

CHAPTER 1

The inter-war years 1919 to 1939 and the impact of the Second World War (1939–45)

Evidence suggests that the growth of the services represented by such [sea-side and other holiday] resorts, including the services of transport, has been among the most rapid forms of economic growth since the [1914–18] war, and that its effect upon the movement of the population has been of the first importance.

Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population
(Pimlott, 1940, p. 240)

In the twenty-first century there are many who appear determined to live in what Eric Hobsbawm termed ‘a permanent present’. Some, perhaps, to quote LP Hartley’s famous aphorism, because ‘the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there’; others, because they fail to see the relevance of past events to modern times. But it is also widely agreed that those who forget their history are condemned to repeat it. At least one can safely argue that most of the seeds of the future can be traced in the past. For tourism this is especially true of the inter-war years. In many ways it was a sad and tragic period lasting only 21 years, characterized by grinding unemployment and poverty for many in the 1930s. Such conditions facilitated the rise of ruthless dictatorships in Germany, Russia, Italy and elsewhere in Europe that would set the scene for the Second World War. But it was also a time of great incipient change, especially in the social conditions

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of the population, emerging lifestyles, better communications, growing political awareness and action. This period witnessed a transition away from the Victorian Age toward the new world of greater individuality, mobility and innovation in most spheres of daily life, and especially in leisure and travel. Against what one might suppose, as this chapter notes, it was also a period of remarkable growth in travel and tourism and of developing social ideas that are still easily traceable today.

The appalling loss of life and economic ravages of the First World War were closely followed by the century's most vicious outbreak of 'Spanish Flu', which claimed over 21 million lives around the world. Economic recovery was barely under way before the Great Depression (1929–30) spread to Europe from the USA. It quickly brought economic progress to a halt and plunged millions of people into economic misery from which they would only be relieved as industrial expansion was funded by governments in preparation for the Second World War. As economies picked up, the war clouds gathered and wartime conditions and deprivations returned in 1939 for six long years.

A changing society and new mobility

In the 1920s and 1930s some of the main trends of post-war tourism were clearly discernible and some remarkable developments occurred. The First World War had led to major social changes, not least in the position and status of women, half the population, who were finally to get the vote with equal rights to men in 1928. Slaughter in the trenches during the First World War resulted in a much more sceptical attitude to 'authority'. What was known at the time of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and of Stalin's pre-war communist regime, together with the economic conditions of the 1930s, led to a widespread belief in the ideals of socialism across much of Europe and North America. This belief would change the agenda in the inter-war years and come to fruition in the UK after 1945. The First and Second World Wars took millions of people from their normal home environments, tossed them into a cauldron of feverish activity and change, and moved them frequently within the UK and abroad. Traditional perceptions of home, village and town boundaries were broken; ideas of communication between people altered. Allied to increasing personal mobility such changes laid the social foundations for a growing demand for travel and tourism. In the hothouse of war, technical and technological progress was rapid in aircraft, motor transport, communication systems and the mass production processes needed for weapons of destruction and other military supplies. All of these developments would find applications relevant to post-war tourism.

Rail travel reached its peak of popularity in the 1930s, using leisure excursions as well as holiday travel as a major stream of revenue. The famous steam locomotive, Mallard, reached its record 126 miles an hour in

1938 and the 'Bentley boys' achieved their string of records at Le Mans 24-hour races in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Apart from a few transatlantic services by airships, sea travel was the main form of long distance transport, with the great liners such as *France* and *Queen Mary* built in the 1930s competing for the Blue Riband transatlantic record. Bus and coach travel expanded greatly, helped by the dramatic developments of road vehicles during the First World War, after which thousands of surplus army trucks were turned into the charabancs that were the basis of the bus and coach industry for the next twenty years. Dylan Thomas immortalized the role of such vehicles for leisure travel in his classic 'The Outing', about a day trip to Porthcawl (men only) in the 1920s.

By the 1930s some two thirds of the population already lived in the seven British conurbations of upwards of one million each: 'These imprisoned millions needed little persuasion to escape when they could' (Pimlott, 1947, p. 213). Private cars became an important transport mode, although ownership was still mainly the preserve of the wealthy and the rapidly growing suburban middle class. In 1930 there were an estimated one million cars on the roads of Britain and the first Highway Code was published. By 1939, notwithstanding the depression years, some two million private cars were licensed, including mass-produced Austin Sevens, Ford Eights and Morris Minors that were designed for a budget conscious leisure orientated market. By contrast, the less affluent used bicycles, which were readily accessible and there were estimated to be some 10 million bicycles providing the only affordable personal transport option available to most. Road traffic signs were not standardized in Britain until 1934, which also saw the first pedestrian crossings (Belisha beacons). Motorways were built in the USA and Germany although not in the UK, where dual carriageway roads and the first town bypasses were the height of sophistication. Ferdinand Porsche designed Hitler's 'people's car', the Volkswagen, which was launched in 1936 and London's first Motor Show for the public opened at Earls Court in 1937. The effects of this growth over a decade altered the traditional patterns of tourism in ways that would become much clearer after the war.

Motor drawn caravans, known originally in France as *maison automobiles*, appeared just before the First World War but 'caravan design was revolutionized in the 1930s when Hutchings produced his first Winchester'. This was an art deco inspired streamlined vehicle with egg shaped curves and a clerestory roof that became known as the aero look and set the design norms for at least 25 years (The Times, 2000, p. 93). The first caravan parks were established around Britain's coasts promoting a rash of insensitively located sites that would not be controlled until planning legislation was introduced (Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, 1960).

Although numbers were still modest, more British people travelled abroad, mainly to Europe, in the inter-war years and volume increased in the late 1930s to about one million visits. Britain was still essentially a class orientated, law-abiding society, relatively insular despite Empire links. It was still steeped in traditional practices and lifestyles that the Great War had

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powerfully challenged and undermined but not yet greatly altered, at least on the surface. Church going was already in decline but continued to wield a strong influence on national issues. Life was relatively simple, largely home focused, and essentially family orientated. There was no inflation. Indeed there was deflation for a time in the 1930s. Prices had not changed much for over 100 years. Holidays by the working population who were able to afford them were in the main limited to the nearest seaside resort for occasional day trips or a week's holiday at best, in July and August, or to visiting friends and relatives. Travel by train or bus was the norm.

After the First World War most manual workers could not afford to stay away from home on holiday, but the issue became identified as a form of social justice and the pressure for state intervention in support of holidays grew strongly in the 1930s. It led to the formation of the Interdepartmental Amulree Committee in 1937 that produced probably the most far-sighted evaluation of UK tourism in the twentieth century. Perhaps because it focused on demand and not organization, its approach was far more profound and influential than anything produced in the strategic tinkering of the last quarter of the twentieth century – and it led to the Holidays With Pay Act of 1938. Legislators do not work quickly in such areas and the Act was several years in the making. The TUC had first passed a resolution in favour of paid holidays for all workers in 1911 and unsuccessful Bills were put to the House of Commons in 1925 and 1929. However they did not attract enough support at the time and paid holidays was not a political agenda issue in the economic and political circumstances of the next five years. The 1938 Act, arguably the most significant government decision influencing travel and tourism in the twentieth century, meant that a worker's entitlement to holidays with pay would be the norm in the future and it laid a key foundation for developments in tourism after the war. Ironically, it was passed not by a socialist but a Conservative Government. Its provisions were not compulsory although the Act had exactly the intended effect over the following two decades.

New ways of thinking

Influenced by the same movement that had led, before 1914, to the growth of nonconformist churches, trades unions, the National Trust and the ideals of socialism, there was a remarkable inter-war years development of non-profit-making organizations, clubs and societies providing a range of holidays for their members. These included, for example, Youth Hostels, Cyclists Touring Club, Holiday Fellowship, Workers Travel Association, Co-operative Holidays Association and so on. These not-for-profit organizations emphasized in their objectives and practice the educational and social values of leisure and holidays. Interestingly the word 'tourism' was rarely used and even then it had a pejorative meaning. A nineteenth-century dictionary

defines tourists as 'people who travel for the pleasure of travelling, out of curiosity and because they have nothing better to do', and even 'for the joy of boasting about it afterwards' (Lundberg, 1985).

The Youth Hostels Association, which began activities in 1929, aimed 'to help all, especially young people of limited means to a greater knowledge love and care of the countryside . . . and thus promote their rest and education.' It had 80 000 members by 1939.

In 1919 the Co-operative Holidays Association claimed to provide holidays that were spiritually and physically bracing. The Workers Travel Association in its Annual Report of 1924 promoted 'travel as the best means of achieving mutual understanding between the workers of all countries. Such understanding is only possible by mutual contact, by interchange of visits, by the study of languages and by an interest in the history, literature, art and social movements of other countries.' The objects of the Holiday Fellowship were 'to provide for the healthy enjoyment of leisure; to encourage love of the open air; to promote social and international friendship; and to organise holidaymaking and other activities with these objects.' The National Clarion Cycling Club (*Fellowship is Life; Socialism, the Hope of the World*), formed in 1895 had its membership peak in 1936 when it had 8306 members in 233 local associations across Britain. Overall there were some 3500 cycling clubs with 60 000 members represented by the Cyclists Touring Club and the National Cyclists Union. It is estimated there were some 10 million bicycles in Britain by the end of the 1930s. The bicycle undoubtedly freed millions from their urban confines and promoted an attitude shift toward the countryside that would develop strongly with the popularization of the motorcar before and especially after the war.

This movement of self-help and self-improvement, often associated with socialist ideals expressed through travel and leisure, was a very powerful force in Britain in the inter-war years, where travel had always been respected as a cultural and educational force. The ideas led also to the rights to ramble conflicts that were focused politically in the mass trespass on Kinder Scout (Derbyshire) in 1932 and influenced the thinking on national parks that would mature during wartime and be expressed in the National Parks legislation of 1949. On the Continent, notions of State or political intervention to provide tourism facilities were much stronger, often associated with social and sometimes socialist motivations, as well as health ones. Both Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia organized subsidized mass holidays for hundreds of thousands of their party members and for youth members in the 1930s, partly as reward and partly as propaganda. In many ways such developments pioneered the forms of mass tourism that would dominate holidays in free Europe after the war, albeit through private sector intermediaries for profit rather than State organizations for political reasons. Religious interests, especially in pilgrimages, were another source of non-profit travel generation.

The role of social organizations in tourism was significant and continued in Britain and more so in mainland Europe in the years of

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reconstruction after the Second World War, when socialist doctrines were generally popular and often the driver of government policies. Club Méditerranée, for example, was formed initially in line with socialist principles by Gerard Blitz and Gilbert Trigano, both pre-war French communists. Villages de Vacances Françaises and Cheques Vacances provided subsidized holidays for the less well off in France. In Britain, however, paradoxically following the victory of a Labour Government in 1946, the movement declined in significance as entrepreneurs in the holiday industry developed efficient low cost mass-produced package tours. Nationalization and government regulation and control were no match for entrepreneurial thinking and understanding of market forces, and tour operators achieved for a mass or popular market what pre-war idealists had sought in terms of affordability and easy access. Many will regret that the heady ideas of self-development and moral improvement of the inter-war years were rather lost in the process.

The volume and patterns of pre-war tourism

Some pre-war data are provided in Appendix V, but there were no precise measurements of tourism in this period and there was no recognized system of tourism statistics in Britain until the 1950s. Market research was still a relatively unknown art.

Professor Sir Frederick Ogilvie published the first economic study of international travel into and out of Britain (Ogilvie, 1933), devising his own estimates based largely on official migration and transport records. During the period from 1921 to 1931 the best year was 1929 when 692 000 overseas visitors came to Britain, including visitors from the Empire and Commonwealth and expatriates. These numbered 240 000. British residents travelling abroad were estimated as just over one million. Ogilvie was strident in his criticism of the quality of the available data and much of his criticism would still be relevant 60 years later in 1995 and on into the twenty-first century.

Receipts from overseas visitors were estimated at £22 445 000 and spending by British residents on their travels abroad at £32 794 000. Even at that time a substantial debit balance was a concern for the Government of the day. Fare payments from inbound visitors were not measured but it is likely that these would have shown a credit balance of some size. Before the Second World War there was no formal government tourism policy to promote Britain's attractions overseas, only the grant of small funds allocated to the newly formed Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland since 1929. By contrast, a number of countries, especially in Europe, were making great efforts to attract tourists and Britain was seen as one of the leading markets.

International travel in general steadily increased in Europe in the 1920s reaching a peak in 1928 and 1929, but declining substantially as the deep economic recession took hold. In 1929 there were an estimated one million visitors to Switzerland, 1.25 million to Italy, 1.95 million to Austria and over one million to France. In some cases numbers were reduced by 50 per cent by 1931. However, traffic recovered slowly to reach new record levels by 1938 as the leading countries introduced tourism promotion and development programmes. Tourism was also greatly encouraged by the heavy depreciation of currencies in some important destinations such as Germany and Italy.

American travel to Europe increased rapidly in the 1920s to over 400 000, but was obviously affected drastically by the Great Depression. Indeed this peak figure was not exceeded until post-war expansion in the 1950s.

The volume of overseas visits to Britain recovered slowly from the recession helped by the establishment of the Travel Association with its overseas promotional programme. The peak inter-war year was 1937 when official records reported just under 500 000 foreign and Commonwealth visitors. This did not include visitors from the Irish Free State nor British expatriates returning from short trips on leave or for holiday. It seems likely that the total was a quarter or so higher than the peak arrival figures of the 1920s.

A feature of the overseas visitor movement to Britain was the high proportion of non-European and long distance visitors. Great Britain still rejoiced in its status as a worldwide Empire and in 1937, compared with 100 000 US nationals, there were 200 000 overseas British nationals (Commonwealth etc.) arriving and staying for long periods. Accordingly their tourist expenditure was high, making Britain's tourism traffic a high value, low volume trade. This was quite different from the situation in Europe where countries like Switzerland and France attracted over 90 per cent of their foreign visitors from other European countries. This pattern of travel continued for at least a quarter of a century after World War II until declining length of stay and the withering of former Imperial connections altered the volume-value balance toward more and more people, fewer nights and reduced expenditure per stay. One estimate of Britain's tourism revenue in the 1930s indicated that it exceeded that of France.

With no official or other recognized system for measurement, estimates of domestic travel within Britain were very approximate. The best assessment suggested that by the late 1930s, at the time of the Holidays With Pay Act, one third of the population or 15 million people took one annual holiday staying away from home within the country. It is impossible to quantify growth, therefore, but it does seem realistic to suppose that domestic holiday taking doubled between 1920 and 1938. Such growth fuelled the remarkable investment in resorts such as Blackpool, Eastbourne and indeed most leading seaside resorts during the 1920s and later 1930s. The combination of what is left of the Victorian, Edwardian and Art Deco styles of seaside architecture provide a fascinating visible reminder of the vitality of past growth periods.

Government interest in pre-war tourism

The national tourist organization for the UK had its origins in the 'Come to Britain' movement founded in 1926 by Sir Francis Towle, then Managing Director of Gordon Hotels in London. Its focus was inbound visitors, London and the role of the private sector, especially hotels. This movement created lobbying pressure from the industry and the need for some Government financial aid was immediately clear. The Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland (TAGBANDI) was formally launched and recognized in 1929 with a modest £5000 grant from the then Chancellor of the Exchequer – Winston S. Churchill. Governments began to take more of an interest in tourism at the national level after the 1930s' Great Depression when the potential for foreign exchange earnings was first recognized.

This new initiative was badly needed as travel declined sharply and suddenly in 1930 as a result of the Wall Street crash and the subsequent depression. More than half of transatlantic business was lost. The Government's knee jerk response was to cut its grant to the Travel Association to £4000 as part of a public finance saving programme, which was exactly contrary to the required economic medicine for recovery. Interestingly the Travel Association was persuaded to change its name in 1932 to The Travel and Industrial Development Association of Great Britain and Ireland in an early recognition of an inward investment role. The Government's £5000 contribution, however, was not restored until 1936 although it increased to £15 000 in 1938 (British Tourist Authority, 1972). Many will see parallels with government responses to tourism in later eras.

Apart from its role in public transport provision and regulation, there were two main reasons for the growing political and government interest in domestic holidays and inbound tourism in much of Europe. Firstly a reforming spirit and socialist pressures led to the widespread introduction of agreements concerning time off and holiday pay. By 1937 workers' holidays were regulated by legislation in 20 countries. By 1939, under arrangements agreed before the 1938 Act in the UK took effect, 5 million workers were already covered by holidays with pay agreements in the UK. In Belgium there was a national office for workers' holidays; in France an Under Secretary for State for Leisure and Sport; in Germany a vacation section of the 'Strength through Joy organisation' (KDF); and in Italy rest houses run by Il Dopolavoro.

The second reason was the economic turmoil brought about by the Great Depression era of the early 1930s. Many governments responded by introducing a tourism programme for promotion and for certain aspects of tourism development. Some countries suffered severe depreciation of their currencies, which boosted tourism businesses. For the fortunate stronger currency countries, such as Britain at that time, outward tourism expanded as it offered obvious bargains to those who could afford it.

As noted above, one motivation for government interest in leisure travel was a political response to a growing interest in social welfare, and the belief that leisure and recreational facilities for the poorer sections of the population were socially and in some cases morally desirable. 'Access for all' 'For the many not the few' were not sound bites of the 1930s (the sound bite age was not invented at the time), but the ideas were the same and they were powerful in their influence. Social tourism, as this policy came to be called in European countries, involved savings schemes, subsidies and cheap transport for families on state railways, state subsidies for spa facilities (the Kurorts), hostels, holiday camps and centres. Many non-profit-making groups were involved, including trade unions, political parties and religious organizations.

In the UK, in the inter-war period, government interest was concentrated more on the perceived balance of payments advantages of tourism and there was no evident recognition of its great economic and social significance and potential. There was from time to time, however, state action and legislation affecting tourism as a result of government policies dealing with major current issues. For example, although not passed until 1943, the Catering Wages Act established a Wages Commission and Wages Councils to protect the large numbers of workers in the hotel and catering industry who were then largely not represented by trade unions. Until that time, in some of the more expensive hotels, waiters and other customer-facing staff were still expected to work solely for remuneration based on tipping. As an interesting addition the Commission was charged with reporting on the provision of holiday facilities, partly a social measure, but specifically to keep under review the requirements of overseas visitors. The Commission actively pursued this task until it was later taken on by the British Travel Association (known as the British Travel & Holidays Association from 1951).

The Hotel Proprietors Act 1932, dealing with the responsibilities of host and guest, notably in relation to stolen property, introduced a more modern definition of an hotel, always a problem area for state regulators.

One of the early pieces of legislation in Britain in support of tourism was the Health Resorts and Watering Places Act of 1921 (Pimlott, p. 244). It permitted local authorities to spend profits from municipal enterprises for tourism up to the equivalent of the revenue of a penny rate, on limited forms of advertising. In 1931 this power was extended in the Local Authorities (Publicity) Act, which granted powers to draw directly on the rates to the equivalent of one half (old) penny for promotional purposes – including overseas promotion for the first time. A further increase to 1.3 old pence was permitted in 1936. These were important steps in recognizing (in principle and practice) local authorities' responsibilities in what would now be known as 'destination management'. Local authorities played a pioneering role in securing government recognition for the importance of tourism outside London and enjoyed a level of recognition, trust and confidence from Central Government in the 1930s that has long since been withdrawn.

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The Health Resorts Acts also provided some limited exemptions from the strict Sunday trading laws, which after the First World War closed most shops on Sundays. Resorts were allowed to permit trading on 16 Sundays in the year, then the weeks of the main holiday season, in a restricted list of articles deemed necessary for travellers. The list was odd, permitting for example the sale of herrings and saucy postcards but not the Bible.

In Scotland for many years bars were closed on Sundays, but hotels were permitted to serve drinks to refresh travellers who had journeyed at least three miles from home. There was in consequence a good degree of Scottish mobility on the Sabbath.

Throughout the inter-war years, the evidence suggests that the Government's role in Britain was responsive to industry representation, reacting to the economic and social issues of the day where tourism was seen as a useful aid to their main-line policies. The Holidays With Pay Act was very significant in its implications although tourism was not considered to be an important sector of the economy requiring any significant public support or state intervention.

In many ways one can argue that this proved beneficial and encouraged the development of necessary public/private sector partnerships. It helped to prepare the way for the massive development of the holiday and tourism trades after the war. From its early years The British Travel Association, under its various titles, sought commercial and local authority members. By the 1950s, the Association had several thousand members and could claim to represent a wide range of industry interests making up the travel trades. Although the private sector involvement in the Travel Association was never more than a very small percentage of the total business sector, it did include leading companies and made possible some effective working relationships with the public sector at local and national level. It sowed seeds that would germinate during the war and emerge in post-war conditions.

Role of local authorities

Before 1929 and the limited support for the new Travel Association, public sector involvement in tourism was concentrated solely at local level. A remarkable combination of municipal and private sector enterprise had built Britain's seaside resorts mostly between 1870 and 1914 and local governments competed vigorously for the seasonal visitor market. In the pre-war era local authorities contributed substantially to the national stock of leisure facilities, such as entertainment parks, gardens, piers, swimming pools and promenades, cultural attractions and sports facilities. They also undertook the major task of resort management although this was not a word in use at that time. There were over 200 established holiday towns in the 1930s, mostly seaside resorts, and in addition historic centres prospering from the travel and holiday trades. The British Resorts

Association traces its origins to 1921 when the 'Conference of Health and Pleasure Resorts' was formed. The bulk of the population that could afford leisure travel took their holidays in Britain; the great majority, especially families, chose the seaside. They travelled often to the same resort, in the main by one or other form of public transport, i.e. railways, coach and bus. The growth of day excursions provided another stream of economic wealth for resorts that was promoted vigorously by railways and bus companies, the latter beginning to develop inclusive tours in Britain and abroad in the inter-war period. Active local authorities were represented as members of the national Travel Association, which also lobbied on their behalf.

Many resorts in the 1920s and later 1930s found ways to invest substantially in new amenities, promenades, beach pavilions and swimming pools. Blackpool created seven miles of promenade with sunken gardens and other amenities at a cost of over £1.5 million from 1921 to 1923. Resorts organized entertainment with leading musicians and theatrical stars, and sponsored major events, such as the successful Blackpool Illuminations (which had commenced in the previous century), festivals and competitions. Bournemouth sponsored a leading symphony orchestra, and the Palm Court Trio in the Grand Hotel at Eastbourne became a household name, thanks to the new national radio network.

The large resorts with their piers and promenades had developed their own unique resort architecture, to which great architects of the past had contributed. Pugin, for example, designed beach pavilions and shelters and promenade lamp posts in Margate. In the 1930s these resorts were among the leading mass holiday centres in Europe. A further source of pre-war resort growth was the movement towards retirement out of towns and cities to places well known through regular holiday patronage.

Spas flourished in Europe and still held their own in Britain where their history and Georgian architecture attracted a more affluent clientele. British spas never recovered after the losses of the Second World War and the advent of the National Health Service, which prescribed ordinary tap water in towns for hydrotherapy. It was not until towards the end of the twentieth century that interest in health linked to recreation was commercially viable again in Britain, with large investment by commercial operators in mineral waters, health 'farms' and residential centres usually in the countryside, health clubs, saunas and gymnasia.

In the 1930s, Continental spas attracted a British clientele and promoted a substantial trade in the import of foreign mineral waters when they returned. British spas had forgotten one of the recipes for the early success of Bath and Beau Nash, the first resort director, when it was said 'it was the duty of the doctor to entertain the patient while nature effected the cure'. In contrast to the British Government's policy, in Europe, Germany and France for example, spa treatment 'The Cure' was provided free for employees and their families as a social service. Holidays in Soviet Russia for party members followed the same course.

Transport

Public transport developed rapidly during the inter-war years as the population became more mobile, with holiday taking and other leisure traveling, such as excursion days away from home, increasing substantially.

The railways, which had been government controlled in the First World War, were reorganized in the 1920s with government help into four main-line companies: GWR (West Country); LMS (Euston to Scotland via Preston); LNER (Kings Cross to Scotland via York); and Southern Railways (South of London). These were the glory years of steam trains and companies competed to operate relatively fast and efficient services – with first class luxury for those who could afford it. A number of famous trains were introduced in the 1930s such as the ‘Flying Scotsman’, the ‘Coronation Scot’ and the ‘Cheltenham Flyer’ which reached speeds in excess of 100 miles per hour. Mallard reached the record steam train speed of 126 mph in 1938. International services such as the ‘Golden Arrow’, the ‘Blue Train’ and the famous ‘Orient Express’ to Istanbul were well patronized. It was the peak of railway eminence as the transport of choice and a fifty-year long decline would set in (in the UK) after the war as ever more cars were purchased and freight transferred to roads.

Road transport began its rapid growth in the inter-war years. At first the most significant changes were the creation of a network of long distance coach services as well as the growth of bus services in urban areas and their rural hinterland. By 1938, it is estimated that the number of buses and coaches exceeded 50 000 and that 37 million passengers were carried on long distance routes in 1939. Although private car travel was increasing rapidly, the total number compared with post-war developments was still modest, rising from 132 000 at the beginning of the war in 1914 to two million registered private cars in 1939. The numbers doubled in the 1930s, however, notwithstanding the depression years.

People went on holiday mainly by public transport to destinations in Britain, usually by the seaside. The railway was the dominant transport provider but a substantial proportion made the journey by coach. Both railways and bus companies offered package tours especially to Continental European tourist areas. Tour operators owned their own coach companies just as after the war they developed their own airlines and hotels in a process known as ‘vertical integration’. Excursions, particularly by road were popular, not only trips from home but also tours from the seaside resorts during the holiday period. Continental travel by road was increasing rapidly by 1939. Tour operators had formed their own trade body, The Tour Operators Conference, the name providing some indication of their growth and commercial success at that time.

Travel by sea, and in particular on the great ocean-going liners, reached the peak of its development when the *Queen Mary* (80 000 tonnes) went into service in 1936 and completed the voyage to New York in 5 days carrying 2000 passengers. The Blue Riband for the quickest transatlantic crossing stimulated fierce international competition when Dutch, French, Italian,

German, Scandinavian and American State-subsidized liners fought for the traffic that reached its high point in 1929. Volume on routes such as New York to Southampton was substantial, with passengers between Europe and the USA reaching one million in the good years, although modest compared with future growth in the second half of the century.

Liners offered regular and comfortable travel to and from all the continents and Britain played a key role with its Empire connections, its still large merchant fleet and its position as an intercontinental junction. Forced to respond to economic recession and consequent surplus capacity, shipping companies developed cruises in this era, foreshadowing the major development that would take place fifty years later, albeit with the essential contribution of air transport to move the market to the ships.

Air travel developed slowly at first in the inter-war period, with government support primarily through mail contracts, but the competition from highly subsidized European airlines limited Britain's services on the shorter routes. One of the first regular air services, however, was started by the Air Ministry in 1919 to carry passengers from London to Paris to the peace conference. These services had a chequered career as the journey was uncomfortable (no toilets, and took over two hours), the aircraft were unreliable and weather dependent, and a lack of modern navigational aids hindered efficient operation.

The British Government was more interested in the Empire routes where it faced little or no competition and Imperial Airways developed important services with its popular flying boats. The State also sponsored pioneering airships, but these proved faulty and dreadful pictures of the crashes of the R101 and the Hindenburg went around the world. By 1937, the peak pre-war year, Imperial Airways carried only 244 000 passengers. A second state supported airline, British Airways started in the mid-1930s on routes to Northern Europe. But even by 1937, the peak year according to the Board of Trade statistics, passengers travelling from the UK to the Continent by air numbered just under 100 000.

Air travel was poised for rapid expansion, however, even before the war started in 1939. The Boeing 307 was the first airliner with a pressurized cabin, for example, in 1938. The war would produce massive technological advance in aviation and the basis for the great leap forward in civil aviation in the decade 1945 to 1955. This would be driven by the development of jet engines that were conceived in the 1920s by Sir Frank Whittle who famously could not acquire government support for development. The first jet engine was not built until 1937 and was first demonstrated in the air in 1938.

Hotels and catering

Hotels, catering and many other service trades dependent on tourists and other travellers benefited from post-war recovery after 1918, but were seriously affected by the 1930s depression and the substantial decline in travel

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and consumer spending which followed. Many hotels, especially in London, had been requisitioned during the First World War. In some respects this was fortunate for the hoteliers as by 1913 the railway boom had encouraged the development of many large hotels in cities and resorts. Overcapacity in rooms was affecting profitability as discounting for trade led to falling prices and revenues. It was a process reflecting the business economics of fixed capacity and very variable demand that would become familiar many more times over the rest of the century. At the end of the First World War, however, compensation was poor and inadequate to meet the costs of restoration. Furthermore, the financial effects of the war had reduced the value of the hotel companies' reserves and led to higher interest charges, making the necessary capital expenditure difficult. The industry was operating on a stock of mainly Victorian buildings lacking more modern amenities, such as bathrooms, increasingly demanded by the clientele, especially in London by Americans, who numbered about 400 000 a year by the end of the 1920s.

As the inter-war years recovery took effect and prosperity improved there was substantial new investment. In London during the late 1920s large new hotels were constructed such as the Cumberland and Strand Palace, the Dorchester, the Mayfair and the Park Lane. Gleneagles was built by the LMS railway company in Scotland. But the Great Depression had a serious effect. Some of the large pre-war hotels were demolished and replaced by offices – The Royal became the Unilever head office, and the Cecil was replaced by Shell Mex House. Few hotels companies were profitable and the industry had a poor reputation with financiers.

Overall the total accommodation capacity throughout the country did not change much between the wars. There was always large capacity in small establishments such as boarding and guest houses, and seasonal accommodation in rented properties, bed and breakfast, farm houses and other temporary provision. Hostels, camping and caravanning were developing. A major innovation was the invention of the 'luxury' all-inclusive holiday camp. In 1939 there were some 200 holiday camps around the country but most were fairly spartan affairs until Butlin built and opened his first holiday camp at Skegness in 1936. At an investment cost of £100 000 it catered for 100 000 during the summer season; the charge was £3.10 shillings inclusive for the week. The clientele was largely white-collar rather than blue-collar workers, as this seemingly modest price was still beyond the means of the average industrial worker with a wage of £250 a year or less. At the Easter opening of the Skegness camp the British weather was traditionally cold and there was snow on the ground. Heating was not provided and dancers took to the floor in heavy overcoats to enjoy the dance hall facilities provided as part of the entertainment. The campers were clearly not daunted and the first season was fully booked. Although the implications would not be clear until after the war, Butlin had broken the mould of the then traditional seaside resort holiday experience (Read, 1986, p. 19).

The catering industry was as yet undeveloped for tourism purposes although a range of small cafes and teashops were found in most places, together with inns and pubs. The latter offered little in the way of food,

however, before the war. Significantly there were some significant innovations in popular catering, such as the rise of milk bars and the popularity of Lyons Corner Houses. Charles Forte (later Lord Forte) created his first company to develop catering services in leading-edge cafes known as milk bars in London's West End in the 1930s (see Chapter 6). He did not become involved with hotels, however, until the 1950s. Reflecting the growth in road traffic, inns and hotels along main roads recovered trade that had been lost to railways fifty years earlier and created new customers from motorists. Many resort hotels offered entertainment, and dance halls in all towns and cities as well as in resorts provided mass entertainment for millions in the inter-war years.

The cinema was also a major source of mass entertainment in cities, towns and resorts, and thousands were built in an extravaganza of art deco architectural styles. Many such buildings, often no longer cinemas but bingo halls or restaurants, can still be seen in Britain's towns some seventy years later.

1939 – the impact of war

The immediate effect on travel and tourism in 1939 was inevitably drastic in Britain and mainland Europe. International pleasure travel ceased abruptly for the second time in 25 years. Families were split up when conscription was implemented. Petrol, food and other forms of rationing were soon introduced; attitudes and expectations of leisure time and social life were dramatically altered and put on hold. Private motoring except for business and official purposes virtually ceased. Beaches were fortified and mined in the southern part of the country for fear of invasion. In 1944, all civilians except those who lived there were banned from a coastal strip ten miles wide, which stretched from the Wash to Lands End (*The Times*, 2000, p. 97). In many popular holiday areas, hotels, holiday camps, transport and other tourism facilities, including London Zoo, were requisitioned for military purposes. Many hotels would not reopen. Some were bombed, such as the Langham and the Carlton in London, some converted to offices. The result of the two wars changed the industry substantially. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that by 1955, of the 110 hotels listed in the Baedeker Guide in 1910, only 11 survived.

Main messages of the inter-war years which resonate into the post-war period

1. Although still at a low base compared with the post-war era, the economic and social conditions of the British population, especially personal mobility and lifestyle expectations, changed in ways that

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would fan the desire to travel and take holidays as soon as it was affordable. The era of cinema and radio communications for all and television (for a very few) transformed the role of the media in most people's lives and would extend it dramatically after the war.

2. Depression years notwithstanding, as the quote at the head of this chapter illustrates, tourism interpreted as leisure travel and the holiday trades grew strongly in the inter-war years. Such growth would provide a springboard for future development just as soon as post-war conditions allowed.
3. The inter-war years witnessed the wide growth of socialist ideals and thinking about the role of holidays and leisure in society that in many ways failed to develop in the UK after the war, notwithstanding or perhaps because of a Labour Government acting according to socialist principles. Perhaps those ideals have their modern echo today in the notions of 'Access for All', 'For the many not the few' and 'Right to Roam'. The National Parks thinking of the 1930s obviously influenced the 1940s and 1950s and perhaps also finds modern echoes in the sustainable tourism movement of the last decade.
4. The inter-war years also provided opportunities for entrepreneurs that would strongly influence post-war tourism. Charles Forte, Billy Butlin and Wallace Arnold, for example, all pioneered new business models. The art of promotion, since developed as marketing, was important in this period too as 'all the resources of 20th century salesmanship were called into play by the holiday resorts, the transport undertakings, the travel agencies, the hotels and the amusement caterers' (Pimlott, p. 213).
5. With the honourable exception of the Holidays With Pay Act of 1938, the British Government revealed an overall indifference to the potential role of tourism that was in contrast to the interventionist policies of leading Continental governments. The depression years underlined the value of inbound tourism, however, and started a preoccupation with inbound tourism and foreign exchange earnings that would last into the twenty-first century. Driven by holiday resorts of the period, the evidence suggests that local authorities with tourism interests were far more dynamic and far-sighted in their actions than they were allowed to be after the war and following local government reorganization in the 1970s. In this sense at least lessons of history appear to have been lost (see also Chapter 9).
6. Professor Ogilvie's pioneering studies and later work by Elizabeth Brunner revealed the inadequacy of tourism statistics. Key aspects of this deficiency would be tackled after the war but even into the twenty-first century the lack of adequate data bedevils decision-making in the tourism sector as it did in the 1930s.