 2/- per head per week. Water free. Caravans for hire on field from 25/- per week.

Saddle Horses. Riding Track.

Apply - - Proprietor

8

Figure 4a: advertisement for the camping ground at Valley Farm, from a local guide book dated 1936.

³⁵ Records of Site Licence Applications, Tendring District Council Archives. See Appendix One.



Figure 4b: location of the 9 sites claiming to have been in operation prior to 1939, and the 2 existing commercial holiday camps.

Some of these were characterised by plotland type shanties and permanently sited older caravans from pre-war days. But such was the demand that these early facilities could scarcely cope. Local and small-scale entrepreneurs would capitalize on this, and new camp sites were set up with basic facilities such as fresh water tanks or stand pipes and

chemical toilets. For the next decade at least, and despite the proximity of two major commercial holiday camps at Clacton and Dovercourt, campers would flock to Tendring's coastal areas and camp on any available piece of land that they could find. In fact even by the start of the 1960's, campers were still 'thronging' to the district, particularly Holland-on-Sea. The *East Essex Gazette* carried an article in August 1961 entitled 'Campers Expected to Throng Roadside', describing how tents were being pitched along the roadside verges and on the 'un-official' free campsites, and that no-one was likely to stop them. The article was accompanied by a photograph of a large, family size tent with a washing on a line strung from its entrance, located on the roadside, with a bus passing by. It carried the caption: 'A familiar sight to bus passengers on Holland Marshes are lines of 'smalls' swinging in the wind. A big influx to join the tents already established on this free camping site is expected this weekend. Despite many local protests, it appears authorities have no power to stop them.'³⁶

But there were organized campsites all over the country, and naturally in Tendring- particularly at Holland.³⁷ As mentioned, many of these had existed before the war, but they now started to take on a new form. It has been shown how the new planning legislation prevented the establishment of holiday huts, shacks or buildings anywhere without the application for, and subsequent granting of, formal planning consent by the local authority. Any structure that could be considered mobile or temporary was, however, seemingly exempt from this requirement. Old pre-war touring caravans, traditional traveller's caravans and tents were all acceptable. In fact, anything that could provide basic accommodation, and could be moved on if necessary, could and would be used as holiday accommodation in the post-war years. This *could* include old busses or coaches- even railway carriages if they were mobile. Although this activity smacked of

³⁶ *East Essex Gazette*, 4th August 1961.

³⁷ Holland-on-Sea forms part of the northern section of Clacton-on-Sea.

the sort of 'shanty towns' of the plotland developments that the planning laws and their architects sought to discourage and eradicate, under the new planning regulations it appeared at first that there was little that could be done. Only structures built 'in situ' and that were immobile would appear to potentially contravene the complex 1947 Act. And with the siting of such mobile forms of accommodation on campsites of this nature after the war, the static holiday caravan site was born.



Figure 5: Valley Farm, Clacton-on-Sea, 1948: the birth of a caravan site.

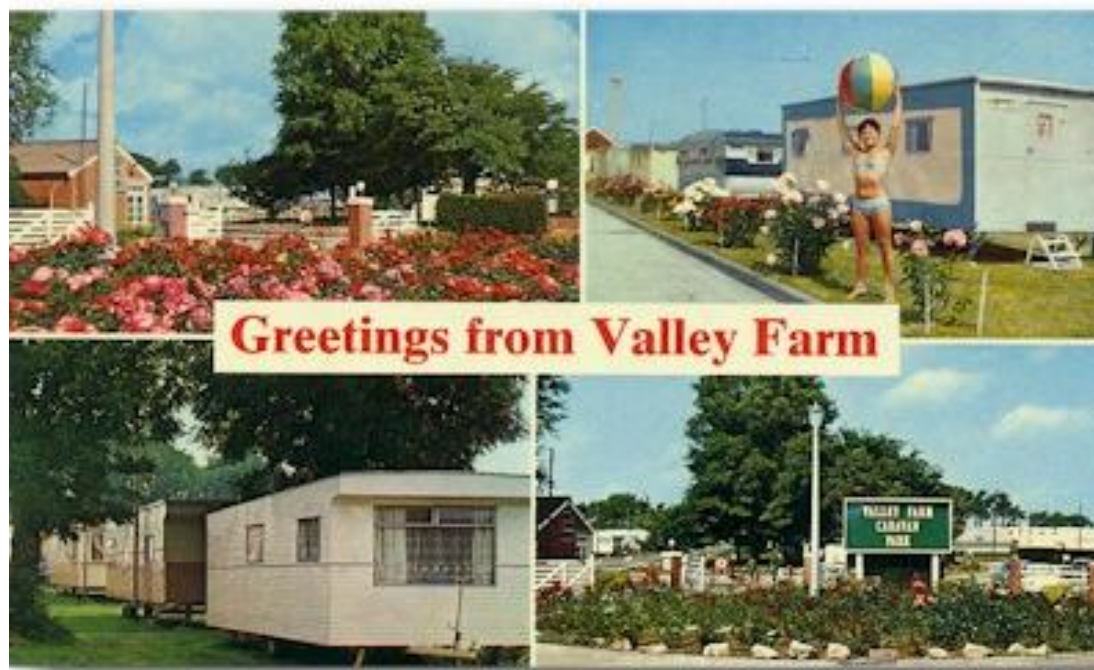


Figure 6: postcard of Valley Farm Caravan Park, Holland-on-Sea, mid 1960's.

Fig. 5 shows such a site in Tendring, at Clacton-on-Sea. The old busses, coaches, carriages and other less purpose-made forms of accommodation would soon be replaced by newer, larger caravans on such sites. Valley Farm Camping Ground Ltd. was registered on the 28th January 1949 under the terms of the Companies Act, 1948 by two directors: Noel Pawsey, an incorporated accountant and Claude Chaston, a building contractor, both of Clacton-on-Sea.³⁸ Within a few years this particular site would develop into Valley Farm Caravan Park, one of the numerous caravan sites in the Tendring District (see Fig. 6), in a similar way that such sites were in fact developing in many parts of Britain. Registrations filed by local entrepreneurs for such businesses in Tendring at this time include Parkavan (Clacton) Ltd., established by Thomas and Ivy Taylor of Clacton-on-Sea to run the new Highfields Holiday Park, a caravan-based holiday camp close to Valley Farm. Douglas Garton, a Colchester based transport contractor, along with Florence Garton and Kate Norfolk, established the Southcliffe

³⁸ Registration details from Companies House.

Trailer Camp Ltd., soon to become the Martello Caravan Camp at Walton-on-the-Naze.³⁹ Local authority licensing for caravan or camp sites was still an issue for developers, but in the immediate post-war period, concerns about the expansion of residential sites were a more pressing issue for regional authorities. By 1960, some seventy-one such holiday camp sites were licenced in the Tendring District: forty-nine of which were licenced for holiday caravans, a further seventeen for touring caravans and tents only and a further five which were licenced but with no details of pitch numbers.⁴⁰ This embryonic form of caravan site, immune as it seemed to be from planning legislation for the time being, provided a base location which would now allow holidaymakers to establish their own forms of accommodation within a social space not unlike the pioneer camps of the pre-war years, but without the regimentation, rules and routine. More widely, this phenomenon was undoubtedly occurring at resort locations both inland and around the coast. Indeed, the locations of some 3,500 to 4,000 static holiday caravan parks currently estimated to be operating in the UK show a distinct tendency to have established at the coast as well as inland in East Anglia, South Wales and Lincolnshire and the north of England. The majority of these were established during the early post-war period.⁴¹

The situation from 1945 (but prior to the implementation of the terms of the 1947 Act) is illuminated somewhat by calls in the trade press from local authorities, as well as some site owners and operators, for a more standardised form of site licensing. M. H. Tribe, Vice-Chairman of the Kingsbridge (Devon) Rural District Council was a farmer and site operator at this time. He urged local authorities to adopt the principles and recommendations of the Camping and Caravan Clubs: to specify a minimum of fifteen

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Records of Site Licence Applications, Tendring District Council Archives, see Appendix One.

⁴¹ Data for caravan site locations and numbers from NACO; *The Holiday Caravanner*, 43 (Spring 2014), p.2 and 46 (Summer 2015), p.40; *BH&HPA Journal*, 169 (September-October 2014), p. 169.

to twenty feet between the siting of accommodation units, and to stipulate minimum standards for sanitation. The requirements of the Shepton Mallet (Somerset) Rural District Council in this regard were offered as a model for such controls. Tribe also defined what he saw as the four distinct types of camping sites that existed at this time: the single party occasional site, the regular site for moveable dwellings, permanent sites and holiday camps of the hutment type. The first of these categories, thought to be in no need of any form of regulation, was characterised by highly transient use by campers and touring caravanners who would seldom stay longer than a week or two. The second category, essentially a more regularly used version of the first, had no permanent buildings or structures save for perhaps sanitary conveniences. Such sites would benefit, according to Tribe, from a few simple regulations coupled with an occasional visit from the sanitary inspector. It is the third category, characterised by 'permanent dwellings left in position all year round, though some of them, such as old caravans, may be nominally moveable'⁴², that appeared to warrant the more stringent regulation; the recommendation being that special provision be made for such sites in local bye-laws. Such sites, more pre-war plotland in nature at this time, would soon lose their shacks and shanties in favour of the embryonic post-war static holiday caravan. The fourth of Tribe's categories clearly included commercial holiday camps with permanent accommodation; he asserted that their visitors could hardly be described as campers. He suggests such camps to be a separate case altogether, 'they are a distinct type' that should 'afford no guide to the others' mentioned above.⁴³

As the concept of the static holiday caravan site was, as yet, generally unknown, it would be some time before a unified approach to site licensing would occur. When it did, it would be as part of a wider response to the need to regulate the residential use of

⁴² M. Tribe, 'Site Licensing from Two Sides', *Caravan*, 13/144 (April 1945), p. 68.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

caravans and their location, as detailed in the Arton Wilson Report, the pre-cursor to the Caravan Sites Act of 1960.⁴⁴ This will be further discussed in Chapter Seven.



Figure 7: tents and caravans, Seawick Holiday Lido, c. 1949.

Other areas within Tendring saw similar activity to the developments at Valley Farm. In Chapter Three the link between plotland holiday home development in the inter-war years and subsequent post-war caravan site development has been analysed. The areas of former plotland holiday homes saw their structures either replaced or augmented by nascent caravan sites, including Jaywick, Wrabness and Point Clear and the area at Saint Osyth Beach which saw rapid development. When Terry O'Dell acquired land there in 1948 (see Fig. 7), he started his business (Seawick Holiday Lido) in much the same way, providing plots for camping and the siting of touring-type caravans for summer use.

⁴⁴ 1959-60 Cmnd. 872 Ministry of Housing and Local Government. *Caravans as Homes*, a report by Sir Arton Wilson, KBE., CB. July 1959.

The key aspect of this is that although these early caravans were mainly of the touring type, their owners would have no desire or intention to move the caravan once sited on the camp. The touring caravan, very much the preserve of the middle classes before the war, was appropriated and utilised by the new post-war holiday caravan site clientele in a different way. Working-class holiday makers, in many cases, would not yet have the resources to tow a caravan around the country for a holiday; travelling extensively and visiting numerous destinations. But they could purchase a second-hand one (cheaply if it were an old, pre-war model) and park it on a site to use as a holiday home, and importantly, let it out to friends and family if the site was relatively close by and readily accessible. The camp would, therefore, become the destination for the holiday, and thus began to establish its own identity and purpose beyond that of a simple place to park the caravan or tent. As facilities on the camps or sites increased, this process would be further enhanced and consolidated.

Agency, resourcefulness and determination surely characterises the early post-war caravan holiday home owners and users. They may well also have enjoyed the occasional holiday at a Butlin's, Warner's or Pontin's commercial camp. But with good rail and improving motor access from London, the North-Essex coast was an ideal destination for those individuals and families who sought out a cheaper and less-regimented alternative. Terry O'Dell recalled that his earliest customers were almost exclusively working-class Londoners, looking for escape from the city, and an affordable holiday by the seaside. He found that they were also keen to return to the same site, and therefore the idea of owning accommodation in the form of a caravan there appealed greatly. Again, a motivation first observed amongst the earlier plotlanders was also evident: that of having a plot, or 'stake' at the seaside- to own a small part of it and to enjoy the

personalising of the holiday home.⁴⁵ More widely, the 1950s had witnessed the popularisation of ‘do-it-yourself’ in the home. The enthusiasm for repairing and modernising domestic environments with new products such as Formica was equally applicable to the caravan holiday home, and a dated second-hand touring caravan was ripe for conversion and modernisation into a static holiday home.⁴⁶

As discussed, for many working-class families in the immediate post-war period, the cost of a holiday was a limiting factor as wages were still relatively low. Despite the full roll-out of paid holidays from 1945, many would be looking to find a holiday destination close enough to be affordable in terms of transport costs, and that would offer cheap accommodation in a favourable, resort environment. Thus, many Londoners came to the Tendring district from 1946 for their holidays, just as their counterparts in the northern industrial cities would once again visit resorts such as Blackpool, and Midlands workers would holiday again on the Lincolnshire coast or the resorts in North Wales. Londoners would also find resorts throughout the south-east of England close enough to visit without straining the budget too much. Some London families would find holiday opportunities at the resorts of the Norfolk coast. Linda Tribe, whose childhood home was at Hornchurch on the outskirts of London during the 1950s, remembers her first family caravan site holidays during her interview in 2011:

I think the first time ever- when I was born- my Dad wanted to go away on holiday and somebody at work said they could have his caravan and then my Dad just had to hire transport to get from Hornchurch to Caister.... That was 1952. My Dad was a buyer for Brown Brothers in London ...Buying electricals, electrical fridges, freezers for a big company and then they used to sell them on.⁴⁷

Linda was clear, however, as to her family’s social and economic status: ‘Yes, very working class, not rich by any means.... used to have to really watch the pennies and

⁴⁵ Recollection of frequent discussions on these topics with my father.

⁴⁶ See R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, revised ed. 2012), pp. 51-2 and 72-3.

⁴⁷ L. Tribe, interview, see Appendix Four.

save for holidays.’ Linda’s family would take one holiday each year only at the caravan at Caister; even during the 1950’s she claims her father had no paid holiday, but just had to ‘have time off when you wanted it.’ The caravan served as the holiday accommodation for all the family, eventually five children and grandparents. Linda claimed that it was a holiday that they enjoyed and could afford.⁴⁸

As discussed above, the first caravan site proprietors in the Tendring district were almost all small-scale landowners, entrepreneurs, business owners or speculators. Of the forty-nine sites registered after 1945, only seven were licensed in the names of companies rather than individuals; and some of these companies are known to have been owned and run by individuals or families.⁴⁹ Generally not from a holiday trade background, most of these individuals initially saw opportunities for the provision of camping or caravan grounds with basic facilities. Examination of the company returns of a sample of ten caravan sites in Tendring reveals that their first directors and shareholders comprised of seven married women or housewives, six building contractors, two camp managers, two farmers, two publicans, an estate agent, a hardware store manager, a café proprietor and confectioner, a transport contractor, a widow, an accountant and a man described as a gentleman. These small-scale entrepreneurs, very different in background or experience from their commercial counterparts such as Butlin or Warner, at this stage worked in tandem with the agency of their clients to mutual benefit. As their clients increasingly sought to site caravans or similar structures on the site, these operators realised that with this came the opportunity to charge an annual ground rent, even a siting fee. This meant a more guaranteed, predictable income than that which could be derived from tents and basic camping. Caravan owners could let their caravans at very attractive rates to offset their own costs.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Records of Site Licence Applications, Tendring District Council Archives, see Appendix One.



Figure 8: road building and maintenance at Seawick, c. 1960.

As the Valley Farm, Highfields, Martello and similar caravan sites were evolving at Holland-on-Sea, Clacton, and Walton, Seawick Holiday Lido was established at Saint Osyth Beach in 1948 in much the same manner. Also, the Hutley family were now developing their first caravan site by the beach. In its first years, Seawick essentially consisted of a mixture of tents and touring caravans augmented by the odd converted lorry or bus. Caravans soon began to dominate, and as they were to remain more or less permanently *in situ*, a series of roads were needed for motor vehicle and pedestrian access. Generally carried out on a very limited budget by the site owner and a small staff, this was the first major activity in the gradual process of establishing the permanence of the caravan sites (see Fig. 8). As site fees came in more regularly and, with increasing demand, more caravans were sited, further infrastructure was added. Fences and entrance gates were erected, providing a moderate level of security for unoccupied caravans, particularly during the winter months. Storage buildings for tools and equipment (wooden, readily available ex-military storage huts) were erected. Planning permission for such buildings was deemed unnecessary as they were purely for storage

and, being little more than garden sheds, would not be used for accommodation. Fire points with fire buckets full of sand, fire extinguishers and a metal triangle to sound the alarm (again, all military surplus hardware) were put in place to conform with early fire regulations- although caravan sites were still a 'grey area' in this regard. Electricity could be distributed to some caravans in a limited supply: usually no more than 5 amps per unit at this stage, enough for lighting only. In most cases overhead cables installed by the site operator would achieve this, and the caravan owner would be charged for the provision of the facility and for the electricity used. Fresh water was available from water bowsers initially, and as sites began to establish themselves pipes were laid from the mains supply to a series of stand pipes where water could be collected and taken to individual caravans. Toilet facilities on caravan sites were at this stage basic: caravans rarely had toilets within, and small huts with chemical 'Elsan' type toilets were provided. Waste water from cooking and washing was simply discarded onto the ground outside the caravan. Rubbish was disposed of in dustbins located at points around the site. This would be collected in a trailer by a site worker and in many cases taken to a remote area of the site and burned.⁵⁰

A large wooden hut at Seawick, initially a storage building, became 'The Stores': a shop retailing to holiday makers essentials such as milk (sterilised at first until daily deliveries were established), bread, newspapers and other basic commodities. Initially, gaining supplies for the shop was difficult as the site was some way from the residential community, but suppliers soon realised that there was a substantial and growing market at the new caravan sites, and shops such as The Stores at Seawick began to prosper during the summer seasons.

⁵⁰ These details are from my own early recollections and from the many discussions with my father, family and other post-war site operators that I have met during the years that I worked in the industry.

It was soon apparent to site operators that there was a need to further cater for their clients beyond just providing the most basic facilities and necessities. As caravans became holiday bases at a fixed location, communities were forming at these sites; returning families and friends would meet other groups, often from similar areas with shared experience. Sylvia Juggins, an early visitor at Seawick at this time, remembers:

In the evenings we would all get dolled up in our new dresses to go to dinner and stay to have fun and games. Anne and I always got up the front to sing "A Your Adorable " [sic] A popular song at the time. Anne also remembers an Irish lady who taught her to tell the time.⁵¹



Figure 9: the Club House, Seawick, c. 1950.

Somewhere to socialise, beyond the caravans themselves, particularly in the evenings was now expected on caravan sites. With limited funds, site operators would not be able to provide more than basic facilities in this regard. The solution in most cases was a building (generally pre-fabricated or ex-military as these were still cheaply available) that would serve as a club house (see Fig. 9, above). With simple tables and chairs and tea-urn, these club houses soon became the social centre of the caravan site. And, again,

⁵¹ See Appendix Four, S. Juggins evidence.

with little or no budget, entertainment would generally be provided by the caravan site users themselves. With an upright piano, an amplifier, speakers and a microphone, such club houses could become the venue for impromptu entertainments, games and competitions. Caravan owners would often have family members who had a party-piece or could 'do a turn' on the microphone. In this way entertainment came to the caravan sites. Not the formal, highly organised entertainments of the commercial holiday camps led by uniformed professionals and well-known artistes, but a self-originated, simple form: informal, amateur, improvised and owned by those who derived it (see Figs. 10 a), b), 11, 12 a), b) and c), below).



Figures 10 a) and b): entertainments at the Seawick Club House, c 1950-55.



Figure 11: early informal entertainment at Seawick; Bill Hillyear on the piano accordion.

At Seawick, a further building was constructed, which became ‘The Club’. Serving tea, coffee, sandwiches and cakes, it was furnished with simple tables and chairs and a basic kitchen area. Eventually a bar and catering equipment became necessary for these club houses. Once the necessary licence had been obtained, a more formal bar serving alcoholic beverages was added. Terry O’Dell admitted that, as a site operator, he was happy to turn his hand to most trades (including bar work) but did not relish the idea of standing up and entertaining a crowd in ‘The Club’. Fortunately he did not have to: his brother-in-law, Bill Hillyear, could ‘do a turn’ at the microphone with his accordion (see Fig. 11), and as he later recalled there was no shortage of willing volunteers amongst the caravan owners to take their turn ‘on stage’. Joining these volunteer entertainers were those who would take on any available casual work whilst they were at their caravans, such as serving in the shop, making and serving tea and sandwiches or cleaning. This was a common practice, particularly amongst retired caravan owners, as wages could offset the costs of the caravan’s ground rent.⁵²

⁵² Recollections, Terry O’Dell.



Figures 12a), b), and c): impromptu entertainments at Seawick Caravan Club, early 1950's: 'lovely-legs' competition, 'gurning' and 'crooning'.

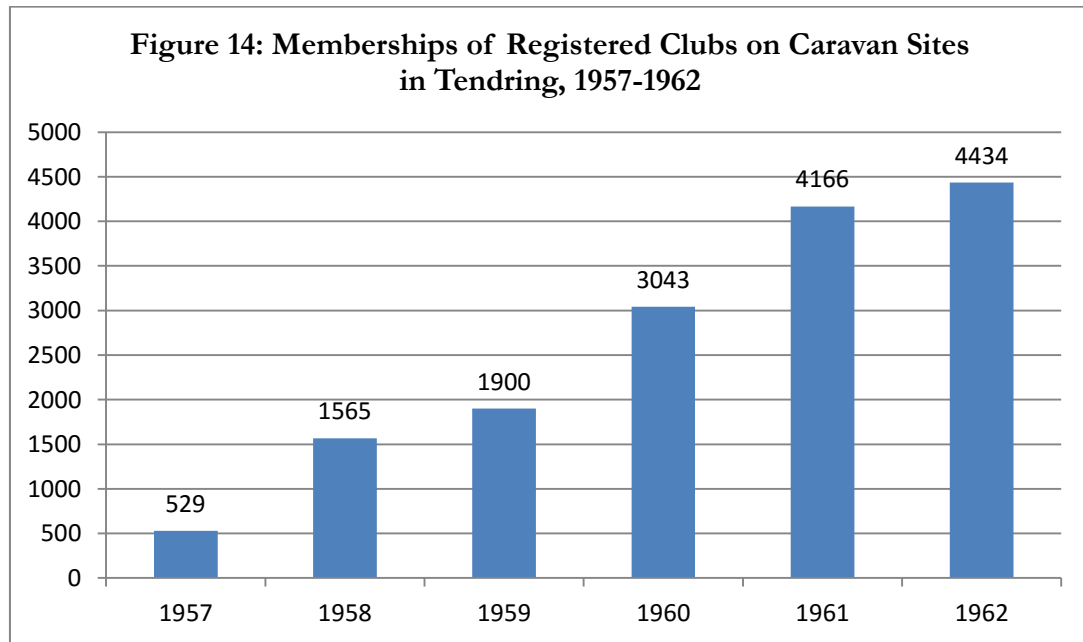
In 1954, two such clubs (serving alcoholic beverages) were registered in the Petty Sessions Division of Tendring in compliance with the Licensing Act, 1953: the Coronation Club at the Point Clear Bay Estate, and the Seawick Caravan Club at Seawick Holiday Lido, St. Osyth Beach. By 1961 twelve clubs within caravan sites had registered. As more clubs established in this period, memberships steadily increased.⁵³

Figure 13: Caravan Site Club Membership Numbers by Year, 1957-62

Number	Site	Club	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962
1	Anchor Caravan Park	Anchor Camp Club					31	151
2	Point Clear Estate	Coronation Club	94	79	89	95	76	96
3	Highfields Caravan Park	Dolphin Club	25	362	420	920	698	382
4	Firs Caravan Park	Firs Club					52	177
5	Highlands Caravan Park	Highlands Club			26	397	694	794
6	Martello Caravan Park	Martello Club		30	170	550	681	719
7	Sacketts Grove Caravan Park	Sacketts Grove Club					25	
8	Seawick Holiday Lido	Seawick Caravan Club	350	350	420	250	450	500
9	Shangri-La Caravan Park	Shangri-La Club	60	54	141	204	658	728
10	Charles Caravan Park	The Ranch Club				27	39	133
11	Rosebank Caravan Park	Rosebank Club					68	106
12	Valley Farm Caravan Park	Valley Farm Club	359	690	634	600	694	648
		Totals	529	1565	1900	3043	4166	4434

⁵³ ERO, P/T L9, 10, 11: List of clubs registered in the Petty Sessions Division of Tendring in compliance with S. 143 (1, 4) of the Licensing Act, 1953; see Appendix Three.

Fig. 13 (above) details the annual membership numbers as submitted on licence applications under the Licensing Act between 1954 and 1962. Fig. 14 (below) illustrates the growth in memberships for the twelve registered clubs during this period more clearly:



Such was the growing popularity of this activity that over the turn of the decade total memberships of clubs on caravan sites in Tendring rose from 529 in 1957, to 4,434 in 1962: an increase of 738 percent over the period.

In order to establish how these early caravan sites fared economically and to understand how profitable the overall operations were for the proprietors, a sample of ten of the sites that formed just after the Second World War in the Tendring District have been selected, and their annual reports and accounts requested from Companies House.

Unfortunately Companies House confirmed that the vast majority of company annual accounts prior to 1970 are not archived, and as such data for the financial performance of sites prior to this date is lost. It is possible, however, to show that these ten small,

independently owned businesses grew from small beginnings with limited start-up capital to much more substantial business by the early 1970s. Figs. 15 and 16 (below) demonstrate this:⁵⁴

Figure 15: trading profit and loss data for ten parks in the Tendring District, 1970-1973

Name of Park	Name of Company	Trading Profit (-Loss) for the Year (£s)			
		1970	1971	1972	1973
Firs Caravan Park	Firs Caravan Park (Clacton-on-Sea) Ltd.		101	832	898
Highfields Caravan Park	Parkavan (Clacton) Ltd.	101428	123922	156394	179922
Highlands & Rosebank Caravan Parks	Highlands Caravan Park Ltd.		22210	22231	23610
Hutleys Beach Caravan Park	St. Osyth Beach Estate Ltd.			27197	35965
Martello Caravan Park	Southcliff Trailer Co. Ltd.	63581	66109	72702	49971
Point Clear Bay Holiday Estate	Point Clear Holiday Estates		5379	3020	26260
Seawick Holiday Lido	Seawick Holiday Lido Ltd.	5103	5137	8630	10662
Sacketts Grove Caravan Park	T.S.T. Parks Ltd.				-431
Tower Caravan Park	Tower Caravan		17905	30901	36228
Valley Farm Caravan Park	Valley Farm Camping Ground Ltd.			24064	21619
	Totals	170112	240763	345971	384704

Figure 16: analysis of start-up share capital for ten static holiday caravan sites in the Tendring District from 1949

Park	Name of Company	Directors & Shareholders	Start-up Share Capital (£'s)	Year Registered
Firs Caravan Park	Firs Caravan Park (Clacton-on-Sea) Ltd.	Horace Woolley, Doris Woolley	5000	1962
Highfields Caravan Park	Parkavan (Clacton) Ltd.	Thomas Taylor, Ivy Taylor	1000	1953
Highlands & Rosebank Caravan Parks	Highlands Caravan Park Ltd.	Eric Albert, Thomas Harries	100	1959
Hutleys Beach Caravan Park	St. Osyth Beach Estate Ltd.	Harold Hutley, Edward Hutley	40000	1956
Martello Caravan Park	Southcliff Trailer Co. Ltd.	Douglas Garton, Florence Garton, Kate Norfolk	2000	1949
Point Clear Bay Holiday Estate	Point Clear Holiday Estates	Stanley Parrish, James Parrish	1000	1956
Seawick Holiday Lido	Seawick Holiday Lido Ltd.	Terry O'Dell, Barbara O'Dell, William O'Dell, Winifred O'Dell	1000	1956
Sacketts Grove Caravan Park	T.S.T. Parks Ltd.	Norman Turner, Dennis Selwood, William Tellwright	2000	1948
Tower Caravan Park	Tower Caravan	Richard Mathews, Martha Mathews, Benjamin Pearce, Irene Pearce	1000	1963
Valley Farm Caravan Park	Valley Farm Camping Ground Ltd.	Noel Pawsey, Claude Chaston	1000	1949

⁵⁴ Company accounting data from annual returns supplied on DVDs by Companies House.

By the end of the 1950's more of the new caravan sites had originated their own facilities and entertainments, and formally registered their clubs. In these formative years they engendered a close, community spirit amongst their patrons who, as well as becoming stake holders in the sites by investing in the purchase of a caravan, would also have an involvement in the entertainment rituals and games that took place there. For the caravan owners on these sites this sense of stake-holding would continue to develop as the caravan sites became more established. This whole process of a domestic holiday caravan site experience was, therefore, a truly grass roots alternative to the mainstream, commercial holiday camps. It was initiated mainly by small-scale, individual operators and driven by their clientele: the working-class families from the urban industrial centres, gradually gaining paid holiday time and more security in employment and exercising an independent, rational *and* preferred choice for their holidays. Those that could invest in a second-hand or even new caravan would have the option of sub-letting, this in turn created holiday opportunities for the less financially advantaged. Those that chose to take their holidays at a caravan site did so, therefore, because they could afford to do so, because they could organise their own regime (as facilities began to develop, optional eating-out and entertainments became available), because of communal links with fellow holiday-makers and because they could own their own holiday home and offset costs if needs be. We must, therefore, see this whole activity as a grass-roots movement that is driven by the agency of working-class holidaymakers who, with the growing confidence gained by the developing post-war economy and social, workplace and welfare progress, acted in tandem with small-scale local entrepreneurs to originate a form of holiday that was enjoyed by, and benefitted, all concerned.

5.4 The 1953 flood: disaster, aftermath and significance.

Within the first few years of the establishment of the first caravan sites in the Tendring District, a catastrophic natural event occurred which severely impacted the lives and property of those who lived and worked on the East Anglian coastline. This event is significant in the study of the caravan sites in this area not just in terms of its impact upon a relatively new industry, but how and why the sites that were affected emerged from the disaster in the way that they did.

Tendring District's coastal inhabitants awoke to a windy day on Saturday, 31st January 1953. During the day the north-westerly wind remained strong, and there were warnings of a high tide later on. This in itself was not uncommon as high spring tides would often occur and would not be the cause of too much damage, although there had also been cases of more severe flooding in previous years: Jaywick, for example, suffered badly in 1936 and 1948. What could not have been anticipated were the rare and yet disastrous set of meteorological and tidal circumstances that were combining along the east coast. The wind continued to blow all day. Gales were reported in Scotland, and high winds were causing problems at sea and all along the east coast, and to some extent inland. By dusk it was difficult to stand against the wind on the seafront at Harwich, and heavy seas were breaking over the foreshore. The first and indeed only, official communication to reach Essex as to the possibility of extreme conditions was communicated by telephone at six p.m. to the Essex River Board in Chelmsford. The East Suffolk and Norfolk River board warned their Essex counterparts 'that the sea was rough and that conditions on the Norfolk coast were favourable to a high tide.' There was, however, no apparent

indication that this would be an extreme event, warranting anything more than the usual precautions in such situations.⁵⁵

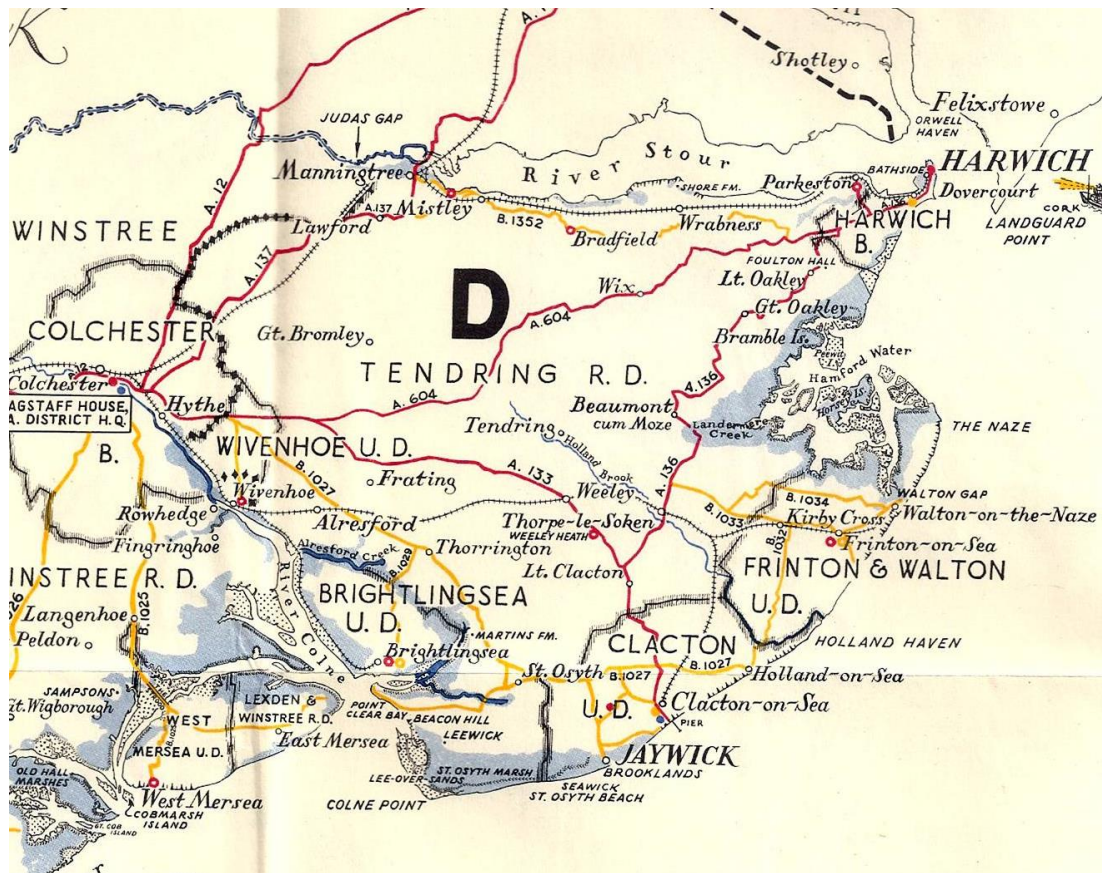


Figure 15: the extent of the flooding in north-east Essex and the Tendring District, January/February 1953. The areas marked in blue show the extent of the encroachment of sea water.

⁵⁵ H. Grieve, *The Great Tide: The Story of the 1953 Flood Disaster in Essex* (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1959), pp. 88-91.

Like scattered toys in a crazy jumble



Figure 16: an aerial photograph of Seawick Holiday Lido which appeared in the Daily Sketch on February 3rd, 1953. The double-decker bus where stranded residents sought refuge can be seen next to the central stores/workshop building.

Thus, those who lived and worked along the low lying areas of the Essex coast, (one of the longest coastlines in England) were almost completely unprepared for what was about to happen over the coming hours and days. The constant high winds had held or 'backed-up' up what was already a naturally high tidal flow or surge; long-lasting high winds in any other direction, or indeed in the direction that they blew but without the coincidence of a high tide, would not have yielded such disaster. Coastguards, and consequently fishermen and yachtsmen, were becoming wary about the fact that the afternoon low tide had not ebbed as usual, with the water remaining at low water at the usual height of high water on a neap tide. The next high water was due at about an hour after midnight at Harwich. When it came, the tide was far higher than anyone had witnessed in living memory.

As can be seen, in Tendring District some areas were affected more significantly than others. In the north, the area around The Naze, Great Oakley and Harwich (largely farmland) was flooded. The higher ground between Walton and Clacton escaped with less flood water. But the low-lying Wicks and marshlands from Jaywick, Saint Osyth Beach, Lee-over-Sands, Point Clear and the land surrounding the river banks and creeks around Brightlingsea and Mersea Island were inundated.⁵⁶

A glance at the above map (Fig. 15) may suggest that things could have been far worse in Tendring at least, with much of the area seemingly uninhabited. However, there were thirty five lives lost at Jaywick, as there was in many other parts of the east coast. Parts of Harwich and Dovercourt were significantly affected. Many of the Jaywick holiday huts were flooded out, and the caravan sites at Saint Osyth Beach and Point Clear were under several feet of water. More widely, in Essex alone more than 119 people lost their lives in the disaster and 12,356 homes were broken into by the sea. In excess of 21,000 people were made homeless, and over 31,000 qualified as 'Flood Victims' under the Lord Mayor's National Flood and Tempest Distress Fund.⁵⁷ Other areas from Kent to Lincolnshire suffered tragedy and major disruption.

In the low-lying marshland areas once the sea had invaded, it stayed; see Fig. 16 (above). After an initial ebb (which caused similar damage in the way that the initial inrush of water had), a residual body of water remained for some considerable time. Ironically, at Saint Osyth Beach and Jaywick, the sea had simply come around the existing sea walls, breaching the areas where the defences were incomplete. In the coming days, the true extent of the damage to the caravan sites became apparent. Many of the caravans were picked up by the sea, and tumbled over or dragged along to be dumped down randomly

⁵⁶ Map detail from Grieve, *Great Tide*, larger map appendix.

⁵⁷ ERO, Essex County Council published figures; St. Osyth Historical Society in *St. Osyth News*, March 2003.

as the water receded. Most caravans at this stage were still relatively lightly constructed; some earlier models utilized hardboard extensively in the panels, this rendered them particularly susceptible to water damage. As the waters finally receded, a full scale cleaning up operation began on the caravan sites affected by the flood. Many caravans were damaged beyond repair, and those that were insured were the subject of claims, see Figs. 17 a) and b) (below). However, a surprising number were salvaged, repaired, and returned to service.



Figures 17 a) & b): the area along the sea defences between Saint Osyth Beach and Jaywick at the new Tower Caravan Site: a) before, and b) after the flood. The Martello Tower at Jaywick can be clearly seen in each photograph.

Amongst the serious disruption and chaos of the early months of 1953 along the Tendring coast line, many businesses both large and small suffered greatly. The caravan sites and farms incurred significant damage to property, land and livestock. Farms

suffered greatly as a result of the sea water lying on land for extended periods. Nearly all of the estimated 5,000 acres of marshland between Harwich and Wigborough Wick (2,000 acres of which was ploughed and sown) was underwater. Large areas of grazing land were spoiled. This damage was longer term, as the land would remain unfertile for grazing and crops for a number of growing seasons.⁵⁸

But for the recently established caravan sites that were submerged, the situation was quite different. As the water subsided, the clean-up operation saw the removal of wreckage that was beyond salvage and a general clearing of debris. Repairs to storage buildings were carried out, and caravans that could be repaired were worked upon, either by owners, or on their behalf by site operators and their staff. As insurance claims began to be filed, at Seawick Terry O'Dell was contacted by insurers to help assess damages to caravans and associated property in the area. As this was such a new industry, few professional insurance loss adjusters had the experience to deal with caravan holiday homes.

After one of the busiest pre-season periods of their working lives, the site operators were open for business by the start of the 1953 summer season. Some caravan owners returned to using tents until new or replacement caravans were available and sited. Many spent the season re-establishing their holiday homes, and making them habitable once again. But the key point here is that the caravan owners and site customers did return, with no apparent loss of enthusiasm for their holiday homes or the environment in which they were located.⁵⁹ With the combined efforts of site operators, staff and caravan owners, the caravan sites were soon back to the same sort of condition, both in a physical and commercial sense, that they were in prior to the floods.

⁵⁸ S. Archer, 'Report on the Floods', *Essex County Standard*, (February 1953), cited in *St. Oysth News*, March 2003.

⁵⁹ Terry O'Dell; Basil Hutley.

The significance of this is that it clearly demonstrates the levels of demand for, and commitment to, holiday caravans in the area from the customer base largely located in east London. Although only a few of the caravan sites in the area were damaged significantly by the floods, the ones that were saw considerable damage and destruction to large numbers of units of accommodation. And yet, despite this, caravan owners quickly returned and the growing popularity of these sites remained largely unaffected and continued to develop exponentially.

More widely in Britain, static holiday caravan sites were establishing along the coast and in East Anglia, South Wales, Lincolnshire and the north of England. The majority of sites currently operating in the UK were established in the first two decades after the Second World War in the manner discussed above.⁶⁰ The locations of some 3,500 to 4,000 parks estimated to be active in Britain in the second decade of the twenty-first century have been partly visualised by diagrams recently published by NACO and the BH&HPA (see figs. 18 and 19, below) showing locations of their members, and these can therefore be used to give a visual indication of where sites were developing nationally during the second half of the twentieth century.⁶¹

⁶⁰ BH&HPA, NACO, S. Munro.

⁶¹ NACO: *The Holiday Caravanner*, 43 (Spring 2014), p.2; BH&HPA, *British Holiday & Home Parks Association Journal*, 169 (September-October 2014), p. 45. A more detailed and accurate mapping of NACO members parks can be viewed at <http://www.nacoservices.com/static-caravan-parks/england> [last accessed August 2015].

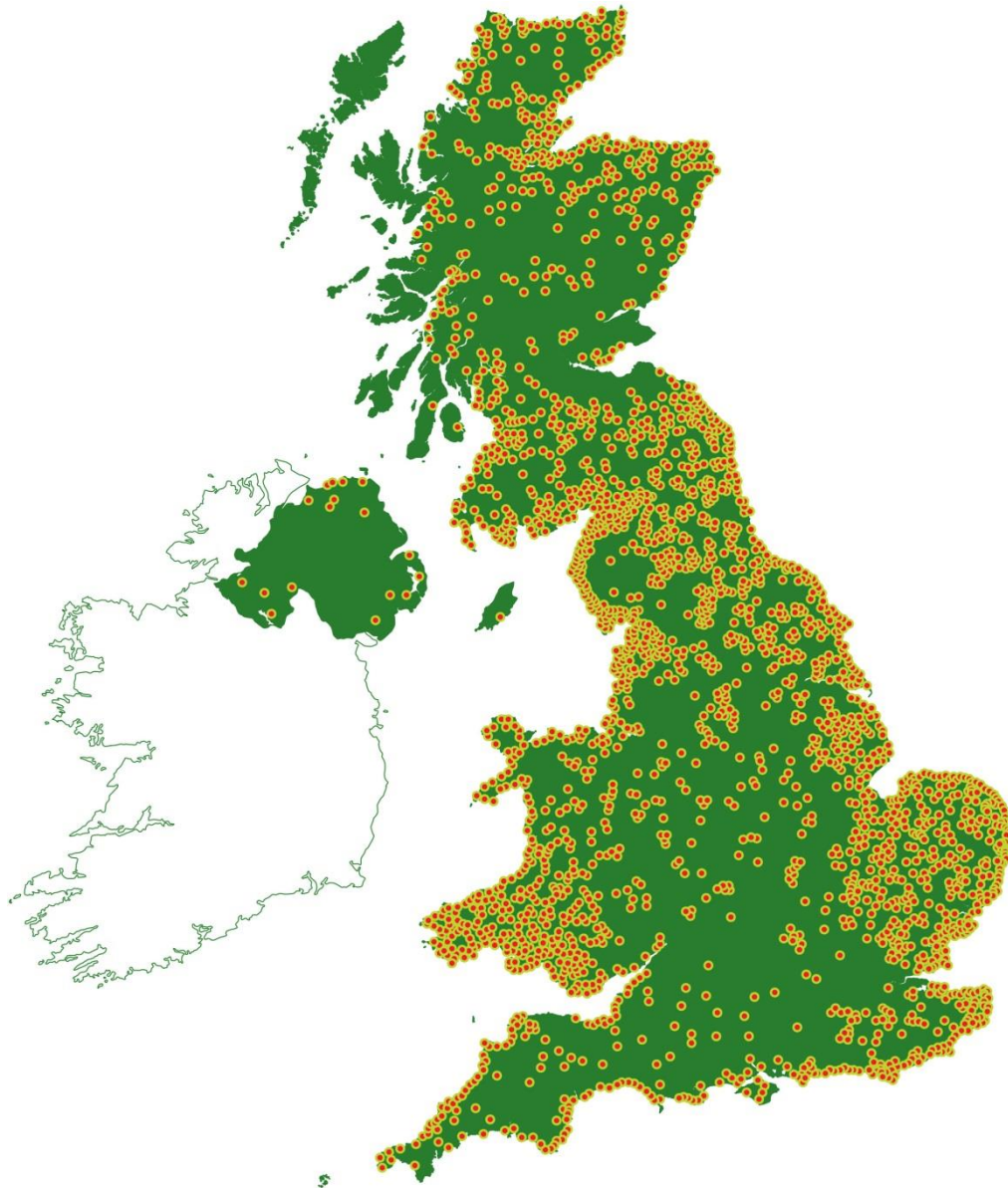


Figure 18: NACO member site locations, 2014. Note: parks in this diagram are not shown to scale.

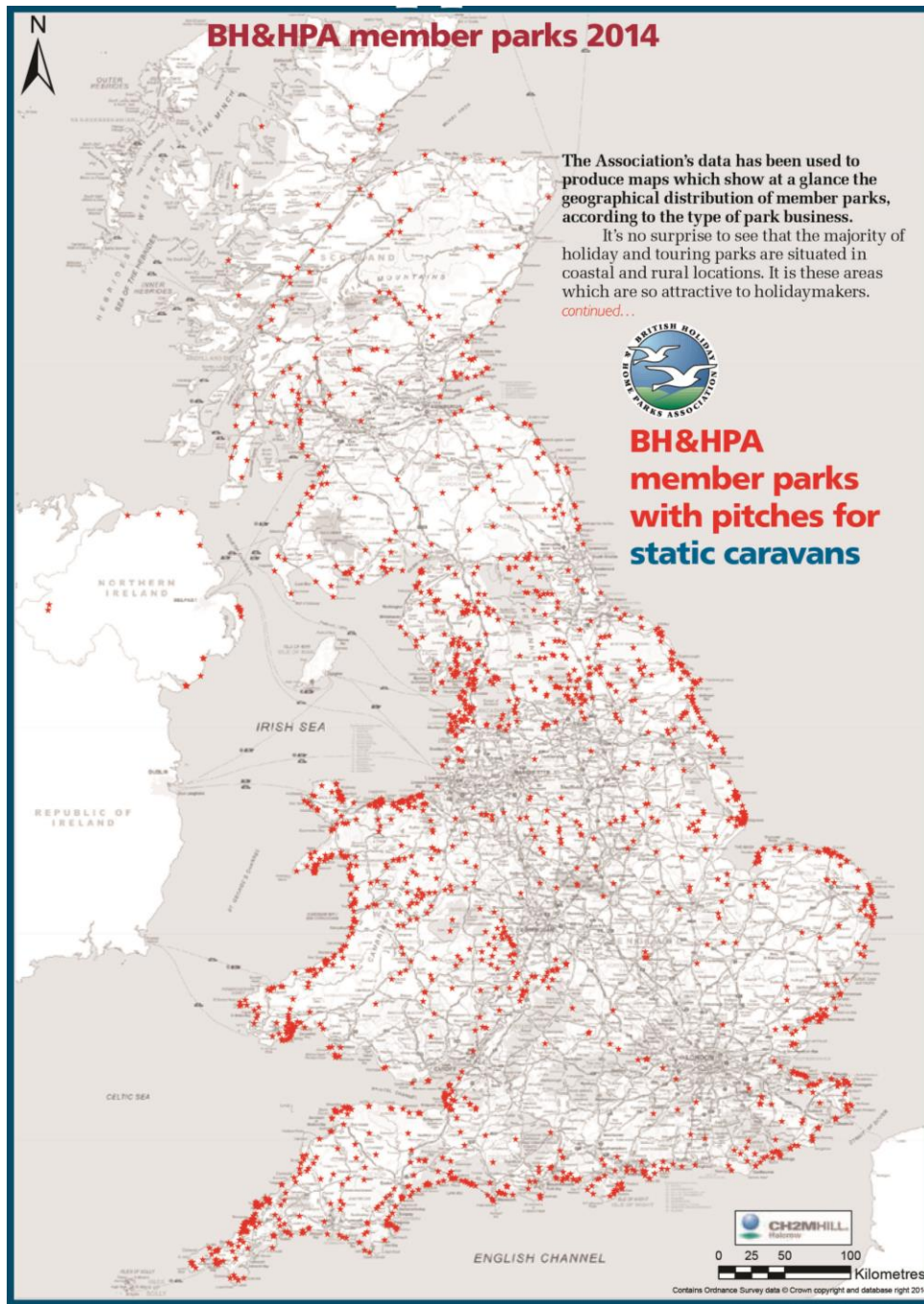


Figure 19: BH&HPA static caravan park member locations, 2014.

5.5 Caravan sites and the development of allied trades.

The establishment and proliferation of the first caravan sites catalysed the birth and rapid growth of new, secondary or dependant trades. Travelling showmen and fairground operators were amongst the first who saw new opportunities at the new

caravan sites. A few months before the summer of the summer of 1954, William (Billy) Ball Senior, an experienced showman from a long family line of travelling show people, came to Seawick Holiday Lido to meet the site owner and ask if it would be possible to establish some amusement facilities on the site on a permanent, rental basis. Terry O'Dell, the owner, as a former professional boxer had in his earlier career worked in the fairgrounds and fought in the boxing booths that were common in the pre-war travelling fairs. He was, therefore, familiar with many in the travelling show community, and trusted and respected them. A deal was agreed, and sealed simply with a handshake. Terry O'Dell and Billy Ball always maintained that no paperwork was ever necessary.⁶² W. Ball Amusements remained at the same site, under the management of two generations of the family, well into the twenty-first century. The foregoing may seem a rather heroic narrative viewed through a nostalgic lens, but it is important to this study as it was an occurrence that was probably typical of such arrangements at least in the Tendring District, and therefore possibly on a much wider basis.

This was not, of course, an isolated occurrence. The new and developing caravan sites offered opportunities to the travelling show community that were un-available on the commercial holiday camps, where all amusements and entertainments were 'in-house' and provided by the staff and management of the camp only. The new caravan site operators, in most cases, did not have either the experience or expertise to set up, operate and maintain fairground amusements. As well as operating the larger fairground attractions such as the 'Waltzers' or large carousel merry-go-rounds and Ferris wheels, travelling show families were experienced with providing and operating small-scale amusements such as 'swing boats' (these were one of the first amusements set up by W. Ball at Seawick), coin-operated machines ('one-armed bandits'), bingo games and

⁶² This situation was tested much later when the new owners of the caravan park sought to challenge this original agreement unsuccessfully, as the original handshake agreement was ultimately deemed to still constitute a legally binding contract.

dodgem cars. Therefore, the partnership was mutually beneficial: caravan site operators could equip their parks with further amusement facilities for little or no capital outlay, and the show families would have new opportunities to expand their business interests. As data for company accounts prior to the 1970s have not been archived centrally (as discussed above) it is impossible to demonstrate accurately the levels of profit from such arrangements. But we can safely assume that it was a profitable exercise, quite simply because it continued to operate for the remainder of the period under study. These partnerships between site operators and amusement caterers did little at first to hasten the decline in self-provision and community-based entertainment (as described above) which was characteristic of the early sites. But changing client expectations and entertainments would, nevertheless, occur, particularly after the 1960 Caravan Sites (Control of Development) Act, as discussed in Chapter Seven.

The Formation of the National Caravan Council (NCC) and its initial impact upon the industry is considered in the following chapter, but a significant development that arose as a result of the NCC's efforts to introduce standards to the manufacturing of caravans was the formation of a national group to represent caravan site operators, and similarly introduce minimum standards as a qualification for membership. The inaugural meeting of the National Federation of Approved Site Operators was held in London during February 1952; this national body would represent smaller branches and groups from all over the UK and by 1953 'standards for qualification for membership' were adopted. Parks failing to adhere to such standards would be disqualified if they failed to meet them. When the constitution was published, the word 'approved' had been dropped from the title; the organisation was now known as the National Federation of Site Operators (NFSO). This title would (from 1986) become the British Holiday and Home Parks Association (BH&HPA), reflecting the changing way in which the industry viewed itself in later decades. In its representations to media and governments, the NFSO would

distinguish its membership from non-member sites as being 'approved', thereby positioning the federation as the national representative organisation for sites that conformed to agreed quality measures. The NFSO communicated to its membership and the wider public through a journal established in 1953 entitled *Caravanserai*, this (for a few years at least) would also provide a platform for trades and businesses allied to sites to communicate and advertise to them directly. By the end of 1958 *Caravanserai* had been replaced with a less formal newsletter; however, the publications essential aims were still broadly achieved.⁶³ Thus, caravan sites of all kinds now had a qualifying, nationally representative body which would hold conferences, provide a lobbying voice and lend much-needed further respectability to the growing industry. As will be demonstrated further, the NFSO would prove to be a useful ally to site operators as legislation aimed at caravan sites would soon be in the planning stage as a result of growing public concern.

The most substantial development to spring from the caravan site phenomenon was an extensive domestic static caravan holiday home manufacturing industry that responded to the nascent demand for new 'static' units that did not need to be equipped for regular towing. The agency of early post-war working-class holidaymakers, who sought to appropriate second-hand touring caravans (the only available, affordable option) to use as on-site static holiday homes, began to create a demand for a new product. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the new static caravan manufacturing industry, at first tentatively responding to the wants of the post-war users, would ultimately then take the lead in caravan design and the style of interiors in particular, by producing (like fashion houses) a new range every season, thereby taking control in what was originally a demand dictated by the users.

⁶³ D. Davey *et al.*, 'The British Holiday and Home Parks Association 1950-2010', in *The BH&HPA Journal*, Sept. /Oct. edition, supplement (Gloucester: BH&HPA, 2010), pp. 3-6.

Prior to these later developments, and as a result of the increasing demand for such accommodation, manufacturing of caravans increased in the post-war period but now with the inclusion of a slightly larger, less mobile unit that was intended to remain in one place for most, if not all of the year. W. M. Whiteman claims that the static holiday caravan (which he describes as ‘a third category’ – the other two being touring caravans and mobile homes) began to emerge in the mid- 1950’s.⁶⁴ But before this the caravans that had begun to occupy the campsites in their transitory stage toward becoming caravan parks as we know them today were designed mostly for touring use; touring caravans had for some time been augmenting tents at campsites. In common with camping in tents, these caravans generally had no toilet facilities, only gas lighting; cooking and drinking water had to be fetched and carried. They were, however, more commodious than tents, and were relatively easy to transport to the site. As the numerical balance between tents and touring caravans at camping grounds began to alter in favour of the caravan, so the designation of such sites would in time, of course, alter to ‘caravan site’.

Caravan manufacturing during the war had come to a standstill as engineering industries were focused on wartime production, and in the immediate aftermath materials were in short supply. Pre-war units were available, but with the massive shortage of housing due to wartime bombing, many of these units were put to use as temporary housing. Indeed, Whiteman describes conditions at the time as desperate and agonizing: families around industrial cities hunting for housing and shelter, in some cases turning up at caravan dealer’s premises carrying their few possessions with nowhere to stay that evening. This, it is claimed, in turn led to unscrupulous traders preying on the victims of this situation by attempting to obtain second-hand caravans, regardless of condition, by any means fair

⁶⁴ W. Whiteman, *The History of the Caravan* (London: Blandford, 1973), p. 208. This is one of the very few relatively scholarly works produced dealing solely with the history of caravan design and manufacture.

or foul, and selling them on at inflated prices. Serious faults would be covered up, equipment removed and replaced with inferior fittings; a large proportion of this stock being described as ‘fit only for burning.’⁶⁵ This situation would undoubtedly be the first of a number of issues that would contribute to the growing notion of caravans being ‘a problem’, and generally having a bad press. Initial reporting of this was marginal, however, as specialist media coverage of caravans at this stage was mainly limited to the *Caravan* magazine, founded in 1938 with the merger of two earlier caravan journals, and dealing mainly at this stage with touring units and their enthusiasts.

It is remarkable, therefore, that enough pre-war caravans were found to populate the campsites described above as early as 1948, such as was witnessed at Holland-on-Sea and Saint Osyth Beach, see Figs. 5 and 7, (above). But it would not be long before manufacturing would commence again, providing fresh models to gradually replace the old stock. Pre-war caravans were manufactured using a large proportion of perishable materials, such as wood, hardboard and canvas for the main body shell and roof. With the development of new technologies under the necessities of war, more durable units could be manufactured, if materials were available. In February 1945 Whiteman, now editor of *Caravan* magazine, organised The Caravan Materials Convention to bring together existing and potential caravan manufacturers and introduce them to the wide range of new materials and possible production techniques, see Fig. 18, (below). During this gathering, the possibilities of aluminium replacing hardboard and canvas as a panelling material, along with new waterproofing compounds, paints, adhesives, sealants and furnishing textiles were among the new technologies demonstrated and discussed.⁶⁶ It should be noted that Whiteman’s contribution at this point resulted in an event that must have been a significant boost for an industry struggling to re-establish after the war.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-120.

⁶⁶ W. Whiteman, ‘Unique Gathering of Manufacturers’, in *Caravan*, 13/144 (April 1945), pp. 69-72.



At the opening of the "Materials for Caravans" Convention, organised by THE CARAVAN. Left to right, Mr. E. Sumner, Chairman of the Caravan Manufacturers' Association, Mr. A. C. Bossom, M.P., Sir Patrick Gower, Chairman of the National Caravan Council, Mr. W. M. Whiteman, Editor of THE CARAVAN

Figure 20: W. M. (Bill) Whiteman at the Materials for Caravans convention, taken from an article in *The Caravan* published in April 1945.

But from 1945 allocation of materials would be tightly and rigorously controlled: only industries that could export would have first calling upon precious stocks. The Board of Trade took the view that the caravan industry could and would not export at all: most European countries would not be in a position to spend upon such luxuries, neither were they as familiar with the caravan as a holiday concept in the way that their British counterparts were. But although only sixty four caravans were exported in 1947, during the same year *Caravan* magazine stated that it was aware of 181 companies or individuals who claimed to be, or about to be, in the business of manufacturing caravans. By July 1949 the magazine reported that this number had risen to 215 firms known to be in production.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Whiteman, *Caravan*, pp. 121-123.

Despite the difficulties in sourcing materials, Britain's post-war caravan manufacturing industry clawed its way back in to production, encouraged by a growing demand and new methodologies in design and production. At first production centred largely around touring caravans, but by the early fifties some manufacturers had an eye on the new caravan sites, and considered production of a model that was suited to be sited on a park or site and remain there for much of its lifetime. Amongst the companies that actually responded by producing such a unit were Bluebird, Lynton and Willerby Caravans.

These first static caravan holiday homes were just eighteen to twenty feet long, but were soon being manufactured at twenty two feet in length. Much of the impetus for this new, tailored design was a growing awareness by these manufacturers of the practice of caravans not only being sited on parks where they were intended to remain, but that they were also being sub-let to other users by the caravan owners themselves. This practice, resulting from the agency and resourcefulness of early working-class holiday makers with limited means looking to offset the costs of their caravan, continued to grow; it was an effective way for the owners to upkeep their holiday home, thereby making it more affordable and consequently more popular. Notices in the windows of caravans would advertise that it was for hire, and would often give a telephone number for the owner to be contacted for bookings.⁶⁸ It is this practice that also ensured that even the most financially constrained family could take a holiday.

It was thus that a new, inter-dependant industry formed: at first within general caravan manufacturing, but soon to be a separate and extensive industry. The new caravan sites were seen by the manufacturers as a marketplace for a new form of holiday accommodation, based on the traditional touring caravan, but more suited to a static usage. And it was the early caravan site users and owners who created this demand: by their adaption of an existing form of holiday accommodation that would be seemingly

⁶⁸ Terry O'Dell.

exempt from the rigours of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, caravan site users catalysed the birth of the static holiday caravan manufacturing in Britain. This, in turn, resulted in the development of specialised caravan transport companies. These firms, equipped with specially designed vehicles, were concerned with the national distribution of caravans which were by now unsuitable for towing on the road. The development of these industries will be more fully investigated in the following chapter.

Chapter Six

Static Holiday Caravan Manufacturing: The Birth of a New Industry

6.1 Introduction

The point during the mid 1950's at which some amongst the more established caravan manufacturers in Britain realised that there was a demand for a unit that would be better suited to semi-permanent siting for holiday use, rather than road touring, should be seen as the start of a new, offshoot manufacturing industry in this country. The static holiday caravan quickly evolved to become a wholly separate product in terms of design, use and manufacture. This would lead to the caravan manufacturing industry in Britain gradually dividing more clearly into four separate and distinct categories after 1950: touring caravans, static holiday caravans, residential caravans (or mobile homes) and motor-homes. Motor-homes (sometimes referred to as campervans or motor-caravans) are based on an existing motorised vehicle and are, therefore, generally produced by more specialist conversion companies not generally involved in the manufacture of other types of caravan.

Most of the companies that manufactured the first static holiday caravans generally continued to produce the other closely related products, either touring caravans or residential park homes (or 'living vans'); but many went on to produce only static holiday caravans. Later on, several firms were founded simply to produce this product and no other. This chapter will consider the birth and development of the static holiday caravan manufacturing industry in Britain, and analyse its relationship with the emergence of holiday caravan sites, the site operators and their customers. Along with the role of the manufacturing industries representative bodies such as the National Caravan Council (NCC), other inter-dependent industries such as static caravan transport and distribution

companies will also be studied. These industries come under scrutiny at this stage as it is argued that they arose largely as a direct consequence of, and response to, the markets generated by the users and proprietors of the developing caravan sites discussed thus far. It has also been suggested that this industry initially comes into being by responding to a demand that was at first led by its clientele, and yet it later evolves to take the lead in promoting new trends, fashions and technical developments to customers, thereby creating a more industry-led market. These developments will also be considered further.

6.2 The National Caravan Council and post-war manufacturing

Prior to 1939, a number of different organisations, companies, clubs and interests were involved in the production and use of caravans. Touring caravan users were represented by the British Caravanners' Club, the Caravan Club and the Trailer Caravan Club; manufacturers were generally represented by the Caravan Manufacturers Association. Dealerships were represented by the Caravan Distributors' and Agents' Association and in addition, some manufacturers were members of the light trailer section of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. Other interested groups included the R.A.C., the Showman's Guild and the Camping Club. As discussed in the previous chapter, William Whiteman with the help of *Caravan* magazine, then the only media voice for the industry and its consumers, had given manufacturing a boost with the Materials Convention; he was now instrumental in galvanising these disparate groups into an over-arching, unifying body. In March 1939 Whiteman proposed 'the formation of a round table body bringing together all interested organisations and acting as a clearing house and mouthpiece.'¹ The NCC was formed shortly after on the 18th May 1939. After the war the NCC would work to implement standards in caravan manufacture and site provision, and generally promote and give a voice to the industry. Under the editorial overview of

¹ W. Whiteman, *The History of the Caravan* (London: Blandford Press Ltd., 1973), p. 97.

Whiteman, *Caravan* became the NCC's platform journal for addressing both trade and public alike. Much of the editorial content mirrored the key issues facing the industry and its customers, and views from all sides were given the opportunity to be published. The NCC's key initial aims were thus clearly being met in the post-war years, largely as a result of the efforts of Whiteman and his fellow NCC board members.

The organisation of an 'approved list' scheme of manufacturers was deemed crucial to the industry by the end of the 1940's as a way to counter bad feeling and adverse publicity generated by sub-standard manufacture of caravans. With the problems caused by the less than scrupulous practices perpetrated by some dealers in response to the housing shortage as discussed in the previous chapter, and 'back-street' manufacturers attempting to cobble together something resembling a living caravan for sale as cheaply as possible, the NCC decided to act. In April 1950 they announced from their offices in Old Bond Street, London, 'In response to requests from the public and trade alike' that the NCC had prepared a list of approved caravan manufacturers, inclusion into which was granted 'after consideration of both the manufacturers and their products.'² The first list contained the names of twenty-two companies or 'makes'. These manufacturers were duly authorised to advertise their inclusion in the NCC List of Approved Manufacturers; manufacturers not included were warned publicly that they were not entitled to use the name of the NCC in any way.

Within two years the success of the scheme was becoming evident as more manufacturers applied to join the list. By May 1952 the published list contained the names of forty-two caravan manufacturers. The NCC had now originated an approved badge to be displayed by approved manufacturers in the form of a transfer in the window of their caravans. This distinctive 'letter A' badge and logo would become a

² *Caravan*, 18/5, (May 1950), p. 605.

common sight in caravans and in the offices of parks and dealerships in due course. The NCC were also keen to stress their impartiality when promoting the list, however, describing themselves as the ‘impartial organisation which represents all sides of caravanning.’³ However, as Whiteman observed: ‘Inevitably the people who were doing nearly all the work and paying all the costs wished to call the tune, and in early 1952 the Trade Division took over the NCC.’⁴ Other member organisations were given associate status and representation on the Grand Committee, but the NCC was now essentially a trade organisation, with the caravan manufacturing industry at its heart. More widely, this was where the caravan manufacturing industry joined other UK manufacturing industries and organisations in engaging with growing concerns for consumer protection. The ‘A’ badge joined the growing and varied ranks of marks of assured quality, including the Harris Tweed Associations ‘Orb’ or the British Standards Institution’s ‘Kite Mark’.⁵

It is, therefore, clear that early post-war caravan manufacturing was aided considerably by the efforts of Whiteman and the NCC. The catalyzing effect of the materials convention bringing together manufacturers with new technologies, raw materials and sourcing opportunities undoubtedly helped the design and manufacturing processes to move away from the canvas, hardboard and steel of the first utilitarian general purpose units toward the more advanced and durable aluminium-clad, effectively sealed lightweight proto-static holiday caravans of the mid-1950’s onward. The initiation of quality control within caravan manufacturing with the introduction of the ‘Approved Manufacturer’ list also had an impact not just on product quality, but in a wider sphere. The ‘caravan problem’, as will be considered more fully in the following chapter, stemmed from a broad disapproval amongst the middle-classes, conservationists and

³ *Caravan*, 20/5 (May 1952), p. 696.

⁴ Whiteman, *History*, p. 127.

⁵ M. Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 171-8.

local authorities of caravans sited more permanently around the countryside. Although tempered by an understanding and acceptance of the need for temporary housing in the immediate aftermath of the war, the idea of fleets of caravans on sites around the coast and countryside appalled many observers, as has already been discussed. Objections raised at this time included health and sanitation, unsightliness, despoiling of the countryside, disregard for planning regulations and overcrowding.⁶ Some of these objections were, arguably, eased as the caravan manufacturing industry became more quality-conscious under the guidance of the NCC, and the caravans themselves more suited to permanent siting and residential use. The NCC, obviously aware of the perceptions of caravans in some quarters, therefore attempted to provide positive publicity wherever possible, and draw the industry towards a more publicly acceptable image.

6.3 The first static caravan manufacturers and their product

By the mid fifties it was apparent to some within the caravan manufacturing industry that customers for their product were, in increasing numbers, seeking a cheaper unit and one that prioritized space and comfort over practical and legal considerations dictated by the need for being towed on the public highway. Whilst the touring caravan manufacturing business was still growing and viable, a new market for a different caravan was opening up. This new product would evolve gradually towards a unit that would be larger overall, and as it would not require the sort of chassis and running gear that was required for the rigours of road use; it could be equipped with a lighter sub-frame and simpler wheels that could be supported under the axle when it was placed on site. So long as it could be towed for a relatively short distance and manoeuvred into position at low speeds, this is all that would ultimately be required. Once on site, the

⁶ See Ch. 7: The Arton Wilson Report.

caravan could be supported by the 'jack-legs' at each corner, wooden blocks along the chassis and axle stands in order to stabilize the lighter chassis and support the whole unit.⁷ Whilst it could be moved again if necessary, it was envisaged that it could remain *in situ* for years if required. Those that sought to own this product were the new site operators (for letting fleet use) and holiday caravan owners on the sites discussed in the previous chapter. Some, of course, were keen to acquire individual units of this specification of caravan to sub-let to others for holiday use, as well as for their own enjoyment.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, letting, or renting-out caravans once sited to other users was a practice that started to develop rapidly on sites during the 1950's. Indeed, it was becoming an increasingly popular strategy now, as it would offset the costs of the holiday caravan for its owner, and yet allow the owner to use it for a holiday also. Site operators at first would be reasonably comfortable with this practice, not least as it would help to ensure that the site would have more holiday makers present during the season than if the caravans were empty when not in use by the owner. Operators quickly realized, however, that if they could purchase cheap, durable units in quantity, then they could establish a fleet of letting caravans on their own sites. Initially acting as letting agents for caravan owners on their sites, many operators ultimately took to controlling their own letting fleets.⁸ Letting was, therefore, a contributory factor in raising the demand for the manufacture of such units; it also ensured that static caravan holidays were available to those on lower incomes. The cost of new caravans of the type that were aimed at static holiday use was still fairly prohibitive for working-class families at this stage, but small letting fleets on sites coupled with caravans purchased privately, and let out regularly to offset purchase costs, ensured good availability at affordable prices

⁷ Jack-legs are the strut-like supporting legs located at each corner of caravans (including tourers) that can be lowered (wound down) by using a brace.

⁸ See Whiteman, *History*, p. 209.

for those on lower incomes. Also, a healthy 'trade-in' economy would have been encouraged by dealers and manufacturers in order to maximise sales of new units. This, in turn, would ensure a regular supply of cheaper second-hand caravans, again, for those on lower incomes.

This is the activity that probably spurred on at least four of the early post-war manufacturers to design a product more suited to caravan sites than road touring.

However, other influences should be noted. The housing shortages and the shortage of hotels in the immediate post-war period created an increase in the use of caravans as temporary or 'not-so-temporary' accommodation, as previously discussed. In January 1945 *Caravan* reported in an article by Sir Pierson Frank, Chief Engineer and Surveyor to the London County Council that planners now clearly recognised the value of caravans as homes, and that the post-war housing shortage may encourage their use as family accommodation.⁹ Wartime military restrictions on access at coastal areas (especially in the south and south east of England) coupled with a general lack of free time had taken a toll on hotels and boarding houses in these areas; in May of that year the journal reported statistics from the recent Catering Wages Commission report that 'there are functioning only 5 out of 16 licensed hotels, 6 out of 36 unlicensed hotels, and 100 out of 1,000 boarding houses' for an un-named south coast resort.¹⁰ Some manufacturers, now aware of this situation and conscious of the fact that it would be some time before the new house building programmes would begin to alleviate the problem, were naturally keen to have a product on the market that would serve as a temporary family home. Caravan dealerships were established throughout much of Britain, and the demand that they experienced for such units was in turn fed back to manufacturers. In May 1945 manufacturers collectively announced a two-year plan to manufacture caravans 'designed

⁹ *Caravan*, 13/141 (January 1945).

¹⁰ W. Whiteman, 'National Shortage of Hotels Creates Caravan Need', in *Caravan*, 13/145 (May 1945)

for living.¹¹ One manufacturer, Jubilee Caravans, announced in June 1945 that they were to build, ‘with Government authority, a batch of caravans designed for residential purposes.’ In addition, it was noted that:

To ensure that they play their proper part in meeting the housing shortage they will be sold only to buyers who can show a genuine need. Bombed out or homeless families, and business men, technicians, etc., with mobile jobs which take them to different parts of the country, are the kind of applicants who will qualify.¹²

Caravans that could accommodate family living for extended periods in more spacious surroundings were, therefore, already on the drawing board and had indeed been in production for some time by 1950. But the relatively high demand for such units was short-term; local authorities were often hostile to the proliferation of residential caravan sites, and the caravan as a permanent home was seen by some as insanitary and undesirable. Indeed, by the mid 1950’s a general public disapproval of caravans was evident largely as a result of the build up of ‘un-official’ caravan sites accommodating families on a permanent basis, rather than for holiday or temporary use. These sites came about as families and individuals grouped their caravan homes together on available land, forming unplanned community sites. Encouraged by caravan dealers, keen to sell both new and second-hand units, caravans were offered as accommodation that was at first seen by all to be temporary. But such sites tended to remain in situ for extended periods and grow, much to the concern of surrounding middle-class house owners. Ultimately the ‘caravan problem’ would lead to protests amongst the middle classes and some politicians; this was eventually brought to head at Egham, Surrey, where such a site became a focus for local dispute, as will be discussed further. The ‘caravan problem’ was something which government and the industry were forced to consider, and would be substantially addressed after the passing of the Caravan Sites Act in 1960. This, and the

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² W. Whiteman, ‘New Vans for Those in Most Need’ in *Caravan*, 13/146 (June 1945).

impact of this legislation on caravan sites themselves, will be more fully considered in the following chapter. Ultimately, however, as more new permanent homes were constructed, the need to manufacture high volumes of pre-fabricated buildings and caravans simply for housing families during the shortage diminished. A stable market for residential caravans on sanctioned, regulated parks would persist long-term, but at the same time the demand for a static holiday unit was now growing.

The first holiday units were not revolutionary departures from established formats, and were heavily influenced by the 'living vans' produced immediately after the war; but they did start to step clearly away from dedicated touring use. Manufacturers, including Willerby, Berkeley, Lynton, Pemberton and Bluebird, began to produce a model that was now aimed at the holiday caravan site market; these were firms that were experienced in production of caravans for a wider use than just road touring. In some cases the new unit was the cheaper 'Holiday' version of an existing model in production for the residential market.¹³ This was achieved by incorporating less insulation, not installing a stove for winter heating, and generally simplifying the specification of the caravan. Willerby Caravans, established in Hull by local businessman Walter Allen just after the war (but claiming to have been incorporated in May, 1944) was in the business of manufacturing 'temporary holiday accommodation following the previous hard years.' The company claims that 'within six months the company had built almost 800 steel framed, canvassed walled and roofed small vans' which 'marked the birth of the first mass-produced caravans.'¹⁴ Although Willerby claim the '22 Home' to be the first *holiday home* caravan to be manufactured, Whiteman suggests the Willerby Carotel should be seen as one of the first of the new designs.¹⁵ The Willerby Home, measuring 22 feet long by 7.5 feet wide, produced in 1950 and retailing at £450, was in effect mid-way between

¹³ Whiteman, *History*, pp. 208-9.

¹⁴ Willerby company history at www.willerby.com [accessed March 2012].

¹⁵ Whiteman, *History*, pp. 208.

touring caravan and residential home unit. It was, therefore, an ideal static holiday home caravan. However, the price of this caravan (£1115 more expensive than a new Austin A30 car at the time)¹⁶ meant that it was not typical of the units bought by early static holiday home users. Those on a more restrictive budget were seeking smaller, cheaper, second-hand touring stock to use for themselves and to let to others. The Willerby Home would appeal to more middle-class caravan enthusiasts or those who had moved on from letting smaller units and were now prepared to invest more substantially. Site operators would also see this model as ideal for letting.

Caravan manufacturers promoted sales through dealerships and by advertising in magazines and specialist journals such as *The Caravan*. Fig. 1, below, gives an example of Willerby's advertising coupled with that of Montrose Caravan Distributors Ltd., for 1953.¹⁷ The Willerby Home at £450 is advertised within a range of units that included, at one end of the price spectrum, the Willerby Junior MK II at £285, and the Willerby Villa, a residential unit, at £895 at the other. Although not yet specifically described as such, the Willerby Home can nevertheless be seen here to represent the prototype for a static holiday caravan; still maintaining some of the key features of the dedicated touring caravan, but larger and looking rather too unwieldy for constant road use, even being described in this advertisement as suitable for permanent living.

¹⁶ *Ideal Home*, 1954, in O. Newman and A. Foster, *The Value of a Pound: Prices and Incomes in Britain 1900-1993* (London: Gale Research, 1995), p. 158.

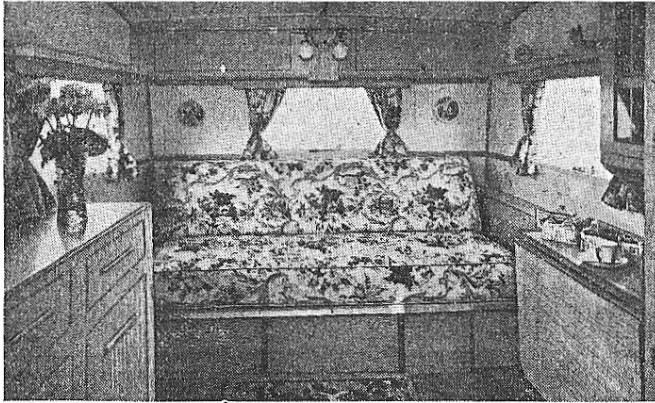
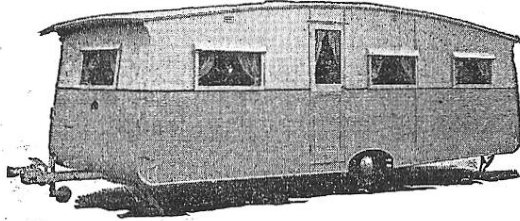
¹⁷ *The Caravan*, 21/5 (May 1953).

WILLERBY

The Finest Name in Caravans

The Willerby Range has set a new high standard in design, appearance and construction amongst moderately priced caravans. No other range offers you so much comfort, so much space and so much equipment at anything like Willerby prices.

If you cannot call to see these outstanding caravans, please write for our leaflets.



An interior shot of The Willerby 'Home' — a popular model in this range of caravans for Touring, Holidays and Permanent Living

TRADE ENQUIRIES
INVITED — LIMITED
TERRITORY AVAILABLE



WILLERBY JUNIOR MK II £285
WILLERBY STD. 4-BERTH £299/10
WILLERBY HOME £450

WILLERBY VANESSE HOME £499/10
WILLERBY MOBILE FLAT £499/10
WILLERBY VILLA - £895

MONTROSE
Caravan Distributors Ltd



World Concessionaires for Willerby, Beau Manor and Robin
STOCKPORT ROAD, CHEADLE, CHESHIRE
CITY SITE : TONMAN STREET, MANCHESTER
Also at Harwood Bar, Gt. Harwood, Blackburn, Lancs., & Handforth, Cheshire

Sole Distributors for Raven 'Montrose Castle'
Telephone : GAT 4207/8/9
Telephone : DEA 8027

Figure 1: an advertisement for the Willerby range of caravans, 1953.

Willerby, currently still one of the major static holiday caravan manufacturers in Britain, are keen to publicise their heritage as one of the originators of the static holiday unit, and their claim, historically, is reasonable; but they were not the only company aware of, and responding to, the market situation at the time.

The entrepreneur and manufacturer Bill Knot, based at Poole in Dorset, also saw opportunities to provide a new static holiday caravan. Before the war, at the age of sixteen he had begun by manufacturing caravans by hand, using recycled vehicle axles. Helped and subsidised by his father, an auctioneer, his business was relatively successful. After the war he established Bluebird Caravans, a small manufacturing business near Poole, which aimed to produce a more standardised product. Bluebird initially produced low-cost, virtually hand built products that were often criticized as lacking in build quality and reliability. But Knott was particularly adept at sourcing materials, and buying them cheaply in bulk. And by the early 1950's, in addition to their touring caravans, Bluebird were marketing a range well-suited to permanent siting on holiday caravan sites.¹⁸ As dealers were encouraged with favourable credit terms to stock Bluebirds, they began to appear not just in show yards, but on the caravan sites themselves. In May 1953, dealers Essby Caravans announced the opening of a new depot in Tendring at the Martello Tower Site near Saint Osyth Beach. On show was the new Bluebird range including the Nuhome at thirty-three feet long and priced at £595, the twenty-two foot Homestead at £475 and the Wren, a four-berth unit, priced at just £169. These competitively priced caravans were offered with 'convenient hire purchase terms' and were 'guaranteed sites with service and after sales' facilities.¹⁹ As detailed above, only the cheaper new units were less expensive than a typical popular new car of the period, and so the convenient hire purchase terms would have been appealing. In comparison to housing, however, these new caravans were in fact relatively inexpensive: a 3 bedroom semi-detached house with a garden in Stretford, London would sell for £1400 in 1952. By 1957 the average price for a new house at mortgage completion stage was £2330.²⁰

¹⁸ A. Jenkinson, *Caravans: The Illustrated History from 1960* (Dorchester: Volace, 1999), pp. 8-11.

¹⁹ *Caravan*, 21/5 (May 1953), p. 759.

²⁰ Household receipt, 1952, in Newman & Foster, *The Value of a Pound*, p. 153; Halifax Building Society, 1957, in *The Value of a Pound*, p. 153.

Bluebird were quickly establishing as a major producer of static caravan holiday homes, and Knott saw this product as the one that would be the way forward for his company.

Knott himself was somewhat of a maverick in the caravan industry. His manufacturing methods were at first described as haphazard and idiosyncratic; models varied in specification considerably and his fiercely independent stance saw him at odds for many years with the NCC. Knott's belief that their approved manufacturers list was a restraint of trade kept him and his company out of step with the industry orthodoxy for many years, even though by the 1960's he had become Britain's largest manufacturer.²¹ By this stage Knott had already floated the company, now Bluebird Investments, and share prices were rising steadily. He also had responded to the buoyancy of the new market in static holiday caravans by buying a golf course near Bournemouth, and turning half of it over to the siting of a fleet of Bluebirds for holiday hire.²²

Ultimately Bluebird would, in 1963, merge with another success story of post-war caravan production in touring caravans: Sam Alper's Sprite. Sprite and Bluebird became Caravans International or CI as the company were more familiarly known. Although Bluebird pressed on with the manufacture of a touring range for a few years in addition to their statics, they eventually focussed solely on static holiday caravans under the Bluebird brand. Eventually Knott broke away from the Bluebird brand altogether, and formed BK Caravans to manufacture caravan holiday homes at Mannings Heath, not far from the Bluebird factory.²³ In one sense this merger now seems very appropriate, as it was the unification of companies formed by two very charismatic and driven individuals. Alper's contribution to the production, development and popularisation of the post-war

²¹ Whiteman, *History*, pp. 138-142.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 209.

²³ Jenkinson, *Caravans*, pp. 8-9.

touring caravan is well-documented and indeed celebrated;²⁴ Knott's contribution to the development of the static holiday caravan is less popularised, but arguably no less significant in terms of his contribution to the static holiday caravan industry. The Bluebird Thunderbolt, manufactured and marketed some six years before the companies merger with Sprite, exemplifies Bluebird's ability to produce a unit which, although sometimes described as residential, in fact was the ideal static holiday caravan (see Fig. 2, below).

Before you buy for 1957 you must not fail to see the new
BLUEBIRD

THUNDERBOLT

There's never been a caravan like this before!
It's brilliantly spectacular, it's gloriously
colourful, it's years ahead of its time!

In every inch, inside and out there is the
touch of the craftsman with a lavish hand.
At any price the Thunderbolt is 1957's
finest residential. At only £523 10 0 it is
sheer bargain price luxury.



Length 22 ft., width 7 ft. 6 in. Four
berths (two singles and one double).
End kitchen with sink, oven cooker
and storage space galore. Toilet
Compartment. Solid fuel stove, gas
lights, hot and cold water. Exterior
in ribbed aluminium. Fully insu-
lated.

COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE
H.P. FACILITIES . SITES
AVAILABLE TO CUSTOMERS
TOWING . REPAIRS . ETC
AFTER SALES SERVICE
OPEN DAILY
9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Call at your leisure. We'll be
delighted to show you our
wonderful range.

Gordons Caravans LTD

CHORLEY RD (A6) · WALTON-LE-DALE · PRESTON · LANCs · Tel. PRESTON 2924

Figure 2: 1957 media advertisement for the Bluebird Thunderbolt with Gordons Caravans of Preston Lancashire. Hire Purchase facilities are offered as part of this dealerships services.

Berkeley Caravans of Biggleswade, Bedfordshire seemed more conservative in their approach at this time, yet still produced and marketed a product that was ideal as a static holiday home. The advertising for their early 1950's range suggests a 'caravan for all uses' approach, however: '...for a permanent home; for low price, high-pleasure holidays or for happy, super-camping weekends.' This range included the 1953 Berkeley Consul which at £559, seemed to be particularly unsure of its purpose, being described by the maker as a '20ft. 4-berth van for permanent residence, but easily towed.' Berkeley, with

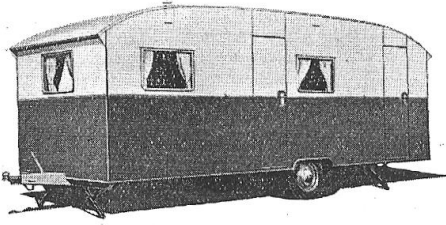
²⁴ Most recently in the BBC documentary *Caravans: A British Love Affair*, directed by B. Martin, first broadcast in February 2009, by BBC Four.

their slogan 'For residence...for holidays...for value', were clearly ensuring coverage of what they now saw as the main yet distinct markets for their product: residential homes, touring caravans and static holiday home caravans (see Fig. 2, below).²⁵ The latter two terms would soon become ubiquitous in the caravan industry in the shortened forms of 'tourers' and 'statics'.

**Berkeley value
will decide you!**

When you come to see the Berkeley range you will find just the caravan you want . . . for a permanent home; for low-price, high-pleasure holidays or for happy, super-camping weekends. In any and every model the skilled planning, splendid construction and good equipment — plus exceptionally low prices within each class — all emphasise the outstanding value you get when you buy a Berkeley.

BERKELEY CONSUL.
20 ft. 4-berth van for permanent residence, but easily towed. £559 (plus £1 P.T.). For full details write to Dept. XI. Berkeley Coachwork Limited, Biggleswade, Beds.



BERKELEY CARAVANS
For residence . . . for holidays . . . for value

Figure 3: A 1953 advertisement for Berkeley Caravans.

²⁵ *Caravan*, 21/6 (June 1953), p. 1016.

Prominent amongst the range of companies that followed this trend in producing caravans more suited to static use were Lynton and Pemberton. Lynton were known for their design flair: incorporating colourful, homely furnishings and giving their models exotic names derived from American pleasure resorts.²⁶ During the mid 1950's the company produced caravans to satisfy the growing market for letting; but in design terms, their models sought to progress from the utilitarian and functional designs characteristic of the caravans produced for residential use directly after the war. Although they owed their developmental heritage to such units, these next generation models were amongst the first to embrace post-war modernity with cleaner lines and more rectilinear styling; trying to take a lead and actually influence public taste by creating a new range and fashion on an annual basis. As such, companies such as Lynton would now seek to establish a lead in terms of design and style. Taste would now become a factor in the choice of a caravan holiday home as well as practical and financial considerations; design in caravan manufacturing was attempting to engage with trends of modernist design, ubiquitous in so many other aspects of life. But price was also still very much a key factor; the manufacturer Pemberton grew rapidly at this time by producing a model of twenty feet in length for under £380, which was to become a common sight on many static caravan sites around the country.²⁷ This was a practice which Pemberton pursued; in 1961 the ex-works retail price for the twenty-foot long Pemberton Sunstar was just £365.²⁸

In the aftermath of Whiteman's Materials Convention for the caravan manufacturing industry providing a springboard for better access to materials and manufacturing processes, manufacturers (Pemberton in particular) gained a reputation for quality of build, and it is evident that this was not unduly acquired. Even in recent years, a casual

²⁶ Whiteman, *History*, p. 208.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Anon. *The Key Guide to Used Caravan Values* (Northwich: H&H Publishing Co. Ltd., 1971), p. 132.

tour around the few smaller caravan sites that still allow the odd older caravan to remain *in situ* providing it is in respectable condition, may well reveal amongst the ranks of more modern units the distinctive stretched oval profile of a Pemberton Moonbeam or similar model, dating back to the 1960's or even late 1950's.²⁹ Holiday caravans in production at this time had moved forward considerably from the canvas-walled, steel-framed units of immediate post-war vintage. A general improvement in build quality during the mid 1950's was accompanied by a concentration on the provision of better internal facilities and fittings. By 1958 Paladin were advertising the Liberator as 'the most luxurious 22 ft. caravan ever!' Its quality of build was apparently evident in its exterior 'Rippleform' panelling, and the model featured hot and cold running water, a double sink unit, a full sized oven cooker, plastic topped work surfaces and an abundance of cupboard space. Such caravans were moving well away from the camping, make-do feel of the tourer, and attempting to provide levels of domestic comfort comparable to the kitchen and parlour of the home.³⁰ This would, of course, appeal to the ideal of a portable domesticity that the pre-war plotlanders sought in their holiday homes; the same ideal that static holiday caravan owners and users now sought to achieve on caravan sites around the country in the post-war period.

Thus by the late 1950's a distinct static holiday caravan product was beginning to emerge. It was partly based on the living caravans produced immediately after the war, but adapted to drive down production costs in order to provide an increasingly affordable product. This coupled with increasing security in employment as austerity receded and the new social reforms began to take effect, along with the availability of hire purchase schemes and the possibility of letting, provided the conditions to bring more working-class holiday makers into static holiday caravan ownership. The emerging

²⁹ Examples have been seen in Jaywick Lane, Point Clear and Wrabness.

³⁰ *Caravan*, 26/2 (February 1958), back cover.

post-war caravan sites and their customers were providing a growing market for the new 'static' models, and the manufacturers were able to respond accordingly. Letting was a key element in the creation of, and response to, this demand; manufacturers being spurred on by the hope (albeit modest at first) of fleet sales for the well-priced yet popular model. At first, therefore, demand was entirely consumer led. Most working families in this marketplace were buying good second hand units of the 'proto-static' type, creating a demand for new production. As confidence in employment grew more affluent individuals and families at the higher end of the working class, lower middle-class white collar workers along with site operators with a view to letting, were able to buy the new static units with hire purchase opportunities. The caravan holiday home users, those that let them for holiday use and the site operators themselves were becoming increasingly clear in the specification of the caravan that they required in order to fulfil their needs. And this crystallisation of demand would in turn, therefore, further consolidate the establishing phase of post-war caravan site development. As the static holiday caravan itself became available as a distinct product, dealers would specifically target caravan sites as the new front line of their marketing strategies.

In Tendring, following the earlier example of dealership and site partnerships set by Essby in 1953 at Martello, Jaywick, Point Clear caravan site teamed up with London based Gallows Corner Caravans of Romford and Wanstead, in such an arrangement in 1962, see Fig. 4, below. Caravan sites were encouraged to stock new models for sales display in this manner, often with sites guaranteed to be found for purchasers of new units. Second-hand, traded-in units would be available for those who, perhaps, after a few seasons of hiring a static holiday caravan for their annual holiday on a site at which they enjoyed the facilities and had developed social links and formed a sense of kinship, could now find an affordable way in to having their own holiday home on site. This, of course, could be sub-let if required, to off-set costs. Hire-purchase facilities became

increasingly commonplace, thereby further encouraging those with regular income to become stakeholders in the whole movement of the static holiday caravan industry.³¹

Hire-purchase was not a new phenomenon, but was an option that had been regarded with much suspicion, especially amongst working families, in earlier years. The Hire-Purchase Act of 1938 was the legislative instrument that finally began a regulatory programme for credit trading of this type. It was proposed by Ellen Wilkinson, the Labour MP for Jarrow (who also led the 1936 Jarrow March) in response to sharp practices from unscrupulous traders, including the practice of ‘snatch-back’ of goods partially paid for.³² Further Acts in 1957, 1964 and 1971 added further controls to the practice. With a strengthening economy and high employment levels by the mid-50s, hire-purchase, now regulated, became increasingly popular. Indeed, the ‘consumer boom’ is said to have been largely funded by hire-purchase at this time; the first Board of Trade statistics for outstanding hire-purchase debt in 1955 was £450 million. By 1960 the figure had reached £935 million.³³ Schemes varied in terms of deposit required and duration of the agreement, but as evidenced further below, smaller deposits and longer terms were being introduced under the rationale that as long as the customer could afford the monthly payment, all would be well.

³¹ Increasing advertising of hire-purchase facilities is evident in *Caravan* after 1950.

³² A. Taylor, *Working Class Credit and Community since 1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 32.

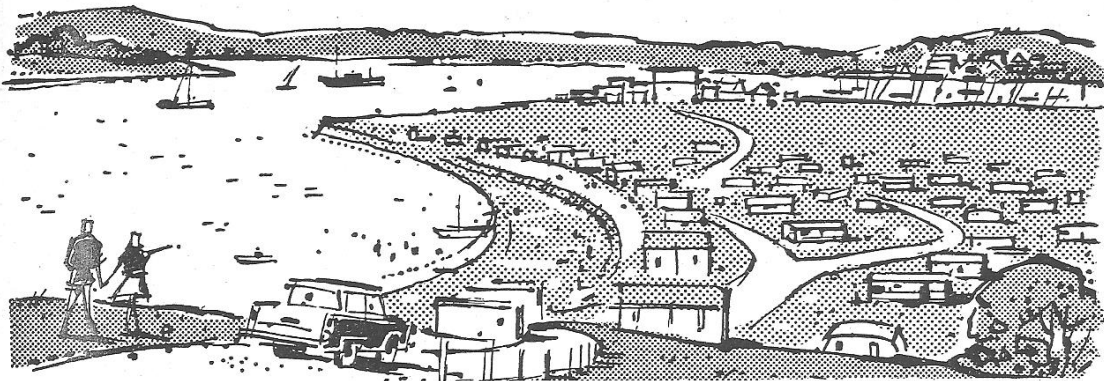
³³ *Ibid.*, p. 144.



Hundreds of sites at Point Clear, Essex
Exclusive to
Purchasers of NEW Caravans from GALLOWS CORNER CARAVANS

This recently developed site has new roads, electricity, flush toilets, shops, licensed club and many other attractive features.

Situated by the junction of the Colne and Blackwater estuaries and the open sea. Safe sandy beaches : one of the few places on the east coast where your boat can be reached both at high and low tide. Near to Brightlingsea, famous for oysters and yachting. Lovely creeks where you can learn to sail.



MOBILE HIRE FLEET AVAILABLE

Open every day of the week and we are so easy to get to

GALLOWS CORNER CARAVANS LTD.

GALLOWS CORNER, ROMFORD, ESSEX
 Tel.: Ingrebourne 41597

Also at

Wanstead Caravan Centre
 23 CAMBRIDGE PARK ROAD,
 WANSTEAD, E.II. Tel. : 7166

POST COUPON NOW

Please send details of Point Clear site and caravans for sale, from £400 £600 £800

Details of Mobile Hire Fleet

(Tick which required)

All makes supplied.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Figure 4: Gallows Corner Caravans advertising sites available at Point Clear, in the Tendring District. The mobile hire fleet also featured in this advertisement probably refers to touring caravans for hire at the depot.³⁴

³⁴ *Caravan*, 30/5 (May 1962), p. 57.

Towards the end of this initial period, with manufacturers such as Lynton beginning to introduce more distinctive elements of design beyond simple ergonomics, such as architectural considerations influencing exterior shapes and forms, more homely interiors and giving their products a distinct identity by branding, the wholly consumer-led stage of the static caravan manufacturing industry was, perhaps, coming to an end. Gradually, it would become the manufacturers who would take the lead in dictating design and style. By the 1960's, new ranges of static holiday caravans would be conceived with their specific market in mind, but with new ideas and features designed to impress potential customers, and make them feel that this was the model that they must now own, and that their existing caravan was *passé* or simply out-of-date. The existing caravan could be traded in on favourable terms, and they could upgrade to a new, more luxurious holiday home. Once again, traded in caravans would have provided cheaper second hand stock for entry level, or those customers on the tightest budgets to view when considering purchasing their first caravan holiday home.

In the report published in July 1959, preceding the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act (1960), it was noted that:

Caravanning in this country has become really big business only since the war. The industry's output of caravans of all kinds in 1938 was about 1,000. The output in 1948 was 3,600. In 1958 it was 36,500 (including some 3,500 exported), with a total retail value estimated at £14,600,000. Production is still increasing.³⁵

The report also gave details of the NCC's estimate that the total number of caravans of all kinds in use in Britain in 1959 was about 180,000. The report itself estimated the approximate number of caravans in use at that time as all-year-round homes by people other than those it described as 'gypsies or vagrants' to be 60,000. The remaining 120,000 would, therefore, consist of the small number used by gypsies or vagrants and

³⁵ A. Wilson, *Caravans as Homes*, Cmnd. 872 (London: HMSO, 1959), p. 5; NB: these data refer to caravans 'of all kinds'.

those used for holiday purposes. The NCC estimated that within these recreational or holiday use figures, somewhat less than 30,000 were touring caravans, used on the road and stored when not in use. This would mean that the data from the report and the NCC formed a combined estimate suggesting that there were around 90,000 caravans in the UK ‘to be used as static holiday or weekend accommodation, sited more or less permanently in a holiday camp or in the corner of an orchard or field, and occupied by people who for most of the year live elsewhere.’³⁶ It is interesting to note here the reference to caravans being sited ‘in the corner of an orchard or field’; although this was presumably a smaller number than those on caravan sites (even small ones), it does recognise that a significant minority were being used perhaps as a replacement or alternative to the earlier plotland holiday homes that would have been constructed in such places during the inter-war years, when static-type caravans were not available and planning laws were less rigorous. Figs. 5 and 6 (below) illustrate the above data for caravan manufacturing and use to 1959:

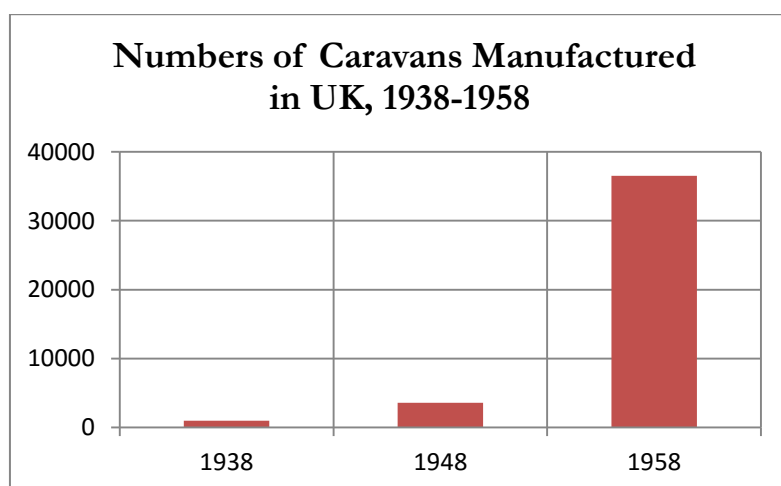


Figure 5: UK caravan production data, 1938-58.

³⁶ Wilson, *Report*, pp. 5, 6, 37-9.

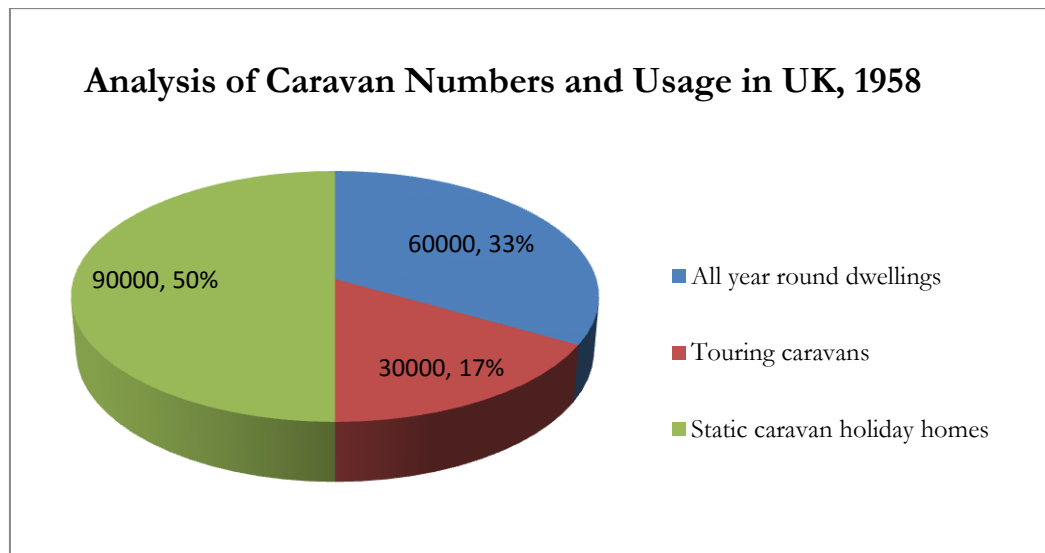


Figure 6: UK caravan numbers and usage, 1958.

With an estimated fifty percent of all caravans in the UK being static holiday homes by 1958, the extent of the growth of the static holiday caravan market in the post-war years is clear. As the overall increase in caravan manufacturing unfolded after 1948, static caravan holiday homes became far more prominent in terms of overall caravan production.

6.4 Static holiday caravan design, manufacture and marketing from 1960

With the promotion of the industry and the establishing of manufacturing standards, the NCC had begun to achieve many of its initial aims by 1960. The setting up of the approved list scheme had given the industry a respectable face and further promoted consumer confidence in the product. Ownership of a static holiday caravan on a site, or hiring one for a holiday, was also still an affordable choice for working-class families, when one considers the availability of cheaper units in the second-hand caravan market stocked by the trading-in of older models for new ones (a practice paralleled in the motor-car trade). A fully guaranteed used caravan could be purchased on terms from a

reputable dealer from £100 in 1962.³⁷ As a result of all of these factors and in concert with the demand from the end-users and site operators, the static caravan holiday was now firmly established as a growing and popular alternative to the commercial holiday camp in and around Britain's resorts. Indeed, by 1970 this relative growth against that of the commercial holiday camp was substantial: in an analysis of major forms of holiday accommodation in the UK for that year, static caravan pitches were estimated at 181,620 (not including touring pitches) as against 128,750 holiday camp beds.³⁸ This figure becomes more remarkable when we consider that each pitch for a static caravan would represent at least 4, but often 6 berths. Even allowing 2 persons for each holiday camp bed (257,500) and an average of 5 persons per static caravan pitch (908,100) we can see that there were more than 3.5 times as many static caravan berths than holiday camp berths in the UK by 1970.

For site operators, 1960 was an important year. The passing of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act in the wake of the Arton Wilson Report (entitled 'Caravans as Homes') in that year had a number of implications. For the manufacturers, it was clear that the industry was now regulated at the user end, i.e. on the caravan sites themselves, in such a way that their products would have to conform to further minimum standards. The regulation and control of sites had further effects upon static caravan manufacturing. In order to conform to standards, many park operators had to invest substantially to upgrade sites, and costs were passed on in the form of increases in ground rents or pitch fees³⁹ for individual caravans, and rental charges for letting fleet caravans; this will be further explored in the following chapter. As Whiteman suggests,

³⁷ Newark Caravans, an established Nottinghamshire company, offered used models fully guaranteed from £100 to £500 on 1, 2 and 3 years hire purchase or 4 and 5 years rental agreements, see *Caravan*, 30/5 (May 1962), p. 65.

³⁸ Source: Hotel and Catering Economic Development Committee, *Hotel Prospects to 1980*, cited in A. Burkart and S. Medlik, *Tourism: Past, Present and Future* (London, Heinemann, 1974), p. 155.

³⁹ Ground rents or pitch fees are the fees payable by caravan owners for the annual use of the plot upon which the caravan stands within the caravan site.

this factor also catalyzed a further evolution in static holiday caravan design, ultimately leading to the full separation and crystallization of the static holiday home as a distinctly separate form.⁴⁰

Manufacturers now had, therefore, two distinct markets for the static holiday caravan: the letting fleets and the individual or family customers. Both would be accessed via park operators. Eventually sales of fleets of caravans would be negotiated directly with the park operator, and individual customers were also tending to seek to buy their caravan holiday home from the park that they had chosen to site it on, an indicator of the decline of consumer agency, as discussed further below. As discussed, Bluebird caravan's pioneering of this process was soon emulated by others, thereby allowing dealers to take stock for sale and display it at the caravan parks and allowing potential customers to browse the products on-site rather than travelling around to dealerships and incurring further transport and delivery costs. As parks raised letting fees in order to help to recoup the additional costs of regulation as detailed above, the operators sought a more desirable caravan to offer that could offer more berths. In this way additional charges and raised fees could be justified as parks could be seen to be offering more for the increased charges. Likewise, as annual ground rents and the profits on new caravan sales were increased for the same reasons, a better product would be needed to help justify such higher costs.⁴¹ The letting of static caravans, whether by the park operator or caravan owner remained popular as it allowed access to a static caravan for holiday purposes without the commitment of caravan ownership. Dave Maidment recalls:

We just liked caravan holidays. Before we got involved in caravan holidays, we tried it out in a camper van, and we enjoyed it, and we decided a static one would be much better because you haven't got to worry about pitching up. When you're there you're there. And the following year I got to hear of somebody who had a caravan. That was 1969. We hired it, enjoyed it, and the following year came back again and that was the start of what's here now, the early days. The club house in the early days used to be called the El-Toro, I

⁴⁰ Whiteman, *History*, pp. 209-11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

believe its Seawick Holiday Lido now. And there was the other little club on Bel-Air. You had, you know, a couple of places to go.⁴²

Thus, the post-1960 static caravan holiday homes became more spacious and comfortable units than their earlier incarnations. Increasing the number of berths was, again, a relatively straightforward way for manufacturers to give more perceived value for money. Statics were now typically marketed as featuring up to six berths (or sometimes even eight);⁴³ the additional two berths often achieved by converting lounge or dinette seating into a further double berth. The need to include and develop further improvements and conveniences also meant that manufacturers would now become more dependent upon effective design as a key element to their company's structure. Where Lynton had started to venture in this regard, others would soon follow. It is from this point that the pattern of manufacturing that was to become dominant for the remainder of the twentieth century in Britain develops. As manufacturers competed to innovate and offer new and more desirable products, the concept of a 'new range' for the 'new season' became to be the manner in which new products were eventually marketed. Regional shows would ultimately be organised in order to showcase such models, and manufacturers, dealers and park operators would work together to organise sales promotions, end of season special offers and other marketing tactics, see Fig. 7, below. As this process evolves therefore, the static caravan user and purchaser's place in the structure of the market gradually changes from one of initiating, driving and growing a demand to one of being enticed to enter an existing market place and being subjected to promotional tactics and sales campaigns.

It has been argued thus far that the agency of working-class consumers has been a significant factor in the origination of the static holiday caravan site and its associated

⁴² See Appendix Four: D. Maidment interview transcription.

⁴³ *Key Guide to Used Caravan Values*, general holiday home specifications, 1966-71.

manufacturing and service industries. By the early 1960s, the slicker, more professional on-site stocking and marketing of static holiday caravans was evidence of a developing and strengthening market, and that the level of agency had begun to decline. More widely since the end of the Second World War, as discussed in the previous chapter, a period of economic growth and development began in tandem with the eventual receding of post-war austerity. As capitalism re-established within the mantle of the welfare state and the economy strengthened, working families aspired, and were enticed, in their new confidence to own and consume products and services from larger manufacturers and suppliers, and gradually abandon more self-originated, rational or home-made alternatives. Continuing the late 1930s trend of upper-working class aspiration to have the life-styles of the lower-middle classes, so a much wider and growing section of the working class in Britain saw their living standards improve materially.

Recent studies have convincingly shown how concerns about the newly-affluent worker lacking guidance in the market place fuelled the disquiet felt amongst some Labour politicians at the growth of affluence and consumerism.⁴⁴ Many of these also saw the new affluence as temporary, founded on debt through hire purchase, and at odds with traditional socialist doctrine, appeasing and distracting workers from the more wholesome possibilities that improving incomes might offer and fracturing them from collective solidarity into atomised, self-centred consumers. Roy Hattersley observed that televisions, washing machines and continental holidays were helping to 'blur the boundaries of class struggle'.⁴⁵ Other Labour politicians sought to move forward by accepting and embracing consumerism as an inevitable aspect of a 'post-materialist'

⁴⁴ See L. Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-64: Old Labour, New Britain?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); L. Black, *Redefining British Politics: Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010); P. Gurney, 'The Battle of the Consumer in Post-War Britain', *The Journal of Modern History*, 77/4 (December 2005), pp. 956-987; Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth Century Britain*.

⁴⁵ R. Hattersley, 'New Blood', in Kaufman (ed.) *The Left* (London, 1966), p. 153, cited in Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain*, p. 111.

society in which the lives of the working-class could be enriched and made easier. They moved to engage with consumers primarily by ensuring that the buyer was empowered with knowledge of goods and services and protected from unscrupulous practices. Anthony Crosland, a 'revisionist' politician of the 'New Left' championed this approach. Michael Young, from Labour's Research Department, became a key figure in the founding of the Consumers Association in 1957, the body geared to testing and reporting on consumer products, modelled on the American Consumer Union. As the view that the working-class consumer did not properly consider their consuming habits and did not know how to spend their extra money was widespread amongst politicians (if the middle-classes were seen as skilled in this regard, working-class consumers were often viewed as gullible), then this was a way forward. The Consumers Association and its journal *Which?* (which published the results of independent product tests) attempted to educate, enlighten and thereby empower all consumers, but in reality only reached a middle-class audience. Co-operative retailers, also claiming to be the voice of the consumer, remained wedded to earlier principles and practices, and avoided opportunities to modernize and embrace new products and practices.⁴⁶ The Molony Committee on Consumer Protection, set up to review legislation in 1959 after growing pressure from 'many sections of the media and consumer movement' has been shown by Hilton to have been a remarkably un-balanced group with a distinct business bias.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, reform was achieved; but this was mainly characterised by self-regulatory schemes and codes of conduct. In this political climate and despite the many advances in consumer protection, the working-class consumer was, therefore, still in many areas 'at the mercy' of manufacturers, advertisements and the marketplace.

⁴⁶ Black, *Redefining British Politics: Culture*, pp. 14-16, 39-45, 46-57, 73-4; Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth Century Britain*, pp. 167-298; Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain*, pp. 109-118, 124-154.

⁴⁷ Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth Century Britain*, pp. 221-8.

As this transformation took place in the wider context, so newly-affluent working-class holiday makers no longer needed to find an old caravan for a few pounds and negotiate with a campsite operator to site it for a holiday home. By the 1960s they were much more in thrall to the new economic model. They could visit a static caravan site, view new and second-hand stock and buy (with hire-purchase terms if required) on-site in the new sales office, run by the site operator or local dealer, supplied by trade-ins and new stock from the manufacturer. Caravan exhibitions such as the one advertised in Fig. 7 below, further evidence the situation described above and strengthened the developing infrastructure of the trade and retail aspects of the static caravan holiday home business. Thus, although not generally utilising national advertising, the manufacturers and site operator's earlier relationship with their customers had clearly begun to change. What was originally a grass-root, symbiotic relationship, as described earlier, that established the static caravan and site as an affordable holiday concept, became one where the suppliers now increasingly took control of the product in terms of design and marketing.

Now acknowledged the largest caravan exhibition in the country—Luxury Holiday Caravans and Modern Mobile Homes, shown in their natural surroundings. Approximately 100 models all representing modern design with experts in attendance to answer questions on every phase of caravanning.

The Allen Caravan Organisation

presents

6th ANNUAL MIDLANDS CARAVAN EXHIBITION



In the grounds of

WOOTTON HALL · WOOTTON WAWEN

Near Henley in Arden (main Birmingham to Stratford Road)

NOW OPEN UNTIL MONDAY, MAY 7th (inc.)

OPEN TILL DUSK — DAILY

- * Luxury holiday homes
- * Modern Mobile Homes
- * Class Tourers
- * Large comprehensive display of accessories
- * Site Operators from all parts of the country in attendance
- * Finance and insurance facilities available
- * Leading Manufacturers representatives in attendance

Figure 7: advertisement for the Midlands Caravan Exhibition organised by the Allen Caravan Group, May 1962.

Some further insight into the changing nature of the holiday consumer at this time is offered by Shaw and Williams' analysis of social access to tourism from 1994. Using the 'values and lifestyles' (VALS) methodology proposed by Mitchell and Earl, they give a sociological model (albeit a rather crude one) which, it is claimed, can be used to further understand the nature of demand in a society and as a way to understand broader

changes over time.⁴⁸ A hierarchy of VALS types is proposed for developed economies, ranging from needs-driven individuals at the lower end who are simply concerned with the basic staples of life, through a divided line of inner- and outer- directed types leading to a convergence of integrated types as described in Figure 8, below.⁴⁹

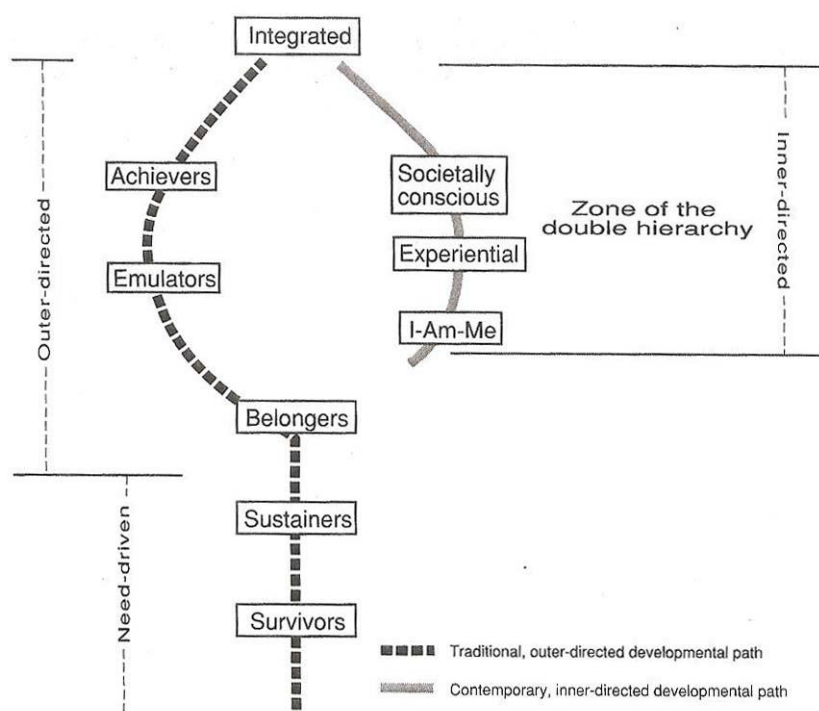


Figure 8: the value and lifestyle hierarchy.

It is claimed that the majority of people in Western societies comprise the outer- and inner-directed groups. In the UK, the needs-driven group was claimed to be comprised of unemployed, unskilled or skilled workers; the inner- and outer- directed groups containing a smaller number of skilled manual workers, but largely clerical, managerial and professional workers. The inner-directed group are claimed to have been in growth by 1989, accounting for around 38% of the population, with 34% being outer-directed

⁴⁸ From P. Earl, *Lifestyle Economics: Consumer Behaviour in a Turbulent World* (London: Wheatsheaf, 1986) and A. Mitchell, *The Nine American Lifestyles* (New York: Warner, 1983) in G. Shaw and A. Williams, *Critical Issues in Tourism: A Geographical Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 46-9.

⁴⁹ Diagram from Shaw & Williams, *Critical Issues in Tourism*, p. 47.

and 28% needs driven.⁵⁰ MacNulty refers to the ‘skilled consumers’ of the inner-directed group as having emerged in Britain since the 1960s. Shaw and Williams use this model, via Gratton’s work, to give a view of the relationship of these changing consumer types and access to UK tourism between 1800 and 2000, see fig. 9, below.⁵¹

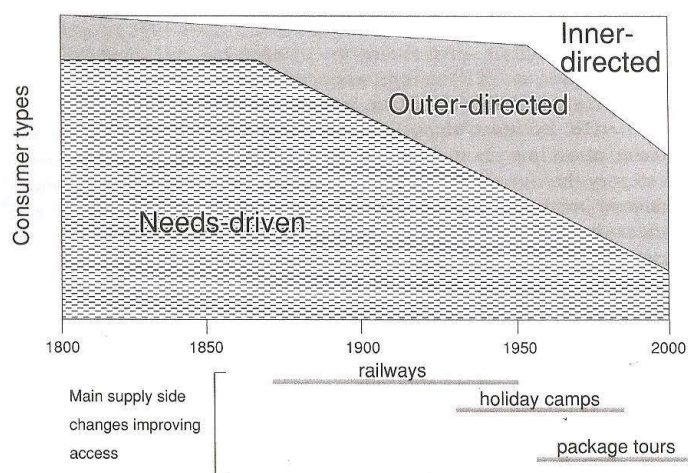


Figure 9: change in UK consumer type and access to tourism, 1800-2000.

Again, in this simplistic model, we encounter the problem of holiday camps being used as a general term, presumably covering both catered and self-catered alternatives. But the decline in the needs-driven group illustrates the movement of working-class consumers into either inner- or outer- directed groups. The agency of the largely needs-driven early originators of the caravan site diminishes in direct proportion to their changing experience as consumers. As a result of the changes in post-war society discussed above, needs-driven caravan site originators became inner- or outer-directed consumers in this model; they began to exhibit divergent motivations for domestic holiday choice. The outer-directed, conspicuous consumers could aspire to ever-developing new luxuries in static holiday caravan design, inner-directed, ‘skilled consumers’ could eschew the brash

⁵⁰ W. MacNulty, ‘UK Social Change Through a Wide-Angle Lens’, in *Futures* (August 1985), pp. 18-25, cited in Shaw and Williams, *Critical Issues in Tourism*, p. 47.

⁵¹ C. Gratton, ‘Consumer Behaviour in Tourism: A Psycho-Economic Approach’, conference paper presented at ‘Tourism Research into the 1990s’, University of Durham, 1990, with diagram in Shaw and Williams, *Critical Issues in Tourism*, p. 48.

delights of the commercial and traditional working class-holiday options and seek discrete, seaside or countryside holiday environments to be enjoyed on their own terms. Agency, defined in terms of the creative, need-driven desire to make this happen by adaption and improvisation was gradually replaced with the selective perusal of the market place. As Benson observes: 'When real incomes rose, the first priority was to obtain enough food to eat and adequate accommodation in which to live. But once these basic needs had been met, priorities began to alter.'⁵² Those working-class families and individuals that 'bought-into' static holiday caravan ownership during the 1960's were now doing so in a way that followed their wider patterns of consumption at this time.

During the early 1960's caravan site operators had engaged with the new legislation and as a result had seen costs rise as they were required to invest in site infrastructure. From their point of view, the industry was becoming more demanding and competitive, and would naturally require an increasingly business-like approach from its practitioners if success were to be maintained. New and second-hand static caravan sales formed a substantial part of the site operators business, and profit on these sales was therefore a key factor. If a site operator only sold a small number of new units over a season, then the trade discount that the operator may have enjoyed would be less than that enjoyed by the operator or distributor whose seasonal sales were higher. However, if sale-or-return deals could be negotiated, or at least payment made to the distributor or manufacturer once the units were retailed on site, then the trading situation for the site operator would be optimised.⁵³

A group of eleven proprietors, who were mostly operating caravan sites in the Tendring District, came together to discuss ways of optimising their trading relationships with the

⁵² J. Benson, *The Working Class in Britain, 1850-1939* (London: Longman, 1989) p. 146; see also J. Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880-1980* (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 28-30.

⁵³ NACO, Terry O'Dell Jnr.

caravan manufacturers. As a consequence of their discussions they decided together to form Anglia Caravans Limited, a company incorporated on 6th February 1964. The company would act as a distributor of caravans and associated products, and would negotiate directly with manufacturers for the best deals to supply parks in the region. Quite simply, by placing their orders with Anglia Caravans, site operators in the area would benefit from the companies 'bulk buying power' and enjoy better terms than they could otherwise negotiate alone for smaller orders. Such was the difference in terms for larger orders that Anglia Caravans would also be able to enjoy profits from the distribution of caravans to its site operators, along with sales of touring caravans and accessories to the public. The companies founding directors were: R. Cooper of Coopers Beach Caravan Park at Mersea Island (the one site not located in Tendring); D. Taylor of Highfields, Clacton-on-Sea; E. Albert of Highlands and Rosebank parks, Clacton; H. Doble of Castle Hill Park, Clacton; J. Garneys of Willow Caravan Park, Walton; D. Garton of Martello Caravan Park, Walton-on-Naze; A. Gooderson of Anchor Caravan Park, Clacton; A. Hake, a former operator of a park thought to be outside of the district; T. Harries of Highlands and Rosebank Parks, Clacton; T. O'Dell of Seawick Holiday Lido, St. Osyth Beach, and H. Woolley of Firs Caravan Park, Clacton. Two years later an associated company, Anglia Caravans (Norfolk) Limited, was established to carry out similar practice with caravan parks in Norfolk.⁵⁴

Although not all parks in the district were involved with the Anglia project, the company was initially successful in achieving its aims, and trade was strong enough for the company to secure sizable premises at 475 Ipswich Road, Colchester by the end of the decade. This large site had room to carry both touring and static caravan stock in a showground, offices and an accessory shop as well as a Calor Gas franchise. Road

⁵⁴ National Association of Caravan Owners (NACO) Archive, *Memorandum for Articles of Association*, Anglia Caravans Ltd.

trailers and horseboxes were also displayed and sold from the site. Anglia Caravans' growth during its first ten years was not wholly dependant on static caravan distribution, but this part of the business was nevertheless substantial. At a board meeting on 21st April 1972, it was reported that caravan sales (including tourers) had increased from 678 units for 1970-71, to 702 units for 1971-72.⁵⁵

As Anglia Caravans established itself in Colchester and Sherringham during the 1960's, a growing proportion of the UK's numerous caravan manufacturers were producing a range of dedicated static caravans, which began to be referred to increasingly as holiday homes. The 1971 *Key Guide to Used Caravan Values*, a trade publication for use by caravan dealerships and park operators as a guide for buying in used caravans, part-exchanges and retailing, details some forty-nine companies out of a total of 267, who were marketing a range of dedicated static caravan holiday homes, see Fig. 10, below:

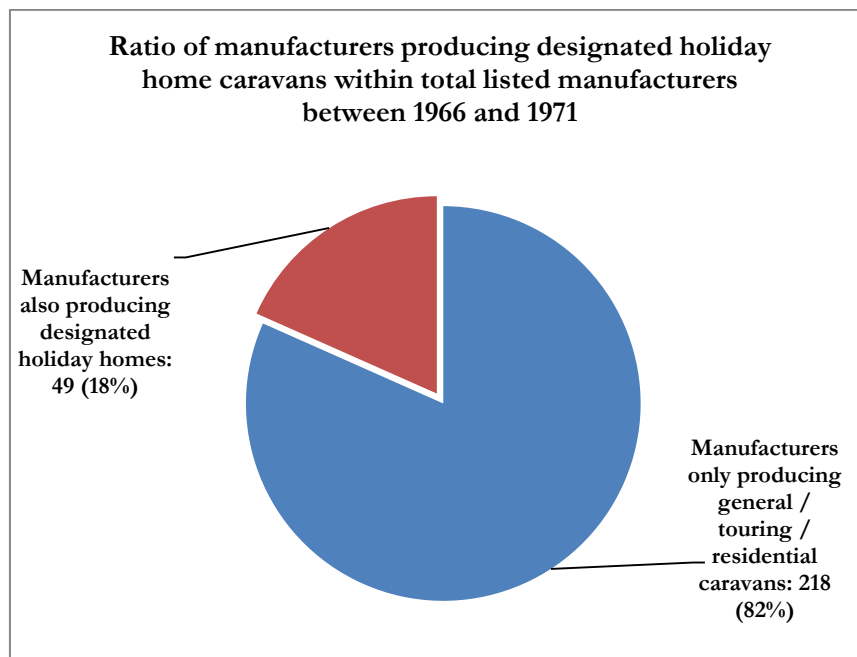


Figure 10: Caravan manufacturers producing holiday homes, 1966 to 1971.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ NACO Archive, *Minute Book*, Anglia Caravans Ltd., p.9.

⁵⁶ *Key Guide to Used Caravan Values*, listings of caravan manufacturer's products, 1966-71.

It should be stressed, however, that as we have seen, many models of caravan were produced (and were in production) that were considered as a kind of general model suitable for static or touring use (in reality many of these units were now far less suited to towing), and were in fact being sold and used as static holiday homes, and had been for some time. Often the term 'mobile home' was used as a catch-all term for such general units. Thus, the above chart could be misleading; it does, however, serve to illustrate the extent to which the absolute definition of the static holiday home caravan as a separate unit, constructed and dedicated to its sole purpose of being semi-permanently sited at a caravan site for holiday use, was now being adopted by manufacturers and the industry in general.

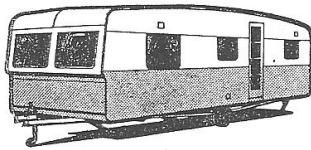
Caravan sites now became increasingly populated with these designated holiday homes during the 1960's and on into the 1970's as the older, more general and non-specific units of the 1950's became obsolete, see Fig. 11, below. As touring caravan design began to result in a more specialised product purely for road use, so static caravan holiday homes diverged from the old, more general unit to likewise become a specialised product, but for siting on a semi-permanent basis and no road-towing capacity at all. Throughout the 1960's nearly all of the manufacturers who produced a designated static holiday home also produced a range of tourers, but this would ultimately change as companies producing just statics emerged later on. Responding still to demand from park operators and the public looking for increasingly comfortable units at competitive prices, manufacturers began to promote more innovative designs and novel features. The process of market-change, described above, accelerated from this point.



Figure 11: view of caravans at St. Osyth Beach, c. mid 1970's.

The clearest physical indicator of the changes in design and marketing for the static holiday home was the introduction of units that conceptually fully embraced the modernist design characteristics of pure, clean rectilinear lines, simplicity (even minimalism), use of new materials and a rejection of excessive decoration or references to classical, nostalgic or bygone elements. As it was realised that the new static units technically did not need the inherited aerodynamic curves of the touring caravan, so some of the new designs did away with them altogether. The ends of the caravan could now be flat and square, and allow for more internal space and headroom, whilst following a modernist design aesthetic. In addition, an extra door could now be situated at either end of the caravan. These developments were particularly evident in *The Futurist*, an aptly named 25ft by 9.5 ft, 2 to 6 berth unit produced in 1962 by Lissett Caravan and Bodybuilders Ltd. of Driffield, Yorkshire; see Fig. 12, below:

**For
that
EXTRA
SPACE
and VALUE
get a
LISSETT
CARAVAN**



Don't wait! Send for leaflets from Dept. C.F.B.B.:

LISSETT CARAVAN & BODYBUILDERS LTD
AERODROME WORKS, LISSETT, Nr. DRIFFIELD, YORKS. Tel: SKIPSEA 284

The FUTURIST

25ft. x 9ft. 6in. wide. Permanent or Holiday home for 2 to 6 people. Roomy interior combines labour-saving layout and luxury—with glamorous contemporary styling.

The BROADVIEW

30ft. x 9ft. 6in. wide. Permanent residence for 2 to 6 people. Room to spread yourselves in space and luxury. Beautifully furnished Lounge, Hallway, Bathroom, Bedrooms and Kitchen with Dinette.

The NEW! BERMUDAN

22ft. x 7ft. 6in. wide. First-class accommodation for 5 or 6 people, delightfully furnished with splendid up-to-date facilities. An ideal holiday caravan.

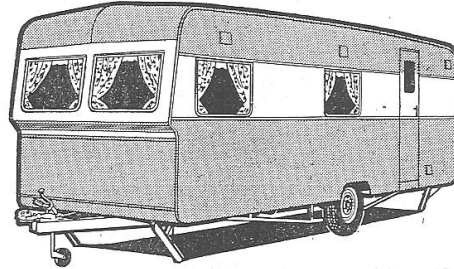
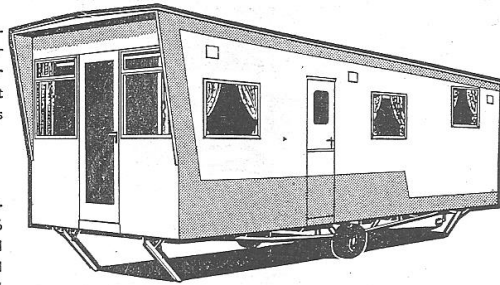
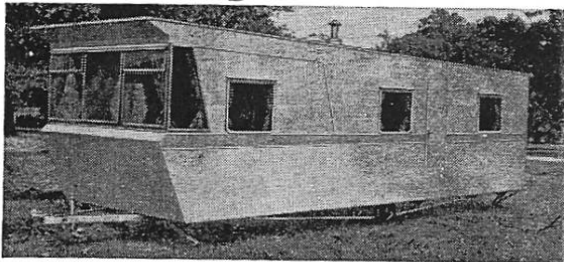


Figure 12: advertisement for Lissett caravans, 1962.⁵⁷

Not all manufacturers at this stage followed this trend, and many (including Lissett, as can be seen) produced both traditional and modern units; both concepts are evident in the above advertisement. Pemberton and A-Line also stuck doggedly to the more traditional external shapes for some years to come, although in terms of interior design, furnishings and equipment offered, they were as contemporary as their competitors. As static holiday caravans began to be built in longer overall configurations, the elongated, extended curved design itself began to appear as a more modernist concept. Many manufacturers, including Lynton, Donnington and Willerby, continued to pursue pure progressive, brutally square or angular design, nevertheless. Lynton evolved a distinctive, angular-fronted, rectilinear design and adopted exotic international resort names for their products such as the 'Majorca' or the 'Valetta Continental'; see Fig. 13, below.

⁵⁷ *Caravan*, 30/5 (May 1962), p. 48.

Want to be sure?
GO
Lynton
 they're guaranteed!



Majorca 28 £699.10.0

This is just one of the Lynton range that caters for everyone who wants roominess, good design, and above all, *guaranteed* craftsmanship. A caravan is an important purchase, and it is vital that workmanship and finish leave nothing to be desired. Every model that Lynton produce, from the Valetta Continental 10 at £295.10s. to the Crusader 33 at £822, carry the same Lynton guarantee. You owe it to yourself to find out all about them.



POST THIS COUPON TODAY
 for full information on the Lynton range

There's a Lynton model to suit you, and Lynton literature will tell you everything you need to know including the name of your nearest stockist.

NAME

ADDRESS.....

.....

To: Lynton Caravan Manufacturing Company Limited,
 Lees Street, Manchester 18.

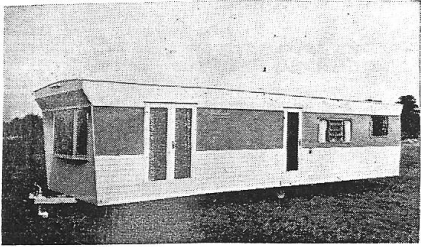
Figure 13: Lynton caravan advertisement, 1965.⁵⁸

Willerby's 1965 'Star' range and Donnington's 26 and 31 models epitomised 1960's modernist trends in static caravan design: rectilinear shape, angular front end and roof

⁵⁸ *Caravan*, 33/5 (May 1965), p. 58.

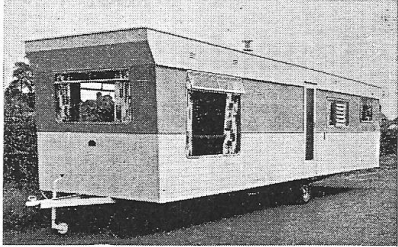
overhangs coupled with variable, well-equipped and relatively clutter-free interiors, see Figs. 14 and 15, below.⁵⁹

WILLERBY "STARS"



SUPER STAR
32ft. x 9ft. 6in. 6/8-berth

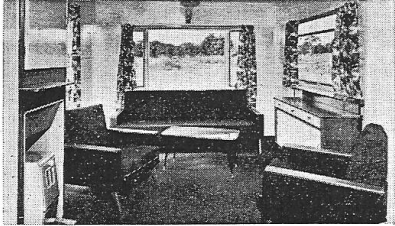
De-luxe fittings include 3-piece suite OR clicker settee and 2 chairs, fitted carpet with foam underlay. Full house type cooker, water storage, dining kitchen, bay window and french doors, insulated walls and roof and special roof ventilation system, solid fuel stove, large fitted wardrobes. Bathroom can be fitted if required as optional extra.



STAR
32ft. x 8ft. 6/8 berth

Fitted with large picture windows. Full oven cooker, water storage, clicker settee and chair, fitted carpet, tiled kitchen floor, dining kitchen, sideboard and ample wardrobes, solid fuel fire, insulated walls and roof. Loose table and chairs in lieu of dinette in kitchen if required at no charge. Bathroom can be fitted if required as optional extra.

"SUPER STAR"
Price from
£849
ex-works



"STAR"
Price from
£690
ex-works

Other Willerby models available :

Dandy 10 from £275	Hawk 20, 8ft. wide, from £449
Dandy 12 £320	Hawk 22, 9ft. 6in. wide, from £545
Dandy 14 £355	Burndene, 26ft. x 9ft. 6in., from £675

All prices may be affected by the prevailing import duties.

Send for Free Leaflets to :

WILLERBY CARAVAN CO LTD

WILLERBY • NR. HULL Tel.: 57901 (3 lines)




Figure 14: Willerby's 'Star' range from 1965.

⁵⁹ *Caravan*, 33/5 (May 1965), pp. 55 & 43.

what's in a Donnington?

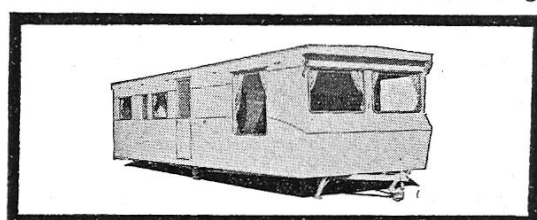
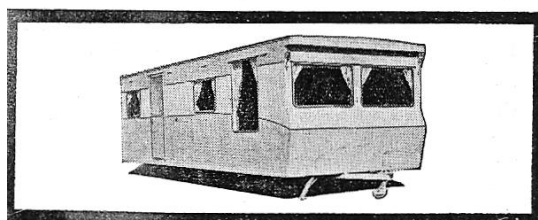


IT'S all in a Donnington. Apart from the superb furniture and fittings that you can see for yourself there's the built-in insulation and moisture protection barriers, and the careful attention to detail that makes every Donnington home a house proud home. Take the Donnington 26 and Donnington 31: here are two fine homes, built with care for carefree living.

Donnington 26—A standard six berth model, 9 ft. 6 ins. wide. Fittings include wall to wall carpets

in bedroom and lounge, wonderfully equipped kitchen, full length wardrobes, solid fuel stove. There are three alternative layouts from which to choose. Available from **£685** (ex-works).

Donnington 31 The big mobile home with eight interior layouts available. Fittings in the 31 include wall to wall carpets in bedroom and lounge, convector fire or infra red heater in main bedroom. Space saving dinette with plastic topped table and upholstered seating. Available from **£795** (ex-works).



See the Donnington for yourself, please write for full details, and name of your nearest distributor.

Donnington Castle Caravans Limited

SHAW · NEWBURY · BERKS · TELEPHONE NEWBURY 3121

Figure 15: Donnington Castle Caravan's 1965 '26' and '31' models.

The refinement of this wave of modern designs continued throughout the 1960's and on into the 1970's. A buoyant market for manufacturers, distributors and site operators during the 1960's provided them with the opportunity to fully embrace the static holiday

home market and with pro-active marketing utilising regional shows, incentives for dealers and site operators, and more sophisticated advertising, for them to now lead the market. Complicit in this, of course, were dealers and site operators, as they continued to develop their respective businesses. New models of static holiday homes were now regularly being introduced by manufacturers (often with the same model name, but upgraded, or simply just altered a little and given a face-lift for the new season) to feed the market that they actively sought to continue to expand. But as the 1970's progressed, the period of ascendancy in terms of production and market growth would come to an end. As detailed below, manufacturing output for caravans declined after 1973, but manufacturers were still keen to provide the most desirable holiday homes that they could produce in order to keep their market share.

Thus, the concept of a static caravan on a site as a second holiday home was now fully established; it had for some time effectively replaced its similarly self-originated inter-war predecessor the plotland holiday home, but with the latter's key elements intact. A wide variety of models and layouts, as well as the ease of personalisation and even modification within, enabled individuality and identity to be expressed and maintained, see Fig. 16a) and 16b), below.



Figure 16a) and b): two examples of a mid-1970s caravan on site, exhibiting very different appearances as a result of post-siting personalisation.

Thus, the desire for a second individual domestic space for holiday use had been fulfilled by the static caravan. In order to provide as much of this domestic space as possible, some static caravan holiday homes continued to be made available in even larger formats. Pemberton in particular, by the end of the 1960's, had maximised internal space by producing a wider than average unit, and by enhancing their signature curved

profile had cleverly increased the headroom in the caravan, see Fig. 17, below.⁶⁰

Belmont, on the other hand, offered clean, uncluttered modernity and the promise of a well-equipped second home in the form of an economically priced static caravan. The recognition of the desire or aspiration for a second domestic environment for holiday use was coupled with an attempt to imply status coupled with ownership in Belmont's 1969 advertisement, featuring an overtly middle-class family relaxing in their Montego 25, see Fig. 18, below.⁶¹

⁶⁰ *Caravan*, 37/7 (July 1969), p. 10.

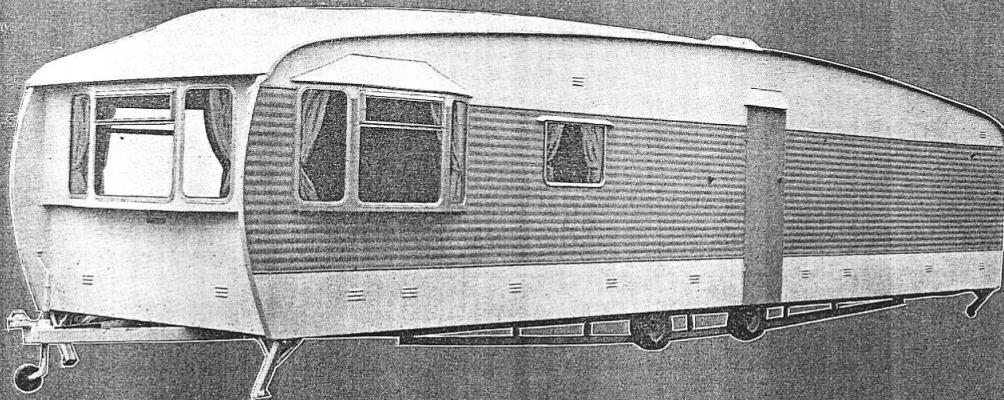
⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

High wide handsome

*The new apex roof
gives additional
height and airspace*

*Six models available
10' 6" wide, giving spaciousness
to the caravans*

That's the Pemberton design and finish



There's a big new world of pleasure
in a Pemberton. See them at your nearest
Pemberton dealer site now. His name
and address are on the following pages.

GET A BETTER DEAL GET A PEMBERTON

PEMBERTON GROUP

Pemberton Caravans Ltd. Wigan, Lancs. Telephone 88 82294/5

Figure 17: advertisement for Pemberton Caravans, 1969.

The Two-Home Family



**Belmont
makes it
easier to
be one**

Round about the end of the week don't you wish you could just pack off to your own little place on the coast or in the country.

**we sell every caravan
we make**



Trouble is, own little places can be pricey. Even own little caravans.

Until you discover the Big Value Belmont range, one of which is the newly restyled Montego 25.

25 feet of roomy get-away-from-it-all holiday accommodation. Full of fitted carpet. Comfy sleeps six. Has a gleaming kitchen with cooker, sink, etc. And bags of storage, working and leisure space.

£625 the lot.

And it's the same story with all big value Belmont caravans . . . pay less, get just as much.

Find out how much in our brochure, yours for the return of the coupon.



We are interested in being a two-home family. Please send full details on Belmont Big Value Caravans

Name

Address

C18

BELMONT

Riverside Works, Cliff Road, Hessle, York
Tel: Hull 645156/7

Figure 18: advertisement for the 1969 Belmont 'Montego 25'.

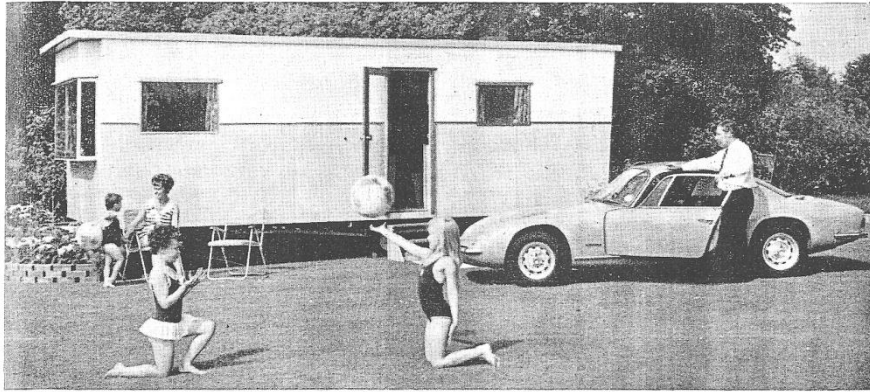
As the static holiday caravan became to be seen by users and suppliers as a second home for holiday use, it grew even further apart from its cousin the touring caravan, not just in terms of physical structure and design (this clearly had been the case for some time), but in the way it was considered and understood. The kinship between caravanning and

camping which continued during the early post-war days of caravan sites evolving, as many did, from camping grounds, was still tangible when the smaller 'general purpose' caravans still lacked many of the features and facilities of the later static holiday homes. Static holiday caravans were now designed to be seen not as an environment where users would have to make certain compromises and use specialised equipment in order to fulfil daily requirements such as cooking and washing, but as a second holiday *home*, where most conveniences were of a domestic standard; somewhere to take the car to at the weekend and spend time with friends or family in comfort and enjoyment, as the advertisements from Belmont (Fig. 18, above) and Fairview from 1969 (Fig. 19, below)⁶² strive to imply:

⁶² *Caravan*, 37/7 (July 1969), p. 37.

Have you seen our Moselle?

LEISURE HOME



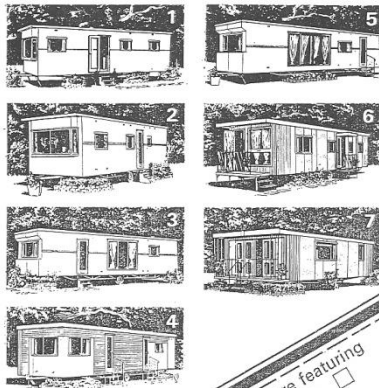
What a modest little unit this Moselle Mk. 1 is. It may be the smallest leisure home in the Fairview range, but it will open up a whole new world of exciting holidays with unexpected comfort and delight, especially for the children. Just look at this accommodation—lounge and leisure area measuring 11ft. 3in. x 9ft. 2in., a separate single bedroom with double bunks and wardrobe, plus a toilet compartment thrown in for good measure. All this with sleeping accommodation for up to 6 persons is yours for as little as £635.

Moselle Mk. 3 offers a slightly smaller living area but has a fully and exquisitely furnished double end bedroom. 6-berth accommodation for £645.

Other models completing the Fairview range:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|---------|-------|---------------|
| 1. Madeira Mk. 1 | 6-berth | £729j | (Leisure) |
| Madeira Mk. 2 | 7-berth | £749 | (Leisure) |
| Madeira Mk. 3 | 6-berth | £849 | (Leisure) |
| 2. Rubens | 2-berth | £995 | (Residential) |
| 3. Constable | 3-berth | £1235 | (Residential) |
| 4. Amazon Mk. 2 | 3-berth | £1350 | (Residential) |
| Amazon Mk. 3 | 4-berth | £1400 | (Residential) |
| 5. Delaware | 3-berth | £1425 | (Residential) |
| 6. Gainsborough | 2-berth | £1665 | (Residential) |
| 7. Rembrandt Twin | 4-berth | £1950 | (Residential) |

(Prices quoted are recommended ex-works retail prices)



FAIRVIEW

FAIRVIEW CARAVANS LTD.
Harwich, Essex. Telephone: Harwich 2324

Please send me your full colour brochure featuring
 Leisure homes Residential homes

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 TC _____

Figure 19: 1969 advertisement for the Fairview 'Moselle' caravan.

Fairview's 1969 advertisement is also significant for two further reasons. During the 1960's Tendring was not only a centre for camping, holiday caravan sites and surviving plotland holiday homes. In addition to its two commercial holiday camps, the district also became the base for a caravan manufacturing company. Romford-based Fairview Caravans Ltd. began production of touring and residential caravans at Harwich in the Tendring district in March, 1963, and as a result of increasing production, an extension

to the factory was opened in 1964. Factory work space was doubled to 7000 square feet, with an additional 15,000 square feet of storage space added. Jobs at the factory were doubled to around 200 staff; with the company claiming to be amongst the 'Big 5' UK manufacturers. The future looked bright for Fairview, with orders in excess of £100,000 on the books and a lucrative Dutch contract to supply 1000 specialised accommodation units to the University of Utrecht over two years.⁶³ But industrial relations at the factory appear to have been in decline. In October 1964, one month after having been fined for having an unsafe machine in operation,⁶⁴ the company suffered a half-day strike by eighty of its staff. Managing director Derek Hammerton claimed, however, relations with staff were good at the factory.⁶⁵ A letter published by the local paper the following week told another story. Signed by John White (branch secretary), C.F. Jones (branch president) and J.A. Parker (shop steward), the letter claimed the earlier report was misleading, and spoke of poor relations with union members and several incidents of staff 'downing tools' at the firm.⁶⁶



Figure 20: the Fairview Caravans factory at Dovercourt, Harwich in Tendring, during the 1960's.

⁶³ *Harwich and Dovercourt Standard, East Essex Gazette Series Supplement*, 13th March 1964.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4th September, 1964.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2nd October, 1964.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 9th October, 1964.

By November the situation had deteriorated, and sixty members of the National Union of Vehicle Builders took official strike action over the sacking of nine men (including their shop steward) and union recognition at the factory. The management claimed that the sacked men were 'unsuitable' for the work, and as the company paid relatively good wages (6s. 4 ½ d. per hour) the workforce had no justification to strike. A non-union worker, Frank Evans, told the local reporter that he had 'no complaints, really' about his job.⁶⁷ After three weeks of industrial action, fifty seven striking workers were told by the management to either return to work or lose their jobs by the end of the week.⁶⁸ But the strike continued at the factory throughout the winter of 1964-5. Ultimately sixty-eight staff members were reported to have been involved in strike action over pay and conditions, and subsequently lost their jobs. The dispute was officially resolved during March the following year, but the company was weakened by the experience. The factory closed with the firm's liquidation in 1971, and 105 staff were laid off. The management are reported to have blamed the state of the home market for the closure after a two-year struggle for survival.⁶⁹ It would in fact be a further two years before national caravan holiday home production would begin to fall, and so Fairview's demise, although linked to problems of poor industrial relations, was also an early indicator for the start of a more challenging time for caravan manufacturers in the UK.

The other significant factor regarding Fairview's 1969 advertisement is the configuration of the range of models listed within it. The company originally manufactured a range of general and touring caravans, but by 1966 two dedicated static holiday homes and four residential models were in production. 1967 saw the last of their dedicated touring caravans, the 'Riva', produced. For the remainder of its existence, the company only

⁶⁷ Other unions were reportedly involved, including the AEU, ETU, TGW, NUS and ASWM; see *Harwich and Dovercourt Standard*, 27th November, 1964.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 11th December, 1964.

⁶⁹ See <http://www.harwichanddovercourt.co.uk/manufacturing>, accessed September 2013; also *Key Guide to Used Caravan Values*, listing of Fairview models, 1955-69; I am also grateful to Terry O'Dell Jnr., former director of Anglia Caravans Ltd. and Seawick Holiday Lido Ltd., for his memories of Fairview Caravans.

produced residential and holiday home caravans. This, too, may be seen as an indicator of the way in which caravan manufacturing would develop during from the 1970's.

Fairview may well have been seeking to pursue the UK market for the holiday *homes*, as discussed above. Fairview's later range of caravans, both holiday and residential (named after great rivers and, latterly, artists or composers), were designed with all the attributes for this market; the 'Van Dyck', 'Constable' and 'Gainsborough' models were particularly prominent in this regard, the latter at 40 ft long by almost 10ft wide was ideally spacious as a holiday home as well as a residential home.⁷⁰

Many in the local caravan industry (not least the company's workforce), would have been disappointed to see the closure of the Fairview factory. Apart from the damage to the local economy, a locally-built product that was in tune with the times and needs on caravan sites (with modest transport costs for sites in Tendring) was, as a result, no longer in production. The models described above were listed as 'Residential';⁷¹ this usually meant enhanced levels of insulation, heating and in many cases toilet and bathroom facilities. As caravan sites sought to offer as much as possible for caravan holiday home buyers in the contracting market between 1974 and 1981, the lines between static holiday homes and residential models began to blur. More and more residential models began to be sold as holiday caravans, and site operators began to install sewer and water pipes to service each new caravan pitch, which could then accommodate a larger, fully serviced caravan which would, in turn, command a higher annual ground rent. The development of the provision of serviced pitches on caravan sites during the 1970's is discussed further in Chapter Seven. The rationale for the industry at this time was, perhaps, less overall caravan sales, but increased sales profit

⁷⁰ *Key Guide to Used Caravan Values*, Fairview Holiday Homes Ltd., 1970 models, p. 85.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

and ground rents on larger models. For the buyer remained the aspiration for that second personalised domestic holiday home.

For the remainder of the 1970's, static caravan holiday home design continued to evolve still further away from its earlier general caravan phase, with the continued emphasis on producing a holiday 'home'. Despite economic conditions, manufacturers offered a range of models that were larger and wider than earlier models, and the double-unit,⁷² once reserved essentially for residential use, came into use as a holiday home on caravan sites around the country. Examples of these units, 'For permanent living or luxury holiday accommodation', can be seen in a Lissett Homes advertisement of 1975, see fig 21, below.⁷³

⁷² The double-unit is essentially two caravans that are designed to be sited side by side, joined together and sealed to form one large unit. As there are voids in the joining sides to create greater internal space, they cannot be sited individually. With the tow bars removed after siting, and the space between the chassis and the ground filled in with trellis, cladding or even brickwork, the sited double-unit closely resembles a domestic bungalow.

⁷³ *Caravan*, 43/5 (July 1975), p. 32.

LISSETT

The Big Mobile Home Range...



Hilton Range Comprising the 32' Broadview, the 36' Waldorf and 40' Grosvenor. All models are a full 10' wide and provide the ultimate in single unit luxury accommodation.



Mini Lodge Standard 22' x 20', this popular model has stood the test of time. Like all Lissett Mobile Homes it comes completely furnished and is complete with refrigerator and fully fitted kitchen.



Metropolitan 38ft & 42ft Now 10' wide both these models have been completely re-styled. They now provide even better value than ever before.



Georgian Mini Lodge Styled similarly to our Georgian Super Lodge, 22' x 16', featuring a semi open plan layout which gives a spacious and airy atmosphere. Its traditional exterior will grace any site. For permanent living or luxury holiday accommodation.



Georgian Super Lodge & Lodge
The Georgian Super Lodge illustrated, one of the most popular and luxurious mobile homes ever. Size now increased to 30' x 20'. Lodge, 36' x 20', the biggest model in our range.



Continental Mini Lodge For those who like the modern look. 22' x 16' with a similar internal layout to the Georgian Mini Lodge. The clean, modern styling features full length aluminium patio windows.

STOP PRESS!
Lissett have re-introduced their famous Bermudan Holiday Homes. 3 sizes, 7 models all 9' 6" wide. Ask for details.

Lissett Homes Limited
Aerodrome Works, Lissett, North Humberside,
YO25 8PZ. Tel: Skipsea (026 286) 373.

Please mail me literature on your 1975 range. CS5

Twin Unit Mobile Homes

Single Unit Mobile Homes

Bermudan Holiday Homes

Name.....

Address.....

County..... Post Code.....

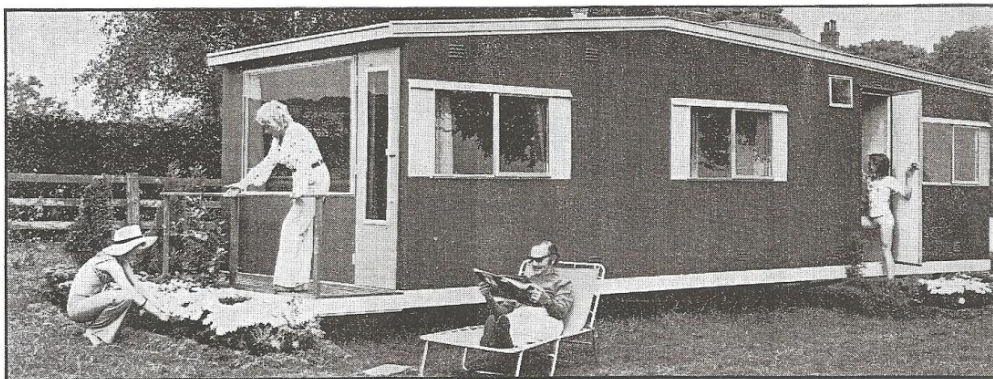
Figure 21: advertisement for the Lissett range of mobile homes, 1975.

It is interesting to note that in the above advertisement, Lissett contrast the 'Continental Mini Lodge' with the 'Georgian Mini Lodge' as being 'For those who like the modern look'. The design of the 'Georgian Mini Lodge' drawing as it did from earlier architectural styles (essentially the design of the windows externally, and interior fittings) was very different in feel to the 'Continental Mini Lodge' with its 'clean, modern styling.' Offering these two conceptual takes on what was essentially the same product may seem unremarkable on the face of it, but it does evidence a slight uncertainty that prevailed in the drawing offices and design studios of the caravan holiday home manufacturers

before they fully embraced the postmodernist design concepts that were the defining feature of 1980s caravan holiday homes.

This short and yet significant period of what might be considered design uncertainty or even now, retrospectively, proto-postmodernism, is further epitomised in an ABI advertisement of 1975, see Fig. 22, below.⁷⁴

First we thought of the care you put into your home, and then we put it into ours.



For choice, for styling, for comfort, and for price, there's nothing to touch ABI Holiday Homes.

Each one packed out with features that underline ABI's fine attention to detail.

Which makes your holidays holidays to remember.

These are the latest designs of our ten choice Belmont Holiday Homes.

Beautifully appointed, spaciouly laid out, with a complement of tasteful furniture and furnishings which go together to provide tremendous value for money.

Luxury, space and quality also come together in our range of Belmont Leisure Villas.

And for those who enjoy their home comforts, finest quality Ace Holiday Homes.

Superbly-styled, they feature large front and side windows to afford a panoramic view of whatever scenery you've chosen to enjoy.

Then there are Sierra Holiday Homes to give you all that's best in a superior class of holiday home.

At a more than reasonable price.

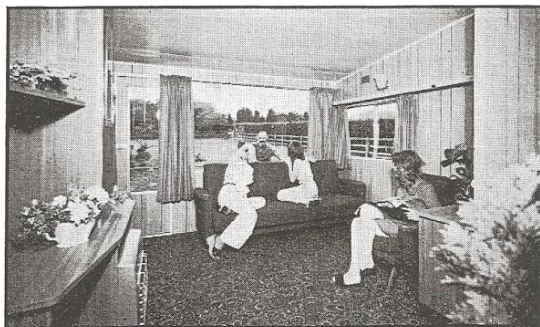


Figure 22: an ABI holiday home advertisement, 1975.

⁷⁴ *Caravan*, 43/5 (July 1975), pp. 52-3.

The distinctive asymmetrical 'gable-end' profile of the caravan featured here suggests continental alpine chalet influence, whilst the large square modern windows decorated with mock shutters demonstrates a further attempt to blend modern design with more traditional elements. ABI Design and Marketing Ltd., the company who produced the advertisement illustrated in Fig. 22, above, were also known as Ace Belmont International, after the consolidation of the Ace Caravan Company (Hull) Ltd. of Beverley, just to the north of Hull, and the Belmont Caravan Company Ltd. of Hessle, also on Humberside. The joining together of these two major manufacturers in 1972 was a significant milestone for Hull's then burgeoning caravan manufacturing industry; by joining together at that stage, ABI achieved a large market share, and has remained one of the most prominent internationally significant manufacturer of touring and static holiday home caravans.

The early 1980's saw a general upturn in static holiday home production as well as a new wave of design within the industry. Earlier developments in the internal design of static caravans whilst appearing to provide more space and extra berths did so at a cost.

Reflecting upon these earlier models, Terry O'Dell Jnr., former managing director of Anglia Caravans, observed that if you looked briefly into a late 1960s or 1970s static caravan you might be impressed to see how happily an extra bedroom had been incorporated into the overall design, but what was less obvious was the fact that the bed was perhaps only two feet wide, the doors were similarly narrow and the walls as thin as could be satisfactorily manufactured.⁷⁵ This situation would change as manufacturers embraced a postmodern trend in static caravan design. Caravans began to be manufactured in a wider and longer format, thus allowing for more internal space, more substantial internal walls, wider beds and more substantial internal and external doors and windows. Such units would be detailed with more traditional, ornate and decorative

⁷⁵ Discussion with Terry O'Dell Jnr., 2nd September, 2013.

furnishings and fittings, and often referencing the past; they would also often incorporate somewhat *kitsch* architectural and interior design themes. Caravan manufacturer's full colour brochures were now in abundance at dealerships and in the sales offices at caravan parks, promoting the new designs. Such a brochure for ABI's Tiffany range of 1985 exemplifies the move to more ornate, decorative interiors, see Fig. 23, below.⁷⁶

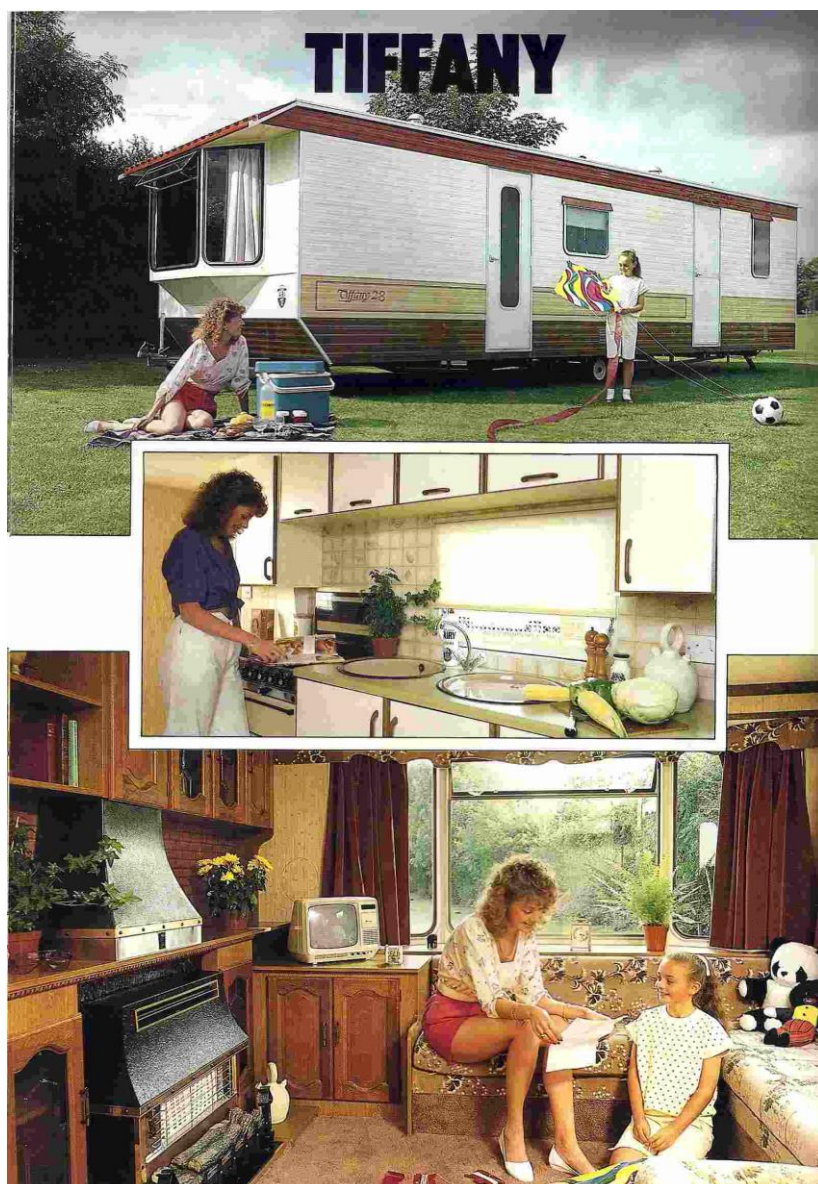


Figure 23: sales brochure views of the 1985 ABI Tiffany holiday home.

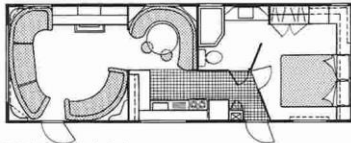
⁷⁶ *ABI Holiday Homes 1985 Model Range* (Beverley: ABI Caravans Ltd., 1985).

Traditional elements were combined here with practical needs, such as the simulated open-log-fire-effect gas fire with decorative cowling, traditional moulded hardwood cabinet doors and built in patterned seating. A rather more cluttered, homely interior has replaced the former more utilitarian modernity of the 1960's and 70's. Externally, a modest tiled-effect feature decorates the area above the bow-window at the front of the caravan. Cosalt's 1987 range, in particular the Madeira and Rembrandt models, pushed these concepts further: see Figs. 24 and 25, below.⁷⁷

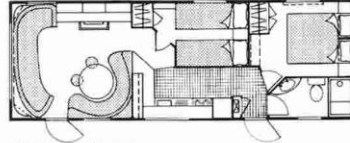
⁷⁷ *The 1987 Range of Holiday Caravans* (Hull: Cosalt Holiday Homes/Cosalt PLC, 1987).



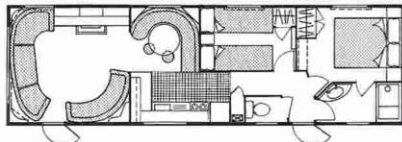
MADEIRA 30
1 BED-2 BERTH + 2 BERTH OPTION FOLD OUT IN LOUNGE.



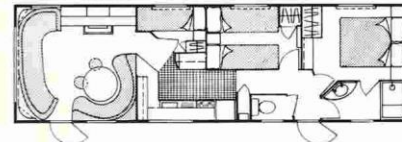
MADEIRA 30
2 BED-4 BERTH + 2 BERTH OPTION FOLD OUT IN LOUNGE.



MADEIRA 34
2 BED-4 BERTH + 2 BERTH OPTION FOLD OUT IN LOUNGE.



MADEIRA 34
3 BED-5 BERTH + 2 BERTH OPTION FOLD OUT IN LOUNGE.



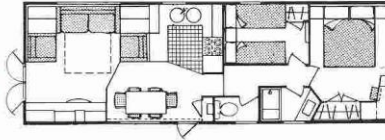
Options— Refrigerator in all models.



Figure 24: brochure details for the 1987 Cosalt Madeira range.



REMBRANDT
2 BED 6 PERSON – FOLD OUT MECHANICAL BED SETTEE.



REMBRANDT
Options – Microwave
Refrigerator
Fridge/Freezer

Figure 25: brochure details for the 1987 Cosalt Rembrandt range.

The trend toward the ‘hyper-elegant’, verging on the *kitsch*, in premium caravan holiday home design continued through the late 1980s and into the 1990s with the introduction

of even larger twelve feet wide, up to thirty-eight feet long, three-bedroom units such as the Galaxy Perseus and Bluebird Empress ranges, see Fig. 26, below.⁷⁸



Figure 26: interior view of the 1991 Bluebird Super Empress Holiday Caravan, from the company's publicity brochure for this model.

Influential architect Mies Van der Rohe's modernist mantra of 'less is more' (challenged by American postmodern architect Robert Venturi's reply 'less is a bore') clearly no longer influenced the design studios of the major caravan manufacturers.⁷⁹ By the early 1990's static caravan holiday home design had in some respects followed the wider trend of postmodernism with its celebration of earlier architectural forms, *kitsch* nostalgia and homeliness. Highbrow simplicity gave way to lowbrow clutter, formality to informality and purity of form to a collage of influences and design references. Interior design in

⁷⁸ *Super Empress: the Ultimate Caravan Holiday Home* (Poole: B.K. Bluebird Ltd., c.1990-91).

⁷⁹ See R. Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (London: Architectural Press Ltd., 1977).

particular, after the influential 1980s *Memphis Group* of Italian designers led by Ettore Sottsass challenged highbrow modernist ‘good taste’ with its embracing of *kitsch*, humorous, historically-referenced and unconventional forms, underwent significant change. But static holiday caravan interiors, whilst turning from modernist simplicity in design terms, as can be seen in Figs. 25 and 26 above, embraced a more nostalgic trend more aligned with the tendencies in smaller-scale postmodern architecture of the time with its re-use of more traditional architectural features such as weatherboarding, gable ends, slate roofs, detailed chimney features and ornate windows. As the new estates built in this manner were aimed at the upper working-class and lower middle-classes, so were the new static holiday caravans. In September 1987 a new Cosalt Rembrandt 36’ by 12’ static caravan holiday home (representing the prestige end of the market) with one double bedroom, one twin bedroom, kitchen, toilet, bathroom and shower retailed at £13,165 including VAT, before siting fees.⁸⁰ With finance terms now available over ten years from companies such as Mercantile Credit, Lombard North Central and United Dominions Trust (the three main finance houses in the static caravan industry at this time),⁸¹ for workers earning salaries of around £11,500⁸² and their families (particularly if the family had two wage earners) such holiday accommodation represented an increasingly affordable possibility. Second hand units in this category would also be attractive: a one year old 32’ by 12’ Cosalt Renoir (a model similar in design and layout to the Rembrandt) retailed at £9,825 before siting fees in 1987.⁸³ These examples are representative of the most expensive products that were available as static caravan holiday homes. At the lower end of the scale, a new 1987 26’ by 10’ Cosalt Concorde, a more basic unit but still equipped with a double bedroom, one twin bedroom, kitchen,

⁸⁰ *Glasses Guide: Caravan Values December 1987* (Weybridge: ABC, 1987), p.155.

⁸¹ Advertisements for these companies were ubiquitous in trade magazines and at caravan sites and dealerships during the 1980s.

⁸² Average salary for manufacturing industry workers in 1987 from *New Earnings Survey*, Department of Employment, cited in *The Value of a Pound*, p. 228.

⁸³ *Glasses Guide: Caravan Values December 1987* (Weybridge: ABC, 1987), p.155.

toilet and shower (and following a similar design ethos as its larger stable mates), cost £6,041 including VAT before siting charges.⁸⁴ Again, therefore, with finance options, new caravan holiday homes were affordable for many. A basic but sound used static caravan holiday home could be bought for considerably less: a 23' by 10.25' ABI Rio Vista built in 1978 retailed at £875 in September 1987.⁸⁵ Ground rents were variable, depending on the facilities and location of the park, but are estimated at between £500 for a small, basic park and £1500 for a premier park *per annum*.⁸⁶

From its initial beginnings as a distinct product, however, it is clear that a new or second-hand static caravan holiday home would involve a considerable initial outlay, as well as an annual ground rent, for its owners. This continues to beg the question, how did working-class people afford them? Chris Edmunds worked for United Dominions Trust, a major organisation in the caravan finance business, from 1974 to 2006 and was responsible for the company's dealings with caravan sites in Tendring District. Chris recalled that the terms on offer to caravan purchasers, both new and second-hand, were always very favourable:

[What sort of terms did you offer in the early days for static caravan purchasers?]

Well, at the beginning there were credit restrictions on cars, which was 24 months maximum with a deposit, and caravans- whilst they weren't as costly, theirs were up to 60 months originally, and the deposit could be 10 percent.

Chris was also able to offer some insight into the social and economic class of static holiday caravan buyers:

[Did this make static caravans available to wider social groups in society?]

Yes it certainly did- I mean finance itself made everything available, and this was the growth of everyone having things because prior to that people had the expression 'if I can't afford it I won't have it' and they all used to- the old folks- used to like to pay cash for their products, and thought that credit was a bad thing to have, and as times moved on that turned out to be totally unfounded as we can see today.

[Did hire purchase and finance make static caravans available to those on lower incomes?]

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.153.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁸⁶ Personal recollection.

Oh yes, because as long as they could afford the monthly payments, because there were credit checks made on people, then we were prepared to write the business.

[And because you are offered a longer term, say 10 years for example, do you think that helped make a difference?]

Oh yes, because if you are taking any amount of money, the longer the period the smaller the monthly payment is, so consequently the longer you have the period the more affordable it becomes.⁸⁷

Thus, more and more people on lower incomes could, with a budgeted monthly payment, afford some sort of static holiday caravan. The nature of the relationship between this phenomenon and wider the aspects of working-class consumerism are discussed further in the following chapter.

With form no longer necessarily following function in the world of static caravan design of the late twentieth century, manufacturers competed with each other to produce a stylistically updated and often technically improved range for each new season. New models would be launched and showcased at the major UK caravan trade exhibitions now occurring annually at Beaulieu in Hampshire and Cottingham, near Hull. With such impressive shows and with increasingly professionalised marketing, as demonstrated in the later brochures illustrated above, the industry had become focussed on creating a product for a wide spectrum of users, and ensuring that new as well as existing customers were reached. In doing so, the position of the static caravan manufacturer had changed in this market. Again, as discussed earlier, those that were involved with the formation of the early post-war static holiday caravan sites created a demand for a new product by adapting existing forms. The caravan manufacturing industry, as has been shown above, responded to this demand by evolving a purpose-built unit to suit the needs of the new static holiday caravan users. As this process developed during the 1960s and 70s, so the manufacturers started to innovate and optimise the product and develop ranges to suit the budgets of a range of customers. In doing so, the manufacturers then eventually took the lead in the relationship with the caravan user.

⁸⁷ C. Edmunds evidence, see Appendix Four.

Now that the market was established and static caravan sites were formalised and recognised in legislation after 1960, the caravan user had become simply the end-user or consumer who was served by the manufacturers and site operators who had by then become the experts and professionals in servicing their needs. Innovations in the product, and opportunities and facilities on the sites themselves became the domain of the industry; the caravan owners and users, beyond choosing and using, became in other respects more passive in the process.

In summary, after 1960 the post-austerity security and affluence experienced by many, in sharp contrast to the situation experienced during the 1920s and early 30s, continued to fuel working-class consumerism, as discussed earlier. Despite the earlier anxieties of some politicians with regard to advertising and the exploitation of the newly-affluent working-class consumer, mollified to some extent with a range of consumer protection initiatives introduced from the mid-1950s, increasing numbers of workers were seeking to have more in life than just the basic essentials. This, in turn, was exploited by capital: in the case of the caravan manufacturing industry, the relatively rapid development of the new product. Consumer protection legislation and initiatives, whilst attempting to ensure products were essentially fit for purpose and of reasonable quality, also (in the case of the Consumers' Association and *Which?*) relied upon comparative testing of products. The reports and publications generated were largely consumed by the middle-classes. Working-class consumers, despite the efforts of campaigners and politicians including Michael Young and Anthony Crosland, remained largely unguided and even resistant to efforts to intervene in their patterns of consumption.⁸⁸ In the midst of this caravan sites offered enhanced facilities, and the static caravan itself was developing significantly as a product in the wake of the 1960 caravan sites legislation (although static

⁸⁸ Black, *Redefining British Politics*, pp. 14-74; Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth Century Britain*, pp. 183-193.

caravans and sites did not, and do not still, undergo comparative testing by *Which?*).⁸⁹ Thus, the static holiday caravan industry and the caravan sites developed within this wider socio-economic context, with the benefit of a comprehensively-stocked new and second-hand market, dealer and site network appealing to a growing market of increasingly-affluent consumers. Many working-class consumers, largely unaffected by the influence of the Consumers Association, continued to make a domestic holiday choice which had evolved thus far by partly by their own agency. Successive generations were now following the wider pattern of domestic consumption in an expanding market. This market was also increasingly enjoyed at the expense of other earlier forms of domestic holiday provision such as the hotel and guest house, as will be discussed further in the following chapter.

6.5 The geography of post-war UK caravan manufacturing

The post-war period saw the proliferation of a considerable number of general caravan manufacturers in the UK, in response to a growing market. Some of these companies were small or only active for a decade or two after the war. But many became more established, and remained in production for a much longer period. Of the 267 manufacturers, large and small, listed in the 1971 *Key Guide* as having produced caravans since 1961, 107 of the larger, more established companies manufacturing all types of caravan were listed with their addresses, and these data show a clear bias in terms of manufacturing location, see Fig. 27, below:⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Confirmed by *Which?* Members services, Castlemead, Hertfordshire, August 2015.

⁹⁰ *Key Guide to Used Caravan Values*, listings of caravan manufacturer's products, 1961-71.

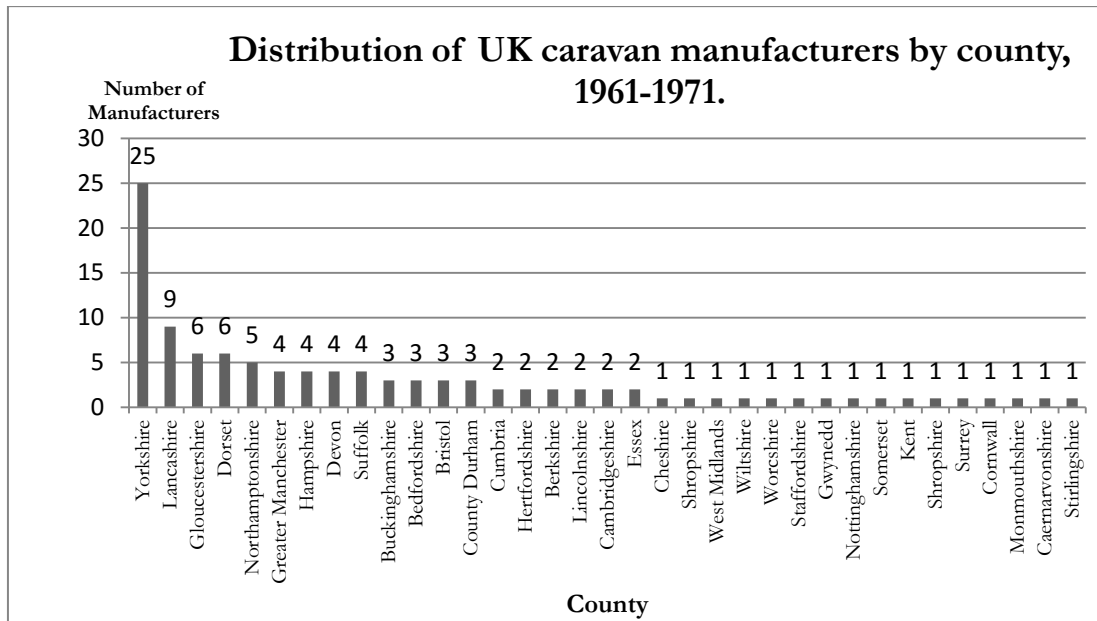


Figure 27: Location by county of UK caravan manufacturers, 1961 to 1971.

Yorkshire, in particular Hull, Humberside and the East Riding, was clearly a centre of caravan manufacturing activity. Almost a quarter of the companies (23.4%) were located there at some point in their history. Of the 49 manufacturers listed as producing holiday homes between 1966 and 1971 as detailed in Fig. 10, 38 companies were listed with addresses, and a similar picture of the Hull area of East Yorkshire being a centre of manufacturing appears, see Fig. 28, below:

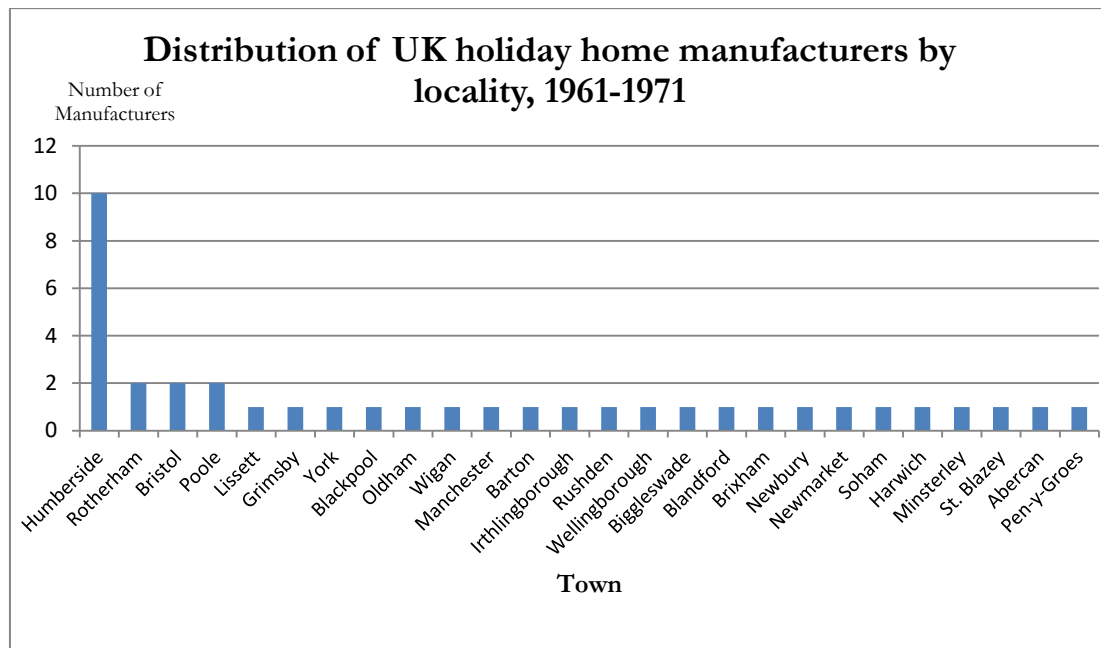


Figure 28: distribution of UK holiday home static caravan manufacturers by town, 1961-1971.

In this analysis, these data suggest that almost a quarter (23.7%) of the UK caravan holiday home manufacturers, whose addresses were listed, were active in the Hull area.

But why Humberside? Hull, in common with at least eight other caravan manufacturing locations, is a port. As such, it was the destination for imports of raw materials for manufacture; if manufacturing centres were close by, then further transport costs for such materials would be minimised. One of the key raw materials for the manufacture of caravans was timber, used in the structural frame of the caravan above the chassis and for internal wallboard. Hull has for many years seen significant imports of timber from Scandinavian countries for the UK market, making the area a sound location for caravan manufacturing. Mike Hopper, Business Development Director of the NCC, agrees with this view: ‘My own view about Hull is that it used to be the import terminal for wood from Scandinavia. Caravans were made of wood, ergo the two got together.’⁹¹

⁹¹ M. Hopper, NCC, in e-mail correspondence, 2nd October 2013, see Appendix Four.

Willerby's early success in the area would probably have encouraged others; Whiteman mentions Astral Caravans of Hull, a large manufacturer, as being headed by a J. L. Spooner: 'Like his neighbours at Willerby, he was engaged in a big way in timber importing and woodworking, and he was also in civil engineering and other activities.'⁹² Certainly as firms were seen to be successful others would want to exploit a growing market. Also, examples of employees leaving one manufacturer to start up a separate business in the locality are common in the industry; Graham Sparks' Atlas Caravans was a salient example.⁹³

6.6 Allied industries

The manufacture of caravan holiday homes in the UK presented opportunities for other businesses to develop at the supply and distribution ends of the manufacturing process. In terms of supply, as static caravans increased in size, in addition to numerous sundry items, fixtures and fittings, the chassis itself was often manufactured by an outside company and supplied direct to the production line of the caravan manufacturer. Companies such as Peak and Atlas Trailer Co. were prominent in this trade.⁹⁴ Specialist commercial upholstery firms such as Beauvale of Derbyshire were active in supplying caravan manufacturers by the 1980's. Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) manufacturers and distributors also had a considerable stake in the holiday caravan industry; touring caravan users had for a long time been dependant on the small 10lb. (4.5kg.) cylinders of butane gas for cooking, heating and lighting. Static holiday home caravans needed a larger, less portable supply; this was initially served with 35 lb. (15 kg.) cylinders of butane, and then increasingly larger cylinders: 45 lb. (20 kg.) propane and ultimately the large 104lb. (47 kg.) upright, orange cylinders of propane gas, stored outside the caravan in a shed or

⁹² Whiteman, *History*, p. 207.

⁹³ Discussion with Terry O'Dell Jnr., Anglia Caravans.

⁹⁴ These companies advertised regularly in *Caravan* magazine; and their advertising was and is prominent at dealerships and parks.

specialised container. The larger caravan parks (and ultimately most parks) increasingly became distribution centres, with storage compounds and retail facilities for bottled gas and its associated accessories- regulators, rubber hose, copper pipe, connection fittings, lighting mantles and so on. Such items would, of course, also be supplied directly to caravan manufacturers. One of the main suppliers of LPG to the caravan industry in the post war period was the Calor Gas company; Bottogas and Camping Gaz were also involved. Insurance companies such as Sun Alliance and, as discussed above, finance companies such as United Dominions Trust and Mercantile Credit developed specialist caravan insurance and finance policies, and were often involved in the sponsorship of regional shows and promotional events at dealerships.⁹⁵

Static caravan road transport was also an industry that was born out of static caravan holiday home production. As a result of the simplification of wheel and axle formats, and the fact that brakes, suspension and other road attributes were unnecessary for dedicated caravan holiday homes, they could eventually only be moved on the public highway when carried by another vehicle. The static caravan presented an increasingly large yet relatively lightweight cargo, but existing mainstream haulage lorries were generally unsuited to carry it. The static caravan, with its lightweight aluminium external panelling was highly susceptible to damage from crane strops if lifted, and its lightweight chassis was also not best suited to this practice for fear of warping or buckling. Far better to have a low-decked transporter onto which the caravan could be winched from ground level, where it could then be supported with blocks and secured from the chassis downward, leaving the superstructure free from restraint and possible damage.

Journeys would often be relatively long; typically from Hull to the south or south west coasts, and so a dedicated transport vehicle was produced. Static caravan transporters

⁹⁵ As above, these companies advertised regularly in Caravan magazine; and their advertising was and is prominent at dealerships and parks.

featured what was to become known as a 'beaver-tail', that is to say a low transport deck with a tail section that sloped toward the ground. The transporter would have a built-in winch and cable, would carry wooden blocks to support the caravan on board as well as a pair of strong aluminium or lightweight ramps (known by the drivers as 'skids') which would be deployed at the rear of the vehicle to allow the caravan to be winched aboard. The process was reversed upon delivery of the unit, see Figs. 29 a) and b), and 30, below:



Figures 29 a) and b): a recent view of an unladen 6-wheel 'beaver-tail' caravan transporter of Shawtrack Services, and a similar vehicle laden with a caravan holiday home.



Figure 30: A static caravan being unloaded from a caravan transporter of Northlodge Transport. As the caravan is slowly winched down the 'beaver-tail' and 'skids', the driver or his assistant keeps the caravan in line by guiding the jockey wheel. The winch is operated remotely with a control pad linked by cable to the winch motor; for smaller units the driver can manage the whole loading and unloading operation if required.

During the 1980's, the role of the static caravan transport companies became even more crucial to the manufacturers, distributors and caravan site operators. As manufacturers developed the large 36 and 38 feet long, twelve feet wide units, they created a problem for transport. Such units constituted wide abnormal loads under traffic regulations, and could not be carried on public roads without certain conditions being fulfilled. M. J. White Haulage of Wimbourne, Dorset, is clear about the administrative complexities regarding the arrangement of such caravan cargos:

An Authorisation of Special Types order must be submitted to every Police Force whose area you travel in. As you can imagine when delivering from Dorset to Fife in Scotland that's a lot of authorities. You must submit these with 48 hours notice before you can travel with the load on that particular journey.⁹⁶

In addition to the necessary notifications, additional safeguards concerning bridges and narrow country roads (a common hazard when delivering to many rural and coastal sites),

⁹⁶ M. J. White Haulage Ltd. from <http://mjwhitehaulage.com> [accessed August 2013]; see also The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations, 1986.

must be in place for such oversize loads, as well as additional on-board markers and extra lighting if travelling in darkness. Police escorts are often required in certain areas.

Caravan transport companies, therefore, have become experienced in dealing with the particular administrative and practical requirements of the delivery of these newer, larger static holiday caravans and residential park homes. Specialist caravan transport companies have, therefore, since the development of the UK static caravan and residential park home industries, become themselves highly specialised in their business, and the drivers who work in this industry in particular form a highly skilled workforce, covering many miles and shouldering much responsibility in terms of road safety and prevention of damage, and who also need and have a deep understanding of the practical issues and ethos of the industry they work within.⁹⁷

Caravan distributors have long been an integral part of the UK caravan industry, and as the static holiday home business developed, companies shared in its growth. Companies such as Montrose Caravan Distributors Ltd. of Cheadle and Manchester, Gordon's Caravans Ltd. of Preston (see Figs. 1 and 2, above) and Anglia Caravans Ltd. of Colchester and Sherringham were among many such companies throughout the UK who derived their income from acting as stockholders and retailing touring and static caravans and associated products from their show grounds. The development of the static caravan holiday home did not, however, ultimately benefit such businesses. As the overall size of static caravans increased through the 1970's and in particular during the 1980's, show ground facilities were become squeezed at dealerships, and space was at a premium. Caravan sites, however, generally had more space for display of new and used models, and gradually manufacturers adopted the practice of dealing directly with park operators and bypassing dealerships altogether.⁹⁸ The bulk buying strategy of companies such as

⁹⁷ Personal testimony based on my own experience in dealing with caravan transport.

⁹⁸ Terry O'Dell Jnr., Anglia Caravans.

Anglia began to lose its effectiveness as caravan sites themselves became the stockholders of new static holiday caravans. Distributors maintained their touring caravan business generally, however, as these smaller and much more manoeuvrable units were much better suited to showground display. In addition, tourers are not destined to be sited on any one park, and so a local distributor's showground was, and still is, the ideal place for the retail of these caravans.

Anglia caravans, whilst involved with the retail of tourers and associated products, were keen to pursue their static caravan business for as long as possible. Difficulties with reduced sales during the mid-1970s did not help matters, however. The company's sales manager, Mr. J. Baker, made his report to the directors on the 7th August 1975:

which showed a continued decline in stock levels and he was now within a unit or two of the prescribed 60 static holiday units. Mr. Baker commented that manufacturers were desperate to dispose of all stocks held by them and substantial discounts were being offered, although few sites were choosing to take advantage of the increased discounts currently available in order to buy on their own account.⁹⁹

At Colchester and Sherringham, Anglia Caravans (along with many distributors) soldiered on with static holiday home distribution into the 1980's when, as the decade progressed, things began to look more promising for the caravan industry generally. At a directors meeting dated 22nd April 1982, it was reported that:

Static Caravan Sales [*sic.*] have shown a marked upward trend compared with last year and it is hoped that the regular site visits and the new Park [*sic.*] customers will help t[o] maintain this trend. It has been necessary to move some of our S.O.R.¹⁰⁰ stock in order to get the right units in the right places, i.e. service units on service sites. Our recent involvement with at the Camping and Caravanning Exhibition (Calex) at White City resulted in one unit sold and one possible.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ NACO Archive, Minutes of Directors Meetings, Anglia Caravans, *Sales Manager's Report*, 7th August 1975.

¹⁰⁰ S.O.R. (sale or return) stock refers to caravans placed at a caravan site for sale, but not purchased by the site operator until a retail customer buys the caravan. If the caravan remains unsold, it may be returned by the site operator, or removed by the distributor if required. Transport was at the distributors expense in this case until the unit was sold, at which point transport costs from the manufacturer to the site only would be included in the overall retail price.

¹⁰¹ NACO Archive, Minutes of Directors Meetings, Anglia Caravans, *Managing Directors Report*, 22nd April 1982.

The role of the distributor as stockholder for static caravans was, however, still under threat from manufacturers who were prepared to place stock directly onto parks themselves on sale-or-return terms, not least in order to be more competitive with discounts. Many turned to the retail of touring caravans only; Anglia Caravans at Colchester, as a company primarily set up to distribute static caravans, was eventually wound up in 1999. The Norfolk operation was similarly wound up some years later.¹⁰²

6.7 UK static holiday caravan manufacturing 1960-1990, in a wider economic context.

To separate and compare static holiday caravan manufacturing with UK manufacturing generally for this period is a task that is exacerbated by the fact that detailed, specific data is scarce, if available at all. The Office for National Statistics have, until 1992, combined manufacturing data for the whole caravan manufacturing industry in this country with that of the motor vehicle body and trailer manufacturing industries. In July 2013 they confirmed that: 'Further investigation reveals that we hold Product sales and Trade data for caravans, but not for static caravans. It becomes increasingly generalised the further back into the past you go - in 1992, caravans are included with motor vehicle bodies, trailers and caravans. By 1960 it comes under the overall SIC heading of motor vehicle manufacturing.'¹⁰³ The NCC in its current format were unable to grant access for the purposes of this study to any records that they might have at their current headquarters at Aldershot, Hampshire, or anywhere else.¹⁰⁴ They did, however, make available some existing data for caravan manufacturing output from 1969 to 1990, see Fig. 31, below, and some limited data for static holiday caravan exports. If the manufacturing data, measured in units produced, is compared with manufacturing output for the UK

¹⁰² Winding-up details from Companies House.

¹⁰³ I am grateful to Stella Giblin, of the Office for National Statistics Library, Newport, for her kind assistance, see Appendix Four.

¹⁰⁴ This was confirmed by Karen Borra of the NCC, by telephone, after a third request for data on 26th July 2013.

generally over the same period measured in manufacturing person-hours, a clear similarity in trend can be observed; see Fig 32, below.¹⁰⁵ Periods of relatively high productivity are apparent from 1971 to 1974 and 1988-89, whilst output slumps around 1980-81. Unsurprisingly, this general comparison confirms that Britain's caravan manufacturing industry responded by limiting production as the prevailing general economic conditions affected demand. The long period of general growth in caravan manufacturing peaked in 1973 and then began decline as Britain entered the first recession for many years.

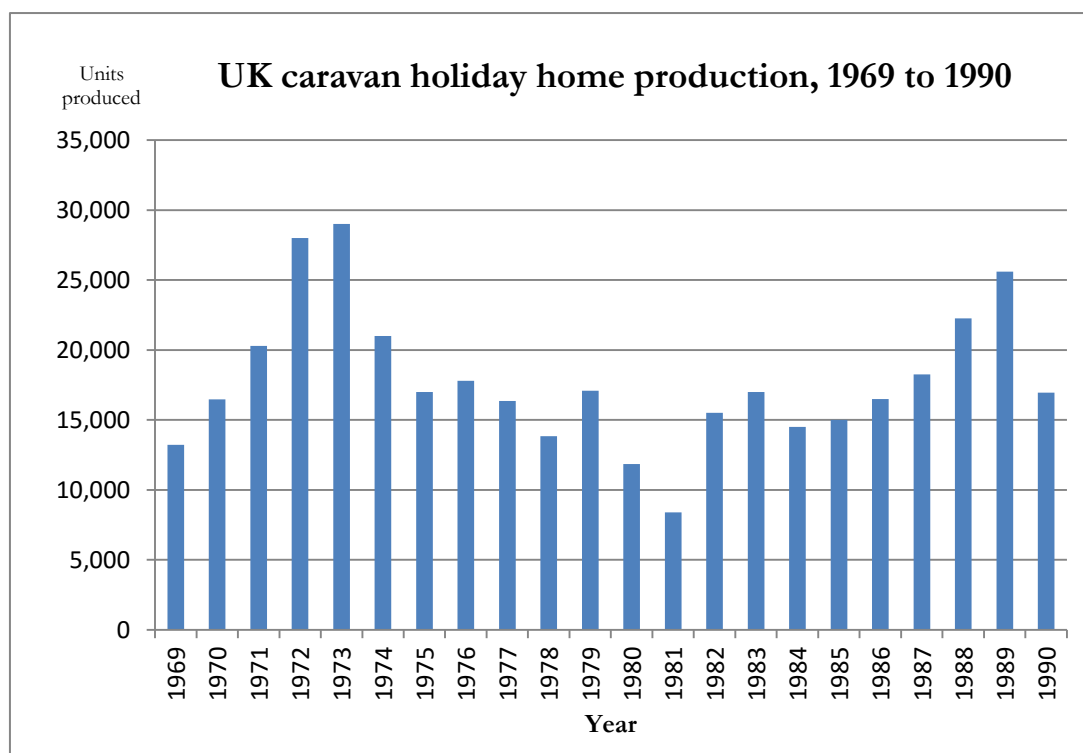


Figure 31: UK static caravan holiday home production, 1969-1990 ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Data from OECD, Main Economic Indicators cited in M. Kitson and J. Michie, *Britain's Industrial Performance Since 1960: Underinvestment and Relative Decline*, ESRC Centre for Business Research, University of Cambridge, working paper No. 14 (1995).

¹⁰⁶ I am grateful to Mike Hopper of the NCC for providing these data. It should be stressed for clarity that these data represent the manufacture of static caravan holiday homes only, not 'caravans of all kinds' as detailed in Fig. 5, above.

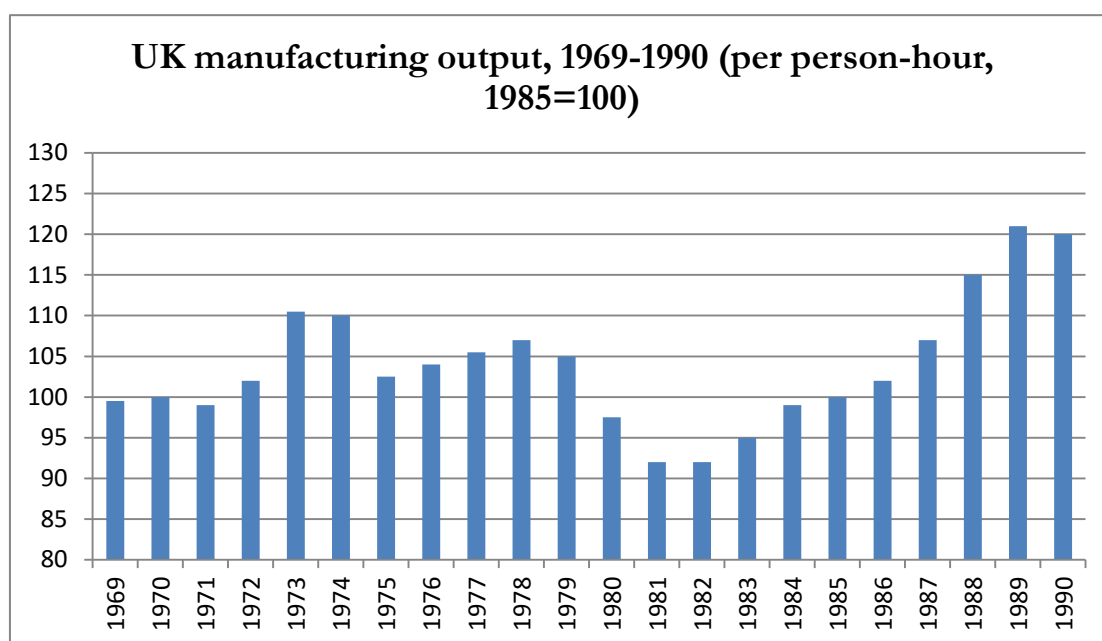


Figure 32: UK general manufacturing output, 1969-1990.

Figs. 29 and 30, above, demonstrate the parallel experience between UK static caravan production and UK general manufacturing productivity over the same period; indeed this is unsurprising as the first economic downturn for decades undoubtedly affected demand in the domestic holiday caravan market. But more specific factors may well have helped protect the static caravan industry from further relative decline. English seaside resorts had enjoyed a period of popularity and growth in the post-war years up to 1974; British Travel Association data for 1968 claim that they received 75 per cent of all ‘main’ holidays (of four nights or more away from home) in Britain’ for that year.¹⁰⁷ Growing competition as cheaper foreign holidays became more widely available may have had an impact eventually, but, as Julian Demetriadi has argued, the main reason for subsequent decline lay with the resorts themselves and lack of government support, rather than any competition from abroad. The period itself is characterised by diversification at resort towns: live entertainment, amusements, fun fairs, shops, catering and, significantly, a

¹⁰⁷ G. Shaw and A. Williams, *The Rise and Fall of British Coastal Resorts: Cultural and Economic Perspectives* (London: Mansell, 1997), p. 49.

variety of accommodation types. Full employment and little overseas competition in the 1950's clearly fuelled popularity, but after 1974 demand shifted. An increase in the number of second or third holidays by the 1970's would impact resort accommodation of all kinds; domestic holidays reportedly peaked in 1973. Before this, the rising numbers of day trippers (as car ownership increases) had started to affect accommodation providers; during 1970 Clacton hoteliers began to see less and less demand from the holiday trade (as discussed further in the following chapter) and shifted their focus to concentrate on all year round business (homeless, mentally disabled), this in turn undoubtedly affected the resort's image. Government legislation is also seen as a blow to seaside resort growth: the 1950's Catering Wages Act and 1966 Selective Employment Tax (SET) 'provided another massive blow to overheads.'¹⁰⁸ Yet caravan sites around the resorts would be largely immune from such problems, and would therefore have been one of the beneficiaries of holidaymakers shifting to alternative accommodation forms, and they had not, in contrast, suffered unduly at the hands of the legislators.

The sites had in fact (after the 1960 Caravan Sites Act legislation described above and in the following chapter) recently raised their general standards and developed new facilities and attractions; social and commercial networks between caravan owners, site operators and tenants were also now well established. In contrast again, Labour's 1969 Hotel Development Initiative Scheme following the 1969 Development of Tourism Act did not, it is claimed, provide the hoped for boost for hotel proprietors. The 'Short-Break' concept in larger, top-end hotels also apparently had a detrimental effect. Seasons were eventually extended by out-of-season breaks for the elderly, but ultimately 'the story of English and Welsh resorts during the period 1950-1974 was one of lost opportunities, not helped by a lack of national government understanding and help.'¹⁰⁹ In contrast,

¹⁰⁸ Shaw and Williams, *The Rise and Fall of British Coastal Resorts*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p 71.

caravan manufacturers, dealers and site operators had seized the opportunities generated by their users initial demand during the period and established an industry that was not exclusively linked to the fortunes of the seaside resorts close to which so many caravan sites were situated.

Improvements in the static caravan manufacturer's product overall since the mid 1950's seem to have run parallel with rising living standards generally over the period. Analysis of retail prices for some key static manufacturers shows that prices had, of course, risen during the 1960's, but annual increases were modest in general and compare favourably with the national picture overall, see figs. 33 and 34, below.¹¹⁰

Caravan Make and Model	Ex. works retail price of new holiday caravans (£'s) for year, with annual % change in price										
	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	Averages
Pemberton Sunstar	365	399 (9.3%)		410 (1.4%)	460 (12.2%)	460 (0%)	490 (6.5%)	520 (6.1%)	520 (0%)		5.07%
Pemberton Rancher	499	525 (5.2%)	550 (4.8%)	565 (2.7%)			560 (- 0.3%)	595 (6.3%)	607 (2%)	660 (8.7%)	4.20%
Belmont Havana						455	475 (4.4%)	499 (5%)	499 (0%)	519 (4%)	3.35%
Belmont Hermes					535	535 (0%)	535 (0%)	565 (5.6%)	565 (0%)	570 (0.9%)	1.30%
Lynton Palma	425	439 (3.3%)	455 (3.6%)	510 (12%)	538 (5.5%)	548 (1.9%)	575 (4.9%)				5.20%
Astral Gaytime	395	399 (1%)	420 (5.3%)	420 (0%)	455 (8.4%)	475 (4.4%)					3.82%
Nene Valley Palace	499	504 (1%)	505 (0.2%)	505 (0%)	549 (8.7%)	589 (7.3%)	545 (- 7.5%)			625 (4.9%)	2.09%
Bluebird Conqueror							465	522 (12.3%)	540 (3.4%)	556 (3%)	6.24%
Combined Average Price Increase		3.96%	3.47%	3.22%	8.70%	2.72%	1.34%	7.06%	1.08%	4.30%	3.9%

Figure 33: Analysis of retail prices and annual price change for a range of static holiday home models, 1961-1970.

Fig. 31, above, shows an annual price change (increase) of around 3.9 percent over a range of models during the years 1962 to 1970. For the purposes of selecting a representative sample, the models chosen represent products that remained relatively stable in design and were in production for a period of more than four years during the period. The *Caravan Buyers Guide* for 1969 gives an average price figure overall for new

¹¹⁰ *Key Guide to Used Caravan Values*, listings of selected caravan manufacturer's ex. works retail prices, 1961-71.

static holiday caravans of £765; this figure, somewhat higher than the £607 required to purchase a new 1969 model, 24 by 9.5 feet, six-berth Pemberton Rancher, includes more the more expensive yet less popular models available.¹¹¹ Fig. 32, below, shows the annual percentage change in the composite price index for 1961 to 1970.¹¹²

Year	Composite Price Index: Annual % Change
1961	3.4%
1962	4.3%
1963	2.0%
1964	3.3%
1965	4.8%
1966	3.9%
1967	2.5%
1968	4.7%
1969	5.4%
1970	6.4%
Average	4.1%

Figure 34: analysis of the annual % change in composite or combined retail prices during the period 1961 to 1970.

The sample chosen suggests, therefore, that average retail prices for static caravan holiday homes were, in general, increasing slightly below the average figure for general domestic inflation for the period.

Static holiday caravans improved significantly in design terms during the 1960's, as has been shown, and price increases were by and large relatively modest. The product was, therefore, kept affordable yet desirably current, convenient and stylish. Comparisons with the changing housing conditions for urban workers during this period, many of whom would either have used or owned a caravan holiday home, may offer some additional clues for the popularity of such a choice. Before 1960, the vast majority of new post-war housing schemes were carried out on bomb-damaged or green field sites.

¹¹¹ *Caravan Buyers Guide*, 1969, cited in Whiteman, *Caravan*, p. 212.

¹¹² J. O'Donoghue *et al.*, 'Consumer Price Inflation since 1750' in *Economic Trends 604* (March 2004), (London: Office for National Statistics, Table 2).

By the early 1960's, however, programmes of inner-city slum clearance were begun in earnest. Indeed, slum clearances rose from less than 35,000 houses per year in 1955 to at least 70,000 each year by 1960. Also, in that year some 135,000 houses were improved with the help of governmental grants. But a great many working families were displaced from traditional inner-city locations in this process, and were re-housed in the newly-built council flats: in 1955 eight towers of council flats fifteen or more storeys from the ground were built in England and Wales, by 1965 the number had risen to 17,351.¹¹³ As more middle-class families enjoyed suburban semi's or newly built detached estate houses, working families in the new council flats may well have longed for the opportunity to spend time in more rural, individual holiday homes, as a break from living conditions which often failed to live up to the dreams of the post-war modernist architects and town planners.

Static caravan holiday home manufacturing in the UK had, by 1990, become a stand alone industry with a firm customer base and supply network. Exports of static caravans had always been rather problematic, however. In 1947, long before the separation within the industry of statics and tourers, when only sixty-four units were exported and the Board of Trade were of the opinion that the caravan industry could make no useful contribution to exports (as discussed in the previous chapter) allocation of materials was a problem, as has been discussed. But exports *were* achieved, although exact data is elusive; Willerby claim to have been exporting twenty percent of their annual production during the 1960's.¹¹⁴ Tourers, in particular enjoyed a growing export market, but statics were larger, less manoeuvrable and therefore more costly and impractical to transport

¹¹³ D. Donnison, 'Urban Development and Social Policies' in R. Leaper, (ed.) *Health, Wealth and Housing* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 56-7.

¹¹⁴ See Willerby company history pages, at <http://www.willerby.com/companyhistory.php?year=1960>, [accessed November 2013].

outside of the UK. Nevertheless, in 1982 some 2658 units were produced for export, and this figure reached a high in 1990 of 5536, see fig. 35, below.

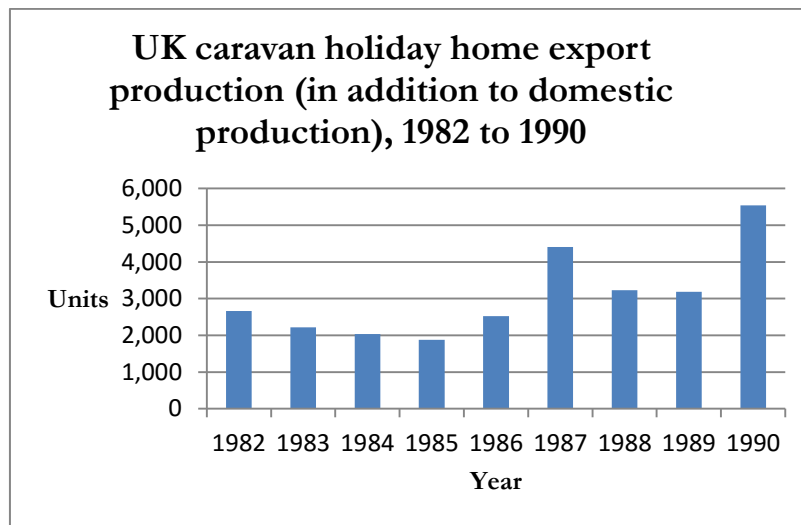


Figure 35: Static caravan export data, 1982-1990.

The industry would, of course, be affected by, and respond to, the more volatile nature of the economy after 1973. But caravan sales would recover in the growth years, and this would be helped in no small measure as manufacturers developed new design concepts for their products. Caravan sites had been developing facilities and enhancing their spaces since the Caravan Sites Act at the beginning of the 1960's more-or-less required them to do so. As demand was strong at this point, these improvements ultimately benefitted manufacturers and site operators not just in the medium but also the long term. By the time of the first economic downturn, the static caravan industry had become firmly established and its product was popular and desirable. The wide adoption of the policy of constantly reviewing design and market suitability on an annual basis ensured that the larger and more established manufacturers, at least, could adapt to the highs and lows of the market throughout the 1970's and 1980's.

Chapter Seven

Holiday Caravan Parks: 1960 – 1989

7.1 Introduction

By the first summer season of 1960, caravan sites and the manufacture of dedicated static holiday caravans, along with all the ancillary or allied trades and industries, had become an established part of UK domestic tourism. In addition, control and legislation in the form of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, 1960 had finally arrived in the wake of the Arton Wilson Report. Despite the growing popularity of foreign travel, the development of package holidays and competition from other sectors within UK tourism, caravan sites would in general continue to be popular with domestic working-class holidaymakers. As discussed earlier, in 1951 the holiday camp was estimated to account for only three percent of overall holiday accommodation (these statistics do, however, include holidays abroad), rising to a peak in 1970 of six percent (not including foreign holidays). In 1970, however, caravans (presumably meaning touring and static) account for eighteen percent of the accommodation for British holiday makers, second only to staying with friends or relatives at twenty four percent.¹ Some caravan owners and users would combine foreign trips to European resorts on package holidays to hotels, with UK caravan site use.² This chapter will argue that during this period, in addition to this broad, increasing popularity, caravan sites would also continue to evolve: physically, economically and socially, and that by the 1980's the earlier image of the caravan site as a low-key, lowbrow, alternative form of holiday camp

¹ Statistics from Digest of Tourist Statistics No. 2, in A. Burkart and S. Medlik, *Tourism: Past, Present and Future* (London: Heinemann, 1981), pp.84-6; Statistics for domestic tourism can be problematic: See J. Walton, *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: MUP, 2000), p. 38.

² Steve Munro recalls this developing during the late 1970's- caravan owners regaling the reception staff in the site office with tales of the recently visited Spanish resorts of the Costa Blanca, and particularly resorts such as Torremelinos and Benidorm, and in Mallorca, Santa Ponsa and Magaluf.

was replaced by one of a much more modern, well-ordered and regulated establishment, offering clean and hospitable facilities in an attractive environment. Caravan sites became caravan parks; the words 'caravan' and 'site' became redundant, too reminiscent of an earlier, less professional or corporate era and static holiday homes on leisure, or holiday home parks emerge as the industry leads what was formerly a consumer-led activity. This phenomenon is also analysed further.

It will also be argued that ultimately there would be a partial blending of the two forms that have been thus far clearly differentiated. Commercial holiday camps, defined by their chalet or built accommodation, organised catering and entertainments and numerous attractions on-site (and lack of caravans) would begin to offer a more relaxed regime, allowing customers to be far more selective and elective; eventually offering self-catering accommodation. Caravan parks on the other hand would begin to offer some chalet accommodation, more professional entertainments and communal facilities, but would generally stop short of the regular, organised communal meal sittings and regimented activity programmes that were hitherto the source of criticism for the commercial camps.³ The trend for holiday camps of each and every manifestation was thus towards freedom of choice but with modern facilities and environments. This study also argues that, in effect, this was the commercial holiday camp moving more towards the caravan site model, rather than the two forms converging at a central merge-point. This is not generally acknowledged in other studies of the commercial holiday camp. The extent to which this more general phenomenon began to be seen in the caravan sites and holiday camps of the Tendring District is examined further in this chapter.

³ Sites at St. Osyth Beach along with other local sites began a small-scale chalet building programme during the mid-1970s; see also S. Dawson, *Holiday Camps in Twentieth-Century Britain: Packaging Pleasure* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 178.

The passing of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act in 1960 marked a significant turning point in the evolution of the caravan site, in its relationship with the consumer and its physical and social development. For this reason, 1960 seems a logical point at which to begin the examination of the next phase of its history. During this period, however, caravan parks benefitted from domestic economic optimism and a growing youth culture that appeared to value domestic holidays and the seaside resort locations as much as ever. Later, against a background of national economic downturn and poor industrial relations during the 1970's and the turbulence of the 1980's, caravan parks (in Tendring, and more widely) seem to maintain popularity. This chapter will consider why, how and to what extent this was achieved, how these developments unfold on parks of the Tendring District and beyond, and consider the developing user profile, provision of facilities and social events and opportunities on static caravan parks generally. The physical nature of caravan site development will be considered in terms of its affect upon the local landscape and national consciousness, as will their role in the local and national economy. The role of the park operator and the effects of the organisation and legislation of the caravan park industry will also be analysed.

7.2 1960-70: Political and social context, the 'caravan problem', the Arton Wilson Report and subsequent caravan site legislation.

Anxieties around international standing and economic performance were voiced by politicians of all shades, not just those on the political right, as Britain entered the new decade. Despite the obvious social and economic progress that had occurred since 1945, the 'declinism' referred to at the beginning of Chapter Five was still a fixation for the Conservatives; in particular Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, who felt that there was 'something rotten at the heart of the British economy in the 1950's, that economic

success contained within it the seed of its own destruction'.⁴ The Suez Crisis of 1956 did reveal Britain as wanting in financial and military terms, causing irreparable damage to the nation's influence in the Middle East. Despite attempts to link colonies into federations in order to counter threats of communist insurgency, and investments in infrastructure schemes in African colonies, developments were moving ahead more quickly than was anticipated, resulting in a relinquishing of control of most colonies by 1963. In order to counter the perceived threat of the economic resurgence of France and West Germany, the political focus was now on attempting to join the new European Economic Community. With a flat economy and America no longer readily available as an economic prop, these were the factors that some may have seen as evidence of Britain's continually weakening position, or decline, in the early 1960's.⁵

But at home, social and economic progress was still ascendant: the aforementioned 'golden age' was almost at its height. Yet despite many of the obvious post-war advances, for many the nostalgic rural idyll, and notions of a 'lost England' were still powerful motivational forces. As has been discussed (and as Readman's work with SCAPA, as discussed in Chapter Four, argues⁶), the lobby against rural despoilment was not confined to middle-class, localized pressure groups. The national campaign had influence in the corridors of power, and fears about rural despoilment were also bound up with fears about growing consumerism. As the manufacture of static caravans had risen significantly, the 'caravan problem' was, of course, seen as a major cause of rural despoilment and for this reason at least, would receive attention in Parliament. As numbers of caravans remaining on sites at coastal locations began to rise significantly,

⁴ L. Black and H. Pemberton, H. *An Affluent Society? Britain's Post-War Golden Age Revisited* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), P. 2.

⁵ See E. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), pp. 220-2, 240-2, 285-5.

⁶ P. Readman, 'Landscape Preservation, 'advertising disfigurement', and English National Identity c. 1890-1914' in *Rural History*, 12 (2001), pp. 61-83.

more fuel was added to the 'caravan problem' debate. But it was not just the caravans themselves that were seen as the problem. Concerns were also raised about the inhabitants of the caravans, questioning whether they were 'decent' people, or were they 'vagrants' living in insanitary conditions and forming new 'slums' in otherwise well-ordered middle-class neighbourhoods.

Cases of local authority intervention in areas where significant communities of all-year-round caravan dwellers resided were featured in the national press, further fuelling the 'Caravan problem' controversy. During October 1958 a *Daily Mirror* front page was dominated by a photograph of defiant men and women, over the headline 'HANDS OFF OUR HOMES!' The report concerned the reaction by 'More than 100 jeering, jostling caravan-dwellers' who 'defied ten bailiffs, a chief constable and thirty policemen who tried to evict them from their caravan site.'⁷ The report went on to establish that the four hour 'siege' was eventually ended after a judge granted a delay to compulsory eviction at the site at Egham, Surrey. *The Times* newspaper, reporting on this incident yet commenting more widely on the situation as it occurred in other areas, observed 'Whether used as holiday homes or permanent residences, caravans present a difficulty to the authorities. The difficulty is greatest when they are aggregated into static residential colonies.'⁸ *The Times* article concluded with the observation that a revision in the law was needed to avoid such problems. The reporting of the Egham situation also highlighted some of the more telling details of the crisis in human terms. On October 15th, bailiffs withdrew from attempting to evict Mr. and Mrs. B. Mitchell from the site. Twenty-one year old Mrs. Mitchell was expecting her first baby in two weeks.⁹ Three days later, bailiffs, police and tractor operators withdrew from forcibly removing

⁷ *Daily Mirror*, Saturday 18th October 1958, front page, p.4.

⁸ *The Times*, 'A Dalliance of Caravans', 16th June 1958, p.9.

⁹ *The Times*, 'Caravan People Defy Bailiffs', 16th October 1958, p. 12.

caravans housing working families not least because more than one of the tractor operators instructed to hitch-up and remove the caravans refused to do so at the last minute as a matter of conscience.¹⁰ As a result of situations such as this (and this one in particular) pushing the ‘caravan problem’ into the public spotlight, further legislation would be enacted that would have, amongst its intended outcomes, unforeseen ones that would further shape the development of Britain’s post-war static caravan holiday industry.

In November 1959 a report entitled *Caravans as Homes* was presented to Parliament by Henry Brooke, the Minister of Housing and Local Government. The motivation to commission such a report is clearly articulated in the announcement made by the minister in Parliament on the 25th November 1958. In response to a question by Sir Lionel Heald, Q.C., M.P. for Chertsey (who had, during the previous month, submitted a memorandum to the minister setting out the views of the National Federation of Site Operators(NFSO)¹¹) where there were a considerable number of caravan dwellings at the time, he stated: ‘I am setting on foot an investigation into the nature and extent of the problems which arise in connection with caravans used as residential accommodation, the underlying causes of these problems, and the views of those concerned.’ The minister also made it clear that the investigation, to be carried out by Sir Arton Wilson, would simply report facts and not venture to make recommendations. The parameters of the enquiry were further clarified on 16th December of that year by the Parliamentary Secretary’s response to a question in the House from Frank Beswick, M.P., which made it clear that what was in mind was ‘caravan living by ordinary people, rather than the

¹⁰ *The Times* ‘New Reprieve For Caravan Dwellers’, 18 October 1958, p.6.

¹¹ D. Davey *et al.*, ‘The British Holiday and Home Parks Association 1950-2010’, in *The BH&HPA Journal*, Sept. /Oct. edition, supplement (Gloucester: BH&HPA, 2010), p. 8.

special problems of gypsies or vagrants.’¹² The report clarified its definition of gypsies and vagrants further:

the gypsy or vagrant caravanners usually move frequently about the countryside; they often park their caravan without any permission from the land owner concerned; and they are said by many local authorities to leave filth and litter where they have been, and to contain more than an ordinary share of law-breakers.

The report went on to make a further distinction:

This is not said so much of the true Romany gypsies, as of the tinkers, “swaggers”, “didicois” and such-like vagrants who in some parts of the country are a regular cause of concern.¹³

The report and subsequent Act of Parliament was, therefore, not a response primarily to the growth of holiday caravan sites, but the perceived problem of residential static caravan use. In fact the report claimed at the outset that it would ‘not deal, except in passing, with caravans used merely for holidays or weekends.’¹⁴ As is often the case with such reports and subsequent legislative measures (the Lyndsey Sandhills Act, discussed earlier, being perhaps an apposite example), it required a particular incident or situation to highlight an issue that was paralleled in other parts of the country, to provide the impetus to set it up. In this case it was the Egham Urban District Council’s protracted and controversial efforts to evict some one hundred and fifty ‘caravan-dwelling households not of the gypsy or vagrant type’ from Metropolitan Green Belt land in Surrey during 1958 (as mentioned on the first page of the report, and in the *Daily Mirror* article above). The caravans had been established on the land without formal planning consent by ordinary working individuals and families seeking accommodation during the housing shortages in the aftermath of the war, as discussed in Chapter Five. Yet the removal of them had proved highly problematic, not just in legal process. Eventually they were only induced to move when an alternative, albeit temporary, site was found for

¹² 1959-60 Cmnd. 872 Ministry of Housing and Local Government. *Caravans as Homes*, a report by Sir Arton Wilson, KBE., CB. July 1959, p.ii.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.1.

them by the public authorities.¹⁵ This situation, above all, serves to highlight the 'grey area' with reference to planning legislation in which the control and licensing of caravan sites by local authorities had existed since the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. Although the Arton Wilson Report was motivated by the problems associated with residential use of caravans, the implications of the subsequent Act of Parliament would have a profound effect upon holiday caravan sites, as well (as has been argued in the previous chapter) as static caravan design and manufacture. The 'caravan problem', therefore, had helped catalyze legislation that would affect the static caravan in all its manifestations.

The Arton Wilson report was compiled after a painstaking investigation into caravan living, sites and usage. National organisations with any involvement whatsoever were consulted, and their views considered. This included the NCC, the NFSO, a number of un-named individual caravan manufacturers, site operators and those concerned with the purchase and sale of sites. The editors of *The Caravan* (Whiteman) and *Modern Caravan* were consulted, as were the Caravan Association, the National Caravan Residents Association, the Showmen's Guild, the Caravan Club, local authority associations, planning institutions, medical health and social service representative bodies and government departments. Questionnaires were sent out to all county, town and district councils in England and Wales. Remarkably, Wilson personally visited over 200 caravan sites in fifteen counties, meeting and discussing the issues with residents and site operators. Much written testimony was considered from individuals and groups; a visit was also made to Edinburgh in order to compare conditions in England and Wales to those in Scotland.¹⁶ Such a comprehensive investigation should, and did, produce a report that would shed much light upon the nature of residential *and* holiday static

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Wilson, *Report*, p. 2.

caravan usage in Britain at that time, and form a solid basis for the consequential legislative proposals. The report, rather narrowly titled *Caravans as Homes*, would remain unparalleled in its depth and scope as an enquiry into the whole sector of static caravan use in Britain for at least the remainder of the twentieth century.

The report also went some way towards highlighting the causes of the poor view of static caravans that had arisen generally: the perceived ‘caravan problem’. It was noted that much of this may be due to misconceptions about the nature of those that chose to live permanently in caravans in the post-war years. Indeed, contemporary coverage in the press of situations such as the one at Egham and the ‘caravan problem’ generally did little to challenge this. But any view that caravan dwellers were somehow less desirable or unsavoury as a community (as mentioned above) was challenged by the report’s findings. In fact it demonstrated that caravan dwellers were, in terms of income and occupation at least, representative of a broad cross-section of society as a whole. Further, it claimed that ‘the average residential caravanner is quite as respectable as the average dweller in bricks and mortar.’¹⁷ The report also acknowledged that criticisms of static caravan use in Britain also stemmed from bad planning. Sites springing up in the wrong places, overcrowding, poor layout and poor equipment and facilities were cited as causes for concern. Clearly it was not just the residential sites that were guilty of this sort of development.

The Arton Wilson report has had limited discussion in the wider historiography of post-war domestic tourism. But it is a document that is worthy of further analysis, not least in that it was the result of a remarkably thorough enquiry, as discussed above, completed in a relatively short period. This was widely acknowledged at the time by politicians on all

¹⁷ Wilson, *Report*, cited in Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Caravan Parks: Location, Layout, Landscape* (London: HMSO, 1962) p. 1.

sides; the Joint Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Earl Waldegrave commented in his speech in the House of Lords, 23rd June, 1960:

Sir Arton Wilson reported in 1959. He did the job very quickly and very well. His report, *Caravans as Homes*, was published as Command Paper 872. Many tributes have been paid to this document as an informative and well-balanced survey of the problem. He was not asked to make specific recommendations, but it is in the light of his findings that the Government have formulated their proposals.¹⁸

The report is also significant for its wider implications, not just in terms of its impact upon the manufacture and use of the static holiday caravan in Britain (discussed further below), but in a wider social context. Its effect upon the perception of marginalized groups in society in particular is worthy of separate, more detailed study.

After the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, 1960 was passed in the wake of the Arton Wilson Report, it became clear that although the aim of the legislation was to control and regulate caravan living and dwelling on residential sites, static holiday caravan sites were also to be similarly regulated and controlled. This came about primarily as a result of the report highlighting some of the causes of the poor view of static caravans as described above (specifically bad location, layout and facilities), and amongst other significant issues, the ineffectiveness of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act to give local authorities clear direction on the regulation of caravan sites. The report did affirm that local authorities had obligations with regard to the location and layout of all caravan sites, and obligations as housing and sanitary authorities toward minimum standards of hygiene on sites; further obligations were cited with regard to residential usage.¹⁹ But the Wilson report was also clear that although, on the face of it, the existing planning legislation could be thought to provide a reasonable system of control over where and how (specifically residential) sites were developed, the system

¹⁸ Hansard, House of Lords Debate, 23 June 1960, vol. 224 cc579-618.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

was, in fact, ‘full of loopholes.’²⁰ Within this situation, the report highlighted the lack of planning control over existing use sites. As discussed in Chapter Four, the situation for caravan sites re-opening from 1948 was very much a grey area. In fact the 1947 Act did not require permission to be obtained for the continuance or re-opening of any site which had caravan use before 1948, and more crucially, gave a virtual exemption from planning control to ‘caravan sites which, although started up and continued on a more or less permanent basis *since* 1948 without specific permission, were not subject of an enforcement notice by the local planning authority concerned within four years of the date of contravention.’²¹ As a result, numerous sites throughout the country (including at least nine in the Tendring District, see Chapter Four, Fig. 3a) were enjoying existing use rights from 1952. We can speculate that many more were probably used informally; as we now know that in Tendring more sites in addition to the aforementioned nine made no mention of pre-war use in their caravan site license applications to the local authority.²²

The 1960 Act dealt with this situation by instituting a licensing system for all caravan sites with very few limited and specific exceptions. A register of these site licenses would be held by the local authority. Provision was made for the recognition and control of existing sites, and amendments to the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, specifically section 12 (5), were passed. Control of future development was also addressed. In anticipation of legislation, Essex County Council set up the Caravan Sub-Committee in 1958 to co-ordinate a response to the situation in the county. It called on each town and district authority to appoint representatives to attend meetings and submit detailed local information. In Essex, a report to the sub-committee by the County Planning Advisor dated 7th August 1958 gives an overview of static caravan usage in the county, and in

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

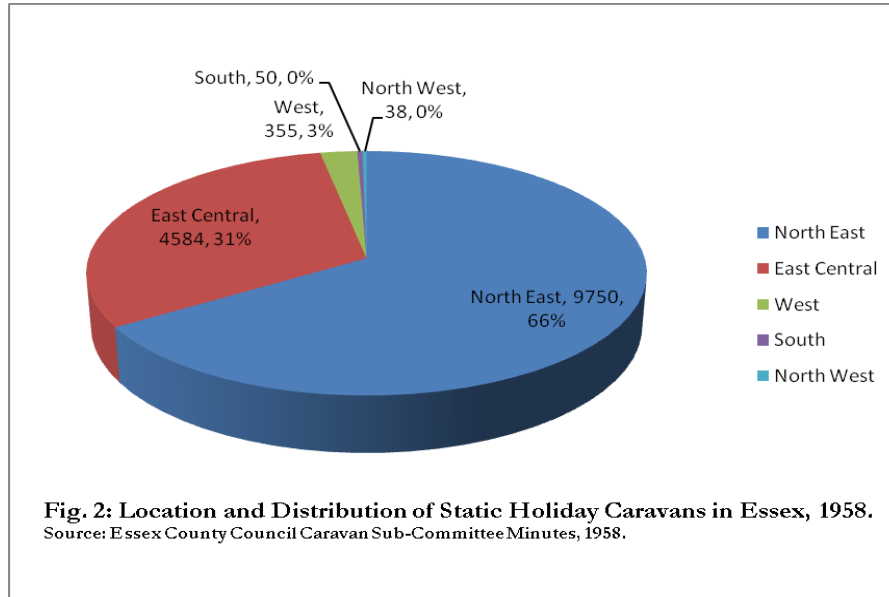
²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

²² Records of Site Licence Applications, Tendring District Council Archives. See Appendix One.

north-east Essex in particular. Numbers of caravans estimated to be in existence and therefore deemed to have permission were given, see Fig. 1, below:

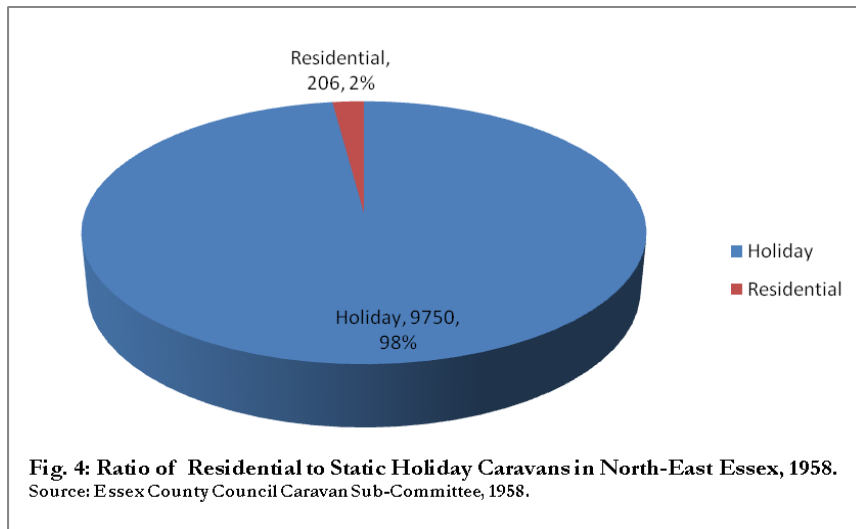
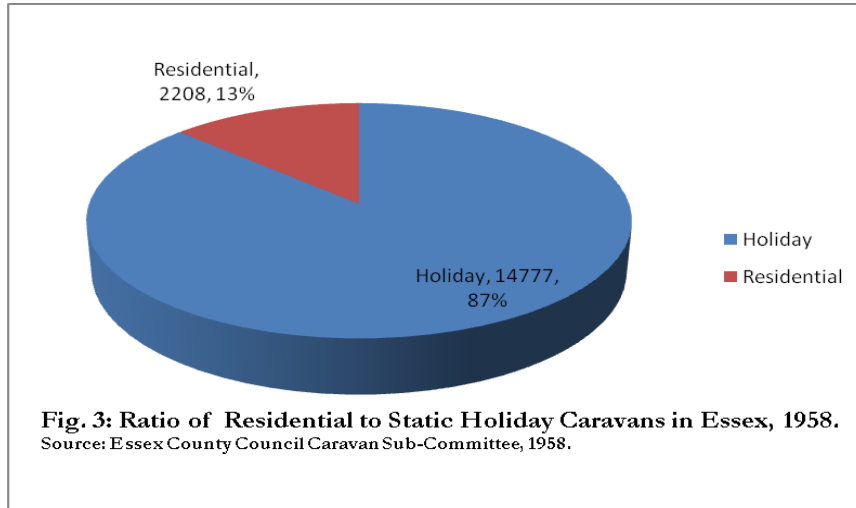
Figure 1: Estimate of Number of Static Caravans in Essex, August 1958		
Source: ERO, Essex County Council, Caravan Sub-Committee Minutes, 1958.		
Area	Holiday	Residential
North East	9750	206
East Central	4584	1050
West	355	156
South	50	221
North West	38	575
Totals	14777	2208

The above data clearly indicate the distribution bias toward, unsurprisingly, east Essex: the coastal and resort side of the county. North-east Essex, which includes the Borough of Colchester and Tendring District, appears to have the largest population of static holiday caravans in the county at this time, see Fig. 2, below:



The data in Fig. 1 also give a clearer picture of the nature of static caravan usage in the county at this point in time. Although a relatively populous county, close to the capital and having coped with its fair share of housing shortages after the war, Essex at this

stage, surprisingly, appears to have a seemingly low number of residential units when compared to the number of holiday use static caravans in the county. In north-east Essex, the ratio is even more pronounced toward holiday units; see Figs. 3 and 4, below:



To further illustrate this in terms of density if we take north-east Essex to be an area of approximately 260 square miles, then these figures represent a mean average density of over thirty-seven caravans per square mile. But if we consider that the vast majority of the static caravans of north-east Essex were in fact within the resort district of Tendring alone (8317 static caravan pitches were licensed on 49 caravan sites in Tendring soon after 1960, see Fig. 5, below), as Tendring is an area of approximately 130 square miles,

then the mean average density of static caravans there after 1960 was some sixty-four units per square mile.

Figure 5: Caravan Sites in Tendring Registered under Public Health Licence or Caravan Sites Act, 1960

Source: Tendring District Council Site Licence Application Records, see Appendix 1

Number of Sites First Licensed for Holiday Caravans, P.H. & 1960 Act	49
Number of Sites Licensed for Tourers & Tents Only, First Record	17
Number of Sites Licensed but with No Pitch Numbers, P.H. & 1960 Act	5
Total Number of Licensed Static Caravan Pitches in Tendring, P.H. & 1960 Act	7133

We can broadly compare this figure with the estimated 11,000 combined static and touring caravans estimated to be sited on another area of caravan site development in 1958²³, the East Lindsey coast of Lincolnshire (East Lindsey District being an area of some 680 sq. miles); which gives a density of less than seventeen caravans per square mile. This would be misleading, however, as East Lindsey has a large rural hinterland mainly devoid of caravan sites. Most of the sites are concentrated mainly in the coastal area and its direct hinterland, an area of roughly 300 sq. miles. This brings the density up to just under thirty-seven caravans per square mile. This area of the Lincolnshire coast has traditionally attracted caravans; a recent report (2011) echoes the widely acknowledged claim that the Lincolnshire coastal area currently has the largest concentration of caravans in Europe.²⁴ In addition to this, in comparison with the data discussed in the previous chapter, *i.e.* that there were around 90,000 caravans in the UK in 1959 ‘to be used as static holiday or weekend accommodation’, then Essex would appear to have been the location for over sixteen percent of the UK static holiday caravan population. North-east Essex and its resorts of Clacton-on-Sea, Walton-on-the-

²³ A. Smith, *Beside the Seaside* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972), pp.203-5.

²⁴ C. Beatty *et al.*, *The Caravan Communities of the Lincolnshire Coast*, Report: CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University, East Lindsey District Council (2011), p.4; see also J. Walton, *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 132.

Naze and Frinton-on-Sea, close to London and easily accessible along the A12 corridor, would have accounted for almost eleven percent of the national figure. This is not, of course, an exercise in exact comparative statistics, but it does serve to offer a feel for how extensively the Tendring District had become populated with caravans generally by the beginning of the 1960's.

The Arton Wilson report and subsequent legislation gave impetus to local authorities for the first time to gain a clearer idea of the numbers of static caravans in use on the ground around the UK. It is now fully evident from these data that the process described in Chapter Four had resulted in the establishment of a considerable number of static holiday caravan sites in Essex, particularly in the north-east of the county; these would now be subject to regulation, and those that had existing use rights would be licensed accordingly. Tendring District's considerable caravan site industry (detailed in Table 2, above), in common with that throughout the UK, was now entering a new phase of control and development. Residential static caravan use in Essex at least, represented a reasonable proportion (thirteen percent) of the total picture; but in north-east Essex the figure was almost negligible at two percent. The dominance of the area as a centre for static caravan holiday home use is by now, therefore, clear.

Most static holiday caravans by 1960 were four to six berth units, in effect a mean average of five berths. Therefore, the 7,133 pitches licensed in the Tendring District at that point in time represented a mean average of 35,665 berths. By comparison, the two large commercial holiday camps, Butlin's at Clacton and Warner's at Dovercourt, in combination could accommodate an estimated maximum of some 6500 visitors: less

than twenty percent of that in the static holiday caravan sector.²⁵ Statistics for actual volume and turnover are problematic during this period as company accounts prior to 1970 have not been retained, but there are some key indicators. Highfields Caravan Park in Clacton, one of the larger sites in the district, repeatedly sought (unsuccessfully) to increase its licensed caravan numbers beyond 725 in applications to the local authority during the 1970s; Valley Farm similarly tried and failed to increase numbers.²⁶ Such applications would not have been made on the basis of a history of poor volume or turnover. It should also be noted that these applications were during the 1970s, a time when the economy started to become less settled after a long period of steady growth. Caravan sites seeking to increase pitch numbers at this stage must have been enjoying good turnover for some time. It may, therefore, be reasonable to assume that holiday accommodation at such sites during the main holiday season generally achieved maximum usage. The remaining plotland holiday homes, mainly concentrated at Jaywick and Wrabness, were still in active use but had not expanded at all in the post-war period. Hotels and guesthouses were, of course, offering holiday accommodation but as has been discussed, they were in decline. The 1951 Clacton Town Guide listed some fifty-five hotels; four more are known to have been in operation, a total of fifty-nine. By 1971 thirty of these establishments had ceased to operate.²⁷

It has been suggested recently in an otherwise credible study that the 1960 Act was only concerned with the planning and location of caravan sites, and that it 'did not concern itself with the quality of the facilities on offer and that would have to be tackled in later

²⁵ D. Hardy and C. Ward, *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (London: Mansell, 1986), p. 135-6; see also N. Jacobs, *Clacton Past with Holland-on-Sea and Jaywick* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2002), p. 107.

²⁶ See *Clacton Times and East Essex Gazette*, 4th February 1972, 3rd August 1973 and 2nd July 1976, also cited in P. Rusiecki, 'The Resorts 1970 to c. 2009' in H. Eiden and C. Thornton (eds.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England, A History of the County of Essex, Vol. 11* (London: IHR, Boydell and Brewer, 2013), p. 263.

²⁷ Clacton Urban District Council, *Clacton Guide, 1951*; see also ERO, T/Z 38/229: A. Seymour, *Patterns of Employment in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex* (Unpublished Thesis for St. Osyth's College of Education, 1973), p. 18.

periods.²⁸ But the 1960 Act had laid down ‘model standards’ in this regard, and clear guidance was issued. Further, in 1962 as an aid to the 1960 Act, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government published specific and detailed guidelines for the location, layout and landscaping of caravan parks for both residential and holiday homes that included detailed recommendations for site facilities, equipment, services, sanitation, access and environmental considerations such as the most suitable species of grass, shrubs and trees to plant.²⁹ The locations of new site developments were also considered in some detail. As one of the causes of the caravan problem was deemed to be sites ‘springing-up’ after the war in ill-considered places, causing views to be spoiled and an influx of tourists in otherwise tranquil residential, coastal or rural settings, guidelines for more suitable settings were suggested. In response to the problem of view despoiling, it was suggested that caravans should be, as far as possible, hidden within the landscape. Open areas should be avoided, screening with trees and foliage should be achieved as far as possible: caravans should therefore be blended in to the landscape at all costs. A more radical solution for coastal areas was proffered: ‘Ideally, some of the obtrusive and unsightly existing holiday sites, particularly those in picturesque or prominent and isolated positions along the coast, should be moved, either by grouping them together and so reducing the sprawl, or setting them some way inland.’³⁰ The reality of the situation was that this was fine for new developments, but the considerable number of parks that now had the benefit of licences via existing use rights were established to the extent that simply moving them would be completely unrealistic. There appears to be no record of this having taken place in Tendring. However, in Norfolk during the 1960’s, as a result of scattered early post-war holiday development, attempts were made to concentrate

²⁸ V. Middleton and L. Lickorish, *British Tourism: The Remarkable Story of Growth*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Elsevier, 2007), p. 77.

²⁹ A booklet entitled *Caravan Parks: Location Layout, Landscape* was published in 1962 by the ministry for park operators and local authorities as an aid to compliance with the model standards given in the 1960 Act.

³⁰ Ministry of Housing, *Caravan Parks*, p. 7.

holiday camp developments in to two new 'holiday towns' to be located at Hemsby and Sea Palling. The proposals, part of the 'East Coast Plan' were never carried out.³¹ In addition to this, the caravan parks that had been successful during the late 40's and 1950's were now, in many cases, making significant contributions to their local economies, by generating employment (albeit largely seasonal), bringing in seasonal trade and by paying rates and taxes. The caravan parks, now licensed and established within local economies were now moving from their establishing phase into a new era of growth and development. This would be aided by their membership in many cases of the NFSO, which in particular offered much guidance on the implementation of new model standards for site operators.

Caravan park operators would now, however, be faced with rising costs. Compliance with site licence conditions could be costly, and would need some considerable investment in many cases. The guidelines for park operators included recommendations for storage and office buildings, public toilets, water supply and drainage and hard-standings for caravans that would be expensive to implement. To raise standards of sanitation, it was advised that drainage was needed not only from toilet blocks, but also from all water points. All sanitation, including water supply, was to comply with British Standards Codes of Practice. Where on-site sewer pipes could not be conveniently connected to local sewers, then it would be acceptable to install a small sewage treatment plant (again, to British Standards), or on much smaller sites cesspools could be used. The old Elsan buckets, soakaways, cinder paths and caravans sited on grass, *i.e.* the usual and familiar features of early post-war caravan sites harking back to the camp-site days, were now highlighted as undesirable and insanitary. Hard-standings for caravans enabled the grass to be kept trimmed and neat, proper roads would facilitate easier motor-vehicle

³¹ Hardy & Ward, *Goodnight Campers!*, p. 130.

access and toilet facilities with proper drainage systems would, of course, be a major improvement. The new generation of 1960's caravan parks would have to be cleaner, smarter, more accessible and have more modern facilities. Existing parks would have to catch up. It was, therefore, the need for compliance with these developments and recommendations that brought about the requirement for further and greater investment on the part of site operators. In order to adhere to the requirements of the site licence, even parks with existing use rights would have to modernise, and the resulting costs would inevitably have to be passed on to the customer. But would this mean that the caravan sites would become more exclusive, and start to alienate the customer base that gave rise to them in the aftermath of the war?

The Arton Wilson report estimated that in 1958 some 3,000,000 people (including children) went for odd weekends or for a week or two in the summer to a static caravan on a holiday site in this country.³² Comparable statistics for holiday camps are illusive, but it is possible to make a projection based on survey data which give a figure of 1,383,000 for 1961, less than half the figure for caravan use three years earlier.³³ For static holiday caravan sites at least, this period of ascendancy would continue, despite the rising costs which were having to be passed on to customers. In his scholarly social history of the popular seaside holiday *Beside the Seaside* published in 1978, James Walvin attests to the voracity with which the caravan had made 'major inroads' into patterns of holiday accommodation: 'In 1955, 2 million people took their holidays in caravans; by the late 1960s this had risen to 4 1/2 million. In 1955, caravan holidays accounted for only 8 per

³² Wilson, *Report*, p. 7.

³³ This figure is obtained by using data from UK Census and Digest of Tourist Statistics No. 2, in Burkart and Medlik, *Tourism: Past, Present and Future*, pp.84-6 which estimates that in Britain, 60% of a total population of 46.1 million in 1961 took a holiday. Of these 5% (based on 4% in 1955 and 6% in 1965) are estimated to have used a holiday camp.

cent of the national total, but by 1970 they had reached 18 per cent.³⁴ A number of factors may account for this. The growth of working-class consumerism has been discussed earlier, and this process was clearly still on-going. Worker's wages had risen steadily during the 1950's and would continue to rise during the 1960's: labourers earning £92 7s *per annum* in 1950 were earning £161 4s. in 1959. By 1968 the annual wage for labourers had risen to £405 0s, an increase of over 338% over eighteen years.³⁵

Demographic factors would also have an effect: in the post-war 'baby-boom' years there was also, quite simply, a larger population in the UK, and a correspondingly higher number of domestic holiday makers. Again, transport was also more accessible for many more families, particularly the working classes. Although railway passenger usage declined somewhat from the late 1950's through the Beeching cuts of the 1960's, private motorcar ownership continued to rise from 2,257,873 in 1950 to 5,525,828 in 1960 and to 11,515,000 in 1970. As Demetriadi observes: 'With the explosion in car ownership during this period it is little wonder that the popularity of caravan holidays grew markedly', and although this observation seems to generalise both touring and static caravan holidays, static use is, nevertheless, part of the picture of growth.³⁶ This 'golden age of popular motoring', aided by relatively low fuel prices, limited restrictions on parking, lightly policed speed limits and (at this stage at least) limited congestion on the roads ensured the continuing popularity of touring and static caravan holidays: 'caravan parks and holiday centres were major recipients of shifts in holiday demand, and cars flooded to the countryside.'³⁷ It would not be until the early 1970's that traffic

³⁴ J. Walvin, *Beside the Seaside: A Social History of the Popular Seaside Holiday* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), p. 146.

³⁵ *British Labour Statistics 1886-1968*, HMSO, in O. Newman and A. Foster (eds.), *The Value of a Pound: Prices and Incomes in Britain 1900-1993* (Andover: Gale Research International, 1995) pp. 139, 165.

³⁶ J. Demetriadi, 'The Golden Years: English Seaside Resorts 1950-1974' in G. Shaw and A. Williams (eds.), *The Rise and Fall of British Coastal Resorts: Cultural and Economic Perspectives* (London: Cassell, 1997), p. 61.

³⁷ Middleton and Lickorish, *British Tourism*, p. 99.

congestion (particularly on the bank holiday weekends), the energy crisis and rising fuel prices would begin to affect the motoring boom.

As the economic, demographic and social factors were in the ascendant at this stage, the increasing costs that were being passed on to the end users of the static holiday caravan did not, therefore, ultimately damage or restrict the industry. Indeed, were it not for the demand for, and popularity of, static caravan holiday homes being fostered and encouraged amongst the working and lower middle classes by a healthy economy and confidence in employment at this particular time, coupled with the easy availability of hire-purchase schemes, then the growth that the industry saw during the 1960's may not have occurred, and static holiday caravan parks might have become a far less common sight in the UK. However, by the middle of the decade, as shown in Fig. 5 (above), Tendring District now had forty nine established holiday caravan sites: see Fig. 6 (Below):³⁸

³⁸ Source: Records of Site Licence Applications, Tendring District Council Archives. See Appendix One.

Figure 6: Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District Licensed Under Caravan Sites Act, 1960				
	Name of Site	Address	Owner(s)	Pitches
1	Ferndale Farm Camp	London Rd., Clacton	Mr. Mrs Eliza Wells	132
2	Fletchers Caravan Site	Point Clear, St. Osyth	Mrs. H. Fletcher	13
3	The Firs Caravan Park	London Rd. Lt. Clacton	Mr. H. Woolley	200
4	Wayback Caravan Site	London Rd. Lt. Clacton	J. Harbour	220
5	Pump Hill Farm	Pump Hill, St. Osyth	Mrs. V. Abra	93
6	Greenlawns Camping Ground	St. Osyth Rd. Lt. Clacton	Mr. H. Carter	30
7	Mill Farm	Mill Farm, Gt. Bromley	Dr. W. & Mr. A Dean	20
8	Eastcliffe Caravan Park	Hall Lane, Walton on Naze	Rt. Hon. A. Barnes	419
9	Elm Farm	Thorpe le Soken	Mr. Gunfield	32
10	Seawick Holiday Lido	Beach Rd. St. Osyth	Mr. T. O'Dell	250
11	The Seaview Caravan Park	Brichfields, Gt. Bentley	Mr. H. Roberts	115
12	Highlands Camping Site	Thorpe Rd. Gt. Clacton	Mr. H. Chilvers	234
13	Point Clear Bay Holiday Estate	Point Clear, St. Osyth	Point Clear Bay Holiday Estates Ltd.	200
14	Coronation / Willow Caravan Sites	Hall Lane, Walton on Naze	Mr. G. Snare	158
15	James Farm	James Farm, Thorpe-le-Soken	Mr. French	13
16	Tower (later Pretoria)	Point Clear, St. Osyth.	Miss J. McKecknie/Mrs L. McGann,	7
17	Flag Inn	Colchester Rd. St. Osyth	S. Edwards	5
18	Tally Ho Garage	Frating	Capt. W. Jones	6
19	Crown Inn	Ipswich Rd., Arleigh	T. Blake, esq.	10
20	Thorpe Cross	Thorpe-le-Soken	Mr. J. Searl	2
21	Martello Tower Camping Site	St. Osyth Beach	Mr. T. Sanders	65
22	Brightlingsea Haven Caravan Park	Promenade Way, Brightlingsea	Brightlingsea Council. Hammerton Leisure	240
23	Western Promenade Caravan Site	Western Promenade, B/ sea.	Brightlingsea Council	240
24	Willow Caravan Park	High Tree Lane, Walton	Jack Garneys	120
25	Charles Caravan Park	Colchester Road, Weeley	Mr. C. Gray	250
26	Lilly Farm Camping Ground	116, Holland Road, Clacton	Mr. H. Bareham	18
27	Shelda Camp / Brook Farm	Castle Hill, London Rd., Clacton	Doris Rayner	16
28	Burresville Holiday Park	106 Burrs Rd., Clacton	Mr. A. G. Parker	8
29	Oakwood Hall Caravan Site	Holland on Sea	Westford Caterers Ltd.	15
30	Robin Hood P.H.	London Rd., Clacton	Charrington & Co., London.	14
31	Martello Tower Caravan Camp	Walton-on-Naze	D.F. Garton	776
32	The Vicarage	Kirby-le-Soken	Rev. J.W. Thomas	3
33	Frating Caravan Dite	Colchester Rd., Frating	Miss L. Harris	25
34	Greenacres Caravan Park	Low Rd. Dovercourt		27
35	Ship Inn	Kirby-le-Soken	Albert Bunting tenant of Cobbold & Co.	50
36	Chester Camp	Jaywick Lane, Clacton	Wallace Ducker	
37	Chester Camp(Silver Dawn)	Jaywick Lane, Clacton	Wallace Ducker	56
38	Southcliffe Caravan Site	Martello C.P., Kirby Rd., Walton	Southcliffe Trailer Co. (D. Garton)	35
39	Hutleys Caravan Park	St. Osyth Beach	Mr. B. Hutley (St. Osyth Beach Estates Ltd.)	500
40	Warners Holiday Camp	Low Rd. Dovercourt	Warners Holidays Ltd.(Mecca Leisure PLC)	92
41	Valley Farm Camping Ground	Valley Road, Clacton	Valley Farm Camping Ground Ltd. (N. Pawsey)	1000
42	Highfield Holiday Park	London Road, Clacton	F. C. Hopkins, then in 1954 Taylor family as Parkavan (Clacton) Ltd.	530
43	Mill Farm	Old Mill, Thorpe le Soken	Mr. C. Hudgell	4
44	Meadow View Camping Ground	St. Osyth Road, Lt. Clacton	Mr. A. J. Ward (1957) later M. Pocock (1960)	115
45	Sacketts Grove	Jaywick Lane, Clacton	T.S.T. (Parks) Ltd	190
46	Shore Farm	Wrabness	W. & J. Garnham	65
47	Greengates	Weeley Road, Lt. Clacton	Mr. F. W. Vine	20
48	Rosebank Camping Ground	251 London Rd., Clacton	Rosebank Camping Ground Ltd.	100
49	Shangri-La Holiday Caravan Park	Colchester Road, St. Osyth	Stanley H. Hiller	400
	Total			7133

But what of the social nature of post-1960 caravan sites and their users? Would the enforced upgrading that the new legislation engendered have an impact upon their

atmosphere of informality, the ‘all mucking-in’ community spirit and culture of self-originated solutions to on-site needs? As more affluent caravan owners and users began to enjoy more formalised services and facilities, the do-it-yourself, community nature of the earlier caravan site (as described in Chapter Four) began, almost inevitably, to be eclipsed. As physical improvements were carried out on the sites themselves to comply with new legislation, services and facilities would also be upgraded and professionalised. But as the caravan *sites* began to shed this earlier campsite identity, in this regard at least, and move toward the commercial holiday camp model to become more like caravan *parks* (later actually identifying as holiday home parks or leisure parks), evening entertainments in particular were not necessarily as fully professional and formalised as those to be enjoyed at Butlin’s or Warner’s. This factor would serve to highlight one of the key distinctions between the two forms at this stage, but would later become less of a distinguishing characteristic.

Music would prove to be an important factor in perpetuating the popularity of caravan sites after the 1960 Act. After the fever of scandal caused by the Profumo affair began to wane, the national media became gripped with another obsession. Writing at the end of the decade, Christopher Booker described the ‘frenzied pursuit of pop singers’ of 1964:

Almost every week some new ‘group’- the Kinks, the Moody Blues, the Ivy League- emerged into the collective fantasy, and particularly as the rhythm ‘n’ blues groups swam into ken, the Rolling Stones, the Animals, the Pretty Things, each weirder in appearance than the last. The spectacular was followed in the headlines once reserved for politicians, film stars or Royalty. ‘TOTTENHAM SOUND HAS CRUSHED THE BEATLES’ shouted the front page of the Daily Express, when the Dave Clark Five (North London) briefly replaced the Beatles in their almost permanent reign at the top of the hit parade. On 11 March even the sober Daily Telegraph began the weekly printing of the ‘Top Ten.’³⁹

Music would directly affect caravan parks in two ways. Firstly, the new music scene was a tangible phenomenon that was actually being accurately reflected, as well as promoted,

³⁹ C. Booker, *The Neophiliacs: a study of the revolution in English life in the Fifties and Sixties* (London: Collins, 1969), p. 225.

by the media. As this new 'youth culture' began to become a significant and ascendant social phenomenon during the early- to mid- 1960's, fuelled largely by the new music scene, numerous new bands such as those described in Booker's piece became idols for the nation's youth. The incidence of new bands playing live music at any more-or-less suitable venue was at an all-time high. Such was the popularity of the live music scene that young people throughout the country began to form bands in an attempt to emulate their heroes, who in many cases began their careers playing in small clubs and bars. A new wave of young musicians and bands were keen to find venues where they could play to live audiences and perfect their craft. Whilst the commercial holiday camps still, as always, offered their professional line-up of entertainers and musicians, caravan sites with their more modest 'club-houses' would be expanding these facilities with stages, lighting and public address systems to accommodate more sophisticated entertainment. These new facilities provided additional venues for amateur and semi-professional groups that had not yet broken into the more mainstream world of commercial holiday camp entertainment. New young bands were looking for places to play. Their fees would also be modest enough for the smaller, independent site operator's nascent entertainments budget. Thus, the caravan parks would have a wealth of live music to call upon provided by bands that were keen to play to audiences just as keen to be in their presence. As will be shown, this practice appears to continue through the 1970's and 1980's.

Gradually, therefore, the practice of caravan owners and occupiers themselves 'doing a turn' on stage and entertainments generally being of a very basic nature was marginalised by local or touring bands providing live music for dancing. As discussed in the previous chapter, those early post-war needs-driven static caravanners who co-produced, co-organised and co-originated were now, in this regard also, either becoming or being

replaced by those for whom the role was more passive. The music scene's second impact in this regard was that with access to plentiful live music, the caravan sites could now provide the optimum environment for young adults and teenagers. New opportunities for romantic encounters and liaisons with new partners were much greater here than at home. And again, it is at this point that the caravan sites begin to adopt some of the principles (in terms of entertainment) of the commercial holiday camp. Swimming pools began to be introduced, and more formalised entertainment programmes began to appear. By the end of the decade, many sites employed a seasonal entertainments manager to host and organise a range of activities. Younger children were also being catered for, older teenagers had live music, dancing and opportunities to spend time with their peers, and parents and grandparents could also find entertainments to suit. The convergence of the commercial camp and the caravan site models had now begun; as commercial camps gradually began to de-formalise their entertainments and facilities, caravan sites became parks where more varied and professional entertainments were offered, along with more modern facilities. During the 1970's some caravan sites would also augment their letting caravan fleet with wooden or brick-built holiday chalets⁴⁰.

As the 'baby-boom' youth became a significant social and economic force in sixties Britain, the economic importance of appealing to teenagers and young adults cannot be overstated. In providing an easily accessible environment that was particularly attractive to younger (as well as older) generations, caravan parks were promoting their growth and popularity even further. In her frank and insightful memoir *The Sixties*, Jenny Diski remembers the changing outlook for the youth of the new decade:

⁴⁰ See Steve Munro interview, Appendix Four; some new chalets at sites such as Highfields and Castle Hill in Tendring became visible from the road.

After the war and the austerity years, the means to control how you were seen were newly available to the young. And so was the ability to distinguish yourself visually from your parents. From the Teddy Boys in the Fifties to the Mods and Rockers who took over, and on to the mini-skirted dollybirds of the mid-Sixties and the diaphanous hippies [sic] of the later Sixties, many more young people than ever before had, for various reasons, enough money to pay for dramatic self definition.⁴¹

As a group within wider society, young people became the high-consumers of the 1960s; one estimate claims that they spent some £800 million pounds on themselves annually during the early years of the decade.⁴² In addition to the provision of live music and the atmosphere that it engendered, caravan parks were also well-placed to accommodate young people's needs in holiday times by providing a less-regimented, less-formalised routine than the commercial camps: still offering live music, bars, and dancing, but in an atmosphere that provided opportunities for freedom of expression away from the regimented, professionally-led, all-in family entertainments of their counterparts, and generally on a more affordable basis.

Most of the caravan parks in the district now had at least one large evening venue that had evolved from being the club-house to a much larger entertainment suite. The Quarterdeck at Point Clear Bay, The Dolphin Suite at Highfields, Clacton, The Raven Club at Tower Camp, Jaywick, The Miranda Lounge and Club El-Toro at Seawick, The Castle Hill Club and The Rosebank Club, Clacton, all offered live music and entertainment throughout the summer season. In order for these venues to put on regular live music and similar entertainments, they had to apply for the required licence under the Home Counties (Music and Dancing) Licensing Act, 1926. Fig. 7 (below) details applications made by venues at or near Tendring's caravan sites:⁴³

⁴¹ J. Diski, *The Sixties* (London: Profile Books, 2009), p. 15.

⁴² M. Donnelly, *Sixties Britain: Culture, Society and Politics* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), p. 35.

⁴³ Sources: ERO, C/DO 13/1, 2, 3, 4; D/RT M2, 6, 41; C/Mli 11, 12, 13.

Figure 7: First License Applications from Clubs On Or Near Caravan Sites, Tendring District

License Types: MD: Music and Dancing, SME: Sunday Music and Dancing, C: Cinematograph, CC: Children's Cinematograph.

Year	Venues	Location	Type of Licence
1954	Beach Café	St. Osyth Beach	MD
	Brooklands Café	Jaywick Estate	MD
1958	Dolphin Club	Highfields Caravan Park	MD, SME
	Shangri-La Club	Shangri-La Caravan Park, St. Osyth	C, CC
	Shangri-La Club	Shangri-La Caravan Park, St. Osyth	MD, SME
1959	Martello Club	Martello Caravan Park, Walton-on-Naze	MD, SME
1963	The Commodore Club	Point Clear Bay Caravan Park	MD, SME
	Valley Farm Club	Valley Farm Caravan Park, Clacton	MD, SME
1965	Ferry Boat Inn	Point Clear Bay Caravan Park	MD, SME
	Quarterdeck	Point Clear Bay Caravan Park	MD, SME
1971	The Monks Head	St. Osyth Beach	MD
1973	Hydro Marina Club	St. Osyth	MD
	Silversprings Motel	Thorrington	MD
	Tartan House, Frating	Frating	MD

Local bands would often be auditioned to play at these venues on a regular basis. Local Clacton-based bands such as *The Martells*, formed in Clacton by guitarist Jack Jacobs, *The Oddens'* and *The Georgie Wood Convention* were amongst the local groups that toured regularly.⁴⁴

As the 1960's progressed, Tendring's caravan sites were, accordingly, transforming from their earlier, grass-roots form towards a more commercial format. Naturally competition between sites was felt, yet there seemed to be a natural internal market identity emerging. The larger caravan sites in Tendring (Valley Farm, Seawick, Highfields and Point Clear Bay) were providing more expansive entertainment, dining and outdoor facilities (swimming pools, donkey rides, more amusement catering, etc.); smaller venues would have more informal bars, still adhering to the club-house ethos with lower-key entertainments. Those seeking a quieter, more tranquil holiday home environment would

⁴⁴ I am grateful to musicians Steve Lewis and Tony Lane for confirmation of these details.

opt for the latter; larger or younger families and individuals for the former. The larger caravan sites were also investing more and more in fleets of hire caravans, which were owned by the site and then let to holiday makers on a weekly basis.

In 1967 the Liberal MP for Orpington in Kent, Eric Lubbock, sponsored a private members bill which, although it was to become the Caravan Sites Act of 1968, would in reality have a relatively minimal impact upon static holiday caravan sites. Lubbock was amongst a group of individuals (including Lionel Heald, as mentioned above) who foresaw problems for those who made caravans their permanent homes, which were not adequately considered in the otherwise comprehensive 1960 act. The bill was prefaced as:

A bill to restrict the eviction from caravan sites of occupiers of caravans and make other provision for the benefit of such occupiers; to secure the establishment of such sites by local authorities for the use of gypsies and other persons of nomadic habit, and control in certain areas the unauthorised occupation of land by such persons; and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid.⁴⁵

The legislation was divided into three parts: Part One provided provisions for the protection of residential occupiers, such as protection from harassment and summary eviction and a minimum length of notice of four weeks where a contract is determinable by notice. Part Two dealt with gypsy encampments and provided a duty for local authorities to provide sites for gypsies, and provided powers for dealing with unauthorised sites. Part Three defined offences, detailed financial provision and tidied up definitions that were less clear in the 1960 legislation. The NFSO were generally in support of the legislation when it came into law in July 1968, and formed a separate committee to deal with residential parks. As far as the static holiday caravan sites were concerned this was legislation geared toward protecting residential caravan dwellers, not holiday owners and users, therefore although worthy of note it would require little

⁴⁵ 1967-68 (20) *Caravan Sites Bill* (London: HMSO), p.1.

modification of existing practice. The only real impact for such sites would be in how the site operator negotiated with any staff (such as caretakers and wardens) that were housed all year round in a caravan on site, as was often the case.⁴⁶

7.3 Static holiday caravan parks: the 1970s.

By the early 1970s, Britain began to feel the effects of economic downturn and the first recession since the beginning of the post-war ‘golden age’ discussed earlier. As Britain’s industries, services and workforce felt the impact of these developments, the domestic tourist industry was also changing. The roots of this, however, were as much to do with changing opportunities, accommodation options and the changing view of the seaside resort as a holiday destination, as with any economic or wider social considerations. The growth that static caravan sites themselves were generally enjoying would, of course, likewise be challenged as the first of what would become a series of economic downturns loomed. In 1972, the NFSO were no doubt delighted that Leader of the Opposition Harold Wilson paid public tribute to the organisation and UK site operators in his opening address at the Camping and Outdoor Leisure Exhibition held at Olympia, London. As a former King’s Scout, he had considerable youthful experience of camping; much of his speech was therefore given to praising the new technical and ergonomic developments in tents, caravans and their associated equipment.⁴⁷ More broadly, Wilson’s support for the industry was symbolically important. The former Prime Minister’s ‘man-of-the-people’ persona and modernising approach was well in-tune with the NFSO’s vision of static caravans being a modern, progressive holiday option for working families, against a backdrop of the beginnings of a decline in the perceptions of the traditional English seaside resort holiday.

⁴⁶ A number of sites had such permanently accommodated staff in the Tendring District at this time.

⁴⁷ P. Howard, ‘Camping as Life of Luxury with Inflatable Furniture and Ingenious Gadgets’ in the *Times*, 27th January 1972.

The NFSO played an active role in marketing caravan parks at every opportunity during the 1970s; exhibitions such as the International Holiday Exhibition also held at Olympia was at first considered ‘beyond the means of the NFSO’, but they were reportedly given a free stand by the organisers who felt that it would be a pity to exclude the federation from the proceedings. As Value Added Tax (VAT) on goods and services was introduced in Britain in 1973, many businesses would have to implement considerable administrative and pricing changes in order to comply with the requirements of its implementation. The NFSO went to some lengths to ensure members were given as much help as possible in this regard by producing guide publications and answering queries. NFSO conferences were also developing during the 1970s; the 1975 gathering at Torquay was extended from two to three ‘very full days’ to allow members ample time for the consideration of that years Mobile Homes Act.⁴⁸ What was to become a challenging decade for UK businesses generally would, therefore, be confronted by the NFSO on behalf of park operators in several imaginative ways. A determination to represent the industry at key exhibitions would augment the caravan manufacturers’ efforts at similar events to ensure a strong market presence. Guide publications listing sites and services helped new caravan users find a site that suited their needs and desires. Help and advice to park operators for challenges such as the introduction of VAT and specific legislation was made readily available. The programme of national conferences also provided a forum for debate and sharing of good practice. By 1971 a new bi-monthly NFSO journal, *The Site Operator*, served as a source of up-to-date advice and comment. Static holiday caravan sites would thus take on the new decade with the benefit of firm support from their trade organisation.

⁴⁸ Davey, *et al.*, ‘The British Holiday and Home Parks Association 1950-2010’, pp. 19, 20.

In addition to economic concerns, further legislation was another factor that park operators would have to negotiate during the 1970s. The impact of this was, however somewhat restricted: the Mobile Homes Act of 1975 was essentially aimed at clearing up further issues of exploitation by residential park operators. The NFSO reported earlier in 1972 that:

The Government has been under considerable and sustained pressure in recent years to introduce legislation aimed at curbing the activities of unscrupulous park owners of Residential Sites [sic], who are at present able - because of the scarcity of sites - to exploit residents in relation to the lack of security of tenure, exorbitant charges, restriction of sales of vans on sites, unjustifiable rent increases, dictatorial site rules, and other abuses which are in conflict with the Code of Conduct laid down for members of the Federation ⁴⁹

As a result of these concerns, the 1974 Mobile Homes Bill, formulated 'to amend the law in respect of mobile homes and residential caravan sites; and for purposes connected therewith',⁵⁰ became law the following year. For the majority of static holiday caravan park operators, the 1975 Act would in reality have little impact other than to secure and improve the situation for any all-year-round staff resident on site in such accommodation. Neither would it have any major or immediate financial implications.

The Rating (Caravan Sites) Bill was being debated in Parliament the same year that the Mobile Homes Act became law. This was described as 'to allow for the valuation and rating as a single unit in certain cases of caravan sites or portions of caravan sites inclusive of parts separately occupied by caravanners and of their caravans; and for purposes connected therewith.'⁵¹ The Rating (Caravan Sites) Act of 1976 would, therefore, have a somewhat more substantial impact upon static holiday caravan park operators. As Valuation Officers in England and Wales were now required to assess all privately owned and occupied caravan holiday homes separately and individually, it is unsurprising that (given the increase in caravan holiday home ownership in previous

⁴⁹ C. Bennett, editorial in *NFSO Newsletter*, December 1972.

⁵⁰ 1974-75 (22) *Mobile homes Bill* (London: HMSO).

⁵¹ 1975-76 (103) *Rating (caravan sites)* (London: HMSO).

years) a huge backlog of over 200,000 units awaiting valuation had accrued.⁵² It is also unsurprising that the answer to this problem was to relieve the Valuation Officers and local authorities of the responsibility of making separate assessments and collecting rates from individual caravan owners and pass this duty on to park operators. Such was the essence of the 1976 Act. This new development clearly meant more work for the park operators, but this was mitigated by the fact that it could be included in the caravan owner's annual site fee bill and clearly differentiated as rates, rather than an increase in fees levied by the park itself. This was hardly a good time to create an increase in the costs of owning a holiday caravan as far as park operators were concerned, but it was inevitable. However, the NCC and the NFSO made a positive impact in the context of both of these pieces of legislation in two ways. Effective lobbying and consultation with ministers ensured that the park operators were not subjected to any unnecessarily disadvantageous measures that may have been included in such legislation. The issuing of guides to park operators advising on how to adapt to new legislation would also have been beneficial.⁵³

The introduction of VAT heralded a number of changes that would affect the tourist economy generally; the Mobile Homes Act and the Rating (Caravan Sites) Act, as discussed, had more specific, moderate effects on holiday caravan sites. Domestic tourism was undoubtedly changing as the century progressed, and the traditional English seaside resort holiday had been in decline for some time. Outdated and poorly maintained Victorian infrastructure at many coastal resorts was failing to attract the sort of visitor numbers that had had been achieved earlier in the century; the Tendring District resorts were no exception. But as Chris Cooper observed in 1997, a number of additional factors accounted for dwindling demand:

⁵² Davey, *et al.*, 'The British Holiday and Home Parks Association 1950-2010', p. 23.

⁵³ For example: *Anon. The Mobile Homes Act, 1975: A Guide for Park Operators* (London: NCC/NFSO, 1976).

well-priced Mediterranean holidays developed in the 1960s and 1970s which helped to change the attitudes and habits of holiday takers; the availability of alternative holiday formats in the UK- particularly city, rural and heritage based products- and also the growth of inland attractions and other day trip products. In addition, newly designed British inland resorts and refurbished holiday centres by the sea are proving both popular and effective competition for the traditional holiday formulae.⁵⁴

Cooper goes on to observe that demand for more flexible forms of holiday provision created a growth in the provision of self-catering holiday accommodation in the UK from 1950; and self-catered holiday accommodation was suggested to account for some seventy to eighty percent of bed spaces at resort locations in the UK by the end of the century.⁵⁵ Caravan sites were not by any means immune from competition from other forms of holiday provision, but as will be further explored, would seem to have remained relatively popular during the economic turmoil of the mid-1970s, and indeed in many cases expanded during the 1980s. This is not to suggest that static holiday caravan parks continued to enjoy the growth of the previous two decades during the 1970s; in 1980 the NFSO claimed a steady decline in the popularity of parks and erosion of member's profits since the early years of the decade. This was attributed largely to the continued popularity of overseas holidays.⁵⁶ However, by their very nature static holiday caravan parks could adapt to change more readily, and weather the storm. The situation was much harder to bear for the more rigid infrastructures and regimes of the commercial camps. The largest commercial holiday camp in Tendring, Butlin's of Clacton-on-Sea, announced its imminent closure in October 1983. Butlin's explained that costs had to be cut, and three successive seasons of losses could not justify the expenditure needed to re-furbish the ageing camp.⁵⁷ The camp did re-open the following season under new ownership as Atlas Park, but this project did not succeed and the

⁵⁴ C. Cooper, 'Parameters and Indicators of the Decline of the British Seaside Resort', in Shaw & Williams *The Rise and Fall of British Coastal Resorts*, pp. 84-6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵⁶ Davey, *et al.*, 'The British Holiday and Home Parks Association 1950-2010', p. 25.

⁵⁷ Rusiecki, 'The Resorts 1970 to c. 2009', in Eiden and Thornton (eds.) *A History of the County of Essex, Vol. XI*, pp. 245-269; p. 254.

camp closed for re-development as a housing estate. Butlin's at Clacton was known for its many on-site attractions: swimming pools, theatres and bars, miniature railway, dining halls and smaller entertainments such as a model car racing circuit. But much of this was by now indicative of a passing ideal in an environment unable to readily adapt.⁵⁸ It also seems symptomatic of the changing expectations and increasing 'atomisation' of post-war working class consumers, a process begun during the 1950s as austerity receded. The earlier symptoms of this process or indeed later ones, as discussed in previous chapters, did not trouble successive Conservative politicians whose 'economic policy was increasingly shaped by the priorities of the atomized consumer, especially after rationing was finally abolished in 1954'.⁵⁹ By the 1960s the process was firmly entrenched, eventually leading to the decline of further traditional, communal institutions such as the commercial holiday camp.

Unlike commercial holiday camps and resorts generally, static holiday caravan parks were more resilient to the economic downturns and perceptions of being outdated and culturally redundant that arose and continued from the 1970s perhaps for a number of reasons, but one of the main advantages that they had over larger commercial camps and the more general resort locations, however, was physical and conceptual adaptability. The trend for constant updating of design practiced by caravan manufacturers during this period, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, ensured that the stock of accommodation at a caravan site was constantly evolving, year by year, and was therefore always, albeit only partially, representative of current design and facilities. Hire fleets, once they had served their time, had paid for themselves and provided income to the park, would be sold off and replaced with new, more sophisticated and up to date units.

⁵⁸ Some of the physical features at Butlin's Clacton were sold off when, as Atlas Park, it finally closed; some were bought by local caravan parks.

⁵⁹ P. Gurney, 'The Battle of the Consumer in Post-War Britain', *The Journal of Modern History*, 77/4, (December 2005), pp. 956-987, p. 975.

It will be argued further that facilities at some caravan sites developed considerably during this period, to keep pace with demands and fashions. As popularity was maintained, this would allow park operators to re-invest in infrastructure to ensure that facilities were maintained to a reasonable standard. With less permanent built infrastructure than commercial camps, these costs would be proportionally lower. In fact accommodation would re-generate itself on a self-funded basis as caravan owners replaced, updated and bought new units, and letting fleets were regularly replaced. Caravan sites were, therefore, places where accommodation, entertainment and infrastructure were essentially on a constant programme of renewal and development. Writing of her holiday experiences at the beginning of the 1980s for Mass Observation in 1987, one single-parent respondent recalled:

TYPICAL ANNUAL HOLIDAY FOR FIVE YEARS Caravan at Felixstowe – nightclub facility, swimming pool, park, amusements. We loved it until the kids got too old. It took me from Xmas to save until August to pay off the hire and have enough money within the holiday to eat and do what we want for just one week (; [*sic*] latterly a fortnight) without considering what we could or could not afford – meant a lot to me – to live like the masses for a short period.⁶⁰

This respondent clearly valued the facilities *and* freedom of choice at Felixstowe; the rather inscrutable comment ‘to live like the masses’ seems to be an acknowledgement of the pleasure of being able to do as one pleased without financial or any other restriction, as most people (in the respondents view) would expect to do on holiday. As commercial holiday camps with their built accommodation were faced with relatively high maintenance and renewal costs, and coastal resort locations generally had experienced the sort of physical, economic and cultural decline discussed above by this period, caravan sites had, therefore, remained relatively fresh, attractive and competitive. By 1981, to hire a basic six berth caravan on a park in Tendring in late season (September, second week) would cost £30 for the week. In peak season (August), the cost would be

⁶⁰ Mass Observation Archive, Summer 1987 Holidays directive, respondent G218.

£103. For a more luxurious caravan, the cost would be £40 or £119, respectively. The cheapest option would, therefore, equate to £5 per head; the dearest just under £20 per head.⁶¹ Freedom of choice and economy were clearly powerful motivational factors; another Mass-Observation respondent testified to caravan holidays taken regularly on the south coast during the 1980s: 'We go self-catering, which works out quite cheap as we take all our own food bought at reasonably-priced superstores, & it suits the children as we're not tied to other peoples meal-times etc.'⁶²

There is, however, evidence of the static caravan holiday's appeal to a widening cross-section of society at this time. In Tendring the caravan sites seemed to continue to benefit from the relative affluence of the metropolitan artisans and working-class. Jim Sewell, who first went to work at Seawick Holiday Lido caravan park at Saint Osyth Beach in 1969 as a plumber, experienced these developments. His job was to help maintain the toilet blocks and general sanitary facilities, but as the site continued to expand during the late 60's and early 70's, he found he was working there almost full time. After a few years at the site, he was asked if he wished to take on the Site Managers job, which had recently become vacant. Interviewed in 2011, he recalls his times selling caravans at Seawick, and the customers he used to meet. Asked initially about who the caravan purchasers were and where they were from during the late 1960's and early 1970's, he recalled:

I would say that my memories were that they were mostly London people mainly from the north side of London or the outskirts of London you know, Essex in particular- who I would say were quite middle-class people who had good jobs, and I can remember quite a lot of them when I sold caravans to them, a lot of them were in the print game -at that time.... and a lot of them – the husbands used to come down all the week and on Saturday nights they all disappeared back home because they were going in to do one nights work -the Sunday papers- and then be back again on the Sunday night and they would be there again for the rest of the week, so they used to only go away to do one nights work and that was enough wages because it was very well-paid by what they used to tell us.... it was a very well paid profession to be in at that time.

⁶¹ NACO Archive, *Site Survey 1981*, Chas. F. Jones & Son.

⁶² Mass Observation Archive, Summer 1987 Holidays directive, respondent B1215.

This evidence clearly illustrates the apparent affluence of those who were buying static holiday homes on caravan sites at this time. Whilst described here as ‘quite middle class’, it is suggested that in reality they were essentially artisan workers, print workers, trades-people and small business owners. These were the more affluent working-class or lower middle-class caravan owners, whilst the less well-off could rent a caravan for a week or two on the same site and enjoy the same facilities and environment. Asked whether there were any other groups of people who came to buy caravans or use the park at all, Jim recalled:

I don't really remember what their particular trades were, but a lot of them used to come down mainly at weekends, i.e. the husband and wife and perhaps the children and perhaps the husband would leave the wife and children down here especially in the summer holidays, while they'd go back and continue with their jobs.... but there were several garage mechanics, there was one or two people that I can remember were in the building trade.... but there was quite a mixed variety from what I can remember.
A lot of them obviously worked in London where it was commonly known that they obviously were paid a lot better money and wage structures to what there were around Essex.... this area of the country anyhow....and one or two of them used to say you know 'cor I don't know why you bother to work here- you know you could earn twice as much as that if you come up London you know- do plumbing up there instead of mucking about down here' ...it did not appeal to me but obviously they, you know, were reaping the benefits of that extra money by coming down to the camp.

Jim also felt that the growing affluence of the typical caravan holiday home buyer continued through the 1970's:

....I think you find that there was more middle-class people coming in.... because the price of the caravans were obviously going up and they were getting bigger, they were getting obviously a lot better, the site was obviously increasing in size and we were selling quite a few caravans during the course of some weekends and, you know, we were doing advertising to try and reach the public through *Daltons Weekly* and other well-known publications at that time to try and attract the people down to the park to see what we had to offer.⁶³

It is clear, therefore, at least in Jim Sewell's experience at Seawick, that there was a distinct sense of affluence with regard to the customers that he was engaged with from the mid-1970s. Growing expectations and changing tastes were being met with evolving caravan design, and the previous two decades of growth had provided valuable

⁶³ J. Sewell, interview, see Appendix Four.

experience for park operators keen to keep their share of the changing domestic market. Exact figures for this are elusive, but oral testimony seems conclusive. Steve Munro is a director of the National Association of Caravan Owners (NACO), the organisation that essentially represents static caravan owners in the UK and lobbies on their behalf. He first entered the static caravan industry in 1976, working as a site accounts assistant. Interviewed in 2014, he recalls how the caravan site, and sites generally, developed from that period:

Well, I would say that it expanded- there was a programme of expanding the number of units available- for both ownership of a static holiday caravan and hiring out, also chalets- let's not forget that, so there was considerable development work and the leisure entertainment complex underwent considerable development during that period.

When asked if this was a period of consistent development or whether there were there peaks and troughs, he responded:

It's a job to say really-everything had peaks and troughs, that's because it's such a seasonal industry, but it seemed to me that everything was on the up.⁶⁴

More generally, when static holiday caravan manufacturing statistics for this period are considered, it is clear that demand for new units was not always consistent and stable: production fell from 29,000 units in 1973 to 13,844 in 1978.⁶⁵ But as far as parks were concerned, as this income stream became less dependable, it may be countered by the possibility that it was as a result of existing caravan owners deferring the upgrade of their older caravan, and potential new owners deferring purchase and taking a hire fleet unit for their holiday instead. Thus, parks would still have an active customer base, but one that was more conservative in terms of spending. Busy, profitable seasons may now be followed by seasons that were perhaps less profitable, but nevertheless with respectable visitor numbers. As stakeholders in the caravan site system, holiday caravan owners

⁶⁴ S. Munro, interview, see Appendix Four.

⁶⁵ I am grateful to M. Hopper of the NCC for providing these data.

could still make use of their asset and its location, even in more straitened times, provided, of course, ground rents remained affordable.

Another factor that would impact upon holiday caravan parks at this time was the introduction of fully-serviced caravans into the holiday sector. Static holiday caravans that were equipped with a flush toilet, bathroom, shower unit and kitchen sink all with hot and cold running water augmenting the existing layout were appearing in the sales grounds on some of the larger parks. As the traditional accommodation of the seaside resort- the hotel, bed and breakfast house or holiday camp chalet- may have become to be seen as dated and tired, caravan parks were providing an alternative. Jim Sewell recalls the arrival of the first fully serviced units on the park:

...I think it was about the late-seventies, perhaps the early eighties, but I can remember the first one coming onto our park for demonstration and display, for sale, and on looking at it- it had got a flush toilet, and as I say this was not something that anybody had ever seen before, erm, or all that anybody had ever seen before was a chemical toilet in a little cupboard. But to have a flush toilet in the caravan and a sink you know, with a tap that actually needed connecting up to the mains water was something new and we had to move with the times as it were, and develop some new sites that were able to occupy this type of caravan.⁶⁶

The interest in these new, serviced units was sufficient to start in train a process that would gradually see the eventual replacement of the older, non-serviced caravans on parks around the country. In Tendring, smaller parks would hang on to such caravans for a number of years, but ultimately their numbers would diminish to almost non-existence. Manufacturers accordingly began to gradually cease production of non-serviced static caravans except for specialised requirements in favour of the more well-appointed models discussed in the previous chapter.

Although it has been suggested that caravan sites and commercial holiday camps were becoming convergent in many cases, it still seems that caravan sites offered the

⁶⁶ J. Sewell, interview, see Appendix Four.

dominant model in this, as the growing provision of self-catering accommodation at commercial camps,⁶⁷ along with the provision of less formalised entertainments and more choice was essentially a defining characteristic of the former. Nevertheless facilities, and in particular entertainment, at caravan parks were evolving. Steve Munro recalls:

The entertainment facilities were tending to cater to traditional British working man's requirements- so there was a variety of licensed outlets, there was a variety of venues with stages that could put on different degrees of entertainment depending upon what you fancied at any given time-there was obviously children's facilities, so all round family holidays.

Steve Munro was questioned further as to the specific nature of the entertainments.

Asked whether the music was performed by live bands, he responded:

Yes there was, live music was very popular- there is a big circuit, or there certainly was at that time, for previously big artists to go around and entertain people in what was effectively a new outlet- it was a new development really, in terms of the size of the venue and the people that they were catering for. There was a genuine feeling of excitement on the day when there was going to be a show in the evening. You could feel it on the camp....

It was a good breeding ground for any bands that formed in an environment where there were holiday camps- as an outlet where they could tailor their act to cater for what the managers in the clubs and the bars wanted for the clientele. There would usually be a house band, given that there were probably head-liners coming in, there would be a retained band and there would be a compere- the whole thing would mirror a sort of variety show that you might see on television in that period.⁶⁸

The mid-1970's summer seasons on static holiday caravan parks were in many cases, therefore, lively and exciting. The gradual influx of new, fully serviced holiday caravans and the provision of live, current entertainments helped parks maintain their popularity.

7.4 Static holiday caravan parks: the 1980s.

If the contrasts between the 1960s and the 1970s in Britain can be considered as marked and significant in social, economic and political terms, then the same observation can be made with regard to the contrasts between the 1970s and 1980s. As caravan parks in Britain more or less held ground generally during the 1970s by developing and adapting

⁶⁷ See G. Shaw and A. Williams, 'The Private Sector: Tourism Entrepreneurship- A Constraint or Resource?' in *Rise and Fall of British Coastal Resorts*, Table 6.2, p.123, English Tourist Board statistics of 1989 show Butlin's and other groups substantial investment in self-catering accommodation during the 1980s.

⁶⁸ S. Munro, interview, see Appendix Four.

in the ways described above, a fierce economic downturn at the start of the new decade would further test the resilience of this form of holiday provision. Just prior to this, there was optimism in the caravan manufacturing industry. In 1978 sales of new and second-hand static holiday caravans were improving on previous years and by 1980 the demand was still strong, particularly for young second-hand units. A relatively good year for sales in 1979 meant that there were a comparatively low number of surplus units at that year's price available for the new season. As a result, price increases for the newest models would be felt sooner than was usual. Demand from this point then reduced dramatically, and new static holiday caravan annual production fell from 17,095 units in 1979 to just 8396 in 1981.⁶⁹

Had it not been for the rapid development of the static holiday caravan itself, and the identity and perception of the parks within which they were sited during the 1970s and 1980s, the caravan parks themselves may have faced the sort of decline that the English seaside resort holiday generally had witnessed. Instead, after the early difficulties of economic and social strife in the early years of the decade, many parks would enter a period of further growth during the 1980s. This is partly evidenced by the growth in production of new static caravan holiday homes, which rose sharply from 1984 to the end of the decade. By 1987 market trends for sales of new and second hand static holiday caravans were very optimistic. The usual seasonal downturn in sales for new and used caravans of all types had not happened at all by December of that year, such was the demand. New sales of static holiday caravans were up again over the previous year, and the industry was described as being in fine fettle.⁷⁰ In their Christmas newsletter, ABI (one of the major UK caravan holiday home manufacturers) proclaimed the 'highest

⁶⁹ Market trends from *Glass's Guide Caravan Values* (Weybridge: Glass's Guide Service Ltd., December 1978 and March 1980 editions); production data from NCC.

⁷⁰ Market trends from *Glass's Guide Caravan Values*, December 1987; production data from NCC.

sales figures on record' in response to the 1987 National Caravan and Camping Show held at London's Earls Court arena. ABI Sales Director Terry Stewart commented "The Company has consolidated its market share with both tourers and leisure homes in a market which is the strongest it has been for some time."⁷¹

Other factors would gradually impact upon the caravan holiday home parks, further distancing them from their former, post-war identities as discussed in Chapter Four. The Mobile Homes Act of 1983 had further regulated the residential park homes sector, strengthening the rights of the residents after the initial 1975 legislation. Again, for holiday home parks, this was less of an issue. The Department of the Environment was moving toward issuing 'model standards' for holiday and residential parks, but this would remain in consultation during the late 1980s. Existing parks came under increasing pressure to conform to ideals that were set outside of their industry. Environmental concerns had been voiced since caravan sites first came into being; in 1984 further recommendations came from East Anglian Tourist Board, who then felt that 'it is time to re-examine the design principles of static sites'. In the report, which claimed static caravans to be 'one of the most important accommodation units of England's tourist industry' accounting for some fourteen percent of English tourist accommodation (forty percent in East Anglia)⁷², Chair Margaret Hutton conceded that:

In the early seventies many thought that chalets and other purpose built holiday accommodation would begin to replace static caravans. This has not happened. Even with the 1984 budget proposals it looks as if the caravan will remain popular for the foreseeable future.⁷³

⁷¹ T. Stewart, 'Highest Sales Figures on Record at Earls Court' in *ABI Christmas Newsletter* (Beverley: ABI Caravans Ltd., 1987), pp. 2-3.

⁷² East Anglian Tourist Board, *Towards a Design Guide for Coastal Static Caravan Parks* (Wethersfield: Melville Dunbar Associates, 1984), p. iii.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. i.

The report was aimed at coastal sites, and contained practical landscaping design ideas as well as recommendations for changes in regulation and aids to business including funding solutions. Caravan parks, it seems, were now seen by such groups as an established part of the nation's holiday establishment, but one which would (in spite of its ability to readily adapt, as discussed) have to continue to conform to wider ideals. Those wishing to establish new parks, however, would face numerous 'tests' in order to gain the necessary planning permissions and site licences. Independent trade journals analysed planning applications and decisions from all over the country; falling outside of the local plan and perceived increases in traffic on country roads were often the commonest grounds for refusal.⁷⁴

Groups such as the East Anglian Tourist Board would not have to remain concerned for too long. Change was underway on static holiday caravan parks, as it always had been. On the parks themselves, much of this change included the profile of the new caravan owners themselves (those who were buying a holiday home for the first time), those who were upgrading, and those who hired caravans for their holidays. Jim Sewell's recollections of the growing affluence of caravan buyers and users is further evidenced by the popularity of the larger, more luxurious fully serviced units developed by caravan manufacturers in the late 1970s and 1980s, as described in the previous chapter. The influx of these new models was matched on-site on many parks by the further development of facilities. The larger parks in the Tendring district now had indoor heated swimming pools, refurbished restaurants and bars, and in some cases (in tune with the 1980s health and lifestyle culture) gymnasias and spas. Seawick at St. Osyth Beach constructed a new leisure centre on the site of its open-air swimming pool. A new indoor heated pool was augmented by a gymnasium, sauna, and steam room facilities.

⁷⁴ For example, see G. Holt, 'Town Planning and Caravans' in *Caravan Industry and Park Operator*, 16/7 (July/August 1984), p. 4.

Sun beds and a beauty salon were situated close to the restaurant. The bars were similarly upgraded: the main ballroom area was provided with a three-tier stage, specialised lighting and new dressing rooms in order to make the most of the weekly visiting cabaret bands. These were often touring bands and acts that made their name decades earlier, and were now touring such venues during the summer seasons. *Alvin Stardust*, *The Searchers*, *The Fortunes*, *Marty Wilde*, *Joe Brown*, *Freddie and the Dreamers* and *The Ivy League* were amongst the acts that appeared there, and on other such parks in Tendring and beyond, during the 1980's. Highfields and Valley Farm at Clacton had similar developments to their facilities. Most smaller parks in the district, whilst not going so far as to add indoor swimming pools and leisure centres, upgraded their existing infrastructure.⁷⁵

Amongst the new wave of caravan owners of the 1980s who enjoyed these facilities were those benefitting from the boom for small businesses, such as the building trade (which was enjoying its own mini-boom time), car sales, small-scale manufacturing and supply, alongside the more traditional trades. The *nouveau-riche* builder, car dealer or kitchen supplier with a new car parked near to a new thirty-eight feet long by twelve feet wide, fully serviced luxury caravan (often a palace of postmodern *kitsch* nostalgic interior design) was not an uncommon resident on the caravan parks of the Tendring district and in the south of England at this time. The prominence of this phenomenon in wider society was such that it was satirised in contemporary television comedy with comedian Harry Enfield's character 'Loadsamoney': an on-the-make, cash-in-hand London plasterer who, whilst earning large sums during the boom time, would flaunt his new wealth by waving a handful of banknotes to the sneering catch phrase 'look at my wad'! Enfield is said to have been inspired to create the character after witnessing Tottenham Hotspur

⁷⁵ I am grateful to Steve Munro of NACO for these details.

football fans waving ten pound notes to taunt visiting fans of teams from the more depressed and unemployment-blighted north.⁷⁶

Caravan holiday home owners were not, of course, the only patrons of the caravan parks; a proportion chose to rent a caravan for their holiday from the park's hire fleet, and enjoy the on-site facilities. As ever, this was an economically effective way of holiday taking for those on lower incomes, especially if the holiday was taken during the quieter periods of the extended season. With substantial investment in evolving facilities, entertainments and associated staff, park operators would now be as keen as ever to keep occupancy levels as high as possible during low-season and mid-week periods, and so prices for caravan rental was often very competitive at these times. Letting fleets were generally financed for the park operators by the major caravan credit companies as described earlier. Repayments could be tailored to suit the income patterns of the park, for example, to begin when ground rents for privately owned caravans became due, and stop during out-of-season periods when income was lower. This seasonal, staged-payment system was a practice which some of the finance companies had evolved for the farming industry. But new letting fleets were expensive, although they were typically comprised of remaining unsold previous years models discounted in bulk by the manufacturer. As a result letting fleets, in Tendring at least, were seldom greater than five percent of parks total licenced pitch numbers.⁷⁷ Also, net income from them was limited. They were still basic units of accommodation, they required cleaners to be employed by the park to attend to them during 'changeover' and there was maintenance and laundry to be paid for. But whilst private caravan owners were often only in

⁷⁶ G. Stewart, *Bang! A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013), p. 247; see also Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice!* pp. 252-4; A. McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Constable, 2010), pp. 168-170.

⁷⁷ I am grateful to Chris Edmunds, formerly of United Dominions Trust, and Steve Munro of NACO for these details.

attendance at weekends, letting caravans ensured the park was busy during mid-week periods. The numbers of holidaymakers using them was also augmented by those renting a caravan from an existing owner. Dave Maidment recalled the ease at which he could find accommodation for his family holiday:

There were sign boards outside the shops. You could always find one. It was in the local gazette, we used to have the *Guardian*. You could always find one. At holiday times you could always find one in the *Guardian*. It was normally Seawick in those days or Tower at Jaywick, its Martello now I believe. Or there was two or three others. You could always find a caravan, Seawick or what have you. There were a couple in Jaywick, Sacketts Grove I believe, er, Silver Dawn. There were always caravans you could get on sites like that.⁷⁸

By the early 1990's a week's holiday in a letting fleet caravan on a park in Tendring would typically range from around £90 for a basic six-berth caravan during the off-peak season (April or October) to £265 during late July and throughout August, or £15 to £44 per head respectively. A higher specification letting caravan (still six-berth, but slightly bigger and with a more luxurious interior) would range from £135 to £335 for the same periods; or £23 to £56 per head.⁷⁹ During the decade rental prices had, therefore increased considerably (up to a 200% increase on 1981 prices, as illustrated earlier in this chapter). Thus, caravan park holidays were perhaps becoming less accessible for those on lower incomes. This did indeed reflect wider economic and social trends at this time, as those on the lowest incomes were increasingly alienated from 'consumer society'; but park operators would always need to balance increasing prices for rental units with the need to keep the highest numbers of customers on site as possible, in order to maximise the use of on-site facilities such as shops, bars, restaurants, cafes and other revenue-generating outlets. This need was felt more keenly at the end of the decade as the economy began to decline; after 1990 *The Sun* newspaper's under-ten-pounds holiday campaign, as discussed below, was successful for this reason.

⁷⁸ See Appendix Four: D. Maidment interview transcription.

⁷⁹ NACO archive, *1991 Caravan Weekly Hire Charges*; S. Munro, NACO.

During the mid- to late-1980s, therefore, holiday caravan parks would often present as a microcosm of wider society, with a clientele of a more stratified status: the more affluent caravan owners, who bought fully in to all the parks had to offer, and the less affluent tenants who holidayed on a budget, and only engaged with the wider on-site entertainments if their budgets would allow. This was arguably the first time that caravan parks had any discernible sense of social stratification within their clientele. The customers on lowest incomes were encouraged by pricing structures to fill the parks at less popular times: mid-week, low-season rentals were the cheapest options. Caravan owners however, could enjoy the facilities at any time, as their budgets would allow. Also at this time a further important signifier of the capacity for the static caravan industry to adapt and change at all levels became apparent. During the 1980s caravan sites became increasingly referred to by their own industry as holiday home parks, and static caravans were similarly re-described as static holiday homes at this time. In 1986 the NFSO became the BH&HPA: the British Holiday and Home Parks Association, partly to reflect the growing changes in the way the industry promoted itself. The terms camp and site were now seen to be regarded by the whole industry- park operators, static manufacturers and indeed caravan owners- as out of date and un-related to the contemporary view of a static park from within and without. The word camp had associations with places of temporary or makeshift accommodation where fellowship, sociability and adventure could be experienced; the term site was now seen as almost wholly inappropriate, and uncomfortably close to phrases such as building site, or even bomb site. Thus, adaptability, as ever, was demonstrated by the industry as it unanimously sought to distance itself from its earlier image.⁸⁰ This re-branding was also a deliberate move to further re-establish the caravan holiday home as a commodity that would appeal not just to the working-classes, but to middle-class holiday makers perhaps

⁸⁰ My thanks to John Lambert, Jim Sewell, Terry O'Dell Jnr. and Steve Munro for confirmation of these observations.

as an additional holiday choice, along with foreign excursions. It was a policy that worked alongside the exploitation opportunities presented by manufacturers who, during the 1980s, had developed the largest and most luxuriously-appointed static caravan holiday home thus far, as well as those presented by the decline of other forms of domestic holiday choice, to further extend market boundaries.

But physically, many parks were by now becoming rather more regimented. With any new development subject to rigorous planning conditions, the most had to be made of the existing, available land on site. Caravans were lined up in rows and spaced as closely together as fire regulations would allow. Larger garden areas were only generally available for the more expensive, privately owned units with accordingly higher annual ground rents. Such layouts set the trend for many parks from that point onward; and are evident in Figs. 8, 9 and 10, below.

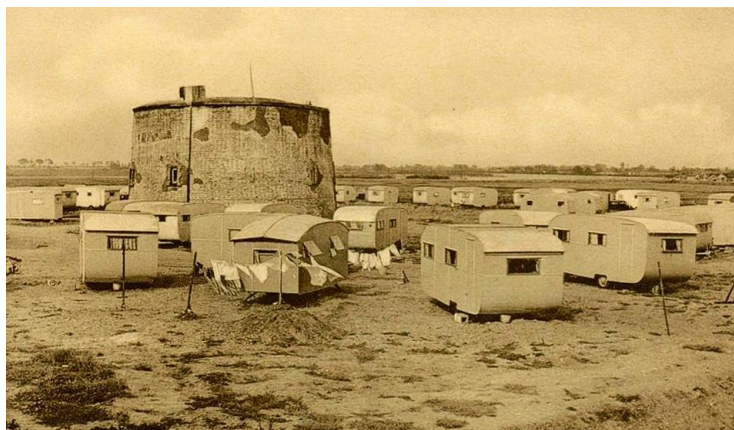


Figure 8: Caravans at the Tower site, Jaywick, c. 1945.

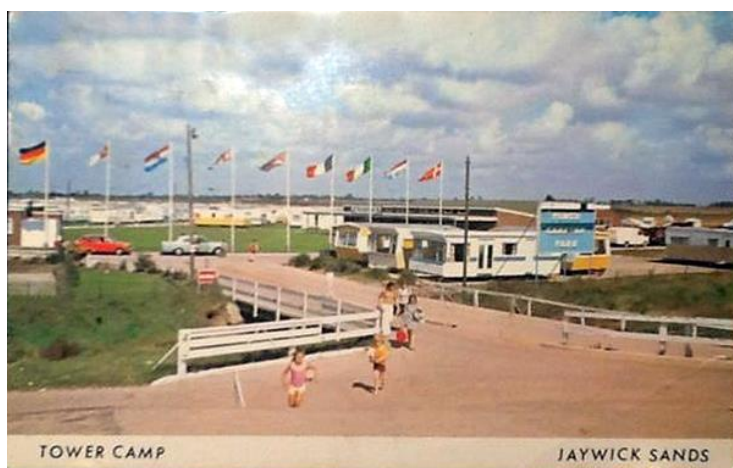


Figure 9: Tower Camp, Jaywick, 1967.



Figure 10: Recent aerial view of Tower Camp, Jaywick.

Letting fleets generally continued to provide cheaper holidays for those on limited budgets, but the more affluent caravan owners could have personalised domesticity in and immediately around their holiday home. A 1980s static holiday home park may well have had a letting fleet (typically between ten and perhaps forty thirty feet long, ten feet wide basic six-berth units), a range of privately owned caravans (on some parks over 1000 in number)⁸¹ and a smaller percentage of luxury, perhaps wood-clad double-units, as illustrated in Fig 12, below. This range of accommodation and its associated scale of costs, again, reflected a more distinct social and economic stratification on such parks. The overall mix was, however, representative of far fewer of the needs-driven consumers discussed in the previous chapter, and far more of the outer-directed, working-class and lower middle-class conspicuous consumers augmented by a minority of inner-directed types within the latter group. The working-class holiday makers were, in the Tendring District, mainly London-based. They were labourers, council workers, semi-skilled and skilled tradespeople, print and service industry workers, drivers and stall-holders. Lower middle-class caravan users typically included shopkeepers, building contractors, small business proprietors and motor traders.⁸² Linda Tribe, whose parents were keen static caravanners, described her family as ‘very working class –not, not rich by any means’ and that they had to ‘to have to really watch the pennies and save for holidays’. Dave Maidment, similarly a keen static caravanner described his trade in Walthamstow: ‘I was a stonemason, I worked on the roads paving, slabbing and that type of thing; putting paving stones down and curbs’.⁸³

⁸¹ See Appendix Two: TDC Caravan Site Analysis, 1979: Point Clear Bay was licenced for 1647 units, Valley Farm for 1000, Martello at Walton-on-Naze for 775, Seawick Holiday Lido for 739 and Bel-Air for 500.

⁸² I am grateful to Steve Munro (NACO), Chris Edmunds (formerly of United Dominions Trust), Jim Sewell (former site manager at Seawick Holiday Lido), and Tony Lane (formerly of Anglia Caravans) for these details.

⁸³ See Appendix Four: L. Tribe and D. Maidment interview transcriptions.

The foregoing suggests a view of the static holiday caravan park from the 1980s as a place where working and lower-middle class holidaymakers now augmented, when and where they could afford it, an occasional foreign holiday with a more regular caravan stay, often on a number of occasions during the year. Eschewing the now culturally-redundant seaside resort and its hotels and guest houses, or the unreconstructed commercial holiday camp, domestic holiday takers made caravan parks popular hubs of domestic holiday consumption. This further suggests that the conspicuous consumption of the outer-directed types and the individualistic nature of such consumers, from the aspirational types in more basic or rented caravans to the 'achievers' in their more luxurious 'owned' accommodation characterises the majority of holiday caravan site clientele from this time. But the situation may not have been quite as simple or indeed materialistic as this picture suggests. The popularity of caravan parks ensured that during the main season they were busy, populous places with relatively large numbers of people communing in relatively small spaces such as the amusement arcades, club houses and generally within the confines of the park. As Walton observed of the seaside resorts many years earlier, the working classes enjoyed this lively, crowded atmosphere.⁸⁴ This, in turn, seems to suggest that, despite the decline in agency, partly evidenced by the decline in self-originated on-site entertainments as described earlier, that there persisted a communal atmosphere, even a tangible sense of community on site. This, it may be argued, has its roots in the earlier motivations and manifestations of early and mid-twentieth century holiday taking: camping, day trips to resorts, hop-picking weeks and pioneer holiday camp experiences. Neither was this communal tendency or instinct confined to holiday time of course, it was allied to the wider sense of community and

⁸⁴ J. Walton, *The Blackpool Landlady: A Social History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), pp. 39-41.

belonging that persisted in the post-war years within the metropolitan working class, as Willmott and Young's now standard research in London's east end had demonstrated.⁸⁵

Toward the end of Chapter Three comparisons with the inter-war plotlanders and 1980s holiday caravans and caravan owners were made. It was suggested that many of today's caravan owners treat their garden spaces and the land upon which their holiday caravan stands as their 'rightful plot'. It was also suggested that such caravan owners are more closely linked to the concept of the pre-war plotlands. In contrast to early post-war static caravans (which were highly portable units differing little from touring caravans) standing in fields with little to define any boundary around them, the 1980's privately owned caravans on holiday caravan parks were rapidly evolving away from being portable in any practical sense, and were adopting features of permanence by becoming more chalet-like in appearance and structure. Owners of these holiday homes saw their investment as 'home from home', with a strong sense of established permanence. The personalised gardens, individual parking places and in many cases small outbuildings create permanence and imply ownership. This, again, suggests that in spite of the 1947 planning legislation and subsequent Acts, the process was and still is retreating back to earlier plotland ideals and appearances (see Figs.11 and 12, below).

⁸⁵ See P. Willmott and M. Young, *Family and Kinship in East London*, revised ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975) pp. 186-199; see also K. Roberts, *Class in Modern Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 87-9.



Figure 11: Plotland holiday home, Wrabness, 2009.



Figure 12: Caravan holiday homes, Bentley Country Park, St. Osyth, 2009. These wooden-clad single and double units became popular as holiday homes on parks in the UK from the mid-1980s.

Holiday caravan parks generally maintained their popularity during the 1980's by offering a product that would appeal to the more affluent as well as those of basic means. More people on lower incomes, as well as those looking for an extra, cheaper short break in addition to their main annual holiday were further encouraged to take to static holiday caravans from 1990. In that year *The Sun* newspaper adopted a scheme in conjunction with numerous park operators whereby readers could collect coupons from the newspaper in order to buy a holiday in a caravan on a park for just £8.50p per person, based on a minimum of four people sharing. This cost went up to £9.50 a few years later and the scheme is still running at that figure.⁸⁶ Caravan manufacturers and park operators were now engaged in an industry that clearly understood the changing nature of its customers, and could, as ever, adapt accordingly.

As the decade drew to a close this model would continue to prevail, but a series of more significant changes would soon occur, which would impact the holiday caravan industry in the UK in a fundamental manner. During the following decade a number of holiday caravan parks, by this time often being run by the second generation of the family that originated them, were sold by their owners to larger companies who were forming chains of caravan parks throughout the country. This appears to have been a development that occurred not only in the Tendring District, but on a national basis. Bourne Leisure Group Ltd, first incorporated in 1969, has grown to become a major part of the domestic holiday landscape in recent years, and currently has the Butlin's, Warner Leisure Hotels and Haven Leisure brands as part of its portfolio. In addition to its hotel

⁸⁶ In 2013 2.4 million people are claimed to have taken holidays under this programme on more than three hundred caravan parks in the UK and Europe; this information from an employee from *The Sun* newspaper who wished to remain anonymous. See also: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/fun/competitions/promotions/holidays/4981485/Holidays-from-950-are-back.html>, [accessed February 2014].

and chalet accommodation in the UK, the group now operates some thirty five static holiday caravan parks, including Point Clear Bay near Saint Osyth in Tendring.⁸⁷

More recently, the company Park Resorts has taken over a number of the former family-run parks in Tendring. Founded at the end of 2000, this company has grown from twelve caravan parks when it was established to some forty eight currently. Five of these are in the Tendring district: Park Resorts now operates Tower Caravan Park at Jaywick, Valley Farm and Highfields in Clacton, Weeley Bridge Caravan Park (formerly Charles Caravan Park) at Weeley and Naze Marine at Walton-on-the-Naze. Two other companies also operate more than one former family-run park in Tendring: Tingdene Parks and Park Holidays, formerly Cinque Ports Leisure. Park Holidays currently operates Seawick Holiday Lido and Bel-Air Parks at Saint Osyth Beach. This company, founded in 1989 but claiming to date back to 1984, started with one park on the south coast. Expanding considerably with the acquisition of eleven parks from Haven in 2001, the company now operates twenty four parks in the south of England.⁸⁸ Tingdene Parks, with Castle Hill Park and Sacketts Grove in Clacton, are an example of a caravan manufacturer branching into park operating. However, despite these developments in the static caravan park industry since the closing decade of the twentieth century, more than half of the holiday caravan parks in the Tendring District (some thirteen parks, not including six residential parks) are still, so far, owned and run as either family businesses or individual companies.

⁸⁷ Company details from Companies House: <http://wck2.companieshouse.gov.uk//compdetails> [last accessed April 2015]; see also <https://www.bournejobs.co.uk/about> [last accessed April 2015].

⁸⁸ Company details from Companies House: <http://wck2.companieshouse.gov.uk//compdetails> [last accessed April 2015]; see also <https://www.park-resorts.com/about-us/> and <http://www.parkholidays.com/about-park-holidays-uk-history-cinque-ports-leisure> [last accessed April 2015].

As considered in Chapter Five, Britain now has an estimated 3,500 to 4,000 static caravan parks, the majority of these were established shortly after the war, in the manner discussed. They now contain some 335,000 static caravan holiday homes, 210,000 of which are privately owned. The industry claimed in 2010 that individuals spend more than 51 million nights in caravans each year, and that more than £1.70 billion was spent on UK caravan holidays in 2008; a figure which was expected to rise due to a twenty percent increase in bookings at that time. Further, the industry in the UK is said to employ in excess of 90,000 people, including part time and seasonal staff.⁸⁹

There is scarcely a stretch of coastline around the mainland where there will not be found a static caravan site within a few miles; on many stretches they are numerous. East Anglia, South Wales, Lincolnshire (widely claimed to have the largest concentration of caravans in Europe) and the north of England are substantially populated with parks on the coastal strip as well as inland.⁹⁰ An industry sponsored report from 2011 has found that in Wales alone:

The total turnover and visitor expenditure as a result of the Wales holiday park industry is £727 million per annum. Its total economic impact to Wales has been calculated as a Gross Value Added (GVA) contribution of £317 million per annum supporting a total of 10,645 direct and indirect jobs in Wales.... The total number of holiday park units / pitches in Wales is estimated at 71,700 of which 64% are owned static units (ie caravans, lodges, chalets etc), 8% are rented static units and 27% are touring pitches (for caravans, tents, trailer tents and motor homes). The BH&HPA estimates that its members own and manage 80% of all static unit pitches (owned and rented) and 60% of all touring pitches.⁹¹

This next phase in the history of the static holiday caravan park after 1990 is more a part of the current developments within the industry than of the developments considered thus far. As such, it is hoped that it will be studied by historians of the future who may

⁸⁹ British Holiday & Home Parks Association, *The Parks Industry: A Few Fact and Figures*, July, 2009.

⁹⁰ C. Beatty, *et. al.*, *The Caravan Communities of the Lincolnshire Coast*, Report: CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University, East Lindsey District Council (2011), p. 4; NACO; *The Holiday Caravaner*, 43 (Spring 2014), p.2 and 46 (Summer 2015), p.40; BH&HPA, *British Holiday & Home Parks Association Journal*, 169 (September-October 2014), p. 45; UK Caravan Industry Statistics issued by The National Caravan Council (NCC), 2008 citing P. Buchanan *et al.*, *The UK Statistics 2008*, VisitBritain, VisitScotland, VisitWales and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, (June, 2009); see also 'Parks Celebrate and Educate in British Tourism Week', *British Holiday & Home Parks Association Journal*, 143 (May-June 2010).

⁹¹ *British Holiday & Home Parks Association / Visit Wales Economic Impact Assessment of the Holiday Park Industry in Wales*, Roger Tym & Partners (2011), pp.1-2.

wish to further understand our domestic tourism history from grass-roots level, and examine how this area of British holiday pursuit sits within the national picture.

Conclusion

The largely unpredicted appearance of the static caravan site in post-war Britain happened as a result of grass-roots agency and the adaption and appropriation of a series of alternative, familiar and popular forms. British working-class families and individuals did not exclusively adopt the state-envisaged solution to mass post-war domestic holiday taking after the Second World War; many originated and nurtured the form of holiday making that has been the subject of this study. They were influenced by earlier forms of low-cost, self-catered holiday making, they were empowered by legislation including that for paid holidays, and they were active at a time of growing assertion, confidence and economic and social progress. An industry that is now a major and seemingly permanent feature of UK tourism is the result of this activity.

The popularisation of camping, and its adoption by philanthropic and political organisations, introduced large numbers of the urban working class (especially the young) to the hitherto rarely experienced pleasures of rural outdoor holiday recreation, the seaside and its liminal pleasures and holiday companionship and sociability. This established a growing knowledge of the pleasures and possibilities of cheap, self-catered holidays in resort locations as an alternative to the established rituals of the working-class holiday in the seaside boarding house. At the same time, the establishment of the pioneer camps enhanced this by further demonstrating the possibilities of an established, permanent holiday base (an idea appropriated by the commercial camp operators). As the philanthropic and rational regimes of the pioneer camps gave way to a more relaxed and sociable policy, they were eclipsed at first by the commercial model of the mid-1930s. But the proliferation of camping grounds, in Tendring at least, ensured that a ready network of suitably informal locations, often operated by small-scale landowners

or entrepreneurs, would be in place to provide possible locations for a number of the early post-war static caravan sites. Camping had allowed do-it-yourself, low budget holidays to be realised and had established a precedent for creating (albeit temporary and small-scale) a personalised domestic holiday space. The popularity of the touring caravan with the middle classes during the inter-war years helped establish a caravan manufacturing base in Britain that in turn would adapt itself in the post-war period to the production of static units. The touring caravans of the inter-war years also provided a supply of second-hand units for post-war use as proto-static holiday caravans.

The plotland holiday home phenomenon similarly created a precedent for alternative, do-it-yourself holiday options. It offered independence and portable domesticity, on a larger scale than that offered by the beach hut or tent. Although largely a more middle-class movement, plotland holiday homes were also the subject of aspiration for many upper-working class families, and were indeed established and enjoyed by many. By establishing a precedent for self-originated holiday homes, they demonstrated further that it was possible to create a holiday home environment at a resort location on one's own terms. The evidence from Lindsey Sandhills and Tendring demonstrates that the popularity of the plotland holiday home, although curtailed by planning legislation, was re-discovered and re-modelled in static holiday caravans after the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act.

This was achieved by the agency of working-class holiday makers during the period of post-war austerity, against the state-approved alternative of the new commercial holiday camp or the traditional boarding house. Changing working-class attitudes and expectations, accentuated during the experience of war, were further bolstered by the post-war political climate and legislation for paid holidays; it is unsurprising, therefore, that many sought new ways to realise their holiday ideals independently. Early campsite

proprietors would welcome the siting of a caravan all year round on site for the payment of a ground rent. Thus, the individuals who bought and found a site for the caravan, the landowners who provided the site, and those that sub-let, borrowed and enjoyed it were the originators of the static caravan site. Avoiding the higher costs and regimented regimes of the commercial camps, the early sites consolidated themselves under the combined agency of their owners and patrons into an alternative and popular form of holiday camp site. In addition to the establishment of a means to own a holiday home on a budget but seemingly free from the strictures of the 1947 planning legislation which curtailed plotland holiday homes, caravans were let to other holiday makers by their owners or by the site operators in order to offset costs and increase revenue. This further exemplifies the proactive nature of the early static caravan site community. The early caravan sites also exhibited an early social developmental stage that was almost the antithesis of that exhibited by commercial holiday camps or indeed other forms of domestic holiday provision. Whereas the commercial camps sought to cater for all aspects of their client's needs with provision of meals, child minding and professionally-led entertainments, early static caravan sites were, as has been demonstrated, organised on a much more 'self-help' basis, harking back to the earlier pioneer camps and campsites of the early twentieth century and in tune with 'do-it-yourself' culture of the time.

Although the static holiday caravan site was originated in this way, it is shown to change and adapt, not just to the legislation which finally recognises it from 1960, but as a result of the changing nature of its patrons and the manufacturing industry that supplied it. As post-war austerity gave way to increasing affluence, static caravan users were presented with a more sophisticated supply-side which began to manufacture a dedicated product, and market it on sites that offered more up-to-date facilities. The increasing availability of hire purchase schemes, tailored to suit the static caravan industry and with extended

terms appealing to working-class budgets allowed and encouraged more people to own a caravan holiday home. Manufacturers could adapt and evolve a product on an annual basis, reflecting current trends and styles; park operators were thus assured of an evolving accommodation stock that was kept up to date in the medium term. Successive caravan site clients, therefore, began to follow wider patterns of consumerism; they took their place as end-user customers in a supply-led capitalist production model. In a capitalist version of choice, choices are offered. And workers are not just shaped by agency; as consumers they buy into things and they buy because they want; for the post-war consumers that originated the static caravan site, choice was not imposed, it was they who shaped the market. But the nature of their agency changes and diminishes as the supply side of the industry capitalises upon a demand that they have created, and now successively continue to embrace. The rational, do-it-yourself nature of the early caravan site evolves and changes as has been discussed; but the role of successive consumers changes in a way that comes to connect with the wider situation as demonstrated in recent histories of post-war consumerism. Agency now equates to desire and choice in the market place.

The almost total re-branding of the industry during the 1980s in which static caravans became caravan holiday homes (eventually simply holiday homes) and caravan sites become holiday home parks exemplifies the powerful ability for the manufacturing and park side of the industry to foresee and readily adapt and change to suit the prevailing economic and cultural landscape. Importantly, this adaptability gave a distinct advantage in terms of appeal over the problems of cultural and physical decline experienced by traditional resort and commercial holiday camp accommodation and environment. As a result, toward the end of the twentieth century when British seaside resorts had physically and economically declined to a point where regeneration schemes and major investment seemed the only way forward, static caravan parks had, in and around such

places as well as in other areas, maintained a fresh physical and conceptual appeal as a choice for domestic holiday taking. This, an area that seems to be absent or highly marginalised in recent histories of tourism and resorts in post-war Britain, should now be considered alongside such narratives in order to gain a more complete understanding of the post-war domestic situation. The rise and decline of the commercial holiday camp and its all-in, fully catered regime, nostalgically typified in popular culture and in the media, is the widespread yet incomplete view of domestic working-class holiday taking in Britain after 1945. That static holiday caravan sites did not share much of the commercial camps developmental trajectory or indeed the same fate reveals a more complex picture of post-war domestic tourism.

The static holiday caravan parks were, no doubt, an influential model for the commercial camps who struggled to modernise and shake off their outdated image during the 1980s. Indeed, it has to be acknowledged that caravan parks also took influence from their 'commercial' counterparts, as demonstrated by the professionalization of entertainment programs and the introduction of better facilities (such as indoor swimming pools and spas) and infrastructures. Yet still the static holiday caravan park, re-branded and having constantly adapted, survived ultimately as the dominant form. Whilst the agency of its originating clients and proprietors gives way to a more industry led, consumer model as discussed, important fundamental aspects of the social landscape of the static holiday caravan park seem to remain, however, even during the social stratification that appears to take place on parks during the 1980s. As discussed in the previous chapter, a sense of communal sociability is clearly evident amongst caravan owners and holiday makers on the parks; one that can be argued to have been common to early camp sites, pioneer holiday camps, holiday plotlands or even the Kent hop-picking camps. That this persists during a period when consumers become more individualistic, or atomised in more general terms, is in itself a phenomenon worthy of further study.

The above-mentioned creativity of post-war working class holidaymakers in originating and using caravan sites has previously been lost to the historical record, and there are other aspects of the story of the development of the static caravan site that have not previously been considered in detail. The caravan problem, a prominent issue which once troubled local authorities and residents of areas where caravans were being used as homes, either on a temporary or more permanent basis, was successfully answered by the Arton Wilson report and subsequent legislation. It was also effectively countered as the static holiday caravan industry moved from its early, do-it-yourself establishing phase into one where its consumers were now in a relationship with a professional, established industry.

The foregoing chapters have revealed that the impact of any legislation upon the static holiday caravan industry during the twentieth century has essentially been either neutral or positive. Any proposals for legislation that may have impacted negatively were successfully challenged by organised lobby groups, such as the Showmen's Guild, and more recently the NCC and NFSO (latterly the BH&HPA). Early planning legislation, being more permissive than restrictive, did not impact holiday camp sites, camping grounds or plotland holiday home construction. This, in turn, allowed the development of these holiday activities that were influential in the origination of the static holiday caravan site, as discussed. Holidays with pay was certainly one of the most significant legislative acts to impact post-war tourism, and again, has been shown to be thoroughly positive. Whilst it has been analysed by other historians, this study has argued that a number of aspects lack emphasis is that this important Act. There has been little discussion as to why the Amulree Committee did not foresee the widespread embracing of the freedom of choice to originate and select alternative forms of holiday rather than the state-envisaged commercial holiday camp model. Similarly, the eventual persuasion of those on the political right as well as business leaders to the benefit for industry from

paid holidays was an important factor crucial to the legislation's enactment, yet it seems to lack emphasis in recent studies. The timing of the legislation, and that it was key individuals, politicians and the unions who initiated, kept its momentum and protected it during the war years prior to its enactment is likewise a significant factor that also lacks emphasis; had this not happened uniquely at this stage, then many of the post-war workers would have been less empowered to originate their own holiday solutions, including the static holiday caravan sites.

Two further Acts, the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and the 1960 Caravan Sites Control of Development Act are important for differing reasons. The 1947 planning Act was a complex and far-reaching instrument that sought to bring all building and land use under governmental control. Had its originators foreseen its development, then the static caravan site would surely have been included in its remit. As this was not the case, then (unlike plotland holiday homes) caravan sites began to develop throughout Britain unhampered by the Act's otherwise wide-ranging tenets and restrictions. The 1960 Caravan Sites Act is significant, not least in the nature of the report which preceded it. Had the Arton Wilson report not been the result of such a comprehensive, in-depth enquiry which challenged the perceived caravan problem and gained a sound overview of caravan use in Britain at the time, then the next stage of static caravan site development may not have been so positive. Indeed, the Act has been shown to have enhanced the industry; urging sites and manufacturers to upgrade facilities and products at a time when their consumers were in a position to seek and buy in to an improved and modernised experience. This helped strengthen the static caravan industry in Britain at all levels, and allowed it to consolidate as a permanent aspect of domestic tourism. Further specific legislation, under the lobby of the NCC and BH&HPA, had little negative impact upon further caravan site development. Thus, whether by design or by

omission twentieth-century parliamentary legislation has, on the whole, been a positive factor in static holiday caravan park development.

As discussed in the introduction, this study has sought to position the static holiday caravan site within the wider context of leisure and domestic tourism in an historical sense and to fill the gap in the historiography in this regard. The social, political and economic phenomena that have had direct influential associations with the birth and development of static holiday caravan sites have been discussed in the foregoing chapters and summarised above. This includes the agency of the working class holiday makers who worked in tandem with the early site operators and the analysis of how this agency diminishes as working-class affluence and consumerism grows during the late 50s and 60s. This has been considered by historians in other contexts, especially in the fields of leisure and tourism; this study now offers a view of how the static holiday caravan industry sits within this wider context. The static caravan industry has adapted at every stage to meet the needs and expectations of consumers as their social, economic and aspirational characteristics change and develop. Its popularity was nurtured during a period of increasing affluence and confidence for its patrons. The static holiday caravan is also the surviving, affordable holiday home model which offers the key attributes of independence and portable domesticity. A recent study, in seeking to understand the enduring appeal of the static holiday caravan (despite being an asset that depreciates relatively quickly) found that in addition to affordability, qualities that included control, escape, salvation and opportunity were highly valued.¹ These key qualities were never unique to static caravans, of course. But despite the economic downturns, revivals and cultural and social changes that have occurred since the first static holiday caravan sites

¹ J. Steer-Fowler, *Caravan Second Homes: An Empirical Study of Consumer Behaviour towards a Depreciating Property Asset* (PhD thesis, University of Plymouth, 2009).

formed, they are qualities that have been re-confirmed and re-presented by the static caravan manufacturers, and the park operators in the Tendring District and beyond.

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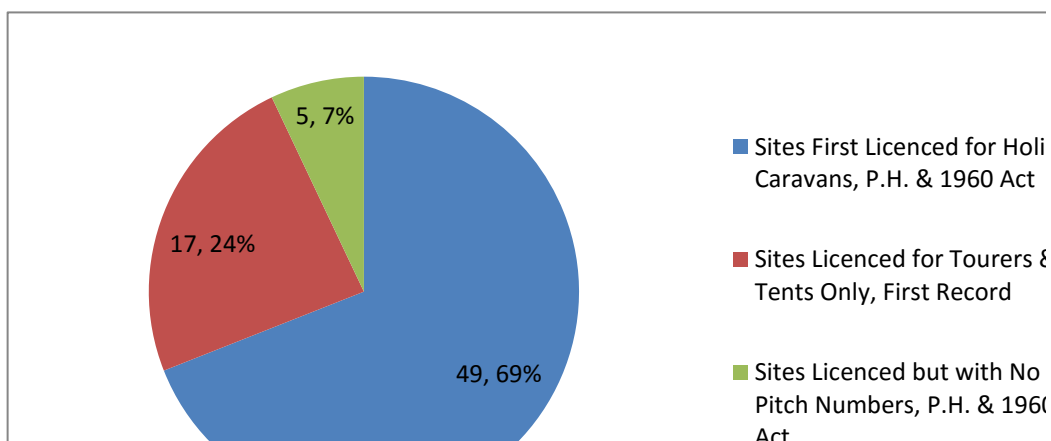
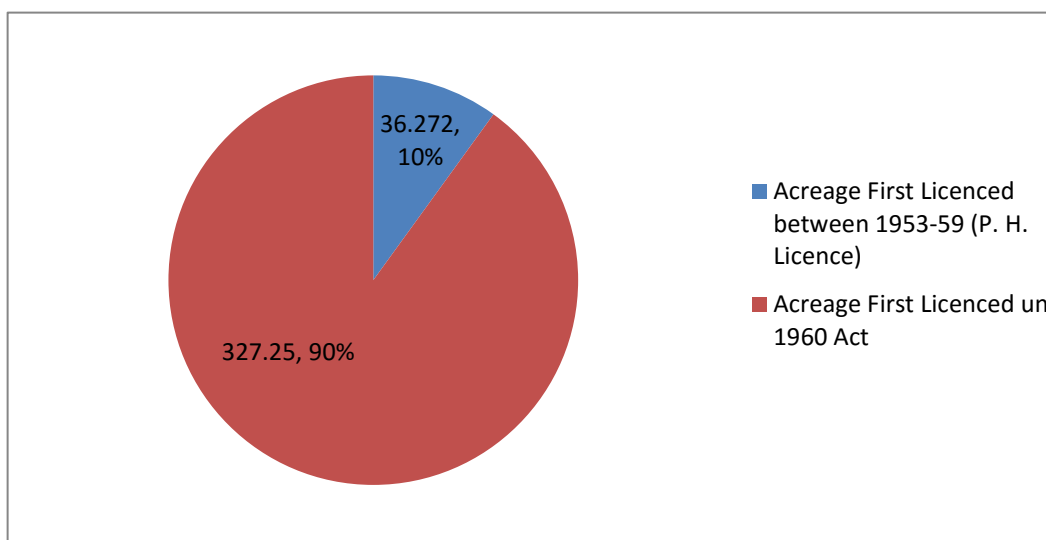
Appendix One, Sheet One: Analysis of Site Licence Records from Tendring District Council

1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
1	Analysis of Caravan Site Licensing, up to and including 1960 Act, Tendring District																		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
2	Name of Site	Address	Owner(s)	First P. H. Act Licence	Caravans	Tents	Chalets	Acres	Site Licenced 1960 Act	Caravans	Tourers (CC only)	Tents	Chalets	Acres	Density / Acre	Constant use since?	Planning Permission Since	Notes	
1	1	Fendall Farm Camp	London Rd, Clacton	Mr. Mrs. Elna Walls	01/04/1953	25	5	1	2.037	1961/7	132	13	5	27	25	1936			
2	2	Fischers Caravan Site	Point Clear, St. Osvyth	Mrs. H. Fletcher											0.5	25	1947		
3	3	The Firs Caravan Park	London Rd. Lt. Clacton	Mr. H. Woodley						Mar-61	200								
4	4	Wanbeck Caravan Site	London Rd. Lt. Clacton	J. Harbour										8.818				1955	
5	5	Pump Hill Farm	Pump Hill, St. Osvyth	Mrs. V. Abrn		45				Mar-61	93							1961	
6	6	Greenlawns Camping Ground	St. Osvyth Rd. Lt. Clacton	Mr. H. Carter						Nov-60	30							1961	
7	7	Mill Farm	Hill Farm, Gt. Bromley	Dr. W. & Mr. A. Dean						Mar-61	20				26.41			1960	
8	8	Eastcliffe Caravan Park	Hill Lane, Walton on Noze	Mr. H. A. Barnes						Jan-61	419							1949	
9	9	Elm Farm	Thorne le Soken	Mr. Gunfield						Jan-61	32				1.75			1947	
10	10	Seawick (Handscombs)	Beach Rd. St. Osvyth	Mr. A. Handcombe						Apr-61	250				4.51		1948- camping pre-1939	1951	
11	11	Seawick Holiday Lido	Beach Rd. St. Osvyth	Mr. T. O'Dell						Jan-62	24				10.59			1957	
12	12	The Seaview Caravan Park	Brichfields, Gt. Bentley	Mr. H. Roberts	01/04/1958	214	15	1	10	Nov-63	115				17.5			1961	
13	13	Highlands Camping Site	Thorne Rd. Gt. Clacton	Mr. H. Chivers						Jul-61	234		15	1		camping pre-1948		1961	
14	14	Point Clear Bay Holiday Estate	Point Clear, St. Osvyth	Point Clear Bay Holiday Estates Ltd						Mar-92	200				26.4			1994	
15	15	Coronation / Willow Caravans Sites	Hill Lane, Walton on Noze	Mr. G. Snare						Feb-63	158				6.337	Used for over 20 Yrs.			
16	16	Maid's Head Public House	Thorne-le-Soken	K. Bowler esq.							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-79	
17	17	Bradley Hall	Thorne-le-Soken	D. Lord, esq.							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-79	
18	18	Hill Farm	Crown Lane, Tendring								Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-79	
19	19	James Farm	James Farm, Thorne-le-Soken	Mr. French		13					Max 5							For 10 vans only, 1960 only	
20	20	Bluebells Farm	Emstead Heath	W. Lovell esq.							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-79	
21	21	Tower (later Pretoria)	Point Clear, St. Osvyth	Miss J. McKecknie/Mrs L. McGann, later M.E. Knight			0.65		Feb-61	7								01/12/1954	
22	22	87 Holland Road	Little Clacton	Mrs. I. Fraser							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1979-80	
23	23	Crackstake Farm	Tan Lane, Lt. Clacton								Max 5							The site licence of Feb 1961 issued to Connought Crusier Caravans Ltd., 325-331 High Road, Hildes, Essex	
24	24	South Heath Farm	Gt. Bentley	Mr. & Mrs. R. Gosling							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-80	
25	25	Fox and Hounds PH	Little Bromley	A. Yound esq.							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-80	
26	26	Georain Rose PH	Flax Hill, Gt. Bentley	Mrs. N. Cox							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-80	
27	27	Essex Craft Centre	Mallinas Farm, Gt. Oakley	R. Bloom, esq.							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-80	
28	28	Home Farm	Wribness	C. Hulley esq.							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-80	
29	29	High Birch Farm	Wesley Heath	P. Ernst, esq.							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-80	
30	30	Burrsville Holiday Park	106, Burns Rd., Gt. Clacton	Len & Lucy Shaw							Max 5							Closed down, Jan. 1975	
31	31	Tall Pines	Colchester Rd. Waleey	E. Chamberlain esq							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-80	
32	32	Coat Lane	Point Clear	Point Clear Facilities Ltd.							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-80	
33	33	Bullock Wood	Ipwich Rd., Ardleigh								Max 5							Planning refused, 1975	
34	34	Willow Hall	Wir	J. Hampton, esq						Jul-63	5			1.84				Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-80	
35	35	Flea Inn	Colchester Rd. St. Osvyth	S. Edwards														1963	
36	36	Martells Hall	Slough Lane, Ardleigh	Mr. & Mrs. K. Cox														Planning refused, 1979	
37	37	Tally Ho Garage	Frating	Capt. W. Jones						were 6								Planning non-existent, 1980	
38	38	Hull Farm	Ardleigh	Mrs. E. Fryer							Max 5							Caravan Club Cert. Only, 1978-80	
39	39	Crown Inn	Ipwich Rd., Ardleigh	T. Blake, esq.					Sep-62	10				3.18				1962	
40	40	Thorp Cross	Thorne-le-Soken	Mr. J. Sarat					Jan-62	2								1961	
41	41	Martello Tower Camping Site	St. Osvyth Beach	Mr. T. Sanders	14/01/1954	65		3.31										8th Feb. 1962	
42	42	Brighton Haven Caravan Park	Promenade W/ry, Brightlingsea	B/sea. Council, Hammetton Leisure					Aug-85	240				2				1977	
43	43	Western Promenade Caravan Site	Western Promenade, B/sea.	B/sea. Council					Jun-78	240				23				1977	
44	44	Willow Caravan Park	High Tree Lane, Walton	Jack Garnevs					Jan-61	120				4.75				1950	
45	45	Cherish Caravan Park	Colchester Road, Waleey	Mr. G. Gray					Dec-72	250				19.91					
46	46	Lilly Farm Camping Ground	116, Holland Road, Clacton	Mr. H. Bareham	09/11/1959	18	0	2	0.5									April 1961 for 200 Caravans	
47	47	Shelda Camp / Brook Farm	Castle Hill, London Rd., Clacton	Doris Rayner	31/10/1957	16	0	0	1									1952	
48	48	Burrsville Holiday Park	106 Burns Rd., Clacton	Mr. A. G. Parker						Apr-61	8			0.5		pre-1948		pre-1948	
49	49	Chapwood Hall Caravan Site	Holland on Sea	Westford Caravans Ltd	13/10/1959	15			0.57										
50	50	Robin Hood P.H.	London Rd., Clacton	Charrington & Co., London.	07/11/1959	14	0	0	0.955										
51	51	Broomfield	London Rd., Clacton	Georain Chambers	28/04/1959	24													
52	52	Martello Tower Caravan Camp	Walton-on-Noze	D.F. Garton					Feb-61	776				27.75			Many years- successful appeal		
53	53	The Vicarage	Kirby-le-Soken	Rev. J.W. Thomas					Jun-62	3				4			Continuous since March 1958		
54	54	The Black Boy	Wribness	Mr. G. Marwood					Jul-81				6					1981	
55	55	Frating Caravan Site	Colchester Rd., Frating	Mrs. L. Hems					Apr-62	25				2.5			'Very many years'		
56	56	Greenacres Caravan Park	Low Rd., Dovercourt																
57	57	Ship Inn	Kirby-le-Soken	Albert Bunting tenant of Cobbold & Co.					Jan-61	50				2.31			Caravans on site 1937		
58	58	Chatter Camp	Jawick Lane, Clacton	Wallace Duckler	06/03/1953	27	3	13	1.9		Jul-61	56						Mar-61	
59	59	Chatter Camp (Silver Dawn)	Jawick Lane, Clacton	Wallace Duckler						Jul-76	35			2.67					
60	60	Southcliffe Caravan Site	Martello C.P., Kirby Rd., Walton	Southcliffe Trailer Co. (D. Garton)							500			66			March 1961 for 500 seasonal caravans	Essex County Council negotiating to clear 193 caravans from St. Osvyth Beach, compensation discussed.	
61	61	Hulleys Caravan Park	St. Osvyth Beach	Mr. B. Hutley (St. Osvyth Beach Estates Ltd.)															
62	62	Warners Holiday Camp	Low Rd., Dovercourt	Warners Holidays Ltd.(Mecca Leisure PLC)							92							1981 for 82 static caravans	
63	63	Valley Farm Camping Ground	Valley Road, Clacton	Valley Farm Camping Ground Ltd. (N. Pawesty)	09/11/1954	891	100	9		Jan-61	1000								
64	64	Highfield Holiday Park	London Road, Clacton	P. C. Hopkins, then in 1954	17/02/1953	16	20	0	16		Apr-61	530		25.25				26-Jul-61	
65	65	Mill Farm	Old Mill, Thorne le Soken	Mr. C. Husbell						May-67	4							Jul-66	
66	66	Meadow View Camping Ground	St. Osvyth Road, Lt. Clacton	Mr. A. J. Wast (1957) later M. Pocock (1960).						Feb-61	115			9.8				Jan-57	
67	67	Sacketts Grove	Jawick Lane, Clacton	T.S.T. (Parks) Ltd						Apr-61	190			7.658					
68	68	Shore Farm	Wribness	W. & J. Garnham					Feb-63	65				5.65				Mar-61	
69	69	Greenacres	Waleey Road, Lt. Clacton	Mr. F. W. Vine						May-61	20			1.4				Dec-53	
70	70	Rosebank Camping Ground	251 London Rd., Clacton	Rosebank Camping Ground Ltd.						Jun-61	100			9			First used prior to 1938		
71	71	Shangri-La Holiday Caravan Park	Colchester Road, St. Osvyth	Stanley H. Hillier						Nov-60	400							Feb-59	
72	72	Name of Site	Address	Owner(s)	First P. H. Act Licence	Caravans	Tents	Chalets	Acres	Site Licenced 1960 Act	Caravans	Tourers (CC only)	Tents	Chalets	Acres	Density / Acre	Constant use since?	Planning Permission Since	Notes
73	73	Totals				1358	167	26	36.272		6959		21	1	327.25				

Note: Some sites were approved with a number of pitches under both P.H. and 1960 Acts, therefore adding the totals of columns F and K will not reflect an accurate number of pitches after the 1960 Act.

Appendix One, Sheet Two: Analysis of Data from Sheet One

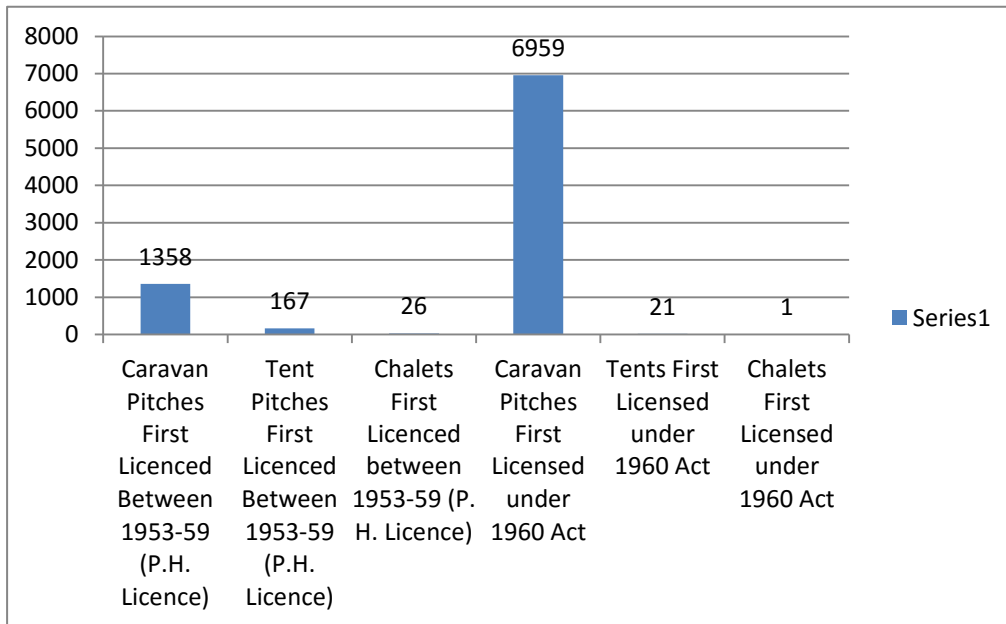
Caravan Pitches First Licenced Between 1953-59 (P.H. Licence)	1358
Tent Pitches First Licenced Between 1953-59 (P.H. Licence)	167
Chalets First Licenced between 1953-59 (P. H. Licence)	26
Caravan Pitches First Licenced under 1960 Act	6959
Tents First Licenced under 1960 Act	21
Chalets First Licenced under 1960 Act	1
Acreage First Licenced between 1953-59 (P. H. Licence)	36.272
Acreage First Licenced under 1960 Act	327.25
Caravan Pitches Licenced Between 1953-59 (P.H. Licence)	1358
Caravan Pitches Licenced under 1960 Act, First Record	6959
Sites First Licenced for Holiday Caravans, P.H. & 1960 Act	49
Sites Licenced for Tourers & Tents Only, First Record	17
Sites Licenced but with No Pitch Numbers, P.H. & 1960 Act	5
Post-1947 Sites First Licenced for Holiday Caravans, P.H. & 1960 Act	40
Sites Claiming Pre-1947 Existing use: Camping / Caravans	9



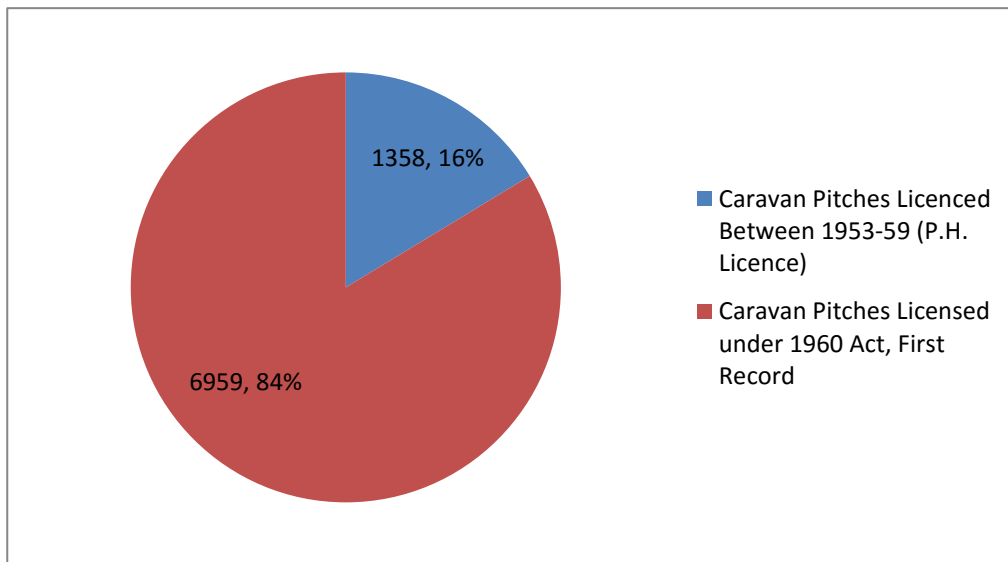
Appendix One, Sheet Two: Analysis of Data from Sheet One



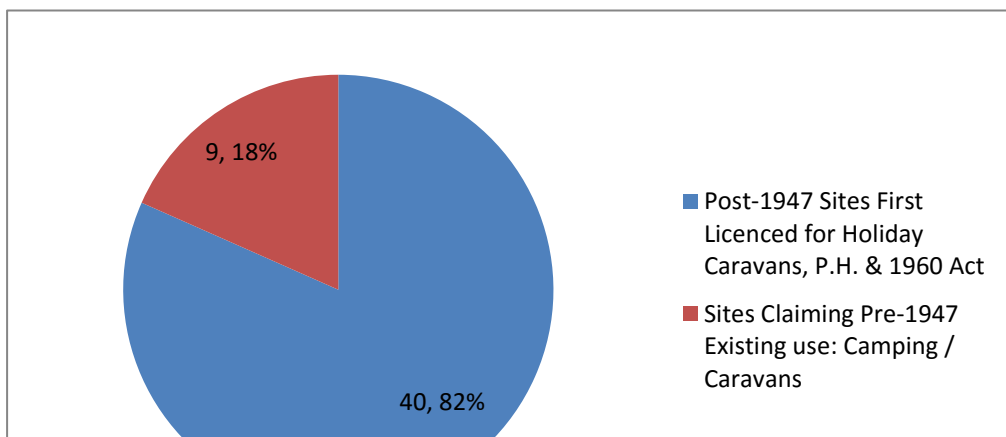
Appendix One, Sheet Two: Analysis of Data from Sheet One



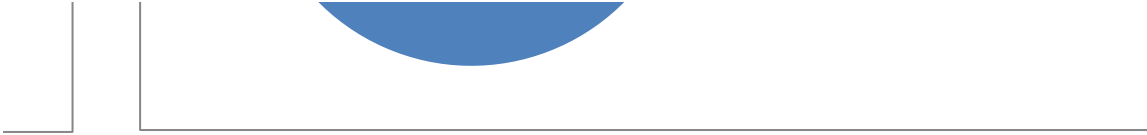
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Appendix One, Sheet Two: Analysis of Data from Sheet One



Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District Licensed Under Caravan Sites Act, 1960				
	Name of Site	Address	Owner(s)	Pitches
1	Ferndale Farm Camp	London Rd., Clacton	Mr. Mrs Eliza Wells	132
2	Fletchers Caravan Site	Point Clear, St. Osyth	Mrs. H. Fletcher	13
3	The Firs Caravan Park	London Rd. Lt. Clacton	Mr. H. Woolley	200
4	Wayback Caravan Site	London Rd. Lt. Clacton	J. Harbour	220
5	Pump Hill Farm	Pump Hill, St. Osyth	Mrs. V. Abra	93
6	Greenlawns Camping Ground	St. Osyth Rd. Lt. Clacton	Mr. H. Carter	30
7	Mill Farm	Mill Farm, Gt. Bromley	Dr. W. & Mr. A Dean	20
8	Eastcliffe Caravan Park	Hall Lane, Walton on Naze	Rt. Hon. A. Barnes	419
9	Elm Farm	Thorpe le Soken	Mr. Gunfield	32
10	Seawick Holiday Lido	Beach Rd. St. Osyth	Mr. T. O'Dell	250
11	The Seaview Caravan Park	Brichfields, Gt. Bentley	Mr. H. Roberts	115
12	Highlands Camping Site	Thorpe Rd. Gt. Clacton	Mr. H. Chilvers	234
13	Point Clear Bay Holiday Estate	Point Clear, St. Osyth	Point Clear Bay Holiday Estates Ltd.	200
14	Coronation / Willow Caravan Sites	Hall Lane, Walton on Naze	Mr. G. Snare	158
15	James Farm	James Farm, Thorpe-le-Soken	Mr. French	13
16	Tower (later Pretoria)	Point Clear, St. Osyth.	Miss J. McKecknie/Mrs L McGann, later M.E. Knight	7
17	Flag Inn	Colchester Rd. St. Osyth	S. Edwards	5
18	Tally Ho Garage	Frating	Capt. W. Jones	6
19	Crown Inn	Ipswich Rd., Ardleigh	T. Blake, esq.	10
20	Thorpe Cross	Thorpe-le-Soken	Mr. J. Searl	2
21	Martello Tower Camping Site	St. Osyth Beach	Mr. T. Sanders	65
22	Brightlingsea Haven Caravan Park	Promenade Way, Brightlingsea	Bsea. Council. Hammerton Leisure	240
23	Western Promenade Caravan Site	Western Promenade, B/sea.	B/sea. Council	240
24	Willow Caravan Park	High Tree Lane, Walton	Jack Garneys	120
25	Charles Caravan Park	Colchester Road, Weeley	Mr. C. Gray	250
26	Lilly Farm Camping Ground	116, Holland Road, Clacton	Mr. H. Bareham	18
27	Shelda Camp / Brook Farm	Castle Hill, London Rd., Clacton	Doris Rayner	16
28	Burresville Holiday Park	106 Burrs Rd., Clacton	Mr. A. G. Parker	8
29	Oakwood Hall Caravan Site	Holland on Sea	Westford Caterers Ltd.	15
30	Robin Hood P.H.	London Rd., Clacton	Charrington & Co., London.	14
31	Martello Tower Caravan Camp	Walton-on-Naze	D.F. Garton	776
32	The Vicarage	Kirby-le-Soken	Rev. J.W. Thomas	3
33	Frating Caravan Dite	Colchester Rd., Frating	Miss L. Harris	25
34	Greenacres Caravan Park	Low Rd. Dovercourt		27
35	Ship Inn	Kirby-le-Soken	Albert Bunting tenant of Cobbold & Co.	50
36	Chester Camp	Jaywick Lane, Clacton	Wallace Ducker	

Appendix One, Sheet 3: List of Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District Licensed under the Caravan Sites Act, 1960

37	Chester Camp(Silver Dawn)	Jaywick Lane, Clacton	Wallace Ducker	56
38	Southcliffe Caravan Site	Martello C.P., Kirby Rd., Walton	Southcliffe Trailer Co. (D. Garton)	35
39	Hutleys Caravan Park	St. Osyth Beach	Mr. B. Hutley (St. Osyth Beach Estates Ltd.)	500
40	Warners Holiday Camp	Low Rd. Dovercourt	Warners Holidays Ltd.(Mecca Leisure PLC)	92
41	Valley Farm Camping Ground	Valley Road, Clacton	Valley Farm Camping Ground Ltd. (N. Pawsey)	1000
			F. C. Hopkins, then in 1954	
42	Highfield Holiday Park	London Road, Clacton	Taylor family purchase as Parkavan (Clacton) Ltd.	530
43	Mill Farm	Old Mill, Thorpe le Soken	Mr. C. Hudgell	4
44	Meadow View Camping Ground	St. Osyth Road, Lt. Clacton	Mr. A. J. Ward (1957) later M. Pocock (1960)	115
45	Sacketts Grove	Jaywick Lane, Clacton	T.S.T. (Parks) Ltd	190
46	Shore Farm	Wrabness	W. & J. Garnham	65
47	Greengates	Weeley Road, Lt. Clacton	Mr. F. W. Vine	20
48	Rosebank Camping Ground	251 London Rd., Clacton	Rosebank Camping Ground Ltd.	100
49	Shangri-La Holiday Caravan Park	Colchester Road, St. Osyth	Stanley H. Hiller	400
		Total		7133

Appendix One, Sheet Four: Analysis of the First Forty-Nine Sites in the Tendring District
With Static Holiday Caravans

	Name of Site	Address
1	Ferndale Farm Camp	London Rd., Clacton
2	Fletchers Caravan Site	Point Clear, St. Osyth
3	The Firs Caravan Park	London Rd. Lt. Clacton
4	Wayback Caravan Site	London Rd. Lt. Clacton
5	Pump Hill Farm	Pump Hill, St. Osyth
6	Greenlawns Camping Ground	St. Osyth Rd. Lt. Clacton
7	Mill Farm	Mill Farm, Gt. Bromley
8	Eastcliffe Caravan Park	Hall Lane, Walton on Naze
9	Elm Farm	Thorpe le Soken
10	Seawick Holiday Lido	Beach Rd. St. Osyth
11	The Seaview Caravan Park	Brichfields, Gt. Bentley
12	Highlands Camping Site	Thorpe Rd. Gt. Clacton
13	Point Clear Bay Holiday Estate	Point Clear, St. Osyth
14	Coronation / Willow Caravan Sites	Hall Lane, Walton on Naze
15	James Farm	James Farm, Thorpe-le-Soken
16	Tower (later Pretoria)	Point Clear, St. Osyth.
17	Flag Inn	Colchester Rd. St. Osyth
18	Tally Ho Garage	Frating
19	Crown Inn	Ipswich Rd., Ardleigh
20	Thorpe Cross	Thorpe-le-Soken
21	Martello Tower Camping Site	St. Osyth Beach
22	Brightlingsea Haven Caravan Park	Promenade Way, Brightlingsea
23	Western Promenade Caravan Site	Western Promenade, B/sea.
24	Willow Caravan Park	High Tree Lane, Walton
25	Charles Caravan Park	Colchester Road, Weeley
26	Lilly Farm Camping Ground	116, Holland Road, Clacton
27	Shelda Camp / Brook Farm	Castle Hill, London Rd., Clacton
28	Burresville Holiday Park	106 Burrs Rd., Clacton
29	Oakwood Hall Caravan Site	Holland on Sea
30	Robin Hood P.H.	London Rd., Clacton
31	Martello Tower Caravan Camp	Walton-on-Naze
32	The Vicarage	Kirby-le-Soken
33	Frating Caravan Dite	Colchester Rd., Frating
34	Greenacres Caravan Park	Low Rd. Dovercourt
35	Ship Inn	Kirby-le-Soken
36	Chester Camp	Jaywick Lane, Clacton
37	Chester Camp(Silver Dawn)	Jaywick Lane, Clacton
38	Southcliffe Caravan Site	Martello C.P., Kirby Rd., Walton
39	Hutleys Caravan Park	St. Osyth Beach
40	Warners Holiday Camp	Low Rd. Dovercourt
41	Valley Farm Camping Ground	Valley Road, Clacton
42	Highfield Holiday Park	London Road, Clacton
43	Mill Farm	Old Mill, Thorpe le Soken
44	Meadow View Camping Ground	St. Osyth Road, Lt. Clacton
45	Sacketts Grove	Jaywick Lane, Clacton
46	Shore Farm	Wrabness
47	Greengates	Weeley Road, Lt. Clacton
48	Rosebank Camping Ground	251 London Rd., Clacton
49	Shangri-La Holiday Caravan Park	Colchester Road, St. Osyth

Appendix One, Sheet Four: Analysis of the First Forty-Nine Sites in the Tendring District
With Static Holiday Caravans

First 49 Sites with Static Caravans			
Owner(s)	First P. H. Act Licence	Caravans	Tents
Mr. Mrs Eliza Wells	01/04/1953	25	5
Mrs. H. Fletcher			
Mr. H. Woolley			
J. Harbour			
Mrs. V. Abra		45	
Mr. H. Carter			
Dr. W. & Mr. A Dean			
Rt. Hon. A. Barnes			
Mr. Gunfield			
Mr. T. O'Dell			
Mr. H. Roberts			
Mr. H. Chilvers	01/04/1958	214	15
Point Clear Bay Holiday Estates Ltd.			
Mr. G. Snare			
Mr. French		13	
Miss J. McKecknie/Mrs L McGann, later M.E. Knight			
S. Edwards			
Capt. W. Jones			
T. Blake, esq.			
Mr. J. Searl			
Mr. T. Sanders	14/01/1954	65	
Bsea. Council. Hammerton Leisure			
B/sea. Council			
Jack Garneys			
Mr. C. Gray			
Mr. H. Bareham	09/11/1959	18	0
Doris Rayner	31/10/1957	16	0
Mr. A. G. Parker			
Westford Caterers Ltd.	13/10/1959	15	
Charrington & Co., London.	07/11/1959	14	0
D.F. Garton			
Rev. J.W. Thomas			
Miss L. Harris			
Albert Bunting tenant of Cobbold & Co.			
Wallace Ducker	06/03/1953	27	3
Wallace Ducker			
Southcliffe Trailer Co. (D. Garton)			
Mr. B. Hutley (St. Osyth Beach Estates Ltd.)			
Warners Holidays Ltd.(Mecca Leisure PLC)			
Valley Farm Camping Ground Ltd. (N. Pawsey)	08/11/1954	891	100
F. C. Hopkins, then in 1954	17/02/1953	15	20
Taylor family purchase as Parkavan (Clacton) Ltd.			
Mr. C. Hudgell			
Mr. A. J. Ward (1957) later M. Pocock (1960)			
T.S.T. (Parks) Ltd			
W. & J. Garnham			
Mr. F. W. Vine			
Rosebank Camping Ground Ltd.			
Stanley H. Hiller			

Appendix One, Sheet Four: Analysis of the First Forty-Nine Sites in the Tendring District
With Static Holiday Caravans

Chalets	Acres	Site Licen	Caravans	Tourers (C	Tents	Chalets	Acres	Density / A
1	2.037	Jul-61	132				5.27	25
		1961?	13				0.5	
		Mar-61	200					
			220				8.815	
		Mar-61	93					
		Nov-60	30					
		Mar-61	20					
		Jan-61	419				26.41	
			32				1.75	
		Jan-62	250				10.59	
		Nov-63	115				17.5	
1	10	Jul-61	234		15	1		
		Mar-62	200				26.4	
		Feb-63	158				6.337	
	0.65	Feb-61	7					
		Jul-63	5				1.84	
			were 6					
		Sep-62	10				3.18	
		Jan-62	2					
	3.31							
		Aug-85	240				2	
		Jun-78	240				23	
		Jan-61	120				4.75	
		Dec-72	250				19.91	
2	0.5							
0	1							
		Apr-61	8				0.5	
	0.57							
0	0.305							
		Feb-61	776				27.75	
		Jun-62	3				4	
		Apr-62	25				2.5	
		Jan-61	50				2.31	
13	1.9							
		Jul-61	56					
		Jul-76	35				2.67	
			500				66	
			92					
9		Jan-61	1000					
0	16							
		Apr-61	530				25.25	
		May-67	4					
		Feb-61	115				9.8	
		Apr-61	190				7.658	
		Feb-63	65				5.65	
		May-61	20				1.4	
		Jun-61	100				9	
		Nov-60	400					

Appendix One, Sheet Four: Analysis of the First Forty-Nine Sites in the Tendring District
With Static Holiday Caravans

Constant use since?	Planning Permission Since
1935	
1947	
	1955
	1961
	1961
	1960
	1949
1947	
1948- camping pre-1939	1957
	1961
camping pre-1948	1961
	1958
Used for over 20 Yrs.	
	For 10 vans only, 1960 only
	01/12/1954
	1963
	Planning non-existent, 1980
	1962
	1961
	8th Feb. 1952
	1977
	1977
1950	
	April 1961 for 200 Caravans
1952	
pre-1948	pre-1948
Many years'-successful appeal	
Continuous since March 1958	
'Very many years'	
Caravans on site 1937	
	Mar-61
	March 1961 for 500 seasonal caravans
	1981 for 92 static caravans
	26-Jul-61
	Jul-66
	Jan-57
	Mar-61
	Dec-53
First used prior to 1938	
	Feb-59

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District:

Sheet One

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1						
2						
3		Licensed				
4						
5		First issued				
6		No.	Premises	Licencee	Date	Type of Licence
7		1	Ferry Boat Inn, Point Clear	William Bond	02/02/1953	Publicans
8				Nancy Chilton	01/02/1954	Supper
9		2	Café Morrocco, Jaywick	Lionel Cowell	19/05/1947	Music and Dancing
10				Sidney Silver	02/03/1953	Publicans
11		3	Monks Head, St.osyth Beach	Ernest Hull	04/03/1952	Publicans
12		4	Beach Stores, St. Osyth	Frank Potter?	29/02/1960	Off
13		5	Brooklands Café	Jatwick	02/05/1945	Music and Dancing

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District:

Sheet One

	G	H	I
1			
2			
3			
4	Holiday Area Premesis in Tendring District Analysis		
5			
6	Conditions?	Source	Description
7	For 3.75 yrs at first. Granted cert. Under s. 4, l. act1953	ERO, P/T L8	Register of Licenses, Tendring Division
8		ERO, P/T L7	Register of Licenses, Tendring Division
9		ERO, P/T L7	Register of Licenses, Tendring Division
10	Granted cert. Under s. 3, l. act1921	ERO, P/T L8	Register of Licenses, Tendring Division
11		ERO, P/T L8	Register of Licenses, Tendring Division
12		ERO, P/T L8	Register of Licenses, Tendring Division
13		ERO, P/T L7	Register of Licenses, Tendring Division

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District:
Sheet Two

Clubs In or Near Caravan Sites, Registered in the Petty Sessions Division of Tendring in compliance wi			
Club	Address	Secretary	Date of Issue
Anchor Camp Club	London Rd., Clacton	Ronald Aland	16/05/1961
			31/01/1962
Brooklands Social Club	Brooklands Gardens, Jaywick	Edward Baldwin	25/01/1954
			29/01/1955
			27/01/1956
		A. Rush	28/01/1957
		Samual Willett	22/01/1958
			02/02/1959
			08/02/1960
			25/01/1961
			29/01/1962
Butlins Clacton Holiday Club	Butlins Holiday Camp, Clacton	Edward Simons	22/01/1954
		Douglas Mason	26/01/1955
		Ronald Hayter	14/01/1956
			31/01/1957
		E. Colin	30/01/1958
		Michael Kibby	30/01/1959
		George Herlihy	26/01/1960
		Michael Hurley	27/01/1961
		R. Cooper	26/01/1962
Coronation Club	Point Clear Bay Estate	Edward Robbins	30/01/1954
			26/01/1955
			25/01/1956
			08/01/1957
			07/01/1958
			09/01/1959
			07/01/1960

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District:

Sheet Two

		John Murton	27/01/1961
			30/01/1962
Dolphin Club	Highfield Caravan Park	Harry Reeve	14/05/1956
		Thomas Taylor	31/01/1957
		Donald Taylor	08/01/1958
			09/02/1959
			12/02/1960
			09/02/1961
			31/01/1962
Firs Club (Wayback Camp)	Firs Caravan Park, London Rd., Clacton	John Harbour	03/02/1961
		Maureen Smith	27/02/1962
Highlands Club	Thorpe Rd. Clacton	Arthur Dabbs	04/04/1959
			29/01/1960
			23/01/1961
			31/01/1962
Martello Club	Kirby Rd. Walton	Douglas Garton	12/06/1958
			16/02/1959
			02/02/1960
		James Marsh	31/01/1961
			29/01/1962
Morocco	Broadway, Jaywick	Herbert Palmer	01/04/1959
			01/02/1960
			21/02/1961
			31/01/1962
The Ranch Club	Charles Caravan Park, Weeley	Ellie Gray	22/06/1960
			02/01/1961
			11/01/1962
Rosebank Club	251-7, London Rd., Clacton	Ernest Bramwell	03/05/1961
			26/01/1962
Sacketts Grove Club	Sacketts Grove, Jaywick Ln.	Norman Turner	19/05/1961
Seawick Caravan Club	Seawick Holiday Lido, St. Osyth Beach	Terence O'Dell	30/01/1954
			01/02/1955
			19/01/1956
			05/02/1957

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District:

Sheet Two

			03/02/1958
			29/01/1959
			04/02/1960
			20/02/1961
			30/01/1962
Shangri-La Club	Shangri-La Caravan Park	Dorothy Taylor	06/02/1957
			31/01/1958
			26/01/1959
			08/01/1960
		Stanley Hiller	26/01/1961
			17/01/1962
Valley Farm Club	Valley Farm Camping Ground	Arthur Reed	02/07/1956
			31/01/1957
			31/01/1958
			28/01/1959
			29/01/1960
			30/01/1961
			31/01/1962

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District:
Sheet Two

th S. 143 (1/4) of the Licensing Act, 1953, between 1954-62.	
No. of Members	Source
Annual(an), Associate(as), Honorary(h) and Temporary(t).	
	31 ERO, P/T L11
	151 ERO, P/T L11
250 club, 605as	ERO, P/T L9
142 club, 1161as	ERO, P/T L9
1350as, 128an, 9975t	ERO, P/T L9
1152as, 91an, 9721t	ERO, P/T L9
626as, 110an, 9183t	ERO, P/T L9
643as, 93an, 8370t	ERO, P/T L9
655as, 105an, 7585t	ERO, P/T L11
659as, 110an, 8658t	ERO, P/T L11
694as, 87an, 6004t	ERO, P/T L11
56/1335/45311	ERO, P/T L9
	ERO, P/T L9
1585/66/59957	ERO, P/T L9
118/65865/117	ERO, P/T L9
112/79147	ERO, P/T L9
125/83193	ERO, P/T L9
221 ord, 55 return, 185h, 82379 country.	ERO P/T L11
2252 ord, 77 return, 130h, 85,958 country.	ERO, P/T L11
1822 ord, 127 return, 128h, 76,944 country.	ERO, P/T L11
	94 ERO, P/T L9
	87 ERO, P/T L9
	85 ERO, P/T L9
	94 ERO, P/T L9
	79 ERO, P/T L9
	89 ERO, P/T L9
	95 ERO, P/T L11

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District:

Sheet Two

76	ERO, P/T L11
96	ERO, P/T L11
25	ERO, P/T L10
25	ERO, P/T L10
362	ERO, P/T L10
420	ERO, P/T L10
920	ERO, P/T L10
698	ERO, P/T L11
382	ERO, P/T L11
52	ERO P/T L11
177	ERO, P/T L11
26	ERO, P/T L10
397	ERO, P/T L10
694	ERO, P/T L11
794	ERO, P/T L11
30	ERO, P/T L10
170	ERO, P/T L10
550	ERO, P/T L10
681	ERO, P/T L11
719	ERO, P/T L11
26	ERO, P/T L10
484	ERO, P/T L10
520	ERO, P/T L11
256	ERO, P/T L11
27	ERO, P/T L10
39	ERO, P/T L11
133	ERO, P/T L11
68	ERO, P/T L11
106	ERO, P/T L11
25	ERO P/T L11
130	ERO, P/T L9
225	ERO, P/T L9
350	ERO, P/T L9
350	ERO, P/T L9

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District:

Sheet Two

	350	ERO, P/T L9
	420	ERO, P/T L9
	250	ERO, P/T L11
	450	ERO, P/T L11
	500	ERO P/T L11
	60	ERO, P/T L10
54a, 667t		ERO, P/T L10
	141	ERO, P/T L10
	204	ERO, P/T L10
	658	ERO, P/T L11
	728	ERO, P/T L11
	25	ERO, P/T L10
	359	ERO, P/T L10
690a, 724t		ERO, P/T L10
634a, 852t		ERO, P/T L10
600a, 1184h		ERO, P/T L10
	694	ERO, P/T L11
	648	ERO, P/T L11

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District: Sheet Three

		Date	Venue
		Nov. 1965	Ferry Boat Inn
		Nov. 1965	Quaterdeck
		Mar-54	Brooklands Café
		Sep-54	Beach Café
		Jan-72	Ferry Boat Inn
		Jan-72	The Commodore Club
		Jan-72	The Quaterdeck
		Apr-73	Silversprings Motel
		Nov. 1969	Ferry Boat Inn
		Nov. 1969	Quaterdeck
		Nov.1969	The Commodore Club
		Nov-67	Ferry Boat Inn
		Nov-67	Quaterdeck
		Nov-66	Ferry Boat Inn
		Nov-66	Quaterdeck
		Nov-68	Ferry Boat Inn
		Nov-68	Quaterdeck
		May-71	The Monks Head
		Jul-73	Hydro Marina Club
		Sep-73	Tartan House, Frating
		Dec-61	Ferry Boat Inn
		Jun-59	Martello Club
		Jul-58	Shangri-La Club
MD	Music & Dancing	Jun-58	Shangri-La Club
SME	Sunday Music & Entertainment	Mar-58	Dolphin Club
C	cinematograph	Jun-63	The Commodore Club
CC	childrens Cinematograph	Jul-63	Valley Farm Club

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District: Sheet Three

Applications for Licenses for Music, Dancing etc,	
Licence	ERO Source
MD, SME	C/DO 13/1
MD, SME	C/DO 13/1
MD	C/Mli 11
MD	C/Mli 11
MD	D/RT M/41
MD	D/RT M/41
MD	D/RT M/41
MD	D/RT M/41
MD, SME	C/DO 13/4
MD, SME	C/DO 13/4
MD, SME	C/DO 13/4
MD, SME	C/DO 13/2
MD, SME	C/DO 13/2
MD, SME	C/DO 13/2
MD, SME	C/DO 13/2
MD, SME	C/DO 13/3
MD, SME	C/DO 13/3
MD	D/RT M2/6
MD	D/RT M2/6
MD	D/RT M2/6
MD	C/Mli 13
MD, SME	C/Mli 12
C, CC	C/Mli 12
MD, SME	C/Mli 12
MD, SME	C/Mli 12
MD, SME	C/Mli 13
MD, SME	C/Mli 13

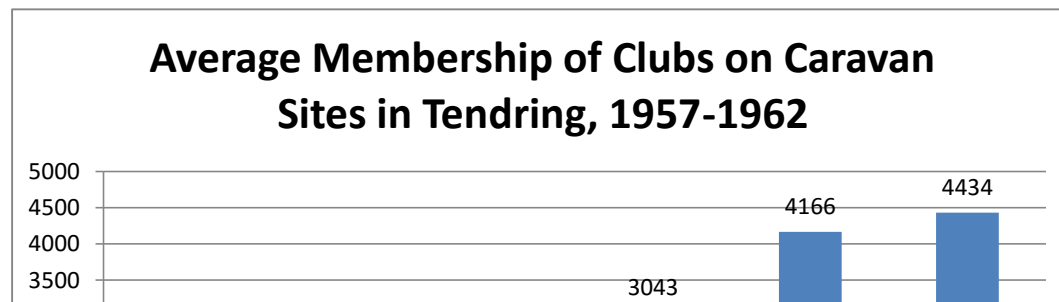
Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District: Sheet Three

Detail
List of Applications for Licence , Essex C. C.
Minutes, Essex C.C.
TRDC Gen. Pur. Cttee. Min.
List of Applications for Licence , Essex C. C.
List of Applications for Licence , Essex C. C.
List of Applications for Licence , Essex C. C.
TRDC Gen. Purp. Cttee. Minutes, !969-74
Licensing of Places of Public Entertainment Cttee. Mins., 1958-61
Licensing of Places of Public Entertainment Cttee. Mins., 1962-64

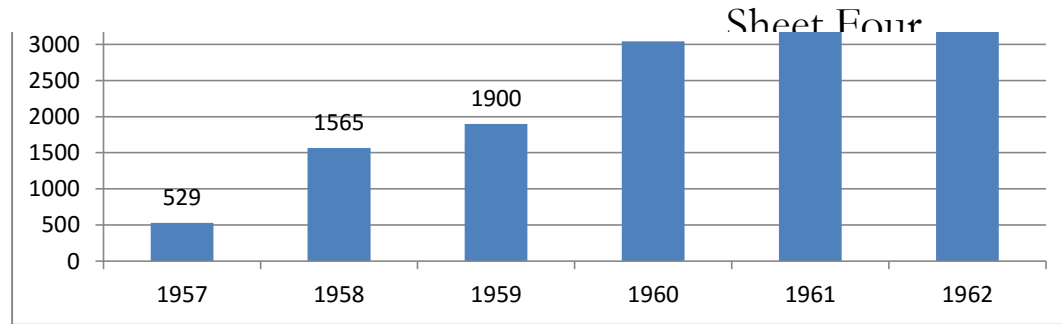
Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District:
Sheet Four

Caravan Site Club Membership Numbers by Year (Excluding temporary, associate, honorary etc).								
Number	Site	Club	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962
1	Anchor Caravan Park	Anchor Camp Club					31	151
2	Ponit Clear Estate	Coronation Club	94	79	89	95	76	96
3	Highfields Caravan Park	Dolphin Club	25	362	420	920	698	382
4	Firs Caravan Park	Firs Club					52	177
5	Highlands Caravan Park	Highlands Club			26	397	694	794
6	Martello Caravan Park	Martello Club		30	170	550	681	719
7	Sacketts Grove Caravan Park	Sacketts Grove Club					25	
8	Seawick Holiday Lido	Seawick Caravan Club	350	350	420	250	450	500
9	Shangri-La Caravan Park	Shangri-La Club	60	54	141	204	658	728
10	Charles Caravan Park	The Ranch Club				27	39	133
11	Rosebank Caravan Park	Rosebank Club					68	106
12	Valley Farm Caravan Park	Valley Farm Club	359	690	634	600	694	648
		Totals	529	1565	1900	3043	4166	4434

1957 1958 1959 1960 1961 1962
529 1565 1900 3043 4166 4434



Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District:



Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District: Sheet Five

Permits Issued for Amusements with Prizes under Betting and Gaming Act, 1960			
Date	Applicant	Premises	Source
29/03/1961	W. Ball	St.Osyth Beach Lido Amusements	D/RT M1/29
29/03/1961	E. Hull	Monks Head PH	D/RT M1/29
29/03/1961	S. Hiller	Shangri-La Holiday Caravan Park	D/RT M1/29
29/03/1961	J. Harbour	Wayback Caravan Camp	D/RT M1/29
29/03/1961	H. & L. Bull	Tower Amusements, Point Clear	D/RT M1/29
29/03/1961	H. & L. Bull	Beach Amusements, St. Osyth Beach	D/RT M1/29
29/03/1961	A. Stanley	Bay Café, Point Clear	D/RT M1/29
29/03/1961	T. O'Dell	Seawick Holiday Lido, St. Osyth Beach	D/RT M1/29
31/05/1961	C. Gray	Charles Caravan Camp	D/RT M1/29
13/05/1969		Monks Head PH	D/RT M2/6
13/05/1969		Shangri-La Holiday Caravan Park	D/RT M2/6
13/05/1969		Charles Caravan Camp	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		Anchor Caravan Park	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		Gaiety Arcade, Point Clear	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		Comodore Club, Point Clear	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		Bayview Café, Point Clear	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		Amusement Hall, Bel-Air Caravan Park	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		Amusement Hall, Bel-Air Chalet Estate	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		Amusement Arcade, Seawick Holiday Lido	D/RT M2/6
22/06/1971		Martello Club, St. Osyth	D/RT M2/6
		Bingo Club/Prize Bingo Licence under above Act	
17/02/1970		Club El Toro	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		St. Osyth Beach Club	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		Meadow View Club	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		Commodore Club	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		Quaterdeck	D/RT M2/6
31/03/1970		Gaiety Arcade, Point Clear	D/RT M2/6
23/06/1970		Amusement Hall, Bel-Air Caravan Park	D/RT M2/6

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District: Sheet Five

23/06/1970		Amusement Hall, Bel-Air Chalet Estate	D/RT M2/6
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Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District: Sheet Five

Description
TRDC Council Minutes, 1960-1
TRDC Gen. Purp. Cttee. Minutes, 1969-74
TRDC Gen. Purp. Cttee. Minutes, 1969-74

Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District: Sheet Five



Appendix Three: Analysis of Licencing for Clubs on Static Holiday Caravan Sites in Tendring District:
Sheet Six

First Licence Applications from Clubs On Or Near Caravan Sites, Tendring District			
Year	Venues	Location	Type of Licence
1954	Beach Café	St. Osyth Beach	MD
	Brooklands Café	Jaywick Estate	MD
1958	Dolphin Club	Highfields Caravan Park	MD, SME
	Shangri-La Club	Shangri-La Caravan Park, St. Osyth	C, CC
	Shangri-La Club	Shangri-La Caravan Park, St. Osyth	MD, SME
1959	Martello Club	Martello Caravan Park, Walton-on-Naze	MD, SME
1963	The Commodore Club	Point Clear Bay Caravan Park	MD, SME
	Valley Farm Club	Valley Farm Caravan Park, Clacton	MD, SME
1965	Ferry Boat Inn	Point Clear Bay Caravan Park	MD, SME
	Quaterdeck	Point Clear Bay Caravan Park	MD, SME
1971	The Monks Head	St. Osyth Beach	MD
1973	Hydro Marina Club	St. Osyth	MD
	Silversprings Motel	Thorrington	MD
	Tartan House, Frating	Frating	MD

Source: Sheet 3

Transcript of interview with Mr. Chris Edmunds, former area manager for United Dominions Trust, 12th March 2015

When did you first become with the caravan industry, and how?

Well, I joined United Dominions Trust which was a finance company in 1974, and their prime financings were caravans and cars.

And how long did you work with caravan park operators?

Well, for the full length of my time- which was 32 years with the company, although it was taken over eventually at the end it was part of Lloyds Banking Group.

What sort of terms did you offer in the early days for static caravan purchasers?

Well, at the beginning there were credit restrictions on cars, which was 24 months maximum with a deposit, and caravans- whilst they weren't as costly, theirs were up to 60 months originally, and the deposit could be 10 percent.

Did this make static caravans available to wider social groups in society?

Yes it certainly did- I mean finance itself made everything available, and this was the growth of everyone having things because prior to that people had the expression 'if I can't afford it I won't have it' and they all used to- the old folks- used to like to pay cash for their products, and thought that credit was a bad thing to have, and as times moved on that turned out to be totally unfounded as we can see today.

When did you see that changing?

Well, I probably didn't see it as clearly as most people because when you're working for a finance company, all you're interested in is getting people to take that product on. Perhaps I was not looking at it quite the same way as everybody else.

Did hire purchase and finance make static caravans available to those on lower incomes?

Oh yes, because as long as they could afford the monthly payments, because there were credit checks made on people, then we were prepared to write the business.

And because you are offered a longer term, say 10 years for example, do you think that helped make a difference?

Oh yes, because if you are taking any amount of money, the longer the period the smaller the monthly payment is, so consequently the longer you have the period the more affordable it becomes.

So you were happy to do that; was there any risk as far as you were concerned?

Well, the risk with static holiday caravans is we always know where they are, because after all if you were financing a car it can go anywhere, but it was on a plot at a caravan site- so we always knew where that product was.

What were the prices of second-hand static caravans like then In comparison with similar products such as cars, or perhaps boats?

Well they were still, you know, not perhaps expensive but yet they were still something to aspire to. You know, to have a caravan- because all things are relative to what people are earning at the particular time.

Would you describe them as a popular choice for working-class people during the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s?

Oh absolutely, because then- certainly in the early times- people weren't going abroad. There wasn't the sort of facilities for people to go abroad as there are now, I mean that was the thing- you either holidayed here or you didn't holiday at all.

Were their periods of growth and decline in the second-hand and new static caravan market?

Yes indeed, as with all things, er, its boom and bust. And I think that- without having figures to hand at the moment- as unemployment goes up so sales go down, and we have just lived through the last five years of poor times and I am sure- looking at the paper the other day car sales now have gone to a new record. But that's because things are changing.

Was there a great percentage of re- possessions in that period?

No. From a finance point of view it was probably one of the safest sections that we had, because we always knew exactly where they were, and so therefore- you know- we had control of the products, so to speak.

How would you describe your customers for second-hand static caravans, and new static caravans, in terms of their social group- their class-how would you describe them?

Well, I think this is quite difficult. They were people who always had the ability to get hold of cash payments. Perhaps the original thing, and I use this expression 'The London Barrow Boy' who was a cash man all the way through, and I think that I recall that a lot of people paid their deposits in cash. A lot of them weren't using banks for that and so that was the sort of thing that happened in those days.

So there was an element of a cash economy, perhaps a black economy?

A black economy I would say is perfectly fair.

Was that a situation that was dominant, or was that just some of them?

One never knows. I wouldn't have thought that there were many middle group managers or doctors that took on static caravans, so it's hard to say what those groups were- whether they were A, B, C or D.

So, essentially, if we went from the 1960s to the 1990s, was it essentially a period of growth during that time?

Oh yes. I mean, also the second hand market –people wanted a new caravan more and more, and the sites themselves had perhaps a 10 year rule, so that a caravan- when it reached the age of 10 years- had to come off the site. So only new caravans could then be re-purchased.

Do you remember how many sites you were dealing with in that time?

Well, the company I worked for was the brand leader in caravan finance throughout, and I think they actually wrote about 70 to 80% of all caravan business in terms of tourers as well, and this was primarily due to the stocking plans that they ran at the same time. But in the area I dealt with the majority of parks in some way.

So in the Tendring District?

The Tendring District which was my patch.

Chris that's been really helpful, thanks ever so much.

Colin Fox <foxesofharrow@yahoo.com>

Mon 19/01/2015 12:10

To:

O'Dell, Sean M;

You replied on 19/01/2015 19:51.

Dear Sean

I do indeed remember holidays at St Osyth beach in the 1950s.

I never knew the holidays as Tendring nor Southwick. They were "St Osyth" to me and my wider family.

We lived in East Barnet and then North Harrow.

Three of my Uncles each had their own caravans on St Osyth beach.

I don't think the "new" sea wall had been built when I first went, but once it was built, there was a small marsh area, then the unmade road, then a strip of sandy land upon which my uncles caravans, plus at least 100 more vans, were lined up then a smaller sea wall then the very nice beach and sea. On the same strip of land there were a few shops and a few semi-permanent wooden houses, which were I believe occupied throughout the year. The beach was flat and sandy. The vans were spread out with plenty of space in between.

One Uncle would drive us down. It seemed a very long journey from East Barnet. I knew we were nearly at paradise, aka St Osyth, when we got on to a bendy stretch of road made of large concrete slabs. I would shout in excitement that we were on the racing track and Uncle would oblige by (probably pretending) to drive fast.

I now recognize that this was a stretch of road on the outskirts of Alresford, where I now live.

When we reached the beach, the road turned to sand and we turned right to access "our" caravans. We would pass an amusement arcade and boating pool on the right, then our vans were on the left. The vans were well spread out so games could be played in between the vans. We became friends with the Brown family who owned the next van. There were individual septic toilet sheds which were emptied each day by "Dan Dan the lavatory man".

The vans were generally brown, grey or cream, but they had coloured stripes (known as gay stripes in the 50s) and were quite attractive.

The vans were each named and one good exercise was to walk the length of that part of the beach and read the names. We stayed in Uncle's "Wyenot". The richer

uncle had "Trident" which was an odd name at the time. Years later we noted that he owned a small factory that made parts for the revolutionary Trident airplane.

I loved running to the nearby shops. They were wooden and built on stilts. The pavement was wooden. To me, we were in Cowboy and Indian territory.

I can not recall any hall or place that provided ongoing entertainment. The boating pool appealed to me, with its little rowing boats for hire. And pennies went in to the slot machines in the amusement arcade.

Buses both single and double deckers, ran to the beach and parked under a cover at the end of the tarmac road. Buses ran to Clacton which was one of our outings, and also ran "day" trips to places that I can not recall. There was a bit of rock fishing. Games on the sand when the tide was out. Paddling or swimming in the sea. A walk along the beach or the unmade road as far as Point Clear to the West and Jaywick to the East. Marshmellow Towers and Pill Boxes.

The vans were cosy. The hiss of gas lamps was thrilling. Waking and looking out the window to see the sea was fairyland. Meals at a table overlooking the sea was magic. Picnics on the beach.

We would sing when it rained. The patter on the van roof was loud, so we had to sing louder "Rain rain go away, come back on Mums washing day"

My family also took holidays in rented bungalows on the South Coast, at Selsey. But St Osyth was much nicer. I guess we were very privileged that the wider family owned their own caravans and no doubt that's how my family could afford frequent holidays.

I visited St Osyth last year and felt desperately sad that the gentle flat beach, the old sea wall, the area where our vans stood, the small marsh land, boating pool and amusement arcade had all gone. Washed away and now looking akin to a bomb site.

I did have many snaps of StOsyth from 1949 onwards but these have been stolen. What a waste.

I attach three snaps obtained from my cousin. The vans are St Osyth beach, and the litter bin is probably Clacton.

I visited the area following massive floods (?1953?) and can recall standing in St Osyth village and looking at the sea stretch all the way to the beach. The vans had however been moved and I think returned after the floods receded.

One Uncle then moved from East Barnet to Alresford, perhaps in about 1955. No doubt they "found" Alresford as a result of their frequent drives to St Osyth. Summer holidays were then in Alresford which I again loved. This Uncle had a pet monkey."Tito". He was a major attraction at the beach and indeed in the village.

Steam trains still plied their trade, even though the new electric trains were running on the sunshine line as early as 1956.

About 1960.on two or three occasions, I cycled from Harrow to Alresford, to holiday with my Uncle, and then cycled on to St Osyth.

Clacton was smart. A bit too posh for my family. It is no longer posh !!

Fast forwarding to 1979 my parents moved to Alresford (from Pinner). I have now inherited their property and refurbished big time. I retired to Alresford in 2012.

One aside; My elder brother wrote about St Osyth for set homework. He was given detention for making up a story about somewhere that did not exist ! So the magic of Tendring had not percolated to the middle class teachers. I wonder what the saint Osyth thought about her existence being denied.

You are free to use any of this material as you see fit.

I could give more info, particularly the journey from London to Tendring, if you need it. Or what our families got up to day to day on those holidays,

Yours

Colin D Fox

Transcript of interview with Mr. Colin Fox, childhood caravan holidays, 1949-58, 2nd February 2015

I am just going to start Colin, if I can, by asking you where you are from and your family background please.

I am originally from Barnet, but from the age of about four I lived in Harrow along with my wider family.

Thank you, and when did you first experience a caravan holiday, and where would that have been?

1949, and that was on St. Osyth Beach.

Right, thank you, and what was your family's motivation to take a caravan holiday?

It was a wider family issue, er, I had three aunts and uncles who owned caravans which they placed upon St. Osyth Beach and we used to go along for our regular holidays to join them.

And when you got down to the caravans what was your daily routine? What sort of activities did you enjoy?

I was too young to be able to relate all the family activities in the right sequence but, er, having once unpacked we would be just straight on the beach, whether it was to run around and walk or whether it was to sunbathe. We would be straight on the beach, of course. As we were the kids, parents had the jobs of making up the food and, of course, the significant task of having to change the caravan from day to night use. It was very much family orientated in that I could run to my aunt and uncle who had one kid two caravans up, or I could run the further distance to an aunt and uncle who had one child 20 caravans up. So we were would all get together; we also knew the family that was in between whose surname was Brown. We would say hello to those and we would go and play on the beach, er, a particularly fond memory was that we would all get together when the tide was out, and the sand was excellent, and we would play French Cricket because everybody- young, old, boy, girl, would join in.

So you all kind of knew each other, was there a community there that everybody was familiar with, or was it easy to make friends?

Er, well it was the Sills family, so there was us lot, one family who weren't Sills', but were well known because they had a caravan between two of the Sills', so we were a big group like that; I don't remember having great friendships with other people.

And the French cricket when the tide was out sounds quite typical of some of the activities that I've heard of, were there any other activities?

Yeah, the boys would play soccer and regular cricket. We would go shrimping or some type of rock fishing with nets with one of the uncles, and it was almost every

evening you would walk the considerable distance along the beach either to Jaywick or alternatively to or towards Point Clear.

Was there any other entertainment that was different for the adults? Were the adults involved in all of this, or were they doing something different?

The adults were always involved. Quite honestly, I think their main task was to look after us kids. I am a family of four children, plus the two other children. Six children are probably quite a handful to look after, so I don't remember the adults going off. I know there was a very nice little café restaurant, but I never remember my parents going off to that.

And so just to be certain- this is in the late 1940s, early 1950s?

The first time I went was 1949; I don't remember anything before about 52 because I would have been too young. So we went on many of those holidays, say, early 1950s. I think they stopped in 1957 or 58.

Were there any facilities around there- around the static holiday caravan site- around there that you can remember your family using?

Yes, there was a boating lake that had rowing boats and later on little motor boats, and we used to enjoy going on those. There was a penny slot arcade, again on the beach side, and we would go to that. The shops were brilliant, because they were like the Wild West because they were up on stilts. Magic! Er, there was quite a few buses down there, single-decker and double-decker that parked in what I imagine was an old hay barn of some type. There was an open sided shelter; the busses would park up there. We would occasionally take the bus to Clacton; the busses seemed to run straight there. We would certainly go out on either evening or day trips to places which, quite bluntly, I can't remember.

When or why do you think this gradually came to an end? Were the caravans just getting old, or did you want to try other things, or other family reasons?

I think the caravans were probably coming to an end, but my uncle who would drive my whole family down here, he moved to the village of Arlesford, so we would then come down to Tendring and visit them, and I don't think they kept the caravan for long after living there. It was excessive money-wise for one to have a nice place in Arlesford, which was fairly seaside like and a caravan at saint Osyth. Er, my uncle was a blue collar worker, so never had a great deal of money.

And finally, just as a final statement on this, how would you describe- Just briefly if you had to summarise- how would you describe the atmosphere of caravans in the early 1950s? Of these static caravans on the beach- how would you describe the atmosphere of the holidays that you took in them?

Very friendly, very safe. No hooliganism or anything like that. Everybody seemed to be friendly towards you. You were friendly to them, er, the beach and the sea were safe to use.

Colin that's brilliant thanks very much.

**Transcript of interview with Mr. Dave Maidment, caravan holiday maker
1969-2000, 21st January 2015**

This is an interview with Dave Maidment, a former caravan holiday maker now living in Clacton on sea. Dave where are you from?

Walthamstow in London, and we used to holiday down here every year; besides other places we always managed to get the week down here.

When did you first experience caravan holidays?

1969 was the first year we had a caravan of any sort, and that was actually down at Saint Osyth on Seawick, and we carried that one on for two or three years until it was on its last knockings, and they asked 'get it off the site' and we couldn't find one for two or three years from people that were hiring, so we went on to the chalets which was at Bel-Air. It's all the same camps more or less it's in the same vicinity. We sort of stuck with that and eventually a caravan came back into our family, and we used to use it between us and we came back down again in the caravan, which was up to about ten years ago.

What was your trade in Walthamstow?

I was a stonemason, I worked on the roads paving, slabbing and that type of thing; putting paving stones down and curbs.

And how easy was it to find a caravan to take a holiday in?

There were sign boards outside the shops. You could always find one. It was in the local gazette, we used to have the Guardian. You could always find one. At holiday times you could always find one in the Guardian. It was normally Seawick in those days or Tower at Jaywick, its Martello now I believe. Or there was two or three others. You could always find a caravan, Seawick or what have you. There were a couple in Jaywick, Sacketts Grove I believe, er, Silver Dawn. There were always caravans you could get on sites like that.

What was the motivation to take a caravan holiday?

We just liked caravan holidays. Before we got involved in caravan holidays, we tried it out in a camper van, and we enjoyed it, and we decided a static one would be much better because you haven't got to worry about pitching up. When you're there you're there. And the following year I got to hear of somebody who had a caravan. That was 1969. We hired it, enjoyed it, and the following year came back again and that was the start of what's here now, the early days. The club house in the early days used to be called the El-Toro, I believe its Seawick Holiday Lido now. And there was the other little club on Bel-Air. You had, you know, a couple of places to go.

And what was the daily routine?

On Saturday when you came down you basically unpacked. We never did a lot of cooking in doors. I'm a great believer if I'm on holiday she is on holiday. So we used to eat out. There was places to eat, nine times out of ten you would pack up a picnic, say Colchester Zoo; we would go there one day. There would be a day when we would just walk into the village and we would have lunch in the Red Lion pub. Then we would go perhaps to the Priory and have a few hours there. There were horses there and deer. And another day we would just walk into Clacton. But basically you did not get the car out once you was down here. It was nice just to do that for the whole week until the next Saturday.

So how would you describe the entertainment?

There wasn't a lot, we had a singer in the little club in Bel-Air and he done I think about three or four nights a week. The other two nights we used to have a man come from Leytonstone. He had a shop, used to sell guitars and drums. Kenny Nichols. And he used to do two nights a week down here. He was a bit of a kids entertainer as well. He would have a gun and holster and swing the gun round and put it back in the holster, you know. He would do that on stage and the kids loved it. But that was basically the entertainment for one camp. The other camp they would do a few bits and pieces- hah- er knobbly knees, glamorous grandmother, that type of thing. That went on in the early days. Party night, Friday was always good. That's where you would say goodbye to everybody that you met in the course of the week. But you really got to know people once you came regular, It was year after year. You sort of get to know the same people. We got on with a crowd from Harlow, we used to have some great laughs.

What years were these?

This would be early seventies.

Did you make any of your own entertainment, did you organize anything?

One of the people who worked in the clubhouse itself asked me and a mate of mine if we had any ideas for the kids, 'cause there was quite a few kids down there that particular year, and we had a think about it and thought how about a sports day. And there was a big field at the back there that was never used, so we found a bit of old tow rope on the beach and done a tug of war with that and we found some other bits of rope which we cut up and made skipping ropes out of. Some old sacks, we done sack racing for the kids, and we had a fabulous time. And we organised a darts tournament in the club, but we only had one dart board, this took all day ha ha! This dart match went on for hours and hours, with one dartboard ha ha! They were queuing up, some got fed up and went home; half of them were drunk by the time it was their turn ha ha ha! But it was nothing, a bar of chocolate for the kids if they won something. It wasn't done for that, it was done for keeping them happy, and to keep them out of the amusement arcades- but there wasn't even many of them, really. There was one or two. And then we would always have an afternoon, Wednesday or Thursday, actually on the camp there, we would have a couple of hour's bingo. Not a

money bingo- a prize bingo. And I'll tell you what, we've still got -we moved down here 10 years ago- we've still got some stuff we found which were bingo prizes! Some were really good- a big solid glass ashtray we won. And that was one win. There was stuff worth doing in those days, there really was.

And how long did you actually take caravan holidays for?

Well, we had quite a few- we've been married 45 years and over the years we would have other holidays, but most years we would manage to get down here for a week and right on the very last knockings, before we actually moved down here, people had sold them all- got rid of them or they had been towed off where they he was old and that. The last few years before we actually came down here we used to take the £9.50 holidays from The Sun [newspaper], but we done that for the reason because we was looking for somewhere to live down here. So it was perfect, it all fell into place. But over the 45 years we've had, what, 30 years of holidays down here.

Why did you stop in the end?

We moved down here so we didn't need it anymore. The problem I had was when we moved down here I had to tell myself I wasn't on holiday anymore ha ha ha-I lived here!

That's great, thanks very much Dave.

MR & MRS F. E. JONES
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TEL. (01206) 262483

18/2/15

Dear Sean,
As promised enclosed my thoughts on the
holiday camps of the 1950s.

In the late 1950s I worked as a coach driver for Grey-Green coaches out of Stamford Hill. Regular journeys were undertaken often with more than one coach to a given destination. Apart from the South coast, our regular destinations were the East Anglian Coast. These were the days before near universal car ownership and our passengers were day trippers or those going for weekly stays at the holiday camps in the area. We would leave Stamford Hill at 7.30 or 8.00am and have three or four pickups on the way to the Mile End Road garage; our usual vehicles were Leyland half cabs with seating for just 33 passengers and a boot for cases at the rear. Saturdays were very busy as changeover days and it was often difficult to fit all the cases into the relatively small boots. We had a coffee/tea stop half way at a pub on the old A12 near Highlands where we would often find ten or so other coaches whose passengers also wanted service. As drivers we had to move our vehicles along the car park as others moved away. We did get free tea and cake though. At our destinations, the various holiday camps

around Great Yarmouth we would be met by groups of young boys + girls who had adapted the chassis of old trams to carry cases (for a fee!) to the chalets for the holidaymakers.

In some ~~one~~ instances we then waited around all day to take day trippers back, but other times we had more passengers to take to London than and there. Our journeys often took four hours as there were few bypasses to towns and villages on the A12 and long queues were frequent on the approach roads to the villages.

Foster Jones

I hope this adds to your collection
for the publication,

Yours sincerely,

Foster E. Jones

Transcript of interview with Mr. Jim Sewell, former site manager at Seawick Holiday Lido, 26th July 2011

Jim I am just going to ask you about the early days when you first started in caravan sites. So what are your memories of that – how did you first get involved?

My first memories were meeting Terry O'Dell Junior when he was employed on the building industry and through that we got to know and work with each other and he at that time said that his father was involved with a caravan site at St Osyth Beach and he wanted to know if I was interested in doing any plumbing work which was my trade at the time and doing any plumbing work on the camp and I said that I would certainly be interested and I duly went down and met and was introduced to Mr O'Dell senior and a guy called Graham ,I can't remember his surname, who was the manager at that time and they asked me if I would be prepared to carry out the plumbing maintenance to the blocks of toilets and in the club and other facilities at the camp which were installed at that time.

And so you went to work there full time –

no, initially when I went there which I believe was 1969, I used to go down there perhaps twice maybe three times a week, and the work was mainly confined to the toilet blocks and shower blocks that there on site at that time, and it was due to the toilet systems overflowing or not flushing, or broken toilet seats things like that which were inevitable through use and vandalism combined and, as I say, this used to involve two or maybe three days a week. Sometimes it would only be one day a week but they used to call me and I used to go down, you know, the next day if it was necessary.

So what were your impressions of the site then in 1969 what was it like?

– Em, at that time- it was my first experience of being on caravan sites- and I did not know what really what to expect, but there was quite a big area of space which was occupied by these oldish sort of caravans, that to me looked old, anyhow- I didn't know much about caravans at that stage. But there were roads and the like that used to serve the car park and there was a lot of fields and things like that all combined on there on the site that were not developed -there was plenty of space there for future development at that time- and the caravans were sort of all nicely decked and most of them had a little gardens around them and fences around them and you used to go around the park you know in the height of the summer season and you would see the owners sitting out there in their deckchairs in the gardens and you know and there would be several owners all collect at one caravan where they would be sitting there drinking tea and having their drinks and you know and all very sociable. There was a small sort of camp club house I suppose you would call it and a supermarket attached to it, and you know during the evenings that would be open and the caravan owners would all go up there and have refreshments as it were and beer and whatever, and a lot of them used to take it in turns and they would muck in because it was only a small sort of community at that time really, a lot of them would

muck in and actually help out serving behind the bar or do the inevitable cleaning and things like that the next morning but it was very sort of socialable sort of atmosphere at that time.

So they felt that they partly owed it to the park really – they were stake holders in the whole place?

Yes- definitely that's right, yes.

How many caravans do you think were there roughly at that time? Not exactly but roughly?

I would have thought probably about 150 but a lot of them were small caravans that to my mind were sort of touring caravans that had been permanently sited there, rather than the static caravans that were becoming or started to come into fashion as it were and which were bigger and wider when they came on the park and a lot of people did upgrade either to the bigger caravans, but there were some that were so immaculately kept the older type you know but you could understand that they did not want to change – for changes sake- because they were very very homely.

Where there any purpose-made static caravans there at that time that you would call non-touring static holiday homes?

Yes there were some statics, they were mainly of what was the common makers at that time--which was Bluebird, Belmont and I think.. Pemberton they were about the three and they all had caravans which were a lot wider than the conventional tourers. They were about 9 to 10 feet wide which was very big at that time and you know sort of 22 and 25 foot length was a big caravan, compared to a lot of the others that were on site-but there were the ones that were coming in and of course they used to have their own transport section at Seawick and they would bring them in with their own lorries and there was be a sales area although I was not involved with it at that time but there was a sales area where they used to demonstrate or display the new caravans and you know it was quite exciting sort of proposition really – to go into the park and see those on display there.

So those were the caravans that were being promoted to people who were coming onto the site rather than the old tourers?

Yes – I was not really involved with the administration or anything at that time, but I can remember that they used to have a touring site section where people could come down with their own tourers and would stay for perhaps a weekend or perhaps for a longer spell on a certain area of the park that was set aside for that but how many of those if any were interested in changing up to static caravans I don't know, but I think we used to see during the going round the site as it were for maintenance you could see that they were obviously selling new caravans and moving caravans about and during the process I gradually got more and more involved with the park because they were developing and building more toilet blocks, they were extending the club house, er they were doing work to the offices and doing work to the

workshop areas and places like that as the park was growing so they were developing further and I was getting more and more involved with my plumbing work, through the need, and I can remember basically that they built the Seagull Public House at the front of the park which was by all accounts initially going to be for a large supermarket right at the entrance of the park, but as the building went on and I think the demand for the leisure side grew that they decided instead of doing the supermarket to open it as a public house which had an upstairs bar as well which they were going to use for dances and various other attractions and that's how it went on you know, that transpired and it was very successful as a public house.

Was there a great demand for this sort of thing – was the business growing because people wanted to come there and buy caravans and new caravans?

I would think so yes. Em I can't remember how long I'd actually been there, but it was several years before I was approached by Mr O'Dell senior- that the manager who had been there at the time was leaving and would I be interested in doing a 'sidestep' or whatever and combine my plumbing work but also get involved with the office and doing some administration and you know working on that side as well- getting to know the working of the park and that from the inside as it were, rather than just out on the site itself. And I said yes I was certainly interested and he then offered me full time employment.

When was this -what year?

I can't remember to be honest what year it was it was in the 70's but I can't remember what year. Probably around the mid 70's.

Right.

But anyhow, the offer that he made was attractive at that time and I said certainly took the step and joined the Seawick Holiday Lido as it was.

Right.

At that time the office was based in I suppose it was an old like- prefab sort of building, em that used to fit the bill as it were but it was somewhat antiquated by modern standards, er but the park was actually beginning to get busier and during the course of my involvement erm I got involved with selling the caravans both new and second-hand ones which were coming onto the market through people part-exchanging. Which I found very interesting.

Can I ask you what sort of people bought the caravans? Where were they from and who were they- first of all in the very early days when you were first there -who were these people back in 1969 and 1970?

I would say that my memories were that they were mostly London people mainly from the north side of London or the outskirts of London you know , Essex in particular- who I would say were quite middle class people who had good jobs, and I

can remember quite a lot of them when I sold caravans to them, a lot of them were in the print game -at that time, erm and a lot of them – the husbands used to come down all the week and on Saturday nights they all disappeared back home because there were going in to do one night's work the -Sunday papers- and then be back again on the Sunday night and they would be there again for the rest of the week so they used to only go away to do one night's work and that was enough wages because it was very well paid by what they used to tell us, erm, it was a very well paid profession to be in at that time.

Where there any other sort of groups people who came to buy caravans or use the park at all?

Em I don't really remember what their particular trades were, but a lot of them used to come down mainly at weekends, i.e. the husband and wife and perhaps the children and perhaps the husband would leave the wife and children down here especially in the summer holidays, while they'd go back and continue with their jobs er but they were several garage mechanics, there was one or two people that I can remember were in the building trade, er, but there was quite a mixed variety from what I can remember.

So a mixture of perhaps were working class people and middle people?

Yes- Yes...er a lot of them obviously worked in London where it was commonly known that they obviously were paid a lot better money and wage structures to what there were around Essex this area of the country anyhow, er, and one or two of them used to say you know 'cor I don't know why you bother to work here you know you could earn twice as much as that if you come up London you know do plumbing up there in staid of mucking about down here' ...it did not appeal to me but obviously they, you know, were reaping the benefits of that extra money by coming down to the camp.

As time went on into the 70's was it the same mix of people would you say?

Yes I would say it was but I think you find that there was more middle-class people coming in, erm, because the price of the caravans were obviously going up and they were getting bigger they were getting obviously a lot better, the site was obviously increasing in size and we were selling quite a few caravans during the course of some weekends and you know we were doing advertising to try and reach the public through Daltons Weekly and other well known publications at that time to try and attract the people down to the park to see what we had to offer.

Just about the advertising- how did you advertise – was it just newspapers and magazines or did you advertise in any other way?

Em we confined it er...we used to do a regular advert in the Daltons Weekly, we would obviously get quite a good response from that and we would also have occasional advert in the Exchange and Mart, we would also do features and the newspapers used to come through to us every now and again and say they would be

doing a special feature on a caravan parks in Essex or you know, perhaps a special feature on caravans would we be interested in placing an advert and would perhaps insert it as a great expense you know just to do perhaps a one off as it were in a national newspaper. I can't say that we ever had an overwhelming success or demand following that ,but it used to get our name across, but I think our best method of advertising really was through the Daltons Weekly ,that's one that I can remember first and foremost.

So when you became involved with caravan sales and more on the administration side when would you say were your best years and what was the busiest times do you think?

Em , I think that the best years probably were late 70's early 80's. And I can remember that the site had grown considerably. When I first went on to the site and got involved with the administration side I think there was grounds within the park that allowed for another 200 odd caravans sites that hadn't been developed at that time, but we were gradually filling up through people coming on with their old caravans which we were also allowing to happen if they so wanted; we would allow them to bring their existing caravan, even if it was a tourer. And they could leave it there permanently for the season and pay an appropriate rent. But anyhow the park was filling up and we built new toilet blocks and new shower blocks, and extended the club a little and things like that until it got to the stage where I can remember that in the mid- to late- seventies they introduced what they called a serviced caravan. Now this was quite new to the trade- prior to these coming in every body had been dependant on collecting their water at a stand pipe and collecting their waste water in a bucket underneath the caravan, and having to take that and empty it in an appropriate drain and using, of course, the site toilets and facilities that were built for that purpose. But the advent of a fully serviced caravan was totally new to our trade.

What year was this?

Er, I can't be too specific, but I think it was about the late-seventies, perhaps the early eighties, but I can remember the first one coming onto our park for demonstration and display, for sale, and on looking at it- it had got a flush toilet, and as I say this was not something that anybody had ever seen before, erm, or all that anybody had ever seen before was a chemical toilet in a little cupboard. But to have a flush toilet in the caravan and a sink you know, with a tap that actually needed connecting up to the mains water was something new and we had to move with the times as it were and develop some new sites that were able to occupy this type of caravan.

And how did you do that?

Er- this was, this was quite a big, a big exercise because we used to be on mains drainage but that drainage was confined to just the toilet blocks and the drainage for the old buckets-you know- waste buckets. So we had to select an area that was

convenient to get into the mains drainage and also what was quite local to the water services that were on site. We also had to undertake a lot of checking on whether the electricity supply would lend itself to supporting the additional lights and equipment that these big caravans, these fully-serviced caravans.

Jim that's great-many thanks.

Transcript of interview with Mrs. Linda Tribe, caravan site visitor/caravan owner, c. 1952- present, 25th July, 2011

Thanks Linda. So I am just going to ask you about your first caravan experiences – what was your first caravan site and what was it called? I can't remember the name of the site but it was at Caister and I was three weeks old – first time.

First time- how many times did you go there?

Probably went there till I was probably about five I should imagine,

Right, right-and when was that?

1952.

52- how many caravans do you think there was there?

Probably 20 – 25 I should imagine.

Could you describe those caravans?

They were like a rounded, round-both-end type caravan - looking back on them now er-they looked like cardboard.

Right -were they new?

Yes, at the time they were new.

Were they the sort of ones that would have been towed on the road as touring caravans?

I would not think they were towed – no I think they were just on the park –holiday caravans- as static holiday caravans-

As static holiday caravans-were there any other forms of accommodation such as tents or huts?

I think you did have tenting because sometimes we did go in tents as well.

Right and why did your family choose a caravan site as opposed to a holiday camp such as Butlins or Pontins?

Because it was much cheaper and more better for the kids to be round the family at the time rather than going to a clubhouse so you was all round the caravan and cooking and eating and playing.

Right did you go to a Butlins and places like that as well?

I have been to a Butlins

So you did both?

Yes.

Which one did you do more of which holiday do you think?

Caravans.

Did you know the site owner of the caravan site?

Afraid I did not- no.

And did you own that caravan did your family own that caravan?

No ,we used to rent.

Right -so that site had caravans for rental-(for rental-yes) and did other people own caravans there?

Probably once I got a little bit older there were caravans that were owned by owners and they had a rental side and owners side and that was more at Felixstowe- that was in later years.

That was in later years, right-and that was at a different park?

That was as a different park that was Felixstowe Beach park.

Right , OK- did the first site, the Caister one, was there any formal entertainment?

I think there was a club house were, you know, Mum and Dad would go and have a drink if they-if my Nan would look after me.

But how did you spend your time?

We used to just run around the parks, erm, on the beaches with your Nan and Granddad, your Mum and Dad might be in the pub having a drink but just running round on the park.

Was there anything organised for you any kind of organised activities?

Not-not then not that I remember of.

No? And how about Mum and Dad -how did they spend there time?

Er, they would take us up the shops and on amusements onto the beach and then probably give us a bag of crisps outside the pub occasionally.

Right, so there were amusements there as well?

There's amusements, all things- little horsey rides and stuff like that along the beach. Erm, loads of things for kids to do really.

Right- and a bit of freedom?

Freedom -yeah -you'd to run around.

So what would you say was the appeal at that site to your family?

Safe -er, you'd met more people because of the different environment being on a holiday camp. Holiday camps you are in chalets or rooms and tended not to mix where on campsites you tend to meet people next door in that caravan and one down the road.

Right- so how did you sort of find out about the caravan – how did your family first find out about them- do you know?

I think the first time ever- when I was born- my Dad wanted to go away on holiday and somebody at work said they could have his caravan and then my Dad just had to hire transport to get from Hornchurch to Caister.

Right, and what year was this?

That was 1952,

52, right ,so he kind of heard about it through someone at work- and what did Mum and Dad do for work?

My Dad was a buyer for Brown Brothers in London

Right- what would you call that -what sort of job was that?

Buying electricals, [Right] electrical fridges, freezers for a big company and then they used to sell them on.

So would you describe Dad's family as working family?

Yes very working class –not, not rich by any means.

OK-

Used to have to really watch the pennies and save for holidays.

So how often did you use the caravan then – the one that was at Caister?

Probably only went there once a year and that was when I was little.

Did your family have a paid holiday ? Was there a kind of a firm's holiday that you could....?

No, just had to have time off when you wanted it.

And how many of you made use of that caravan then?

Well towards the end there must have been about three of us for that one in Caister [Right] -and then we started to go to other places and then there would have been five kids [Right] -and Nan and Granddad, Mum and Dad. Quite a lot of us.

So it became a kind of family holiday ritual- was it something that you always had?

Yes Dad always used to take Nan and Granddad away for a while when I was little

And were caravans always part of the holiday every year do you think that was something that your family liked?

They liked and what they could afford

And wanted to do it every year?

Yeah.

Did you get to know any other caravan people on the site any kind of holidaymakers or people who owned caravans or anything?

You got to know the kids but, I mean, after so many years now I have not got any clue who they are anymore.

So you not only used the caravan at Caister but you then used one at Felixstowe?

That was when I was from about 15 up until I was about 19 or 20.

If it's OK to ask, what year was this?

Oh yeah.. it would have been erm, nineteen ..early.. late 60's early 70's

And what are your memories about those caravanning years- were they very busy times on caravan site?

That was a busy time you'd to come home from work on a Friday night get in the car and drive down to Felixstowe from Ilford I lived then, and my boyfriend at the time and his Mum and Dad owned that caravan and we used to go down the sea front to Charlie Mannings, down to the Pier to see the people playing the organs and things like that and also the amusements and that was a great holiday time. Go in the club house, erm, dancing..

And the boyfriends parents who owned the caravan where they working people?

They were working people- the Dad worked in Ford's and Mum was a district nurse.

Right, OK- OK, and what, was the appeal the same for you then as it was perhaps for your parents earlier on?

Yep, yeah getting away for the weekend from London- out and just enjoy yourself.

Right, and so that lasted until when?

Till I was about 20 so that would have been around 1973[2] something like that.

OK, and did you use caravans after that or caravan sites?

Yes I mean we had been .. caravan sites at Rockley Sands and Sandford Park down at Dorset with my Mum and Dad and tents and that sort of thing.

So Mum and Dad were still keen to go to holiday caravan sites in the 1970's?

Yeah- well into the 70's.

And, so you have had a number of years then in static caravans?

Quite a few years in static caravans, holidays erm, and it was far better for my Mum and Dad and from their point of view it was cheaper than going to a Butlins which they could'nt afford.

Right.

And all the kids were all safe and the kids loved it.

So it was kind of a preferred choice really. Right, OK- and you are still on a caravan park?

I do live on a caravan park now ha ha!

In a wonderful home which is a beautiful place -is the atmosphere the same today do you think on caravan sites or had it changed a little?

It has changed a little in that the park that I am on is more retired people – reserved people rather than being holiday camp people that we were years ago– that is probably because of the age.

OK, well that's brilliant thanks ever so much Linda that's a really helpful interview.

E-Mail correspondence with Mike Hopper and Karen Borra, The National Caravan Council

From: Karen Borra [Karenb@nationalcaravan.co.uk]
Sent: 31 August 2010 14:33
To: ODell, Sean M
Subject: NCC Stats

Sean

Further to our telephone conversation please find attached some statistics, as requested.

Regards,

Karen Borra

Events Co-Ordinator / Exhibitions Manager
National Caravan Council
DDI 01252 796062
Mobile 07801 959710
DEDICATED DIRECT DIAL MEMBERS' LINE call 01252 336097
www.thecaravan.net
National Caravan Council Ltd, Catherine House,
Victoria Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 1SS
Reg. No. 519228 England & Wales
The National Caravan Council is the representative body for the UK caravan industry

To:
karenb@nationalcaravan.co.uk;
Thu 02/09/2010 08:11
Sent Items
Dear Karen,

it was good of you to take the time to send this info, many thanks!

Kind regards,

Sean.

FAO Mike Hopper
OS
O'Dell, Sean M
To:
info@thencc.org.uk;
Tue 06/08/2013 15:16
Sent Items

Dear Mike,
thank you for taking the time to talk to me on the telephone last week regarding my research into the caravan manufacturing industry during the second half of the 20th Century. As you are now aware, I am keen to get as much data regarding the

development of the static caravan manufacturing industry in this country as possible, including sales figures, production output, exports, numbers employed in the industry and so on for the period 1950-1990. Also some key questions remain unanswered- for example, why and how did Hull become the epicentre for static manufacturing in the UK?

I am sending this e-mail just in case I did not give this e-mail address correctly over the phone. I appreciate that you must be very busy, so I appreciate any help that you can give.

Once again, many thanks,
Sean O'Dell

Dept. of History
University of Essex.

OS

O'Dell, Sean M

To:

Mike.H@thenc.org.uk;

Mon 23/09/2013 14:12

Sent Items

Dear Mike,

firstly, thanks again for the production and export stats that you sent a few weeks ago, they were very helpful indeed. I know that this is a busy period for you, but I wondered if you had any further data on static manufacturing from 1950 to 1990? In particular I would dearly like to get hold of some idea of numbers employed, turnover - anything that contextualises the industry within the wider manufacturing sector.

Finally, could I ask your (and perhaps your colleagues) opinion as to why Hull has become the hub for UK static caravan production? We have our own theories on this, but I would like to know if there are any other factors that we have not considered.

Thanks again for your time- your help is greatly appreciated.

Sean.

Sean O'Dell

Dept. of History

University of Essex.

Mike Hopper <Mike.H@thenc.org.uk>

To:

O'Dell, Sean M;

Wed 02/10/2013 10:38

Dear Sean

Very sorry but we don't have data for this section of industry on turnover, number of employees etc. My own view about Hull is that it used to be the import terminal for

wood from Scandinavia. Caravans were made of wood, ergo the two got together.
Does this accord with your view?

Regards

Mike

O'Dell, Sean M

To:

Mike Hopper <Mike.H@thencc.org.uk>;

Wed 02/10/2013 15:54

Dear Mike,

many thanks for the reply and yes, this very much does accord with our view of Hull
as a manufacturing centre. May I quote you as supporting this theory in the
published research?

Many thanks again for your help,

Best wishes,

Sean.

MH

Mike Hopper <Mike.H@thencc.org.uk>

To:

O'Dell, Sean M;

Wed 02/10/2013 16:14

Hi Sean

Fine by me. I'm back in the office next week and will look to see if I can find some
further material which could be of use.

Kind regards

Mike

Research

OS

O'Dell, Sean M

To:

Mike Hopper <Mike.H@thencc.org.uk>;

Thu 03/10/2013 12:30

Brilliant!! Thanks Mike,

Sean.

NCC Stats

OS

ODell, Sean

E-Mail correspondence with PRODCOM/ Office for National Statistics

Good afternoon,

my name is Sean O'Dell, I am a PhD research student with the Department of History, University of Essex. My research interests are around UK static holiday caravan production and use in the post-war period of the twentieth century. I would like to know as much as possible about UK static caravan manufacturing from 1950 to 1990 as possible:- production figures, sales figures, employment, capital etc., and I would be most grateful if you could help me access any data that you might hold in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

Sean O'Dell

Dept. of History

University of Essex

To:

O'Dell, Sean M;

Tue 09/07/2013 11:24

Dear Sean

Thank you for your email.

We are currently experiencing problems sending email responses (from our info@ons mailbox) to some of our customers.

To overcome this problem we are sending the same response to customers using the individual mailboxes of our advisors, you may therefore receive 2 responses.

To help us resolve this technical problem, could you please respond to this email letting us know if this is the second or only response you have received and if the emails you received contained information or were blank. It would be helpful if you could also supply your telephone contact number.

I have forwarded your request to the Prodcum team who will send a response directly to you. Their contact details are:

Phone: 01633 456746

Email : prodcompuplications@ons.gsi.gov.uk

Kind regards

Gillian Day

Customer Advisor | Cynghorydd Cwsmeriaid

Stakeholder Management and Communication Division | Rheoli Rhanddeiliaid a Is-adran Chyfathrebu

Room 1.101 | Ystafell 1.101

Office for National Statistics | Swyddfa Ystadegau Gwladol

Government Buildings | Adeiladau'r Llywodraeth

Cardiff Road | Heol Caerdydd

NP10 8XG

Telephone 0845 6013034 | Ffôn: 0845 6013034

To: Prodcompuplications@ONS

Date: 09/07/2013 11:21

Subject: Caravan manufacturing - Ref: CCC12451

Sent by: Gillian Day

Dear colleague

Please see the email below, received 8/7/13 by the Customer Contact Centre. I am unable to find statistics for Static caravans, only mobile caravans. (29202292)

Could you please respond directly to the customer?

The customer email address is : smodel@essex.ac.uk

If I have forwarded this enquiry to you/your team in error, can you please let me know who the correct recipient should be? This will help improve our service to customers.

Thank you,

Gillian Day

Customer Advisor | Cynghorydd Cwsmeriaid

Stakeholder Management and Communication Division | Rheoli Rhanddeiliaid a Is-adran Chyfathrebu

Room 1.101 | Ystafell 1.101

Office for National Statistics | Swyddfa Ystadegau Gwladol

Government Buildings | Adeiladau'r Llywodraeth

Cardiff Road | Heol Caerdydd

NP10 8XG

Telephone 0845 6013034 | Ffôn: 0845 6013034

Caravan manufacturing - Ref: CCC12451

HF

Hannah Finselbach <hannah.finselbach@ons.gsi.gov.uk>

on behalf of Prodcompublishations@ons.gsi.gov.uk

To:

O'Dell, Sean M;

Wed 10/07/2013 16:24

Dear Sean

Apologies in the delay replying to your email.

Unfortunately the PRODCOM Survey started in 1992, so does not cover the period you require (1950-1990). In our current publication, static caravans would be classified as Prefabricated buildings (product code 25111030 if iron or steel/25111050 if aluminium), within Division 25 (Manufacture of fabricated metal products).

Statistics for pre 1992 may be available from an alternative survey held in our Library. You can arrange a visit to the Library to scan any required information, or alternatively it may be worth checking if any relevant documents can be sent to you.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss further, or if you have any questions on more recent statistics.

Kind regards,

Hannah

To: Library Enquiries@ONS

cc:

Subject:

Good morning,

my name is Sean O'Dell, I am a PhD research student with the department of History, University of Essex. Further to our telephone conversation this morning, my research interests are around UK static holiday caravan production and use in the post-war period of the twentieth century. I would like to know as much as possible about UK static caravan manufacturing from 1950 to 1990:- production figures, sales figures, employment, capital etc., and I would be most grateful if you could help me access any data whatsoever that you might hold in this regard. The PROCOM team suggested that this data would probably only be available from yourselves.

Many thanks,
yours sincerely,
Sean O'Dell
Dept. of History
University of Essex

To:

O'Dell, Sean M;

Fri 19/07/2013 17:03

Inbox

You replied on 22/07/2013 08:28.

Good Afternoon Mr o' Dell,

Further investigation reveals that we hold Product sales and Trade data for caravans, but not for static caravans. It becomes increasingly generalised the further back into the past you go - in 1992, caravans are included with motor vehicle bodies, trailers and caravans. By 1960 it comes under the overall SIC heading of motor vehicle manufacturing.

Suggested contacts for further research are:

British Holiday and Parks Association: <http://www.bhhpa.org.uk/>

Visit Britain http://www.visitbritain.org/Images/Foresight%20Issue%2059_tcm29-14790.pdf

National caravan council at http://thencc.org.uk/contact_us.aspx

Regards

Stella Giblin
ONS Library | Llyfrgell ONS
Room 2.057 | Ystafell 2.057

Office for National Statistics | Swyddfa Ystadegau Gwladol
Government Buildings | Adeiladau'r Llywodraeth
Cardiff Road | Heol Caerdydd
Newport | Casnewydd
NP10 8XG
Telephone: 01633 456582 | Ffôn: 01633 456582

Communication Matters | Materion Cyfathrebu
Communication Division | Is-adran Gyfathrebu
Please note that I do not work Monday, Tuesday or alternate Wednesday
Static caravan manufacturing in the UK

OS
O'Dell, Sean M
Mon 22/07/2013 08:28

Dear Stella, thank you for looking into this for me, and for the contacts- your help is much appreciated. Best wishes, Sean.

Transcript of interview with Steve Munro, Director of the National Association of Caravan Owners (NACO), 10th January 2014

When and how did you first enter the static holiday caravan industry?

My route into the static holiday caravan industry was via the office at Seawick Holiday Lido, at Saint Osyth- I was taken on as the assistant accountant , something like- November 1976.

From that time, how would you describe the caravan site clientele?

The clientele at the caravan sites at that time were drawn mainly from the east end of London, Essex- people whom would historically come to this area for their holidays, er, from London.

So London was the main area- the catchment area?

Yes-East-End, East-London up to Romford, Dagenham, Ilford, Barking- places like that.

In terms of social class, how would you describe them?

They were working class, I would say.

Were there any lower middle-class families or individuals?

It's not something that I would really tune in to very much or think about, probably quite a few. People who had their own business.

Oh, right- so small business people?

Yes.

Where there many of those, or were they in a minority?

I would imagine that he would be a minority-but a visible minority.

How did the caravan site develop from the late 1970s to the end of the 1980s?

Well, I I would say that it expanded- there was a programme of expanding the number of units available- for both ownership of a static holiday caravan and hiring out, also chalets- let's not forget that, so there was considerable development work and the leisure entertainment complex underwent considerable development during that period.

Was that a period of consistent development, or were there peaks and troughs?

Er, it's a job to say really-everything had peaks and troughs, that's because it's such a seasonal industry, but it seemed to me that everything was on the up.

And how would you say the caravan sites industry generally at that time compared with commercial holiday camps such as Butlins or Warners?

I think.... just from my own perspective.... I think there was a programme either knowingly or unknowingly of moving caravan sites towards commercial holiday camps, so ideas would be picked up upon to provide a sort of all in experience when coming down to the park.

Were commercial holiday camps becoming more like caravan sites in that they were being more 'free' with their entertainments and self-catering?

I imagine that the two things were coming together.

Were there any difficult times economically?

In the time period that we are talking about, I'm only aware of that being the case towards the end, I would say it was a period of growth.

How many people would typically be employed on a site such as the one where you worked?

Well, I would have thought that Seawick was probably quite a big employer because it was catering for everything that anybody needed when they came to their caravan when on holiday- there was quite a big office staff, a big maintenance staff and there was quite a big entertainment staff, if you include the entertainments staff maybe there were 80 people in a year, there was certainly 30 people as a minimum.

Then 30 people would be the core staff and that figure would rise during the season?

Yes.

Would that figure double?

Yes it's possible, maybe even up to 80 people.

How would you describe the entertainment facilities?

The entertainment facilities were tending to cater to traditional British working man's requirements- so there was a variety of licensed outlets, there was a variety of venues with stages that could put on different degrees of entertainment depending upon what you fancied at any given time- there was obviously children's facilities, so all round family holidays.

Was there live music?

Yes there was, live music was very popular- there is a big circuit, or there certainly was at that time, for previously big artists to go around and entertain people in what was effectively a new outlet- it was a new development really, in terms of the size of the venue and the people that they were catering for. There was a genuine feeling of

excitement on the day when there was going to be a show in the evening. You could feel it on the camp.

Was there live music from a house band; was this a local band?

It was a good breeding ground for any bands that formed in an environment where there were holiday camps- as an outlet where they could tailor their act to cater for what the managers in the clubs and the bars wanted for the clientele. There would usually be a house band, given that there were probably head- liners coming in, there would be a retained band and there would be a compere-the whole thing would mirror a sort of variety show that you might see on television in that period.

Were there regularly new customers for static caravans during that period?

Yes. I would say it was quite a good period for sales of static caravans.

Both new and second-hand?

I would say yes, because people would upgrade their caravans- it was a period of development in terms of design, there was a natural 'keeping up with the Joneses' feel, if somebody had a certain unit with certain specifications, it would pollinate everybody else.

Would you say there were any differences between caravan owners and those that used the hire fleet?

My understanding is essentially probably not, other than people who owned a caravan could somehow afford to own a caravan- but in terms of the people, I could not see a lot of difference. I would say broadly they were from the same background: working-class people mainly. Some people who took holidays would go on to own caravans.

At the end of the 1980s had caravan sites in Britain changed significantly?

Yes I would say it was a period of change. I think a lot of it came down to entertainments, and what people expected when they came to a caravan park- what facilities they expected to be at the park and how well-appointed they expected their caravan to be.

Had expectations grown or just changed?

They had grown.

Was there any significant change economically; were caravan parks in a better position economically at the end of the 1980s than they were at the end of the 1970s?

Yes- I would say they were, but there was a period coming up when things would not be so good- in hindsight.

So did things peak around the end of the 1980s?

Yes.

Okay- thank-you very much.

Sylvia Juggins <sylviaj1937@gmail.com>

Sun 18/01/2015 16:20

To: O'Dell, Sean M; You replied on 18/01/2015 18:49.

Reading your article in the Gazette on Thursday brought back many fond memories. I was about 9 or 10 years old when we first went to the holiday site , I am now 77. It was just after the war so to go away on holiday at the seaside was very special.

We all had new clothes to go away and I can remember how excited we were.

We stayed in a very small caravan in the field . The owners, Mr and Mrs O'Dell, always came to settle us in and invite us to the hall for a cup of tea and to book us in for an evening meal. My sister and I still remember the delicious rabbit stew she made us , we had never had anything so good.

The caravan was very close to the sea and we went to the beach every day (how funny can never remember it raining)

Us girls played in the sand and had a little paddle in the sea. Dad tried to teach us to swim but he had to be careful as there were still rocks from the sea defences under the water.

We all picked up cockles on the beach and Dad cooked them on the little cooker. we ate them while they were still warm. Can still taste them!!

There was one little shop which sold everything and us girls were treated to new beach shoes.

The one job I didn't like was having to pull the baby's push chair along the soft sand to get along the beach being the eldest this was my job.

In the evenings we would all get dolled up in our new dresses to go to dinner and stay to have fun and games. Anne and I always got up the front to sing " A Your Adorable " A popular song at the time.

Anne also remembers an Irish lady who taught her to tell the time.

One year two of us had sun stroke and Mrs O'Dell looked after us very kindly.

On the left hand side of the picture in the Gazette I think it could be me (or wishful thinking Ha!) sitting alongside 2 little boys.

I have enclosed a picture I found of our family at the camp. Happy Days

Kind regards

Mrs Sylvia Juggins (nee Roberts)

01255 81425 Please feel free to get in touch if you wish to asked me anything .