

Sussex Research

Designing the seaside: architecture, society and nature

Fred Gray

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Designing the Seaside

Fred Gray

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Preface

The purpose of this book is to piece together some elements of the making, using and representing of Western seaside architecture. The beginnings of the book, in a professional sense, date back to the late-1980s, while at a personal level its origins stretch back five decades to my own childhood experiences of the English seaside. Although the errors and misinterpretations are my own, the book has depended on a group of sometimes unwitting collaborators.

The book's themes have been developed in a variety of academic and public contexts. I am especially grateful to the students studying with the University of Sussex Centre for Continuing Education who have discussed and criticized my ideas. Particular thanks are also due to the following individuals: Eamon and Michel of Seafront Image, Brighton; Hilary Lane for help with my understanding of the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill; Sylvia Endacott for the information about Hothamton, perhaps the first planned resort; Jessica Rutherford, David Beevers and their colleagues in The Royal Pavilion, Libraries and Museums of Brighton and Hove City Council; Bob Bradley for opening the resources of Margate Museum to me; Philip Godwin for information about Cromer and Norfolk; Tim Loe for the material on and tour of Tinside Lido, Plymouth; Sue Berry for her insights into the early history of Brighton as a resort and English seaside parks and gardens; Andy Durr and Steve Peak for helping to explain the relationship of the fishing industry to holidaymaking in, respectively, Brighton and Hastings; Zena Thompson of Brighton, Jinty Rouke of Tauranga City Libraries, New Zealand, Margaret Evans of the Queenscliffe Historical Museum, Victoria, Australia, and Christian Deflandre of the Musée de la Carte Postale, Antibes France for providing access to some important images for the book; and, David Sawyers for his deep understanding of the significance of swimming in Brighton;

Mary Hoar has made a sustained and delightful contribution from the early 1990s to my own understanding of seaside architecture; Geoffrey Mead supplied a wonderful array of resources for the book and gave freely of his knowledge of all things Brighton; my other Centre for Continuing Education colleagues Mike Boice, Pam Coare, David Rudling and Martin Ryle provided some excellent seaside titbits; Richard Riding, John Muir, Martin Easdown and other friends from the National Piers Society instructed me about British seaside pleasure piers; Rachel Clark and Geoff Lockwood involved me with the struggle for the survival of Brighton's wondrous West Pier; John Field told me about his own studies of class conflict at the seaside; Ted Lightbown bestowed many brilliant Blackpool images, some of which are reproduced in this book, and showed me Britain's most popular resort; Richard Morrice helped develop the early ideas for the book; Marie-Noël Tournoux told me about French seaside architecture, particularly on the Channel coast; Margrit Kühl allowed me to appreciate better the inter-war seaside architecture of Germany and Italy; Bernd Fischer guided me around some of the architectural glories of Germany's Baltic coast; Melissa E. Baldock deepened my fascination with the iconic Coney Island and Allen "Boo" Pergament, an Atlantic City, NJ, USA historian, provided wonderful insights into that resort's rich history; John K. Walton, the supreme historian of the seaside, made insightful comments on sections of the draft text; Doris Parfitt provided a collection of seaside postcards; and, David and Nickie, Justin and Jo, Lyn and Steve, and Mark and Fi shared the pleasures of experiencing the south coast of seaside England.

Lastly, my gratitude to Carol, Jack and Holly, for enjoying so much seaside architecture with me and for putting up with the fixation that has so often led us on coastal diversions in various parts of the Western world in search of a pavilion, pier or lido by the sea. The book is for them.