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## **The 'heritagisation' of the British seaside resort: The rise of the 'old penny arcade'**

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### **Abstract**

Amusement arcades have long been a key component of the British seaside resort. For almost a century they enjoyed popularity and success and became established as a quintessential feature of the British seaside holiday. However, the advent of home-based video games along with recent gambling legislation has led to a decline of the seaside amusement arcade sector. Arcades gained a reputation as unsavoury places and their appearance and fortunes often mirrored those of the resorts in which they were located. However, over the past decade a new variant of the seaside amusement arcade has appeared featuring mechanical machines working on pre-decimal currency. Such 'old penny arcades' frequently describe themselves as museums or heritage centres and they offer an experience based on a nostalgic affection for the 'traditional' seaside holiday. They have appeared in the context of an increasing interest in the heritage of the British seaside resort and constitute one element of the 'heritagisation' of such resorts. The paper argues that such arcades can be important elements of strategies to reposition and rebrand resorts for the heritage tourism market.

**Key Words:** seaside resorts, arcades, old penny arcades, heritagisation, UK

## **The heritagisation of the British seaside resort: The rise of the 'old penny arcade'**

### **Introduction**

This paper focuses on something that, in the English collective imagination, is a quintessential component of the British seaside resort: the amusement arcade (Elborough, 2010a). Such arcades have experienced mixed fortunes over the past century. At one time they were one of the core features of seaside resorts, offering distractions and thrills that could not be found elsewhere. In this they contributed to the social construction of the seaside as somewhere 'different' and a place of entertainment and escape. However, in recent decades amusement arcades have fared poorly, facing competition from new forms of home-based and family entertainment. But while the outlook for the arcade sector as a whole may appear to be very uncertain, a new form of amusement arcade has undergone surprising growth over the past decade. This is the 'old penny arcade', a sector based on the use of antique machines and old penny (1d) pieces that were rendered obsolete by decimalisation in 1971. There are now more than 20 such arcades in Britain, most of them located in seaside resorts.

This paper charts the rise and fall of the traditional amusement arcade at the seaside resort. It then goes on to examine the rise of the 'old penny arcade' sector with particular reference to the experience offered in these arcades. It seeks to situate the rise of such arcades in the context of the broader commodification of the 'traditional' seaside holiday and the consequent 'heritagisation' of British seaside resorts. Faced with a long-term decline in demand a number of resorts in the UK have attempted to relaunch themselves by repackaging their own pasts as a new (or emerging) form of heritage product. As such, 'old penny arcades' can play an important role in the rebranding of traditional resorts and their repositioning as destinations for heritage tourism.

### **The Changing Fortunes of the British Seaside Resort**

There is an extensive academic literature that has examined the British seaside resort. One strand of this research has charted the historical rise of such places, with authors such as Walton (1981; 1983; 1992; 2000) and Walvin (1978) detailing the social and economic context necessary for the development and growth of mass tourism at the British seaside. At the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century coastal resort towns were the preserve of the upper classes. They offered an experience based on the supposed medicinal value of sea bathing and sea air (although a number also became fashionable centres in their own right). However, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the nature of seaside resorts changed dramatically. The campaign for higher wages and greater holiday entitlement among the industrial working classes led to an increased demand for holidays in locations apart from the industrial towns and cities. The rise of the excursion train (in the context of a rapidly expanding railway network) connected coastal towns with the industrial cities (Walton, 1981), making the coast easily accessible as a holiday destination. As a result the number of coastal resorts increased dramatically. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century there were well over 100 such places, with the majority catering for (and dominated by) the mass working class market.

These new coastal resorts were unprecedented in that they were Britain's first settlements dedicated to mass leisure. These places offered accommodation to their visitors but they also provided new and diverse forms of entertainment and distraction. Indeed, resorts competed with each other to engage in spectacle and the production of novel experiences and activities (Hayler, 1999). In the process a highly distinctive 'architecture of pleasure' appeared at the seaside. This

included structures such as piers, promenades, towers, pavilions, theatres, ballrooms, fairgrounds and winter gardens. During the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, seaside resorts came to be socially constructed as 'different' and 'extraordinary'. They were landscapes physically removed from the normal routines and obligations of work and home (in both geographic and perceptual terms) and they were dedicated to pleasure and entertainment. They became liminal places, characterised by release, escape, excess and the temporary suspension of social norms (Shields, 1991).

Britain's seaside resorts remained popular in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century reaching their heyday in the 1950s. However, visitor tastes were now starting to change and seaside attractions such as theatres, concert halls and shows were less popular than they had been before the Second World War. In addition, many resorts suffered from a lack of investment due to the crippling costs of the War. From the 1960s onwards most resorts entered a long period of decline (Morgan and Prichard, 1999; Shaw and Williams, 1997; Urry, 2002; Walton, 2000). The rise of the cheap overseas package holiday certainly contributed to the 'fall' of the British seaside resort, although it was not the only factor. As Gale (2005) argues the rise of car ownership and the opportunity to visit alternative destinations within Britain (such as rural locations, heritage sites and holiday villages) also contributed to the decline of the resorts. Gale also claims that the facilities and attractions in many resorts (which had often been developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century) were showing signs of deterioration and the resorts themselves were increasingly suffering from negative place imagery. The decline in demand led to the closure of many attractions, tourist infrastructure and accommodation from the 1970s onwards. Many seaside resorts became associated with social deprivation (Agarwal and Brunt, 2006) and failure (Elborough, 2010a).

At the same time the tastes of tourists were changing. A number of authors (e.g. Feifer, 1985; Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Munt, 1994; Urry, 2002) have identified a new type of tourist that is known variously as the post-tourist, the post-mass tourist or the post-modern tourist. Such tourists tend to be members of the (new) middle class or service class. In a consumer society where identities are increasingly defined through consumption (Featherstone, 2007) such people use their holidays as a means of self-definition and identity formation. They increasingly reject standardised collective experiences (exemplified by the package holiday) in favour of new experiences in new destinations. In particular, these tourists favour forms of tourism based on nature, culture and heritage. The traditional seaside resort - based on a collective experience that is itself grounded in a particular historical and social context - had limited appeal for such groups. Indeed, post-tourists are likely to shun traditional seaside resorts and to regard them (and their associated infrastructure and entertainment) as 'low', 'common' or 'vulgar' (Hayler, 1999; Urry, 1988). The implication is that Britain's seaside resorts will have to reposition themselves dramatically if they want to survive (Urry, 2002).

Indeed, in recent years, there has been growing attention to ways of regenerating seaside resorts. This work has examined the future of resorts from both academic (Agarwal, 1999, 2002; Gale, 2005; Middleton, 2001; Smith, 2004) and practitioner perspectives (Beatty, Fothergill, Gore and Wilson 2010; Walton and Browne, 2010). Moreover, resort regeneration has become a matter of government policy. When the Labour Government issued their new tourism policy in 1999 (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999), the regeneration of British seaside resorts was one of the key recommendations. Since then, a number of organisations and agencies have put resort regeneration firmly back on the agenda, such as the British Urban Regeneration Association's 'Seaside Network' which considers best practice in resort regeneration; or the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment which ran the 'Sea Change' investment programme for resorts in conjunction with Regional Development Agencies until 2010.

Despite the considerable interest in the British seaside resort there has been very little research that has focussed on amusement arcades. This is surprising given that almost every seaside resort offers at least one of these facilities (and indeed, some smaller resorts offer few other indoor facilities for their visitors (Shaw and Williams, 1997)). Previous work has examined other quintessential components of the seaside resorts including piers (Adamson, 1977; Gray 1998; Pearson 2002); beach huts (Ferry, 2009a, 2009b); lidos (Smith, 2005); seaside fairs (Bennett, 1996; Copnall, 2005; Evans, 2009; Walton 2007) and holiday camps (Ward and Hardy 1986). Previous research into arcades has largely been limited to issues surrounding adolescent gambling and problem gambling (see Fisher, 1993; 1995; Griffiths, 1995; 1998); histories of amusement arcade machines and video games (such as Braithwaite, 1997; Costa, 1988; Sheff, 1993; Pearson, 2010), or local history books on arcades in specific seaside resorts (e.g. Laister, 2006). Therefore, before considering the rise and significance of the 'old penny arcade' it is first necessary to provide an overview of the British amusement arcade industry.

### **The Rise and Fall of the Seaside Amusement Arcade Industry**

Amusement arcades (usually simply termed 'arcades') originally developed in the UK from travelling fairs. The first examples appeared in the early 19th century in the form of games stalls and shows. The first automated machine of any kind is considered to be a stamp vendor patented in 1857 (Braithwaite, 1997). However, the automation of popular entertainments, such as those found on fairground stalls (e.g. gambling, games of skill, freak shows, test of strength etc), was constrained by the Betting and Gambling Acts of 1853 and 1854. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was evidence of automated entertainment machines in the UK. For example, Braithwaite (1997) argues that automatic machines found at Coventry Fair in 1897 were a significant starting point. Nevertheless, this cannot be considered to be an arcade as such (that is, a collection of automated entertainment machines grouped together in one place), since the machines were distributed across the fair, interspersed amongst other rides and attractions (*ibid*).

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century many former travelling showmen decided to settle in seaside resorts and establish 'static' arcades or 'gaff shops' (temporary arcade venues that were opened by showmen during the winter months). In this context, automated machines started to appear in fairgrounds and on piers along the British coast. These early machines included automated fortune-tellers, shooting ranges, strength-testers and kinematographs. Initially they were sited individually rather than being gathered in arcades (Braithwaite, 1997; Pearson, 2010). However, during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century formal arcades featuring a collection of permanent automated machines (such as mutoscopes, automated football, punchballs and mechanical clowns) appeared in many resorts. They were usually situated along a resort's promenade or located on its pier. By the 1930s amusement arcades were firmly established as a core component of the seaside holiday. They now featured a broader range of fully automated machines that included cranes (also known as 'grabbers'); Allwin machines (a wall mounted machine of 'skill' that involves firing metal balls into winning cups); electric shockers, prize shooters, and the first form of automated gambling machine, commonly known as 'one armed bandits' (Braithwaite, 1997). For visitors to the seaside such machines would have offered exciting and out of the ordinary experiences (Costa, 1988) and in this way, amusement arcades contributed to the construction of the seaside as a place of difference, pleasure and escape (see Lindley, 1973).

As British seaside resorts began to decline in popularity during the late 1960s many of the grand theatres, concert halls, pavilions and ballrooms (often located on piers) closed due to reduced patronage. In many cases they were swiftly transformed into amusement arcades (despite national planning regulations that were intended to prevent such changes of use). This was a relatively simple task as arcades did not require the buildings to be extensively refurbished, nor did they need specialist fixtures and fittings. Among the many examples of seaside structures that were converted to amusement arcades were Brighton West Pier's concert hall; the 360 degree cinema at Blackpool Pleasure Beach; Southport pier pavilion; and Colwyn Bay pier theatre. By this point there were numerous automated machines on the market, including gambling machines (particularly after the 1960 Betting and Gaming Act), cranes, pushers (also called 'penny falls') and many different forms of novelty games (such as horseracing, pinball, driving games etc). Arcades were cheap to run for their owners, requiring only an engineer to maintain the machines and a cashier to give change to the customers. Some of these machines were entirely mechanical, which reduced electricity costs.

As coastal resorts continued to decline, amusement arcades retained their popularity and the arcade sector at the seaside even underwent a period of rapid development and expansion. There were several reasons for this. Such arcades were now able to offer a range of increasingly complex and technologically sophisticated machines. The 1970s had seen the development of the 'video game' market in the USA, and by the early 1980s British arcades were able to offer games such as Space Invaders, Asteroids, Pong, and Pac Man. Such electronic games rapidly replaced mechanical gambling machines and other forms of novelty games. These were machines with a major appeal to youth and family markets and, with the home-based video games industry still in its infancy, arcades offered many young people the only opportunity to experience this new technology. In addition, gambling machines (which had previously been restricted) had become widely available as a result of the 1960 Betting and Gaming Act and were still considered a novelty. Thus, amusement arcades (and the seaside more generally) retained its reputation for spectacle and the extraordinary. On the other hand, traditional mechanical machines (which now offered nothing in the way of novelty) virtually disappeared from seaside arcades.

However, the growth and success of the seaside arcade sector was not to last. Instead, during the 1990s and the 2000s arcades entered a period of stagnation and decline so that some commentators predicted a very uncertain future for the seaside arcade (Bollum, 2006; Kravis, 2003; Tanner, 2004). The most significant reason for this trend was the rapid development and commercial success of the home games console (see Cohen, 1984; Sheff, 1993; Shippy and Phipps, 2009; Wolf, 2007). By the mid-1990s home games consoles were able to compete with the arcade video games in terms of the quality of graphics and game playing. Since then the manufacturers of such games have dedicated their efforts to the home market. Such home-based games were technologically superior and more interactive than the products offered within the arcades so that young people no longer needed to visit amusement arcades to enjoy video gaming. As a result, arcade operators were unable to compete in the video game market and many such games disappeared from arcades altogether. Those games that remain in arcades are often large and expensive 'simulators' (such as powerboat, skiing or racing simulators) in an attempt to compete with the 'interactive' game play offered at home, which many arcade operators cannot afford to invest in. Alternatively, they feature arcade versions of games that are popular at home (such as 'Guitar Hero'). In a dramatic turnaround, video games have gone from being the arcades' star turn to their least popular product.

As video games began to fade into the background, other types of trivial gaming machines returned to centre stage. A large proportion of seaside arcades had invested in reel based gambling (fruit) machines, which proved to be both popular and profitable for the sector. Within the arcade sector and gambling legislation in the UK, these machines are referred to as 'Amusement With Prizes' (AWP) machines. AWP machines usually have relatively low stake and prize values (unlike similar reel based machines that are found in casinos), and are based on games of chance or luck, rather than skill. Other staple amusements included cranes, penny falls, and redemption games (machines that pay out tickets which can then be redeemed for prizes).

In addition to the challenge posed by the rise of home-based video game entertainment, amusement arcades were also facing the problem of a poor public image. Seaside arcades had gained a reputation for anti-social behaviour and low level criminality among young people with little else to do and nowhere else to go (see for example, Kaplan, 1983). Fisher (1993; 1995) notes the dubious characteristics of some of the seaside arcade clientele, citing petty crime and violence amongst their traits. Indeed, Fisher (1995: 75) claims that amusement arcades in the UK are often perceived to be "dark, dingy and dangerous" and that "some amusement arcades are potentially unsafe venues for young people, and the locus for unsocial, undesirable and illegal activities". A similar study reported that a large majority (80%) of respondents perceived amusement arcades to be an unsafe environment for young people (Centre for Leisure Research (1990), cited in Fisher, 1995). Furthermore, Griffiths (1995) argues that seaside arcades, and access to AWP machines can encourage adolescent gambling addictions, and associated problems (such as truancy from school) amongst young people.

The seaside arcade was also starting to face increased competition from other forms of amusement arcade. From the mid 1990s onwards a number of major companies established 'Family Entertainment Centres' (FECs) in the UK. These are large, multi-purpose sites that often include arcade machines, bars, restaurants, ten-pin bowling, pool halls and other family play facilities and are targeted at a broad market. A number of these companies were multinational arcade machine manufacturers, such as Sega and Namco, while others were national arcade operators (e.g. Family Leisure). Not only were the FECs a new form of competition for the traditional seaside arcade, but they could also provide a secure, safe and clean environment for their customers. Moreover, FECs were more appealing to families (the key market for the traditional seaside arcade). With both these sub-sectors of the arcade industry competing for the same market, the market share of the traditional seaside arcade began to decline.

However, the seaside arcade sector faced its biggest challenge with the proposed reform of gambling legislation in the UK. A report commissioned by the Government in 2001 (the 'Budd Report') had emphasised the need to protect children from gambling. The report proposed to restrict the playing of all gambling machines to adults only. This would include the 'category D' games (AWPs) that were commonplace in seaside arcades. Following the publication of the Budd Report in July 2001 campaigns such as 'Save our Seaside' were launched by the arcade industry in response. As well as Budd's concerns regarding access to AWP's, the seaside arcades were also concerned by the recommendations regarding the freezing of stakes and prizes on gambling machines (which would make the arcades less competitive than other sectors of the gambling industry such as casinos and betting shops, which also offered reel-based gambling facilities), and the reclassification of popular machines such as cranes and pushers. One report predicted that "the explosion in the casino sector the Gambling Act is expected to trigger will condemn the bulk of the traditional market to extinction" (Mintel, 2004: 24).

As a result of lobbying by the arcade industry body (British Amusement and Catering Trades Association) and the 'Save our Seaside' campaign the Gambling Act that was finally passed in April 2005 proved to be less damaging for the arcade sector than was expected. Many of the key issues that were to have the greatest impact on the arcade industry did not feature (or were minimised) in the Act. The Gambling Act allowed seaside arcades to continue offering category D games. However, many machines are now required to carry labels informing potential customers that "this machine provides facilities for gambling". The labels go on to inform customers that they should gamble responsibly and give details of a problem gambling advice service. Nevertheless, although the Act itself was less damaging than expected, the period between the Budd Report and the Gambling Act was characterised by uncertainty and stagnation within the arcade sector as both operators and manufacturers reduced investment awaiting the reform of gambling legislation. This led to a further deterioration in many seaside arcades. The arcade sector has declined further since the Act: since 2007 arcade revenues have fallen by an average of 21%, 1000 jobs have been lost and 170 arcades have closed (Petrie, 2009: 17).

Amusement arcades remain an established part of the British seaside resort but they face an uncertain future (Murphy, 2010). In larger resorts, arcades are generally holding their own. However in the smaller resorts where visitor revenues are reduced, many arcades lack funds for investment and upgrading and are often run on a shoestring. Such places feature aging machines and a poorly-maintained environment, and they offer the seaside holiday-maker an unwelcoming and insalubrious experience. In this they often mirror the declining fortunes of the resort in which they are situated. However, there is still some innovation within the amusement arcade sector and over the past decade a new form of amusement arcade has appeared in some seaside resorts.

### **The 'Heritagisation' of the Seaside Resort: The Rise of the 'Old Penny Arcade'**

In 1971 decimalisation of the UK's currency made a whole generation of amusement arcade machines redundant overnight. The costs of converting the coin mechanisms from pre-decimal to decimal coinage would have been considerable and, in a climate of declining demand, unwarranted. Consequently many of the pre-decimal machines were destroyed, and only a small number were converted to accept the new currency. Others were restored and preserved by specialist collectors. Nevertheless, a considerable quantity of pre-decimal currency remained in existence.

Having almost entirely disappeared from public view for several decades, pre-decimal arcade machines have made an unexpected comeback at the seaside (see Table 1). An increasing number of arcades have opened (particularly during the past decade) that feature antique machines, usually operated by pre-decimal currency. There are now at least 12 of these 'old penny arcades' at coastal resorts in England, and a number of others at inland locations (see Figure 1). They feature an eclectic range of mechanical games. Most were manufactured prior to the 1960s at a time when commercial gambling was illegal in the UK. Consequently, such machines had to be based on an element of skill, rather than chance. They include Allwins machines (see Plate 1), pinball games and 'test of strength' games. Other machines are novelty-based and for amusement only. They include fortune tellers, peep shows and 'what the butler saw' devices, along with racing games, animated models, and machines such as laughing clowns (see Plate 2) or sailors. Many arcades also feature games of chance that appeared after the 1960 Gambling Act such as 'one-armed bandits' (see Plate 3) and penny falls. These arcades vary considerably in size from small

outfits featuring a handful of machines to much larger concerns (the largest of which contains over 100 antique machines). In most cases visitors to these arcades can purchase pre-decimal penny coins (at prices that range from 5p to 25p per coin) or they can bring their own coins from home. In other cases, a number of free coins are included in an admission charge. A few arcades feature machines from the pre-decimal era that have been converted to take decimal currency.

Superficially 'old penny arcades' may appear little different from conventional seaside arcades. Both types of arcade feature a range of skill, chance and amusement games; both usually employ a cashier and an engineer; and both are intended to generate income. However, there is an obvious difference in terms of the age and sophistication of the technology employed. Moreover as highlighted above, conventional arcades have predominantly invested in gambling and gaming machines (such as AWP's, cranes and pushers) in recent years. Consequently, the product offered in a penny arcade is markedly different from a conventional amusement arcade. Indeed, in an attempt to differentiate themselves from conventional arcades many old penny arcades describe themselves as 'museums' or heritage centres (see Table 1). Examples include the 'Mechanical Memories Museum' in Brighton; the 'Old Penny Museum' in Great Yarmouth; the National Museum of Penny Slot Machines in Southport; and Rye Heritage Centre. Some of them include small exhibitions and interpretive displays about the historical development of the seaside resort or, in some cases, about the machines themselves. Others contain information labels placed on individual machines. Some present their 'collections' as being of historic significance (such as a number of machines in the now-closed 'Beside the Seaside' exhibition in Bridlington that were presented in protective casing), or 'antique' (although in fact many of the machines in the penny arcades date from the 1960s or later). One of these arcades ('Under the Pier Show' in Southwold) features a quirky collection of contemporary, home-made machines that work on decimal currency but which reproduces the spirit of an old penny arcade.

Like many heritage attractions in the UK, the majority of 'old penny arcades' are in private ownership (see Table 1). Most have been established by individual entrepreneurs (often collectors of vintage machines) who have recognised the growing nostalgic interest in the 'traditional' seaside holiday and have acted on their own initiative to develop an appropriate heritage product for visitors. These arcades are intended to generate a profit for their owners and, like any other visitor attraction, need to attract sufficient customers to remain in business. A smaller number of arcades are managed by local authorities (or in one case a charitable trust). Some of these arcades are 'stand-alone' attractions in their own right, while others are incorporated into larger visitor attractions.

The recent emergence of old penny arcades can be identified as one element of the contemporary 'heritagisation' of the British seaside resort. The growth of the 'heritage industry' within the UK has been well documented (Halewood and Hannam, 2001; Hewison, 1987; Urry, 2002; Walsh, 1992; Wright, 1985). During the 1980s and 1990s heritage tourism experienced dramatic growth, particularly in the number of heritage attractions open to the public. Britain already had a healthy stock of historic buildings and monuments (such as castles and country houses), but during the 1980s there was a marked diversification towards new types of attraction, particularly those themed around industrial heritage. At a time when manufacturing and extractive industries were closing, many regions turned to heritage tourism as part of strategies to rejuvenate local economies (Johnson and Thomas, 1992), a process which Hewison (1987: 95) caustically termed the "heritage solution". The result was a boom in industrial museums and heritage centres, particularly in those parts of the country that had historically been dependent on manufacturing industries. Examples famously included Wigan Pier in Lancashire and Beamish Open Air Museum



in County Durham. This in turn substantially redefined the geography of heritage tourism in the UK, bringing numerous industrial towns and cities that had previously experienced little tourist interest into heritage tourism circuits (examples include Liverpool, Glasgow, Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford).

However, Britain's seaside resorts were largely by-passed by the heritage boom of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. At a time when both country houses and industrial heritage were enjoying huge popularity, seaside resorts were unable to offer either sort of attraction. Moreover, resorts lacked the novelty value attached to industrial heritage; indeed they were saddled with an image of decline and desperation. The main centres of heritage tourism were the countryside and industrial towns (Timothy and Boyd, 2003) and coastal resorts were also geographically removed from such places. Finally, heritage tourism has long been known to be a predominantly middle-class activity (Light and Prentice, 1994) while the main customer base of British seaside resorts was comprised of less affluent working class visitors. Hence, while the heritage tourism boom substantially transformed some parts of Britain, the country's seaside resorts were largely unaffected. Many of these resorts were as old as the industrial towns and cities that were then in fashion but, as Urry (quoted in Franklin, 2001) has observed, they were not considered or valued as 'heritage'.

However, in recent years, the heritage tourism industry has unexpectedly embraced the British seaside resort. This has taken place in the context of a broader 'rediscovery' of the coast among the British population. For example, the five series of 'Coast' broadcast by the BBC (2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010) enjoyed huge popularity and re-ignited popular interest in the British coastline and its resorts. A glossy monthly magazine called 'Coast' was launched in summer 2006. Moreover, holidaymaking at the British seaside has revived in recent years and both the number of holidays taken and the rates of hotel occupancy have increased (Barrow 2009). A key factor here is the rise of the 'staycation' following the 2008 global financial crisis. At a time of constraints on domestic spending an increasing number of Britons are foregoing a foreign holiday and electing instead for domestic travel. One survey in 2011 reported that more than a quarter of the British population were planning to take their main holiday in Britain (Insley, 2011). Much of this domestic holiday-taking is focussed at the seaside (Anonymous, 2011) and many resorts are seeing a revival of their fortunes (Elborough, 2010a). Moreover, this is taking place in the context of a new national tourism policy (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2011) that explicitly seeks to stimulate the growth of domestic tourism.

In parallel, there is a growing nostalgia for the 'traditional' seaside holiday (see for example Pearson, 2005; Elborough, 2010b, Anonymous, 2011). This is one of many instances in which something that is perceived as being in danger of disappearing altogether becomes the focus of heritage interest (see Lowenthal, 1985). For example, Urry (2002) has argued that the rapid disappearance of industrial and working class cultures that accompanied the deindustrialisation of Britain in the 1980s generated nostalgia for the industrial past. This, in turn, led to an increased interest in industrial heritage tourism. However, at a time when industrial heritage appears to be declining in popularity (as demonstrated by the closure of a number of high-profile attractions, among them Wigan Pier Heritage Centre) heritage tourists are seeking new destinations, attractions and experiences.

This is the broader context in which some UK resorts have been seeking to move away from their traditional products of beach and sea and rebrand themselves as destinations for different types of tourism. A number of resorts have identified their history *as resorts* as an unexpected asset. Recognising an affectionate and nostalgic collective memory of the seaside holiday they have

sought to develop heritage tourism by offering an experience based on tradition and the 'heritage of the recent past' (Walton and Wood, 2009). These initiatives have usually been led by local authorities and public agencies within the context of urban regeneration strategies. For example, in the resort of Margate the local authority and a charitable trust are working to transform a former amusement park (Dreamland) into 'Dreamland Heritage Park'. This is acquiring redundant objects from other seaside fairgrounds with the intention of opening a theme park overtly based on the heritage of the seaside funfair.

Another example is Southport in northwest England which has sought to reposition itself as a 'Classic Resort' (North West Development Agency, 2003) and indeed now promotes itself as "England's Classic Resort". The town has sought to rebrand itself for affluent middle-class consumers seeking a short break in a destination which offers a combination of a traditional beach and seaside location, the heritage features of a Victorian resort (such as a recently refurbished pier and an assemblage of distinctive resort architecture) and high-status leisure shopping and dining. Nearby, Blackpool – a town that for many would seem the very antithesis of a heritage attraction - is bidding for World Heritage Site Status on the basis of its history as the birthplace of the working-class seaside holiday and the unique landscape of pleasure that has evolved at the site. Achieving this status would make it the first seaside resort on the World Heritage List. The status would give Blackpool global prestige and recognition as a heritage resource and make a potentially significant contribution to local regeneration strategies (Walton and Wood, 2009).

Similarly there has been increasing recognition and appreciation of the architectural and built heritage of the seaside resort. Some high-profile and iconic examples of seaside architecture (such as the Midland Hotel in Morecambe or the De la Warr Pavilion in Bexhill) have been regenerated in a way that recalls the spirit of the seaside in the 1930s. Similarly, after many decades of decline and neglect, an increasing number of seaside piers are being refurbished and reopened (Dyckhoff, 2008) and the National Piers Society is pushing for the development of a national piers museum. Statutory agencies such as English Heritage are also paying greater attention to seaside architecture (see for example Barker, Brodie, Dermott, Jessop and Winter, 2007; Brodie and Winter, 2007; Mason, 2003; Williams, 2005) and increasing numbers of piers and other seaside structures now enjoy formal protection.

Overall, then, various seaside resorts are undergoing a process of 'heritagisation' in which the values and aesthetics of a particular historic period are imposed upon a space (Walsh, 1992). The recent revival and promotion of 'old penny arcades' (along with other elements of the traditional resort such as piers and beach huts) can be seen in this context. They offer an experience which is overtly based on nostalgia for the seaside holiday of 50 years ago, and the use of pre-1971 pennies enables visitors to physically connect with, and experience, the coinage and mechanical machines of an earlier generation. Indeed, some of these arcades are named in such a way to evoke the 'traditional' seaside holiday of the 1920-1960 era. These include names such as 'Old Penny Memories' in Bridlington, 'Under the Pier' in Southwold and 'Slots of Vintage Fun' in Blackpool. In many ways the process of heritagisation of certain elements of the seaside resort can be considered to be the 're-imagining' of the 'traditional' seaside holiday, almost (re)creating a 'myth' of what seaside holidays in the past were like.

While the revival of 'Old Penny Arcades' has been predominantly a coastal phenomenon, Figure 1 indicates that there are a number of such arcades that are not located in seaside resorts. Two of these (at Battle and Arreton) are situated within a few kilometres of the coast. Moreover, a further two (Newton Abbot and Battlebridge) are within the hinterland of established resorts

(Teignmouth and Southend respectively). Most of these 'inland' arcades form part of broader attractions centred on heritage (such as Bygone Times in Chorley or Yesterday's World in Battle); traditional crafts (such as the Museum of Amusements at Tattonhall which is part of Cheshire Workshops Craft Centre); or retail complexes based on antiques and collectibles (such as Battlesbridge Antiques Centre). What is significant is that, even if not physically located on the coast, a number of these arcades clearly evoke the British seaside holiday. For example, the arcade at Arreton is named "The End of the Pier Arcade" while that Wookey Hole is named 'Wookey Hole Pier'. The latter's website ([www.wookey.co.uk](http://www.wookey.co.uk)) promises "all the fun of the seaside under cover" and invites visitors to "take yourself back to the heyday of the Great British seaside holiday". In these cases the presence of an old penny arcade is used as a signifier of the traditional seaside holiday, even if the arcade is not at a coastal location. This is a further indication of the growing nostalgic appeal of the British seaside holiday and also illustrates how the commodification of the British seaside extends beyond seaside resorts themselves.

### **Conclusion: Old pennies, new tricks?**

Writing in 1994 Prentice identified seaside resorts as one form of heritage attraction. However, despite the popularity of heritage tourism in the UK over the past 3 decades, heritage tourists have been reluctant to embrace seaside resorts and the resorts themselves have been slow to engage with heritage tourism. Instead, many continued to offer a product based on the traditional combination of beach, sea and 'cheap and cheerful' entertainment, even though the demand for this product is in long-term decline. More recently, however, there is evidence that some seaside resorts are starting to reposition themselves for different forms of tourism as part of strategies for regeneration and rebranding. In particular, some are developing products and experiences based on the commodification and heritagisation of the 'traditional' British seaside holiday. Indeed, as Franklin (2003: 137) notes, British resorts have proved to be "remarkably resilient, morphing into new lives for fashionable nostalgias". At the same time there appears to be growing interest in seaside resorts among heritage and cultural tourists who are seeking a traditional and nostalgic experience of the seaside. As such, seaside resorts can be identified as a form of 'emerging' heritage and they demonstrate the ways in which new forms of heritage are constantly being drawn into circuits of heritage tourism (Timothy and Boyd, 2003). This trend is not unique to the UK and there are many other instances throughout Europe and the Developing World of destinations, regions and countries formerly dependent on seaside resorts that are seeking to develop new products based on heritage tourism (see for example Cameron and Gatewood, 2008; Timothy and Daher, 2009).

Amusement arcades, featuring a range of novelty and skill machines have been established features of the British seaside for almost a century. In popular culture and collective memory they are inseparable from the image of the 'classic' seaside holiday. However, in recent decades arcades have fared poorly in competition with home-based video games and have struggled to come up with attractive and relevant games and remain profitable. Today, many amusement arcades are more of a hindrance than an asset for the resorts in which they are housed: many feature aging machines housed in shabby premises and are often perceived as unsafe or antisocial environments for families. In many cases, the arcade symbolises the declining fortunes of the resort itself while, for resorts with ambitions to reposition and regenerate themselves, such arcades are a liability.

'Old penny arcades' on the other hand offer something entirely different from the traditional seaside arcade. This is a sector that, although relatively small, has expanded over the past decade in contrast to the decline of many contemporary seaside amusement arcades. These 'old penny' arcades offer an experience of the seaside rooted in an imagined 'golden age' of the British seaside holiday. Their status as museums or heritage centres makes them entirely appropriate attractions for resorts that are seeking to reposition themselves for heritage and cultural tourism and for a different type of tourist. Moreover the emphasis on 'fun' and 'innocent' forms of entertainment mean that they are suitable for children and family markets and can counter the generally negative perceptions of conventional seaside amusement arcades. Old penny arcades can also play a role within resort regeneration strategies that are centred on the heritage of the seaside holiday. As seaside resort heritage increases in popularity the number of old penny arcades (and similar attractions and museums based on the heritage of the seaside holiday) is likely to increase in number.

The old penny arcade sector, although at present a specialist and niche market, may offer lessons for the conventional seaside amusement arcade sector. In particular, contemporary arcades (and the manufacturers of such machines) could look to the old penny arcades for a model of an arcade experience based on skill, entertainment and novelty. Although there is a limited supply of original pre-decimal machines, there are ample possibilities for the development of new 'heritage' machines that can take decimal coinage. The 2005 Gambling Act included the possibility of banning access to gambling machines to those aged under 18, meaning that conventional arcades would find some of their most profitable machines restricted to adult use. On the other hand, the games in old penny arcades are mostly for amusement only and so are not subject to gambling legislation (and even those machines that might pay out 'cash' prizes are not subject to the gambling laws since the money that is won is out of circulation and therefore has no value!). It will not be possible for all contemporary arcades to become museums or old penny arcades but there is the opportunity to develop new forms of machine based on the principles of novelty and fun that are appropriate for the contemporary arcade environment. In essence, the seaside arcade would then return to being a place for family entertainment (rather than centres for gambling) by offering skill-based and novelty forms of entertainment based on innocence, fun and, to some extent, tradition and nostalgia. Paradoxically, the future of the seaside arcade sector may lie in embracing the heritage industry.

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