Two fat ladies at the seaside: gambling in working class holidays 1920-1970


Abstract

Gambling was a popular and pervasive leisure pursuit long before it was legalised in January 1961. The most prevalent forms of gambling amongst the working classes were the football pools, illegal off-course cash betting and greyhound racing; all of which were predominantly male pastimes. This paper explores the role of gambling amongst women during their annual seaside holidays and highlights the role of seaside arcades and bingo games in familiarising women with gambling, creating a ready market for the first commercial bingo halls which opened within a few days of the passing of the Betting and Gaming Act (1960)

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Despite the ideas of the seaside holiday as an upper-class affair, many Lancashire working class found time to visit Blackpool in this period. [10]. Despite the bathing machine, developed to protect modesty, sexual freedom was explored at the seaside, as telescopes were known to be used by women and men to spy on bathers of the opposite sex. [11].

Fashion. Fig. 1 Sea Side Bathing Dress [12]. Besides the health benefits, ladies of standing had the chance to show how fashionable they were with an excuse to wear something novel they tended not wear in London. Mrs Bell of London specialised in unusual Cloth caps were popular amongst the working class, though trilbies or homburgs were worn by the middle classes. Hair was cut very short at the sides, parted severely from the centre or the side and smoothed down with oil and brilliantine, or combed back over the top of the head. Print, G. Lepape. Print Georges Lepape (1887-1971; engraver), Gazette du Bon Ton (publisher) 1920 France Colour process engraving and colour stencil Museum no. E.291-1954. This fashion plate is from the journal ‘Gazette du Bon Ton’. The journal featured articles about theatre, travel and other pursuits of int