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**Southend-on-Sea 1891 to 1911:  
The Emergence of a Commuter Town?**

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## Abstract

Southend-on-Sea's population grew exponentially in the years 1891 to 1911. This dissertation investigates and evaluates Walton's claim made in: *The English Seaside Resort, A Social History 1750-1914*, that: 'commuters were the main ingredient' in explaining Southend's rise to the third most populous seaside resort during the Edwardian period. It is also a response to Walton's call for more research at the local level to support a greater understanding of the growth and diversity of seaside towns.

This study finds that while growing numbers of commuters began to make a significant contribution to Southend's rapid growth in the Edwardian period, Walton's claim is not a sufficient explanation of what was a more complex process spanning a longer period. It was a unique combination of geographical, economic and social factors which together produced the extraordinary population growth experienced in Southend in the years 1891 to 1911.

These findings will be supported firstly with an analysis of Southend's rapid population growth from 1891- 1911. Secondly by an examination of the importance of three key factors that contributed towards creating a dynamic of rapid population growth by the 1890s. These were: - the town's development as a resort catering predominantly for working class Londoners; improvements in rail connections with London and migration from the Essex countryside due to agricultural distress. Finally the contribution made by three additional factors in bringing about rapid population growth will be evaluated: - the activities of land agents and speculative builders; the role of Southend Municipal Council and the responses of railway companies. These specific factors combined help to explain why Southend was one of the fastest growing towns in England in the period 1891 to 1911.

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### Personal Statement

I confirm that this dissertation has been prepared by me alone and is my own independent work. It has not been previously submitted for a degree or qualification at The Open University or any other institution. Chapter 2 of this dissertation builds on material I submitted in part 2 of my End of Module Assessment for A825.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Lucy Faire for her guidance in supervising this dissertation. Also the staff at Essex County Records Office, Southend-on-Sea Library and the National Archives for their assistance in locating sources for my research.

## 1. Introduction

**‘Southend grew explosively in the Edwardian years, but commuters were the most important ingredient in its rise to third place in the national resort hierarchy.’<sup>1</sup>**

Walton above was referring to the growth of Southend-on-Sea’s residential population. Only the resorts of Brighton and Bournemouth ranked above Southend-on-Sea by 1911.<sup>2</sup> This dissertation will investigate and evaluate Walton’s claim that ‘commuters were the most important ingredient’ in Southend’s rapid population growth. Walton offered no explanation of what he meant by his claim or provided any substantive evidence to support it. Neither did he give any specific explanation of what the other ‘ingredients’ in Southend’s remarkable growth were. Furthermore, Walton’s assertion did not explain why Southend’s population was already rising rapidly by the early 1890s, a decade before the period he identified.<sup>3</sup> This study’s rationale therefore is to fill these gaps, examining the period between the census years 1891 to 1911. It will investigate the role that the influx of commuters played in addition to the other important factors explaining the town’s rapid growth during these years. Walton called for further research at the local level to support a greater understanding of the growth and diversity of seaside towns.<sup>4</sup> This dissertation will add further to the research that has already been completed in response to Walton’s call.<sup>5</sup> It will provide a

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<sup>1</sup>John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort, A Social History 1750-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), p.67.

<sup>2</sup>Walton, p.65.

<sup>3</sup>Census of England and Wales 1891, Area, Houses and Population: Registration Areas and Sanitary Districts, Table 2<<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census>>[accessed 17<sup>th</sup> November 2018].

<sup>4</sup>Walton, pp. 225-226.

<sup>5</sup>E.g. Nigel J Morgan and Annette Pritchard, *Power and Politics at the Seaside: The Development of Devon's Resorts in the Twentieth Century*. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999); M. Huggins, ‘Social Tone and Resort Development in North-East England: Victorian Seaside Resorts Around the Mouth of the Tees’, *Northern History*, 20.1, (1984), 187-206.

more detailed explanation of the unique combination of factors which help explain Southend's rapid growth.

The starting point of 1891 has been chosen as it is from approximately this date that a marked acceleration in the growth of Southend's population can be observed. From 1891 to 1911 it was one of the fastest growing towns in England, becoming a municipal borough in 1892.<sup>6</sup> Already growing rapidly a decade before the Edwardian period identified by Walton and before commuters became a significant presence in the town. The end date of 1911 has been chosen, being the first census year following the end of the Edwardian period. A longer period could not be adequately covered by a dissertation of this length.

Historiographically Southend-on-Sea has been presented as a predominantly working class resort rising to prominence in the late nineteenth century. Histories of Southend can broadly be divided into two types: traditional antiquarian studies and more recent publications focusing on Southend's growth as a resort. There is no in-depth analysis of Southend's rapid growth.<sup>7</sup> The growing popularity of seaside resorts in the late nineteenth century has been seen as an important aspect of British popular culture by historians such as Pimlott, Walvin and Walton. Their purpose to explain the growth and importance of British seaside resorts in providing recreation for the masses, rather than their growth as residential towns.<sup>8</sup>

This dissertation will attempt to partly fill this gap with a local study focusing on Southend's growth as a residential town.

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<sup>6</sup>Census of England and Wales 1911, Preliminary Report  
<<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/EW1911PRE/2>> [accessed 17th November 2018].

<sup>7</sup> Phillip Benson, *The History of Rochford Hundred* (Rochford: Francis and Sons, 1888); J.W. Burrows, *Southend-on-Sea and District Historical Notes*, (J.H. Burrows, Southend-on-Sea, 1909); Sylvia Everitt, *Southend Seaside Holiday* (London: Phillimore, 1980); Ian Yearsley, *A History of Southend* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2001).

<sup>8</sup>J. A .R. Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday a Social History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947); James Walvin, *Beside the Seaside A Social History of the Popular Seaside Holiday* (London: Allen Lane, 1978).

Ravenstien's *Laws of Migration*, and the revisions made by Grigg, Pooley and Turnbull, provide useful reference points from which to view Southend's population growth in a wider context.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the work of Burnett and Dyos gave valuable insights to the process of urban development during the period. Including the role played by land agents and speculative builders, local government and the impact of transport development.<sup>10</sup> Further understanding of the role of railways in facilitating urban expansion is gained from Kellet and Jackson.<sup>11</sup> French and Long illustrated the importance of the middle-class idyll of home and family in driving suburban development.<sup>12</sup> While Stephen Ward's concept of 'selling places' also has relevance in understanding how people were attracted to resorts like Southend.<sup>13</sup> The role agricultural distress in Essex played in Southend's rapid population growth will also be explored; therefore some reference will be made to the debates surrounding the agricultural depression drawing on the work of Boyer, Howkins, Fletcher and others.<sup>14</sup> For a full list of works consulted, refer to the bibliography at the end of this dissertation.

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<sup>9</sup>D B Grigg, 'E.G. Ravenstein and the Laws of Migration', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 3.1, (1977), 41 -54; Colin Pooley and Jane Turnbull, *Migration and Mobility in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century* (London: UCL Press,1998).

<sup>10</sup>John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815 to 1970* (London: Methuen, 1986); H.J Dyos, *The Victorian Suburb, A Study of the Growth of Camberwell* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1964).

<sup>11</sup> Alan A. Jackson, 'The London Railway Suburb 1850 to 1914', in *The Impact of the Railway on Society in Britain: Essays in Honour of Jack Simmons*, ed. by A.K.B Evans, and J.V. Gough (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp.169-180.

<sup>12</sup>Christopher French, 'Housing the Middle Classes in Late Victorian and Edwardian Surbiton', *The Local Historian*, 45.2, (2015 ),126-143; Helen Long, *The Edwardian House The Middle-Class Home in Britain 1880 – 1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press,1993).

<sup>13</sup>Steven V. Ward, *Selling Places The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities* (London: Routledge,1998).

<sup>14</sup>George R. Boyer, 'Labour Migration in Southern and Eastern England, 1861 - 1901', *European Review of Economic History*, 1.2, (1997), 191-215; Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England A Social History 1850-1925* (London: Harper Collins, 1991); T.W. Fletcher, 'The Great Depression of English Agriculture 1873-1896', *The Economic History Review, New Series*, 13.3 (1961), 417-432.

In order to assess the validity of Walton's claim an analysis of census data for Southend will be carried out for the period from 1891 to 1911, identifying key features of the town's growth. Simple mathematical tools will be applied to work out decennial increases for the town. Changes in the occupational structure and gender difference over time will be examined, making comparisons with other major seaside towns. Data derived from enumerator records will be used to estimate the proportion of the population born in local parishes and those born elsewhere, to identify the patterns of migration which helped accelerate Southend's growth. Sampling techniques will be applied to estimate the proportion of different occupational groups moving to the town. Census returns as a source of evidence however, have well documented limitations and these will be discussed in chapter two.<sup>15</sup>

Railway company archives will be examined for evidence of the number of regular commuters resident in Southend and the contribution made by improved rail connections in promoting Southend's expansion. These archives lack detailed information regarding passenger numbers so will be supplemented with evidence from newspaper, parliamentary sources and local contemporary publications and documents. *The Southend Standard and Weekly Advertiser*, provides a huge store of information, comment and opinion on various aspects of the town's life and development in this period. However, the content is often anecdotal, opinionated and not always accurate. London based newspapers such as the *East London Observer*, provide evidence of how Southend was marketed to potential residents and some useful, if limited comparisons, of housing costs between Southend and

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<sup>15</sup>Edward Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census Revisited* (London: University of London, 2005), p.xi.

London suggesting a possible explanation of why large numbers moved to Southend.

The collections of Essex Records Office (ERO) and Southend-on-Sea, Library, Local Studies Centre (SSLSC) hold additional useful sources. Southend, being a Seaside resort, resulted in many town guides being produced, advertising the amenities and attractions of the town, illustrating how Southend was promoted. *Kelly's Directory for Essex* is also helpful for gauging the growth in business, services and employment opportunities. Copies of Royal Commission reports held by ERO provide contemporary, if partial, accounts of local agricultural distress in south east Essex and of rural exodus contributing to population growth in Southend. Both archives also hold a number of sales catalogues produced by land developers in the Southend area. These provide evidence of how residential development was marketed in the town, targeting middle-class consumers with idealised visions of suburban estates. *The Proceedings of Southend Municipal Council*, available from 1892, provide summary, if not detailed evidence, exemplifying the council's activities in promoting and regulating the town's growth. More detailed consideration will be given to the possible limitations of these sources in the chapters that follow.

Chapter two will analyse Southend's rapid population growth from 1891- 1911. It will show that, although the growing number of commuters became a significant factor contributing to Southend's rapid population growth during the Edwardian period, it is not a sufficient explanation for what was a more complex process. Spread over a longer period and resulting from the migration of several different groups into the town.

Chapter three will consider the importance of three key factors that contributed towards creating a dynamic of rapid population growth by the 1890s. These were the impetus provided by Southend's development as a resort; the stimulus provided by improved railway connections and the impact of agricultural depression in Essex.

The fourth chapter will examine the significant role played by land agents and speculative builders, aided by Southend Municipal Council and railway companies in bringing about the rapid growth of Southend during the period 1891 to 1911.

The conclusion will summarise the dissertation's main findings. This study adds further to an understanding of the growth of English seaside towns called for by Walton, supplementing other examples which illustrate their growth and diversity.

## 2: Southend's Population Growth 1891 to 1911

Walton claimed that commuters were 'the most important ingredient' in Southend's rise to the third largest seaside resort during the Edwardian period.<sup>1</sup> It will be argued in this chapter that while the growing presence of commuters made an important contribution to population growth in the Edwardian period, it does not adequately explain what was a more complex process spanning a longer period of time. Southend's population had begun to grow rapidly in the 1880s, rapidly accelerating in the 1890s, long before the presence of commuters became significant. While growing numbers of commuters played a part, many other groups of people migrated into the town in pursuit of employment, business opportunities and other attractions centred in the town itself. This will be demonstrated through an analysis of census data and also by drawing on quantitative and qualitative evidence from railway archives and newspaper reports. Census data as Higgs informs, has its limitations, as does the evidence from railway archives and newspapers. These will also be considered.<sup>2</sup>

Ravenstien's *Laws of Migration*, together with the revisions made by Grigg.<sup>3</sup> Also the detailed research completed by Pooley and Turnbull, provide a useful framework in which to analyse Southend's population growth and relate it to a wider context.<sup>4</sup> Grigg concluded that much of the research conducted since Ravenstein, confirmed a number of his findings for nineteenth century Britain.

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<sup>1</sup> John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort, A Social History 1750-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), p.67.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census Revisited* (London: University of London, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> E.G. Ravenstein, 'The Laws of Migration', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Vol. 48, .2, (1885) 167-235; D B Grigg, 'E.G. Ravenstein and the Laws of Migration', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 3.1, (1977) 41-54.

<sup>4</sup> Colin Pooley and Jane Turnbull, *Migration and Mobility in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century* (London: UCL Press, 1998).

Some which are relevant to this study. Grigg agreed with Ravenstein that people tended to migrate over short distances and that most of this migration was from the countryside to urban areas. Also women were more migratory than males over short distances. However, he questioned Ravenstein's hypothesis that people migrated in small steps and suggested his findings that pull factors were more significant than push factors required further research.<sup>5</sup> Pooley and Turnbull agreed that many of Ravenstein's laws were valid in the context of late nineteenth century Britain. They confirmed that the majority of migration was over short distances. However, they concluded that his analysis of census data overestimated the movement from rural to urban areas, observing a growing trend of movement from large to smaller settlements from the 1880s. They partly supported Ravenstein's claim that migration grew as industry and commerce developed. However, added other factors such as the availability of housing and presence of family or friends. Unlike Ravenstein, they found little difference between the migration patterns of male and females.<sup>6</sup> Evidence from Southend will be compared with these findings.

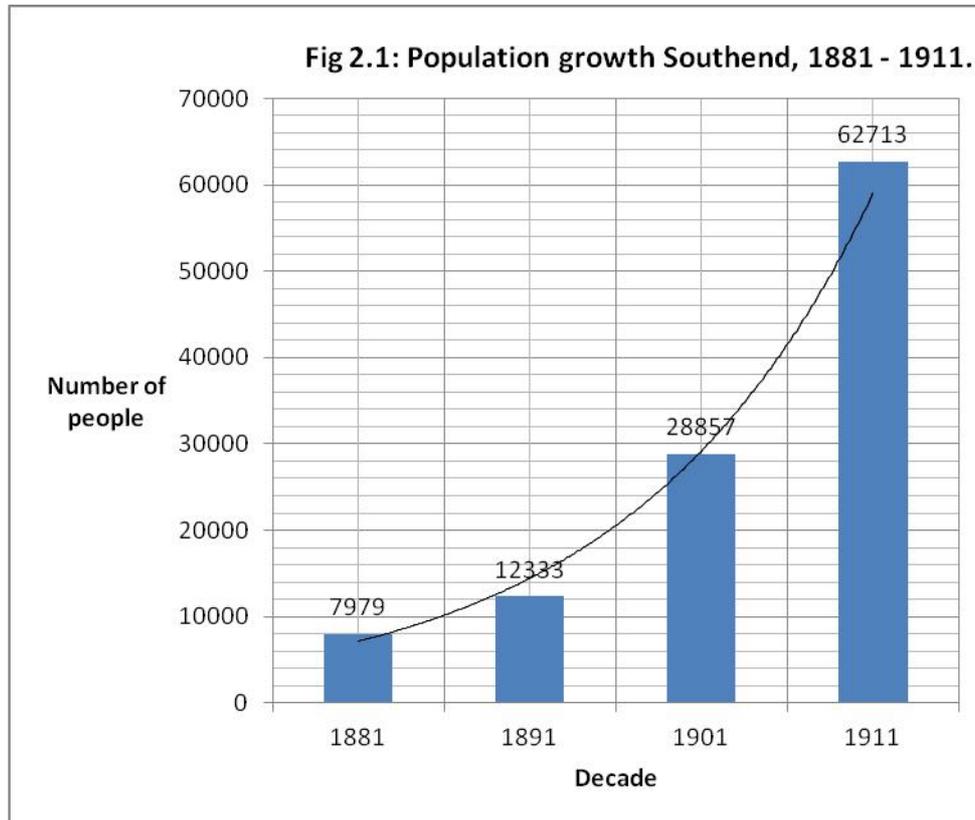
Census records show that Southend's population was already growing rapidly in the 1880s accelerating further after 1891, a decade before the period identified by Walton.<sup>7</sup> Fig 2.1 shows that Southend's population grew from 12,333 in 1891 to 62,713 by 1911.

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<sup>5</sup>D B Grigg, 41 -54.

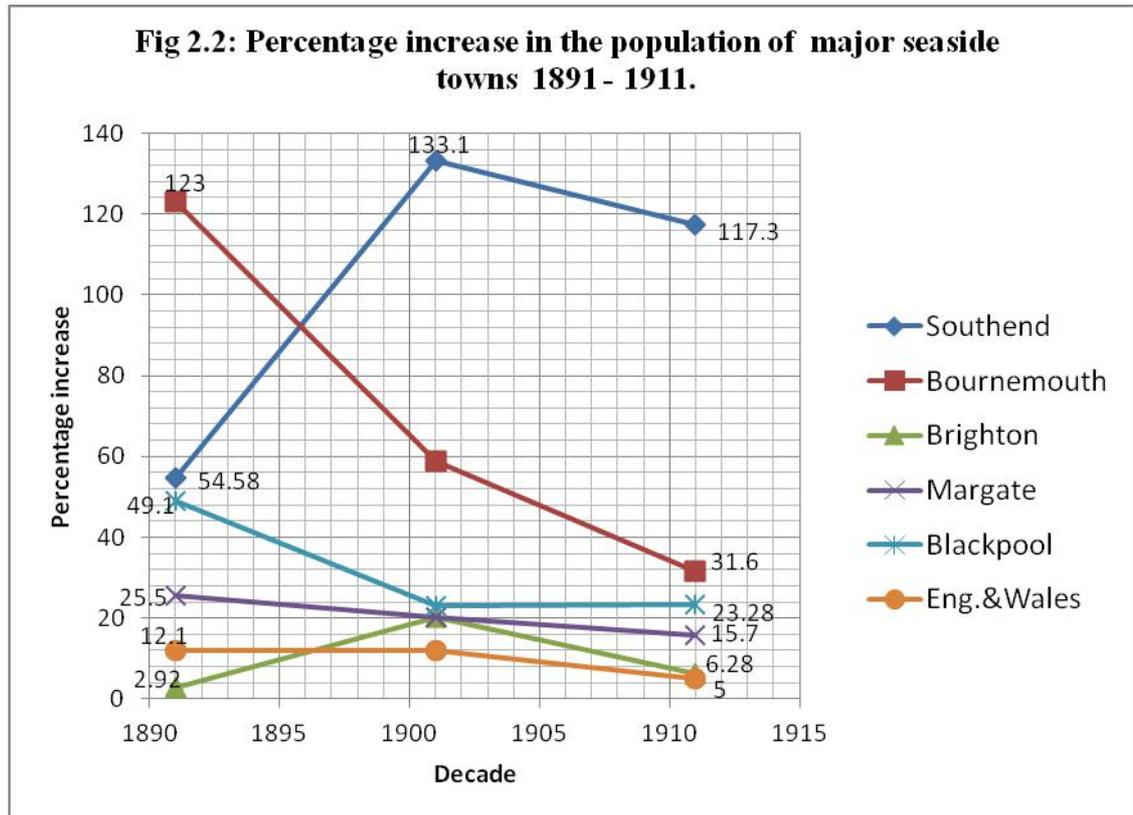
<sup>6</sup> Pooley and Turnbull, pp.300-301.

<sup>7</sup>Census of England and Wales 1891, *Area, Houses and Population: Registration Areas and Sanitary Districts, Table 2*; Census of England and Wales 1911, *Areas, Houses, Families or separate occupiers, and Population:- Registration Areas, Table 5*; Census of England and Wales 1921, County Report Table 3 <<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census>>[accessed 17 November 2018].



The trend line illustrates that between 1891 and 1901, the rate of increase began to accelerate, gathering pace in the years up to 1911. This does not include fluctuations which might have taken place between census years. Neither those produced by seasonal variations, particularly relevant to a seaside resort. Just being based on the resident population taken on census day –these limitations are also applicable to figs. 2.2 to 2.4. Nevertheless, the trend indicates that from 1891, Southend’s population began to increase at a rapid and sustained rate, over a decade before the period identified by Walton.

Southend’s rate of increase was considerably higher than other major resorts. Fig. 2.2 shows the percentage increase in the population of Southend compared to other major seaside resorts.



Southend's population rose rapidly in the period after 1891 to a peak of 133 per cent by 1901, when all but one of the other town's growth rates, apart from Blackpool's were falling.<sup>8</sup> However, while Southend was the fastest growing borough outside London, its growth rate was already in decline by the Edwardian period identified by Walton.<sup>9</sup> It was after improved railway links opened in the late 1880s that the surge in Southend's population growth can be observed.<sup>10</sup> This encouraged the growth of Southend as a resort and made it potentially a more attractive place to live for middle-class professionals working in London.

<sup>8</sup> Census of England and Wales 1891, Table 2; Census of England and Wales 1911, Table 5; Census of England and Wales 1921, County Report Table 3.

<sup>9</sup> Census of England and Wales 1921, General Report with Appendices <<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk>> [accessed 18 November 2108].

<sup>10</sup> J.W. Burrows, *Southend-on-Sea and District Historical Notes* (J.H Burrows, Southend-on-Sea, 1909), p.195

The evidence relating to the number of commuters residing in Southend during the period 1891 to 1911 is limited; much of it anecdotal or imprecise. It does indicate however, that commuters started to become a more significant proportion of the town's population during the Edwardian period. The most obvious evidence for estimating the number of commuters living in Southend in these years is the number of regular season ticket holders. Unfortunately, the London Tilbury and Southend Railway (LT&SR) the main carrier of season ticket holders during this period, kept no systematic records of the number of tickets holders from Southend. The company accounts only gave the total revenue from season ticket sales for the whole line during any given financial year.<sup>11</sup> The Great Eastern Railway (GER) the other line serving Southend, had very few season ticket holders travelling from the town before 1911, with only thirty-three by 1910, rising to 749 in 1911, following the introduction of an improved service for commuters.<sup>12</sup>

The *Southend Standard* contained many articles over the years indicative of the growing presence of 'city men' in the town. There were frequent letters complaining of overcrowding on the morning trains to London and countless advertisements offering accommodation to 'city men.'<sup>13</sup> A letter to the editor in 1901 claimed that 'city men' were choosing to reside in Southend in ever greater numbers and that the town was becoming 'London by the sea.'<sup>14</sup> Estimates of the numbers of commuters living in the town however, varied widely. A report from 1901 estimated that there 4000 city men travelling to London each week.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the following year, an article in the *Daily Telegraph*, promoting

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<sup>11</sup>The National Archives (NA), RAIL 437/61, London, Tilbury and Southend Railway (LT&SR) Accountant's Records and General Balance Sheets, 1886 -1912.

<sup>12</sup>NA RAIL 227/105, Great Eastern Railway, *Report of the Traffic Committee*, 1911.

<sup>13</sup>*Southend Standard (SS)*, 26 June 1902, p.7, col 3, p.4, col 3-4.

<sup>14</sup>SS, 5 December 1901, p.8, col 4.

<sup>15</sup>SS, 24 October 1901, p.3, col 5.

Southend as a new 'suburb of London', stated there were only 2000 season ticket holders.<sup>16</sup>

More reliable, if incomplete evidence nevertheless, is found in the minutes of the LTSR's half yearly meetings of shareholders, where occasional reports were made about the number of season tickets holders from Southend stations. During the meeting held in October 1891 Arthur Stride, the Managing Director of the company, reported that there were 447 season ticket holders from Southend.<sup>17</sup>

This amounted to 3.6 per cent of the total population of Southend in 1891.

Although this proportion is small, to reflect the impact of commuters on the town's population other members of their family and household also should also be included. While specific numbers for Southend were not given, season ticket numbers on the line appeared to have risen steadily until 1905. The minutes of the shareholder's meeting in January 1907 however, reported an 'extraordinary increase' of 448 season tickets from Southend stations in one year.<sup>18</sup> In 1908, Mr Stride gave a figure of 3973 season ticket holders.<sup>19</sup> By 1911, he was able to give a rounded figure of 6000 season ticket holders travelling from Southend stations and confirmed the large increase since 1905.<sup>20</sup> Similar numbers were cited during a parliamentary debate on the Midland Railway (London, Tilbury, and Southend Railway Purchase) Bill, when Bowerman, the Labour MP for Depford, estimated over 6000 season ticket holders.<sup>21</sup> Assuming that the 1911 figure given by Stride was reasonably accurate and adding the 749 from the GER, this amounted to approximately 10.8 per cent of Southend's total population by 1911.

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<sup>16</sup> *The Daily Telegraph* 4 August 1902, p.7, col 7.

<sup>17</sup> NA, RAIL 437/7, *LT&SR Board and Proprietors Minutes*, 1891-1895.

<sup>18</sup> NA, RAIL 437/11, *LT&SR Board and Proprietors Minutes*, 1905-1908.

<sup>19</sup> NA, RAIL 437/11.

<sup>20</sup> NA, RAIL 437/12, *LT&SR Board and Proprietors Minutes*, 1908-1912.

<sup>21</sup> House of Commons, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: The Official Report* (1 August 1912, vol.41, col 2361) <<http://bit.ly/2VfCALX>> [accessed 30 November 2018].

Some contemporary estimates of the number of households supported by commuters appearing in the *Southend Standard* tended to simply assume that each supported a separate household averaging five members.<sup>22</sup> Some sales catalogues produced by land agents claimed that the population of Southend to a large extent consisted of ‘city gentlemen and their families’<sup>23</sup> However, an analysis of a sample of clerical workers from census data for 1911, suggests that both assumptions were incorrect and overstate the number of households supported by commuters. This sample has been chosen as representative of many of those commuting from Southend stations to London. Reports in the *Southend Standard* often referred to season ticket holders as clerks or of ‘modest means.’ Most travelled third class.<sup>24</sup> According to the 1911 census 56.30 per cent of clerical workers living in Southend were born in the London area, with only 4.95 per cent born in Southend or Essex. However, not all those included in the sample would have been commuters, some being employed locally. In addition not all season ticket holders would have been employed as clerical workers small numbers belonging to professional or other occupations. The sample of 786 individuals includes those who describe themselves as clerks, bank clerks, commercial clerks, insurance clerks and stockbroker clerks.<sup>25</sup> Forty-four per cent were heads of households, thirty-three per cent were sons living with parents and fourteen per cent boarders; the majority under twenty-five years old and single. Nine per cent belonged to other households including lodgers, counted as separate households.

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<sup>22</sup>SS, 12 November 1908, p.6, col 7

<sup>23</sup>ERO SALE/A151, Sales Catalogue of Free Hold Land for Sale by The Land Company, 1905-1906, p.3.

<sup>24</sup>SS, 18 January, 1912, p.12.

<sup>25</sup>Occupational data, Census of England and Wales 1911, Parishes of Prittlewell and Southchurch. Findmypast<<https://search-findmypast-co-uk/search-world-Records/1911-census-for-england-and-wales>> [accessed 25 September 2019].

<sup>26</sup> If these proportions are applied to the number of season ticket holders and using the mean size of a household for 1911 of 4.50 given by Schürer et al; a rough estimate of the number of commuters living in Southend can be calculated.<sup>27</sup> Taking the percentage of household heads and the mean household size into account and assuming there were 6749 season ticket holders by 1911, this would give a figure of around 13,363 living in a household in which the head was commuting to London. In the sample seventeen per cent of the combined total of sons and boarders (463) also lived in one of these households so are countered in this figure. The remaining 2,633 of sons and boarders were part of other households. Add the nine per cent living in other households (607) and this gives a rough estimate of 16,660 (26.5 per cent) of the population who were part of a household supported by a commuter or who were a commuter themselves. This was a significant proportion of the total population, although given the nature of the evidence, can only be an approximation.

Therefore, based on the limited evidence available on the growing number of season ticket holders, it suggests that there was a substantial growth in the number of commuters over the period, particularly after 1905. On the other hand, given that Southend's permanent population more than doubled between 1901 and 1911 from 28,857 to 62,713, it is not clear that the influx of commuters was the 'main ingredient' in this increase as claimed by Walton. Neither does it explain why Southend's population was already rising rapidly during the 1890s, over a decade before the period identified by Walton.

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<sup>26</sup> Search of birthplace data, Census of England and Wales 1891-1911, Parishes of Prittlewell and Southchurch, Findmypast, <<https://search-findmypast-co-uk/search-united-kingdom-records>>[accessed 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018].

<sup>27</sup> K. Schürer, E. Garrett, H. Jaadla and A. Reid, 'Household and family structure in England and Wales 1851-1911', *Continuity and Change*, 33.3, (2018), 365-411, (p. 369).

A more detailed analysis of census evidence indicates that the nature of Southend's population growth was far more complicated than Walton's comment would suggest. It involved many other groups of people, besides commuters, moving into the town. The rapid increase in population shown in Fig 2.1 can only be explained by a large flow of inward migration. In this respect evidence from Southend would appear to support Ravenstien's observation that towns grow more by migration than by natural increase.<sup>28</sup> Fig. 2.3 below shows evidence of inward migration. In the period 1891 to 1911, those born in London and the neighbouring counties accounted for around seventy-five per cent of those resident in Southend on census days.<sup>29</sup> This also concurs with Ravenstein's law (confirmed by Pooley and Turnbull) that the majority of migrants moved only a short distance.<sup>30</sup>



<sup>28</sup> D B Grigg, (p.43).

<sup>29</sup> Search of birthplace data, Census of England and Wales 1891-1911, Parishes of Prittlewell and Southchurch.

<sup>30</sup> Grigg, (p.59); Colin Pooley and Jane Turnbull, pp. 300-301.

The figures for Southend have been deducted from the totals for Essex to identify those who moved to the town. For London and Middlesex, to avoid double counting for the years 1891 and 1901, only the results for Middlesex are used as they included the vast majority of individuals recorded for London. For 1911 the results for London have been combined with Middlesex. This slightly overestimates the number shown as a small proportion of the same individuals appear in the search results for both. Nevertheless, they clearly show that much of Southend's population growth was due to inward migration and predominantly local. Fig. 2.3 illustrates that only a small proportion of the population in each census year were born in Southend. Large numbers moved the relatively short distance into Southend from other parts of Essex. London and Middlesex also account for significant numbers of migrants. Evident is the surge in numbers from London and Middlesex in the period between 1901 and 1911. In 1901, 6,079 residents in Southend were recorded as being born in London or Middlesex compared to 10,665 in Essex. By 1911, the 18,714 recorded as being born in London and Middlesex outnumbered the 16,970 from Essex.<sup>31</sup> Part of this increase however, reflects boundary changes as parts of Essex were swallowed up by London expansion. By 1911 Southend had grown into a sizable town with many amenities, attractions and employment opportunities. Also, Southend had become firmly established as a major seaside resort with the vast majority of its visitors and trippers coming from the London area.<sup>32</sup> Ravenstein observed that migration increased as industry developed and the means of transport improved. Pooley and Turnbull added additional factors such as availability of housing and

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<sup>31</sup> Search of birthplace data Census 1891-1911, parishes of Prittlewell and Southchurch.

<sup>32</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Essex 1910*, (Kelly's Directories London, 1910) pp.473- 474.

family or friends already living in a location.<sup>33</sup> Evidence presented in chapters two and three will confirm some of these factors were involved.

Comparing male with female migration into Southend, based on the same birthplace figures, they appear to support Ravenstein's law that females were more migratory than males rather than Pooley and Turnbull's conclusion there was little difference between genders.<sup>34</sup> While the male population rose by 113 percent between 1901 to 1911, from 12,915 to 27,495, the female population grew even faster from 12,817 to 29,224 - 128 per cent.<sup>35</sup> Fig. 4.4 shows that migration from all the selected birth places was higher for females than for males for all three census periods - the gap appearing to widen each successive decade.<sup>36</sup> By 1911, female migration from London and Middlesex was over 3000 higher than that for males. This reflected the growing employment and business opportunities drawing women into the town in domestic and personal services, retail and hospitality, as Southend grew both as a residential and seaside resort.

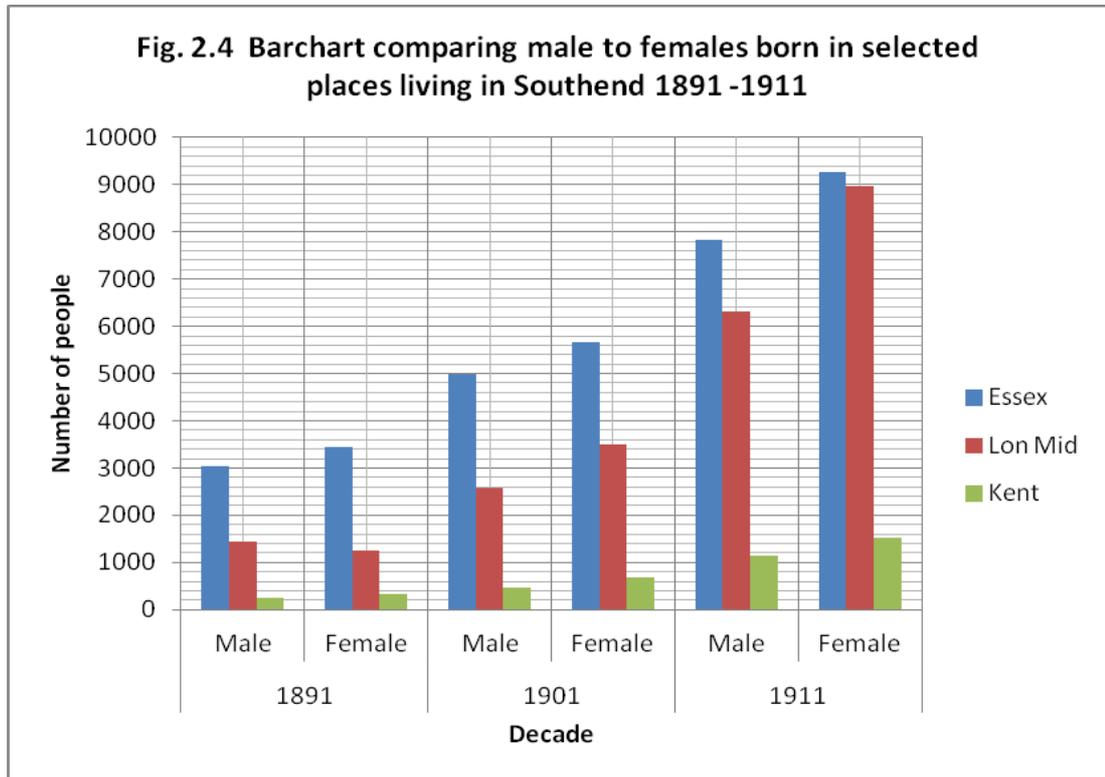
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<sup>33</sup> Grigg, p.43; Pooley and Turnbull, pp.302-303.

<sup>34</sup> Grigg, p.43, Pooley and Turnbull, p.302.

<sup>35</sup> Census of England and Wales, 1901, Table 35A- Grouped Occupation of Males and Females Aged 10 Years and Upwards, County of Essex pp.80-81; Census of England and Wales, 1911, Table 13- Occupations (condensed list) of males and females aged 10 and upwards, 1911, Essex, Municipal Borough of Southend-on-Sea, pp.157-159. < [www.histpop.org](http://www.histpop.org)>[accessed 27 November, 2018].

<sup>36</sup> Search of birthplace data 1891-1911, Parishes of Prittlewell and Southchurch.



Kellet argued that the role of the commuter has often been overstated in suburban life, the economic activity which suburbs generate themselves being underestimated.<sup>37</sup> This view could also be applied to a town like Southend in close proximity to London. An analysis of occupational census data provides evidence of a variety of employment opportunities centred in the town itself attracting inward migration, rather than its attraction as just a dominant town for commuters. This again indicating a much more complex process than that implied by Walton. Before examining this data however, there are some important limitations to discuss, many referred to by Higgs.<sup>38</sup> No separate report for Southend exists before 1901, making a meaningful comparison with 1891 difficult. Comparing enumerator records for Southend in 1891 with the later census tables is problematic, because of the need to match the numerous different

<sup>37</sup> John R. Kellett, *The Impact of the Railways on Victorian cities* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p.368.

<sup>38</sup> Higgs, p.99.

occupations given with the classifications listed in the 1901 and 1911 census tables. In addition, the 1911 census tables are more detailed having more sub-categories than the corresponding tables in for 1901. This prevented exact comparisons. For the purposes of this survey therefore the classifications given in the census reports have been used rather than the Booth- Armstrong classification system, due to difficulties in accurately matching the occupations given in the census tables. It is generally acknowledged that census figures for male employment are overall more accurate than those for females. Many males however, might have been employed in more than one job or employed in different occupations according to the season, especially the case in a seaside town like Southend where many jobs were seasonal. Despite these limitations however, it is still possible to make some broad comparisons between 1901 and 1911.

Examining specific categories of employment for males, a significant rise can be observed in the proportion male residents engaged in commercial occupations from 5.9 per cent in 1901 to 27.91 per cent of the working population by 1911. Male employment in professional occupations - not recorded for Southend in the 1901 census - employed 6.9 per cent of the working population by 1911.<sup>39</sup> This is evidence is of a growing resident middle-class in Southend. However, it also corresponds to rapidly growing national levels of employment in these sectors.<sup>40</sup>

A much higher 22.6 per cent, numbering 1809, were employed in building and construction, increasing to 2433 by 1911, a lower 14.9 per cent of a larger

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<sup>39</sup> County of Essex Census 1901, Table 35a, pp. 80-81; Southend-on-Sea, Census 1911, Table 13 – Occupations, pp.157-159.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Wilson, 'Economy and Society in Late Victorian Britain', *The Economic History Review*, New S 18, 1, (1965), 183-98, (pp.197-198).

working population.<sup>41</sup> This reflected the rapid physical expansion of the town from the 1890s creating demand for housing and other infrastructure developments.<sup>42</sup> Another significant sector was the conveyance of men, goods and materials, rising from 1045 (13 per cent) in 1901 to 2417, (14.1 per cent) by 1911.<sup>30</sup> While there was little change in the proportion of the population recorded as retired or unoccupied - 19.43 per cent in 1901 compared to 19.64 per cent by 1911 - this was noticeably above the national average of 15.79 per cent.<sup>43</sup> This shows that given the huge rise in population over the period, significant numbers were still choosing to retire in Southend. The expansion of these sectors was to some extent stimulated by the growth as Southend as a seaside resort. A more important factor however, was the growing demands of a rapidly expanding residential population. Both censuses were taken in the spring before the beginning of the holiday season, when many more seasonal workers would be employed in these sectors. During the summer months there were claims that Southend's population almost doubled in size.<sup>44</sup>

In the context of a high levels of inward female migration, a comparison of females' engagement in paid employment in 1901 with 1911, shows that in 1901, twenty-nine per cent of the female population were employed - eighty-two per cent of these single. By 1911 this proportion had increased to 31.34 per cent: – eighty per cent single.<sup>45</sup> Compared with other major seaside resorts however, by 1911 Southend had the highest proportion of unoccupied or retired females at 68.66 per cent, noticeably higher than the national urban area average of 65.69 per

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<sup>41</sup> County of Essex Census 1901, Table 35a, pp. 80-81; Southend-on-Sea, Census 1911, Table 13 – Occupations, pp.157-159.

<sup>42</sup> Burrows, pp. 237-239.

<sup>43</sup> Walton, p.79.

<sup>44</sup> SS, 8 October 1891, p.2, col 2; 25 April 1907, p.5, col 1.

<sup>45</sup> County of Essex Census 1901, Table 35a, pp.80-81; Census 1911; Table 13 - Occupations 1911, Essex, Municipal Borough of Southend-on-Sea, pp.157-159.

cent. All the other major resorts were below the national average. For example in Bournemouth it was 59.39 percent, Brighton 62.69 percent and in Blackpool 61.47 percent.<sup>46</sup> Care needs to be taken however, in how these figures are interpreted. The accuracy of the census tables is questionable tending to underestimate female participation. Many occupied in family businesses or who worked for their husbands were not recorded in the census. Numerous women with more than one job, or employed on a seasonal or casual basis were not recorded either. In addition, many households in seaside resorts took in boarders to supplement the family income. Many married women or widows would have catered for these visitors while still being recorded as unoccupied. Differing attitudes amongst enumerators in how they recorded female occupations also limits the reliability of the data.<sup>47</sup>

An examination of the proportion of females working in specific categories also illustrates a complex pattern of growth. In 1901 the number of females working in domestic service was 1,748 or 46.9 per cent of the female working population. By 1911, 4,064 women were employed in domestic service a large rise in numbers but a fall in percentage terms at 44.38 per cent. The majority were employed in private houses.<sup>48</sup> A number however, offered rooms both to long term boarders and holiday visitors. Walton warned that census returns for seaside resorts greatly underestimate the number of female lodging housekeepers because they only recorded those who listed this as their main occupation.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless the high proportion of domestic servants working in private homes could have indicated a larger middle-class population. By 1911 the proportion of

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<sup>46</sup>Walton, p.79.

<sup>47</sup>Higgs, p.101-103.

<sup>48</sup>County of Essex Census 1901, Table 35a, pp. 80-81; Southend-on-Sea, Census 1911, Table 13-Occupations, pp.157-159.

<sup>49</sup>Walton, p.71.

females employed as domestic servants in Southend was almost 1.5 times the national average. Of the other major seaside resorts, only Bournemouth at 1.96 and Eastbourne at 1.94 had proportions significantly higher than the national average.<sup>50</sup> Retail goods and services also offered growing opportunities for women. The numbers employed rising from 1172 (30.1 per cent) in 1901 to 3082 (33.70 per cent) by 1911.<sup>51</sup> This reflected the national trend.<sup>52</sup> While the growth of the holiday trade would have provided some impetus to retail expansion, much of the growth in this sector must have been sustained by the demands of the rapidly rising residential population. Southend's main appeal as a working class resort destination being largely confined to a short summer season centred around weekends and bank holidays.<sup>53</sup>

Overall the evidence from occupational data supports the conclusion that while commuters began to become a more significant presence during the Edwardian years they were just one of many different groups contributing to the town's rapid growth rather than the 'main ingredient' identified by Walton. Many others, including large numbers of females, were attracted into the town in pursuit of employment and business opportunities centred in the town itself or as a place for retirement.

### ***Summary***

Evidence from Census returns showed that Southend's population was already beginning to rise rapidly in the 1880s long before large numbers of commuters were resident in the town, further accelerating in the 1890s. It was a far more

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<sup>50</sup> Walton, p.79.

<sup>51</sup> County of Essex Census 1901, Table 35a, pp. 80-81; Southend-on-Sea, Census 1911, Table 13 - Occupations, pp.157-159.

<sup>52</sup> Wilson, p.198.

<sup>53</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Essex 1900*, (Kelly's Directories London, 1900), p.61.

complex process than Walton's assessment implies, spanning a longer period of time. The rate of increase was considerably higher than other major resorts.

During the period 1891 to 1911 Southend was the fastest growing borough outside London. While the growing number of commuters in the town was a significant factor particularly after 1905, since the 1890s large numbers of other migrants had also been drawn into the town, attracted by employment and business opportunities centred in the town itself, females outnumbering males. A significant proportion also moved into the town in retirement. Therefore commuters, rather than being the 'main ingredient' as claimed by Walton, was just one of a number of different groups migrating into the town that contributed to its extraordinary population growth. The following chapters will examine a number of other important factors which help to explain more fully Southend's expansion during the period 1891 to 1911.

### **3: Resort growth, Railway Development and Rural Exodus**

Walton identified the Edwardian years as the key period in Southend's rise to third most populous seaside resort. He claimed commuters were the main ingredient in Southend's rapid growth but did not discuss what the other ingredients were.<sup>1</sup> Evidence presented in the previous chapter showed that Southend's population growth had begun to accelerate at least a decade before the period he identified. It was a much more complex process than that implied by Walton's claim and involved the inward migration of a number of different groups of people. This chapter will examine three other important ingredients that contributed significantly to the acceleration of Southend's population growth from the 1890s, before commuters became a significant component. The first section will assess the contribution made by the rapid growth of Southend as a resort. It will argue that this provided the initial impetus for the expansion of the town. The second section will explain how improved rail connections to Southend and competition between rival train operators, further facilitated the growth of the town. Both were important attracting large numbers of people seeking work, business opportunities, or a desirable place to live. The third section will discuss how migration from the Essex countryside due to agricultural distress, further contributed to Southend's rapid population growth.

Evidence will be drawn from a variety of sources, including town guides, directories, local newspaper reports, parliamentary papers, census data and railway archive material. The limitations of railway archives and census have

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<sup>1</sup>John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort, A Social History 1750-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), p.67.

already been discussed in chapter two. Evidence from town guides and directories provide useful information however, being promotional material, produced to create a positive image of the town, need to be used with caution. These and the other limitations of the evidence will be considered throughout this chapter.

**(i) *Resort Development.***

Southend began to grow rapidly years before significant numbers of commuters began to reside in Southend. As Borsay, Walvin and Farrant have shown, resort growth and residential development often grew hand in hand. New residents were attracted by employment, business and social opportunities. Also by the attractions and amenities a resort town might offer.<sup>2</sup> This section will argue that it was Southend's rise as a popular seaside resort, from the 1880s, which provided the initial impetus for the town's accelerating population growth. Without the resort's expansion and its associated developments it is doubtful that the growth of Southend population would have been so great during this period or later attracted the large numbers of commuters, claimed by Walton' to have been the most important ingredient.

Earlier attempts to attract commuters to Southend had only limited success. In 1859 Samuel Peto, part of the consortium that held the lease for the London Tilbury and Southend Railway (LT&SR) began an ambitious housing development. His aim was to build a high class residential estate attracting wealthy city gentlemen, providing a regular income for the railway. He purchased

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<sup>2</sup>Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance Culture and Society in the Provincial town 1660 to 1770*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.221-224; James Walvin, *Beside the Seaside: a Social History of the Popular Seaside Holiday* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), pp.39-40; Sue Farrant, 'London by the Sea: Resort Development on the South Coast of England 1880-1939', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 22 .1 (1987), 137-162, (p.137).

fifty acres of land between the railway station and the seafront. One hundred and forty terraced houses were constructed, many with at least a partial sea view, replicating the Keep Town estate in Brighton.<sup>3</sup> In 1861 a daily express train service was inaugurated to cater for city gents, offering a journey time of eighty minutes. Peto however, struggled to find tenants for the properties and only the east half of the site was developed.<sup>4</sup> There was further middle-class residential development by local speculators north of the railway between the 1860s and 1880s, which contributed to the gradual growth of the town. A fashionable shopping and cultural area emerged, creating employment and business opportunities catering for the needs of residents and visitors. It included many fine shops, a coffee palace, theatre and an Institute including a library, reading room and concert hall.<sup>5</sup> These were typical features of an emerging leisure town identified by Borsay for an earlier period.<sup>6</sup>

More important however, were the growing numbers of working class trippers and middle-class visitors which provided additional stimulus to the town's development. By the 1880s, Southend was already meeting Walton's criteria needed for the development of a resort catering for the masses.<sup>7</sup> It was linked by rail to the large population centre of London, with cheap excursion tickets and journey times of less than one and a half hours.<sup>8</sup> Increasing real wages amongst London's white collar and skilled workers provided them with sufficient disposable income to afford a trip to the seaside. Increasing numbers were

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<sup>3</sup> MacKenzie Macbride, *Rambles Around Southend and Neighbourhood, Being a Guide* (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, 1893), pp.13-14.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Kay *The London, Tilbury and Southend Railway Volume One 1836-1893* (Teignmouth: Peter Kay, 1996), p.34.

<sup>5</sup> Macbride, p.18.

<sup>6</sup> Borsay, pp.117 -161.

<sup>7</sup> John K. Walton, 'The Demand for Working-Class Seaside Holidays in Victorian England', *The Economic History Review, New Series*, Vol. 34.2, (1981), 249-265, (p.252).

<sup>8</sup> LT&SR Timetable for 1882 in the *Southend Standard*, (SS) 28 April 1882, p.7.

choosing to visit Southend. The growth of the half day Saturday, and the Bank Holiday Act of 1871, provided the time.<sup>9</sup> By the 1890s Southend could offer a large number of eating and drinking establishments, while there was a growing presence of hawkers, traders and entertainers ready to cater for the trippers' needs.<sup>10</sup>

The August Bank Holiday was of particular significance to the growth of Southend, quickly becoming the busiest weekend of the year. In 1893 a visitor to the town observed: 'The number of excursionists brought into the town each year exceeds that of its predecessors, and consequently I found the town almost besieged with visitors.'<sup>11</sup> However, during the early 1890s Southend was still some way behind Blackpool, as an article in the *London Magazine* observed: 'Blackpool swallows one hundred excursionists trains in a single day and thinks lightly of this feat, but Southend rarely rises to sixty on its busiest day August Bank Holiday.'<sup>12</sup> As Walton explained, up until the 1880s, the growth of the working class excursion to the seaside in the south east of England had lagged behind some northern areas in visitor numbers. In Lancashire for example, the preservation of traditional holidays associated with fairs and wakes weeks; regular work; relatively higher family incomes and organised excursions; had provided opportunities since the 1840s, for workers to enjoy short trips to resorts like Blackpool.<sup>13</sup> For Southend the rising visitor figures for the August Bank Holiday weekend- based on total passenger numbers carried by rail and steamer - help

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<sup>9</sup>Walvin, pp.58-60.

<sup>10</sup>*Kelly's Directory of Essex 1894*, (London: Kelly's Directories,1894), pp.314-320; *SS*, 10 August 1893, p.3, col 5.

<sup>11</sup>*SS*, 10 August 1893, p.3, col 2.

<sup>12</sup>ERO TS 1581, *The London Magazine*, 24 April 1891, p.331.

<sup>13</sup>Walton, 'The Demand for Working-Class Seaside Holidays,' (pp.252-253)

illustrate its rapid growth as a resort. Fig 3.1 shows that the numbers rose exponentially between 1891 and 1910.

**Fig. 3.1 Table showing growth in visitor numbers to Southend on August Bank Holiday weekend 1879- 1910.** <sup>14</sup>

Year	Visitors
1879	25,000
1884	30,000
1891	44,000
1897	93,000
1906	112,551
1910	124,635

During the 1890s, large number of trippers travelled from the London area to Southend, particularly on a Sunday. Hull's guide claimed half a million people visited Southend pier during the summer.<sup>15</sup> This however, would have also included residents and large numbers making repeat visits. In addition Southend continued to attract a significant number of middle-class visitors some who stayed for a view days, others for the season. Kelly's Directory estimated 24,000 in 1894 rising to 30,000 by 1902. The growth in holiday accommodation shown in Fig.3.2 is further evidence of Southend rapid growth as a resort.

**Fig. 3.2: Table showing growth in holiday accommodation in Southend 1894 -1914** <sup>16</sup>

	1894	1902		1914	
Accommodation	No	No	Increase %	No	Increase%
Apartments	128	482	276.60%	727	50.50%
Lodging/boarding houses	8	33	312.50%	146	342.40%
Hotels	7	6	-14.30%	27	350%

<sup>14</sup> SS, 8 August 1879, p.5; 9<sup>th</sup> August 1884,p.5; 9 August 1888,p.4; 6 August 1891,p.8;

4<sup>th</sup> August 1898,p.5; 9 August, 1906, p.3; 4 August 1910, p.10.

<sup>15</sup> *Hull's Guide to Southend-on-Sea and District 1891* (Southend: Hull & Co, 1891), p.38.

<sup>16</sup> *Kelly's, 1894*, pp.314-320; *1902*, pp.374-386; *1914*, pp.552-578.

The information in Table Fig.3.2 was derived from lists given in Kelly's Directory for each of the given years. This evidence however, has some limitations. Not all providers of accommodation would have been listed. Some of the increase just reflected the inclusion of more providers in later directories. The apparent fall in the number of hotels between 1894 and 1902 hides the opening of large hotels such as the Hotel Metropole, the Queens Hotel and Hotel Victoria, which actually increased the number of hotel beds in the town.<sup>17</sup> Some of the apartments and rooms in lodging houses would have also been let to long term residents.

The rapid growth in visitor numbers coincided with the acceleration in Southend's population growth. Southend's expansion as a resort during the 1890s, provided business and employment opportunities, albeit many seasonal, partly explaining the large numbers moving into the town from the surrounding area and beyond. This was long before the commuters identified by Walton became a significant factor. The LT&SR only had 447 London season ticket holders in 1891.<sup>18</sup> The evidence presented in chapter two, illustrated the growing levels of employment in Southend in a variety of different occupations as the town grew as a resort and its population expanded. While there was evidence of growing numbers working in commercial occupations in the period 1901 to 1911, many who might have been commuters, the evidence overall challenged Walton's claim that commuters were the main ingredient in the town's population growth during this period<sup>19</sup>

It was the town's growth as a resort which provided the initial stimulus to rapid population growth during the 1890s, attracting many to the town in pursuit of the

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<sup>17</sup> *SS*, 13 August 1896, p.5, col 5.

<sup>18</sup> National Archives (NA), RAIL 437/7, *LT&SR Board and Proprietors Minutes*, 1891-1895.

<sup>19</sup> *Census of England and Wales, 1901, Table 35A- Grouped Occupation of Males and Females Aged 10 Years and Upwards, County of Essex* pp.80-81; *Census of England and Wales, 1911, Table 13- Occupations (condensed list) of males and females aged 10 and upwards, 1911, Essex, Municipal Borough of Southend-on-Sea*, pp.157-159. < [www.histpop.org](http://www.histpop.org) > [accessed 27 November, 2018].

employment, business opportunities and a place to live. Resort growth continued to be an important element in Southend's expansion during the period 1901- 1911. However, both the growth of Southend as a resort and as a residential location was encouraged further by improved rail links.

**(ii) *Improved Railway Connections***

Dyos, Jackson and Kellett, all highlighted the importance of railway connections in facilitating urban expansion and suburban development. Railways provided quick and easy travel over increasing distances. This enabled the separation of the home from the workplace and an escape from the grime and dangers of the city.<sup>20</sup>

Walton and Walvin both showed how rail links aided the expansion of seaside resorts through cheap fares and by making them easier to travel to.<sup>21</sup> This section will examine how improvements in rail connections and increased competition between rival railway companies, further facilitated the growth of Southend as a resort and residential town. The building of a shorter and more direct route to London by the LT&SR reduced journey times. While the opening of a second line to Southend by the Great Eastern Railway (GER) in 1889 provided an alternative route to London and offered more direct connections to other important towns in Essex. It was after these developments that Southend's residential population began to rise rapidly.

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<sup>20</sup>H. J. Dyos, *The Victorian Suburb A Study of the Growth of Camberwell* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1964), p.28; Alan A. Jackson, 'The London Railway Suburb 1850 to 1914', in *The Impact of the Railway on Society in Britain :Essays in Honour of Jack Simmons*, ed. by K. B. Evans and J.V. Gough (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p.176; John R. Kellett, *The Impact of the Railways on Victorian Cities* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul,1969), p.390.

<sup>21</sup>Walton, *The English Seaside Resort*, p.22; Walvin, p.46.

Southend had been linked to London by rail since 1854 however, up until 1888 this connection was not direct. Passengers were conveyed by a circuitous branch line to Tilbury often having to wait for connections to London. Average journey times to London were ninety minutes. There was only one weekday express train each morning not leaving until 9.am, unsuitable for those working regular office hours.<sup>22</sup> Journey times were longer than those from Brighton -a long established dormitory for London commuters- despite the fact that Brighton was fifteen miles further from central London.<sup>23</sup> The small number of season ticket holders from Southend to London -barely more than a hundred in the 1880s- had long demanded a more suitable and faster express service.<sup>24</sup> There were suggestions that the long journey times deterred those working in London from moving to Southend. An article in the *Southend Standard* claimed ‘Many insurance clerks would be glad to reside in Southend if they could get to London by nine o’ clock.’ The LT&SR’s position however, was that due to the small numbers of regular travellers from Southend, providing more express trains was not viable.<sup>25</sup>

The LT&SR was more concerned with developing its freight business. By the early 1880s, growing freight and passenger traffic through Tilbury had begun to cause congestion on the line. The planned opening of larger docks at Tilbury in 1886 raised the prospect of much greater freight traffic on the line. The company therefore applied for permission to build a new line between Barking and Pitsea in Essex, in order to relieve the growing congestion.<sup>26</sup> It was the opening of this line in 1888 which created a more direct route to Southend, cutting the fastest

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<sup>22</sup>LT&SR Timetable for 1882, *SS*, 28 April 1882, p.7.

<sup>23</sup>NA RAIL 950/12, London, Brighton and South Coast Railway: public timetables, 1883.

<sup>24</sup>*SS*, 15 October 1891, p.5, col 3.

<sup>25</sup>*SS*, 7 August 1885, p.5, col 5.

<sup>26</sup> NA Rail 437/4, *Report on 53<sup>rd</sup> Half Yearly meeting of LT&SR* 31<sup>st</sup> January 1883.

journey times to London to fifty minutes – see Fig. 3.3. It became quicker and cheaper to travel between Southend and London than it was to Brighton.

Excursion fares of 2/6d return, undercut the fares to the south coast resorts. The LT&SR offered second class season tickets at £15 per annum compared to Brighton's £24 per annum.<sup>27</sup> The shorter travelling times and cheaper fares increased Southend's attractiveness both to holiday makers and potential residents.

The reports of the 'House of Commons Select Committee examining the Great Eastern Railway Bill 1883' and the 'House of Lords Enquiry in to the Proposed Extension of the Great Eastern Railway 1883,' provide useful evidence of the demand for improved railway links in South Essex. They also reveal another motivation for the LT&SR in constructing a more direct route.<sup>28</sup> This was the threat of competition from the Great Eastern Railway (GER). The GER applied for permission to build a branch line from Shenfield to Southend, providing an alternative route from London to Southend (see Fig 3.3). The GER claimed that it was in response to the growing calls for improved railway provision in east Essex. Lobbying from farming interests complained that their distance from the rail network put them at a disadvantage in getting their produce to market. Similar arguments were advanced from merchants of various kinds. Land agents argued that the lack of railway provision had further depressed land prices.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Brighton Gazette*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1902, p.7, col 5.

<sup>28</sup> Report on Evidence given to the House of Commons Select Committee Examining The Great Eastern Railway's Bill to expand its services in Essex', SS, 27 April 1883, p.5, col 4; 'Report on Enquiry of the House of Lords select Committee in to Proposed Extension of the Great Eastern Railway to Southend' SS 22 June 1883, p.3, col 4.

<sup>29</sup> SS, 27 April 1883, p.5, col 4.

**Fig.3.3: Map of south Essex 1895, showing named places and improved rail connections**<sup>30</sup>

**\*IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\***

<sup>30</sup> G. Philips. *Handy Atlas Of the Counties of England 1895, Map of the County of Essex* <[www.oldssexmaps.co.uk/countymaps19Cp4.html](http://www.oldssexmaps.co.uk/countymaps19Cp4.html)>[accessed 2 July 2019]

Business interests in Southend also saw the advantage of better rail links with other parts of Essex. The Southend Local Board supported GER proposals, favouring improved links with the north of the county. It was thought that the connection with the GER would give Southend access to a larger rail network and better communication with other important Essex towns, including Chelmsford, Colchester and Maldon.<sup>31</sup>

The extension of the line to Southend made the venture more viable for the GER. In addition to its freight services and meeting the needs of Essex farmers it, hoped to attract excursionists and residents as customers. The new GER station opened in Southend in 1889. This put LT&SR and GER in direct competition with each other. Each offered discounted fares and produced promotional advertising to generate custom, facilitating the growth of visitors to Southend and attracting new residents. The GER matched the LT&RS's fares of 2/6d return for excursion tickets, but its services did not cater for commuter traffic until 1911.<sup>32</sup> Both companies however, expanded their links with London suburban railways, increasing access further, as illustrated in Fig.3.4.

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<sup>31</sup>SS, 22 June 1883, p.3, col 2-3.

<sup>32</sup>NA ZSPC 11/52810, *GER Timetables 1909-1911*.

**Fig. 3.4: Rail Company advertising illustrating Southend's growing links with north and east London** <sup>33</sup>

**\*IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\***

Therefore, by the end of the 1880s Southend's rail connections had considerably improved. Journey times had been cut and with a greater choice of services provided. There was greater connectedness with many areas of London and other important centres in Essex. For Londoner's, particularly north of the Thames, Southend had become not only the cheapest seaside resort to travel to but also the quickest to reach. From the 1890s Southend's growth in population and visitor numbers accelerated rapidly. Improved rail connections and competitive fares together with the town's close proximity to London were significant factors in bringing about this growth.

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<sup>33</sup> *East London Observer*, 13 September 1891, p.4, col.6.

(iii) *Rural Exodus and the Agricultural Depression in Essex.*

The analysis of census data in chapter two showed that during the 1890s migration from rural Essex made the most important contribution to the rapid increase in Southend's population. It continued to be a significant factor during the Edwardian period when Walton claimed that commuters were the most important 'ingredient'.<sup>34</sup>

This section will present evidence that rural exodus, propelled further by prolonged agricultural distress, lay behind large numbers of people moving from the Essex countryside into Southend. Rural exodus was a trend noted by a number of historians as gathering pace during the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> In England as a whole large numbers of people were migrating into the towns and cities from the countryside, pushed out due to changes in agriculture practices reducing the availability of employment. They were also drawn to towns by the pull factors of regular employment, higher wages, business opportunities and the other attractions of town life. These factors were at play in rural Essex however, were fed further by prolonged agricultural distress. Historians debate the causes, extent and nature of the so called 'Great Agricultural Depression' in England between the 1870s and 1890s. Fletcher questions the validity of the term arguing that the depression was largely confined to the corn going sector, particularly to corn growers unable or unwilling to adapt to changing market conditions. He questions the evidence of widespread distress presented in the two Royal Commission Reports on Agriculture produced in the 1890s. He argues that much of it was focused on aristocratic wheat growing

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<sup>34</sup> Walton, p.67.

<sup>35</sup> John Saville, *Rural Depopulation in England and Wales, 1851 to 1951* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957); Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History, 1850-1925* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991); Colin Pooley and Jean Turnbull, *Migration and Mobility in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century* (London: UCL Press, 1998).

interests in the south and midlands.<sup>36</sup> Howkins contended that agricultural depression only served to speed up the long term trend of drift towards the towns and cities.<sup>37</sup> There can be little doubt however, given the evidence from a variety of sources, that rural areas in Essex were adversely affected by agricultural decline and many moved to find work elsewhere.

Aubrey Spencer's report to the Royal Commission for Labour in 1892, described the Dengie Hundred, fifteen miles to the north of Southend, as probably more affected by agricultural distress than any other part of England - see Fig 3.3. He described 'huge tracts of land out of cultivation and many hands made idle by lack of work.' He estimated falls in population of between fifteen to eighteen per cent in the years 1881 – 1891, due to lack of work. He also found 4.1 per cent of the population receiving outdoor or indoor relief compared to an average of 2.6 per cent in England and Wales.<sup>38</sup> Hunter Pringle in his report about Essex to the Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1894 confirmed much of Spencer's findings over a much wider area:

Between the Great Eastern Railway main line and the sea things have assumed a very serious aspect... one sees land going out of cultivation or running wild ... whole farms and tracts of countryside have been abandoned and given up to nature,<sup>39</sup>

He was describing an area comprising the Billericay Registration District, its

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<sup>36</sup>T. W. Fletcher, 'The Great Depression of English Agriculture 1873-1896', *The Economic History Review, New Series*, 13 .3, (1961), 417-432, (pp.417-427).

<sup>37</sup>Howkins, p.4.

<sup>38</sup>ERO TS 164/1, Royal Commission on Labour 1894, *The Agricultural Labourer Vol.1*, Part 5 England. Reports by Aubrey Spencer Assistant Commissioner upon the Poor Law of Maldon (Essex), p.76.

<sup>39</sup>ERO, TS 164/1, Royal Commission on Agriculture. England. Report by Mr. R. Hunter Pringle (assistant Commissioner) on Ongar, Chelmsford, Maldon, and Braintree Districts of Essex (1894), p.36.

boundary seven miles to the west of Southend; the Rochford Hundreds to which Southend belonged and the Dengie Hundreds just to the north - see Fig 3.3. The local newspapers regularly carried reports in the mid-1890s commenting on agricultural distress and declining populations in Essex villages.<sup>40</sup> As late as 1900, an article described the situation in the Essex countryside as: 'fearfully reduced and impoverished through agricultural depression and people drifting away to larger centres.'<sup>41</sup> Many would have been attracted to London, Chelmsford and further afield. Significant numbers however, found their way to Southend. See Fig 2.3.

Southend offered attractions to those struggling to find work, particularly in south east Essex, as a rapidly expanding resort town close at hand and familiar to many. Boyer agreed with Ravenstein that distance was a crucial factor affecting migration during this period.<sup>42</sup> In addition Boyer argued that the presence of friends or family in providing information and support for new arrivals were also important. He agreed with Baines and Friedlander that agricultural migrants tended to prefer employment in transport and service industries, prominent in a resort town like Southend.<sup>43</sup> The evidence from the census data presented in chapter two showed some evidence of these trends particularly for female employment. However, it appears that many agricultural labourers from the surrounding Essex countryside secured employment in the booming construction and building trade in Southend. Fig 4.5 shows migration from the neighbouring Rochford parishes was larger than other districts in Essex. However, migration from Essex as a whole was more significant than from Rochford or the Dengie Hundred in driving population growth

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<sup>40</sup> SS, 5 October 1893, p.5, col 5.

<sup>41</sup> SS, 26 April 1900, p.5, col 5.

<sup>42</sup> George R. Boyer, 'Labour Migration in Southern and Eastern England, 1861-1901', *European Review of Economic History*, 1.2, (1997), 191-215, (pp.193-194).

<sup>43</sup> Boyer, (p.193-194); E.G.Ravenstein, 'The Laws of Migration', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Vol.48, 2, (1885), 167-235, (p.198).

in the period up to 1901. Both areas, while severely affected by the decline in agricultural employment, made only a modest direct contribution to the total.

**Fig 3.5: Table showing the birth places of people living in Southend from significant areas of migration and Southend parishes 1901-1911.<sup>44</sup>**

<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>1901</b>	<b>1911</b>
Born in Southend	5246 (18.8%)	10300 (15.21%)
Rochford Registration District	1529 (5.3%)	2242 (3.3%)
Maldon Registration district	488 (1.7%)	648 (0.96%)
Other Registration Districts of Essex	5408 (18.74%)	5541 (8.18%)
Lon/Midd.	6079 (21.07%)	18714 (27.64%)
Kent	1147 (3.98%)	2651 (3.91)
<b>Southend Total population</b>	<b>28857</b>	<b>67713</b>

What the data does not show however, were those living in neighbouring parishes who might have taken advantage of temporary seasonal work during the summer months not recorded in the census. Also a number of the parishes in the Rochford district were less than an hour walking distance from the centre of Southend, making it possible to work in Southend and continue to live outside the town. This became even more possible with the growth of Southend's tram network from 1901, extending to the edges of the borough by 1911.<sup>45</sup> Notable from the 1911 figures however, was the growth in the proportion of migrants from the London area into Southend and a distinct decline in those born in other parts of Essex as a proportion of Southend's total population, possibly suggesting a change in the pattern of migration during the period 1901 to 1911. However, some of these differences might be due to local boundary changes. Also from the data analysed here, it is not

<sup>44</sup> Search of birth places, parishes of Prittlewell and Southchurch, Findmypast <<https://search-findmypast-co-uk/search-world-Records/1891/1901/1911-england-wales-and-scotland-census>> [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019].

<sup>45</sup> V.E. Burrows, *The Tramways of Southend* (Huddersfield: The Advertiser Press Limited, 1965), pp.15-18.

possible to determine how many actually migrated to Southend directly from their original place of birth.

### *Summary*

Southend's population was already rising rapidly by the 1890s, at least a decade before the Edwardian period identified by Walton and long before commuters became a significant factor. Three factors contributed significantly to this trend. Firstly, the rapid growth of Southend as a resort, which attracted large numbers of working class trippers as well as those seeking work and business opportunities. Secondly, the improvement in rail connections to the town and the competition between rival train operators which led to reduced ticket prices and shorter journey times. This increased Southend's attractiveness as both a place to visit and live. Finally rural exodus from the Essex countryside, fuelled further by persistent agricultural distress, propelled many to search for work elsewhere, significant numbers migrating into Southend.

#### **4. Land agents, the Municipal Council and Railway Companies.**

Walton claimed commuters were the main ingredient in contributing to Southend's growth during the Edwardian period.<sup>1</sup> Evidence in chapter two demonstrated that the process began earlier, was more complex and involved many other groups of people. The previous chapter focused on three additional factors which were of particular importance in driving rapid population growth in Southend in before the Edwardian period. These were resort growth, improved railway connections and agricultural distress in the Essex countryside. This chapter will examine three other factors not addressed by Walton, which played a significant role in bringing about rapid population growth in the period 1891 to 1911. The first section will examine the activities of land agents and speculative builders. These saw huge financial opportunities in developing land close to railway corridors as prime house building plots, appealing to contemporary middle-class ideals. The second section will evaluate the role played by Southend Municipal Council, who encouraged the development of middle-class residential areas. Many of its prominent members had interests in land speculation and the building trade. The final section will assess the contribution made by the LT&SR, keen to increase regular passenger traffic on its railway. These factors resulted in the development of much of the available land in Southend during the period attracting large numbers to the town.

Evidence from land agent sales catalogues, newspaper and railway advertising, will be examined much of which aimed to create an idealised image of Southend

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<sup>1</sup>John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History 1750 -1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), p. 67.

not always consistent with the reality. *The proceedings of Southend Municipal Council* will also be used. While these provide a useful summary of council business and resolutions they lack detail. Council chamber debates and policies for example were often reported and commented on in much greater depth in the local press and these will also be referred to.

Urban historians such as Borsay, Sweet and Corfield have shown how residents had been attracted to leisure towns since the late seventeenth century. This led by the aristocracy and through emulation gradually spreading down the social hierarchy.<sup>2</sup> By the late eighteenth century seaside resorts like Brighton were supplanting spa towns as the most favoured watering places. Pimlott explained how by the mid- nineteenth century the promotion of seaside resorts had shifted from extolling the health giving properties of drinking sea water to those of sea bathing and the bracing sea air.<sup>3</sup> These qualities featured in the advertising of those wishing to attract holiday makers and new residents to seaside towns.<sup>4</sup> Articles and advertising promoting Southend in numerous guide books published in the years 1891 to 1911 featured these attractions.<sup>5</sup> Fig.4.1 below is an example of what Simon Ward termed the 'idealised representation' of resort selling typical of the period.<sup>6</sup> Stylised images like this were regularly used to promote Southend not only as a resort but also as a residential town.

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance Culture and Society in the Provincial town 1660 to 1770* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) p.196; P.J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) pp.51-66; Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840* (Abington: Routledge, 1999) pp. 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> J.R.J. Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday a Social History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947) pp.52-54.

<sup>4</sup> Essex Records Office (ERO) SALE/A151, *Sales Catalogue Southend, Westcliff and District*, (London: The Land Company 1905) p.3.

<sup>5</sup> *Hull's Guide to Southend-on-Sea 1891* (London: *Hull's Guides*, 1891) p.12; H. Darbyshire' *Guide to Southend* (London: Darbyshire Guides 1900) p.7.

<sup>6</sup> Steven V. Ward, *Selling Places, The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities* (London: Routledge, 1998) p.54.

**Fig. 4.1: London Electric Railways advertisement, 1908.<sup>7</sup>**

**\*IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\***

**(i) *Land Agents and Speculative Builders***

Land agents and speculative builders were of central importance in the development of Southend as a residential town in this period. With improved rail connections between Southend and London after 1889, land agents became more active in buying up land in the South Essex area, dividing it up in to small lots and selling it on as building plots.<sup>8</sup> London was expanding exponentially outwards during the late nineteenth century. Many of its outer suburbs were experiencing the most rapid population growth in England during the 1890s:- the city expanded

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<sup>7</sup>London Transport Museum: *Southend and Westcliff –on-Sea* ( London: London Underground Electric Railways,1908)<<https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/collections-online/posters?q=Westcliff-on-Sea>>[accessed 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2019].

<sup>8</sup>'Land Sales in South East Essex', *Southend Standard (SS)*, 18 January 1900, p.8, col.4.

by around 100,000 per year.<sup>9</sup> Southend, a seaside resort close to London, with journey times by rail of fifty minutes, was seen as ripe for residential development. Areas to the west of the town such as Westcliff and Chalkwell were marketed as ‘suburbs of London by the sea.’<sup>10</sup> In the context of prolonged agricultural depression, many land owners close to the new railway corridors were persuaded to sell their land for housing attracted by the potential of a higher return.<sup>11</sup> Thompson’s inquiry in 1907 provided evidence showing that land values in Essex declined by 49.6 per cent during the 1890s, compared to a national average of thirty five per cent.<sup>12</sup> Pringle’s report in 1894 described how land worth £8000 in 1875 sold for £420 in 1885.<sup>13</sup> An article in the *Southend Standard* describing land sales close to the new railway routes, illustrated the profit that could be made in the area by land agents.

There is no doubt that a considerable extent of formerly agricultural land bought at £10 to £20 per acre has been cut up and sold at £5 per plot which at a rate of 20 plots per acre brings in £100.<sup>14</sup>

Dyos explained a number of different ways in which land could be developed for housing during this period. Landowners could manage the process themselves. More commonly the landlord retained their freehold interest in the land but leased it to land agents or directly to builders. Using the terms of the lease to control the character of what was built and increase the rental value of the land. Alternatively

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<sup>9</sup>H.J. Dyos, *The Victorian Suburb: A Study of the Growth of Camberwell* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1964) p.54 p.196.

<sup>10</sup>*The Globe*, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1899, p.8, col.2.

<sup>11</sup>ERO, TS 164/1, Mr. R. Hunter Pringle (assistant Commissioner) Report on Ongar, Chelmsford, Maldon and Braintree Districts of Essex(Royal Commission on Agriculture. England 1894) p.41.

<sup>12</sup>R.J. Thompson, ‘An Inquiry into the Rent of Agricultural Land in England and Wales during the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 70 (1907), 587-616 (p. 601.).

<sup>13</sup>ERO, TS 164/1, p.42.

<sup>14</sup>SS, 18 January 1900, p.8, col.4.

they could sell off their interest entirely to land agents.<sup>15</sup> Walton showed how in the late Victorian period the fastest growing seaside resorts tended to be dominated by land companies.<sup>16</sup> This became the predominant model of development in Southend. A notable exception was the aristocratic Burges family who from 1908 began to lease land for house building, controlling development through strict covenants, with the aim of creating a garden suburb to the east of the town.<sup>17</sup>

Two main companies promoted land sales in Southend. The first was the Southend Estates Company - a local concern run by Thomas Dowsett. He was the first Mayor of Southend in 1892 and a prominent member of the council until 1906. The second was the Land Company, controlled by Francis Ramuz J.P., also a prominent member of Southend Council from the late 1890s, becoming Mayor in 1900.<sup>18</sup> The lists of serving councillors published in the council's proceedings in November each year showed several members of the council connected with land and building interests.<sup>19</sup> Estates were bought from the landowners for an agreed price per acre, or marketed on the landowner's behalf. They were divided into building plots and sold at auctions, advertised locally, in London and the Home Counties.<sup>20</sup> These companies had a significant influence on the nature of urban development in Southend. Both aimed to maximise their returns by

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<sup>15</sup> Dyos, pp. 87-91.

<sup>16</sup> Walton, p.105.

<sup>17</sup> ERO. T/B 195, Microfilm of Accounts and Papers of Burgess Family Estates in Southchurch.

<sup>18</sup> ERO, D/DS 470/1, D/S 517/2, D/D S526/13, D/P 585/6/17, SALE/A 151, SALE/B 235, Various Sale Catalogues related to properties and building plots in Southend-on Sea, 1895 – 1914; Southend-on -Sea Library, LSC (SLSC), D/D, E73 Sales Catalogues 1881-1927.

<sup>19</sup> SLSC, Borough of Southend-on-Sea. *Proceedings of the Municipal Council*, Vol. I - XXI (Southend: Francis and Sons, 1892-1914).

<sup>20</sup> SS, 18 January 1900, p.8; *Tower Hamlets Independent and East End Local Advertiser*, 28 February 1903, p.18; *Croydon Guardian and Surrey County Gazette*, (CGSCG) 2 May 1908, p.2; *Kentish Mercury*, 29 June 1900 p.1.

developing estates attractive to a middle-class clientele, particularly those who worked in London. They emphasised their closeness to railway stations, short journey times to London and cheap season ticket prices.<sup>21</sup> Westcliff-on-Sea was advertised as ‘London’s only seaside suburb’, illustrated in Fig. 4.2.

**Fig. 4.2: Newspaper advertisement by The Land Company for Westcliff-on-Sea.<sup>22</sup>**

**\*IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\***

Writers on urban development, including Burnett, Dyos, Long and French have highlighted the importance of middle-class material and cultural aspirations in leading to the flight of the middle classes to the suburbs.<sup>23</sup> The middle classes

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<sup>21</sup>*Independent and East London Advertiser*, 28 March 1903, p.6,

<sup>22</sup>CGSCG, 2 May 1908 p.2.

<sup>23</sup>Dyos, *The Victorian Suburb*; John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815 to 1970* (London: Methuen, 1978) p.189. Christopher French, 'Housing the Middle Classes in Late Victorian and

ranged from wealthy business owners with incomes of several thousand pounds per year, down to junior clerks, earning little more than £100 per-annum.<sup>24</sup> The middle-class idyll was preoccupied by status. It aspired towards a home based on the nuclear family. The home provided privacy and comfort, a refuge from the dangers of dirt, disease and crime associated with city life. It was an escape from the stresses of work for the male bread winner.<sup>25</sup> The wife and mother's role was to run the home and look after her husband and children, assisted by servants.<sup>26</sup> To emulate a middle-class lifestyle, houses needed to possess several rooms where visitors could be received and the privacy of family members preserved.<sup>27</sup> Helen Long summed up the role of the nineteenth century middle-class home as the physical setting for the embodiment of the Victorian values of virtue, thrift, sobriety and male hegemony.<sup>28</sup> By the late nineteenth century, many of the older suburbs of London resembled the inner-city as London expanded rapidly.<sup>29</sup> With improving transport links, those in search of the middle-class suburban life were being enticed to settlements on the edge of London and in the Home Counties.<sup>30</sup>

The sales catalogues and advertising of the land companies in Southend show how, they attempted to produce an idolised vision of their future housing developments. They appealed to the middle-class aspirations described above and promoted the health advantages of living close to the sea.<sup>31</sup> They aimed to attract

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Edwardian Surbiton', *The Local Historian*, 45.2, (2015), 126-143 (p. 127); Helen Long, *The Edwardian House the Middle Class Home in Britain 1889-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)

<sup>25</sup> Dyos, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> Burnett, p. 189.

<sup>27</sup> French, (p. 127).

<sup>28</sup> Long, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Dyos, p. 54, pp. 181-182.

<sup>30</sup> Burnett, p. 187.

<sup>31</sup> ERO, D/DS 470/1, D/S 517/2, D/D S526/13, D/P 585/6/17, SALE/B 235, Various Sale Catalogues related to properties and building plots in Southend-on Sea, 1895 – 1914.

clientele from London and elsewhere. Sales catalogues included a plan showing the layout of the proposed estate.

**Fig. 4.3: Estate Plan Leigh Hall Estate, Southend-on-Sea, 1897.<sup>32</sup>**

**\*IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\***

Use was restricted to residential purposes, with plot sizes and minimum prices of the houses to be built stipulated in the terms of the sale. The objectives were to create developments attractive to middle-class clients and securing a higher return at auction for each plot.<sup>33</sup> To encourage sales easy credit terms were offered to buyers. For example on the Westcliff Park Estate, plots could be secured with a twenty percent deposit and the balance paid over ten years, land taxes included.<sup>34</sup> The land companies further protected their investments by selling only a limited number of plots on an estate by auction at any one time. Buyers were attracted

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<sup>32</sup>SLSC, D/D, E73 Sales Catalogues 1881-1927.

<sup>33</sup>ERO, Sales Catalogues, D/DS 470/1, D/S 517/2, D/D S526/13, D/P 585/6/17, SALE/A 151, SALE/B 235.

<sup>34</sup>ERO SALE/A151.

with the offers of free luncheons and drinks.<sup>35</sup> Both The LT&SR and GER railway companies assisted the land agents by providing special trains from London, offering cheap return fares or even free travel to these events. Fig.4.4 illustrates how potential estates were marketed, highlighting a number of the attractions for buyers mentioned above.

**Fig. 4.4: Railway Station advertisement produced by The Land Company 1907.<sup>36</sup>**

**\*IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\***

Minutes of Southend Municipal Council's Building Committee provide evidence that many plots were bought up by speculative builders often in small lots, building a handful of houses at a time.<sup>37</sup> This reflected the pattern identified by Burdett, as common to suburban development during this period.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Morning Post*, 11 July, 1901, p12.

<sup>36</sup> *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, TPT-012d, <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/toyota.tcl> [accessed 15 September 2019].

<sup>37</sup> *Proceedings of the Municipal Council*, Vol.2, 1893-1894, p.52.

<sup>38</sup> Burnett, p.197.

Some estates, particularly those further away from the sea front, like Westcliff Park, shown in the advertising above, never lived up to the vision set out in the original sales catalogues of the land agents. The result being long streets of mainly terraced housing, some of which were of poor quality.<sup>39</sup> Some builders produced houses conforming to the minimum standards laid down in the covenants, skimping on the quality of materials, leading to accusations of jerry built housing.<sup>40</sup> The completed houses were sold on to private investors or rented out by the builders themselves. They were advertised in the local press in London, and the Home Counties throughout the 1890s and early 1900s. However, many of these advertisements, lacked detailed information about the quality of the housing, size of rooms or the built environment.<sup>41</sup> Close to the sea front, some plots were developed as boarding houses, apartments and hotels. Those to the west catering for middle-class visitors or individual villas used as seasonal or weekend retreats for the wealthy.<sup>42</sup>

Many houses however, away from the seafront were marketed with rents which could be afforded by middle-class families of modest means. These proved attractive to aspiring lower middle-class London workers. Those employed in clerical positions or with a pension income of at least £100 -150 per annum and lower paid professionals earning up to £350- assuming that families could afford to allocate at least one third of their income for rent.<sup>43</sup> The census analysis in chapter two showed that there was a significant increase in clerical workers resident in Southend in the period 1901 to 1911. Away from the seafront, six and seven room houses were advertised for rents of between £22 and £26, with five

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<sup>39</sup> J.W. Burrows, 'The Development of Southend', *SS 21 March 1907*, p.2.

<sup>40</sup> *SS*, 13 January 1898, p.5,col 4,

<sup>41</sup> Sample surveys from *Southend Standard*; *East London Observer (ELO)*; *Tower Hamlets Independent and East End Local Advertiser 1894 and 1905*.

<sup>42</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Essex 1914*, (London: Kelly's Directories. 1914) pp. 552 -578

<sup>43</sup> Long, p.9; Burnett pp.148-151.

room houses for £18 per-annum.<sup>44</sup> Even by 1905, after large rent increases, they were still affordable for many lower middle-class families with six and seven room houses being offered at rents of between £24 and £45 per annum.<sup>45</sup> These rents were comparable with those in the suburbs of east London advertised in the same newspapers however, due to the lack of detail in many of the adverts it is difficult to know how similar these properties really were. Nonetheless, many were attracted to the town due the attractions and amenities it offered as a seaside resort and low season ticket prices of 25/ per annum- cheaper than many London suburbs.<sup>46</sup> This included not only commuters and the retired, but those attracted by business and employment opportunities.<sup>47</sup>

The plan in Fig.4.5 illustrates the rapid expansion of the built up area of Southend in the years between 1890 and 1920. It can be seen that large areas of former farm land to the north and west of the town were developed for housing through the activities of land agents and speculative builders during this period, mainly before the outbreak of war in 1914. Much of it was close to rail or tram routes.

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<sup>44</sup>Examples, *ELO*. 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 1894, p.8; July 1894, p.8.

<sup>46</sup>Alan A. Jackson, 'The London Railway Suburb 1850 to 1914', in *The Impact of the Railway on Society in Britain: Essays in Honour of Jack Simmons*, ed. by K. B. Evans and J.V. Gough (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) p.173

<sup>47</sup>John William Burrows, *Standard Guide to Southend-on-Sea 1912* (Southend-on-Sea: J.H. Burrows & Sons, 1912) pp.46-50.

**Fig. 4.5: Plan showing urban development in Southend 1890 to 1920.**<sup>48</sup>

**\*IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\***

*(i) The Role of Municipal Government.*

Southend Municipal Council played a pivotal role in controlling residential growth. It encouraged the development of middle-class suburbs and provided amenities contributing to Southend's rapid expansion from the 1890s. Its activities were largely typical of other those of other seaside resorts during this period. Writers on the history of the seaside like Walton and Farrant have commented on the active role played by municipal authorities in promoting resort development. They provided public utilities, amenities and attractions for visitors and residents. Also developed transport infrastructure and passed bye-laws that controlled and regulated the public space.<sup>49</sup> Ward argued that it was the specialised nature of resorts which created an interventionist approach by local

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<sup>48</sup> Planning and Building Department, *Urban Growth* (Southend-on-Sea: Southend-on-Sea Borough Council), 2011), p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> Walton, p.125; Sue Farrant, 'London by the Sea: Resort Development on the South Coast of England 1880-1939', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 22 .1, (1987) 137-162 (p.151).

government in attempting to promote their resorts in the face of competition from rivals.<sup>50</sup>

In Southend the municipal council not only actively promoted Southend as a respectable family resort, but also encouraged and controlled the development of residential areas. The latter it was partly obliged to do due to the myriad of public health and housing legislation regulating the development of urban areas in the late nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup> Most significantly the Sanitary Act (1866) and the 'Public Health Act' (1875) required local authorities to enforce minimum structural and sanitary standards on all new building, including the layout of streets and disposal of waste.<sup>52</sup> The Local Government Act of 1894, further charged local councils with maintaining and protecting public rights of way and providing sewers and lighting at the ratepayer's expense.<sup>53</sup> However, Southend council itself applied for an extension of these powers. The Southend Corporation Act (1895) granted the council broad powers to control building, public space and sanitary arrangements. These included more extensive supervision of the erection of new buildings and the conversion or extension of existing ones. Powers to inspect and reject building plans and to fine builders and owners of homes deemed unfit for human habitation. All estate or building plans needed to be approved by the town's Building Committee before going ahead.<sup>54</sup> Not only did the committee ensure basic standards were maintained, but according to Burrows, was in 1901 given powers by the council to imposed minimum values of £250 on houses built in the Westcliff-on-Sea and Chalkwell areas before plans would be approved. To ensure the development of distinctly

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<sup>50</sup>Ward, p.34.

<sup>51</sup>Burnett, pp.154-160.

<sup>52</sup>Burnett, p.155.

<sup>53</sup>*Proceedings of the Council*, Vol.II, 1893-1894, p.129.

<sup>54</sup>*Proceedings of the Council*, Vol.III, 1894-1895, pp.276-280.

middle-class residential suburbs and increased rate revenue to help pay for the town's growing infrastructure.<sup>55</sup> The council provided roads, pavements and sewers. It also contracted with companies to provide mains water, and gas. These further assisted the land speculators in producing suburbs acceptable to a middle-class clientele.<sup>56</sup> Despite these powers however, the local authority found it difficult to keep up with the rapid development and for many years struggled to establish a system to satisfactorily deal with the disposal of sewage. For example, there were regular complaints of contamination of the beach and some outbreaks of typhoid fever.<sup>57</sup> While the council's building controls ensured that most housing conformed to basic standards of health and hygiene, some problems did arise. In the Prittlewell and Southchurch areas of the town, where working class families shared houses due to unaffordable rents, there was overcrowding leading to higher than average infant mortality.<sup>58</sup>

The 1895 Act, also gave the council powers to create bye-laws controlling trade and leisure activities on the beach and foreshore to preserve good order. It issued licences for the use of pleasure boats, entertainers and street traders.<sup>59</sup> The powers were also used to protect the growing residential areas to the west and east of the town from the increasing numbers of trippers, by confining resort attractions mainly to an area a half mile east and west of the pier. In 1899, bye-laws were enacted prohibiting hawking, the erection of stalls, the provision of swimming machines, the playing of games and the delivering of sermons lectures and

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<sup>55</sup> John William Burrows, *Standard Guide to Southend-on-Sea, 1912* (Southend-on-Sea: J.H. Burrows & Sons, 1912) p.47.

<sup>56</sup> John William Burrows, *Southend-on-Sea and District: Historical Notes* (Southend-on-Sea: John.H. Burrows, 1909) p.230.

<sup>57</sup> *SS*, 15 October 1896, p.8 col.2; 12 May 1898, p.2, col.2.

<sup>58</sup> 'Report of Local board Enquiry', *SS*, 21 January 1901, p.7, col. 4; W. Burrows, 'The Development of Southend', *SS*, 21 March 1907, p.2.

<sup>59</sup> *Proceedings of the Council*, Vol.III, 1894-1995, pp.276-280.

entertainments on the foreshore, west and east of this area, in an effort to create quiet areas for residents to enjoy.<sup>60</sup> A section of cliff-tops was purchased by the council and developed into pleasant walkways and gardens. An area known as the Shrubbery was restricted to those prepared to pay an entry fee of 3d, sufficiently high enough to deter trippers.<sup>61</sup> At the foot of the cliffs west and east of the town, esplanades were constructed by the council for the benefit of the residents and more affluent visitors.<sup>62</sup> Social zoning of this kind was typical of many resorts. Similar examples could be observed at Folkestone, Scarborough and Eastbourne.<sup>63</sup> The council also developed parks on land purchased in Chalkwell to the west and in Southchurch to the east of the town on land donated by Aldermen Dowsett and local builders Alderman Ingram and Councillor Baxter.<sup>64</sup> As Walton observed, local government at the seaside thrived where building interests were prominent on the council.<sup>65</sup> All the above steps contributed to the creation of the middle-class suburbs, at Westcliff-on-Sea and later Chalkwell. These were insulated from the raucous activities of the growing working class tripper resort close to the pier. Resembling the suburbs envisioned in the sales catalogues produced by the land speculators. The council further encouraged residential development by the building of an ambitious tram network which began operating in 1901. This was gradually expanded to in the years preceding the outbreak of war in 1914. It linked the growing residential areas to the town

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<sup>60</sup> *Proceedings of the Council*, Vol. VII 1898-1899, pp.310, 328, 451.

<sup>61</sup> Burrows, *Southend Guide*, 1910 p.91.

<sup>62</sup> Burrows, *Historical Notes*, pp.237-238.

<sup>63</sup> Walton, pp.108-109.

<sup>64</sup> Burrows, *Historical Notes*, p.238.

<sup>65</sup> Walton p.154.

centre, seafront and railway stations, important for commuters. This made the development of suburbs further away from the centre more viable.<sup>66</sup> See Fig 4.5.

### (ii) *Railway Companies*

The two railway companies operating connections from London, particularly the LT&SR, facilitated the development of residential areas in the town. Not only did they provide cheap season tickets but also special trains to sales events. New train stations servicing the new suburbs were opened. In 1893, the LT&SR agreed to build a new station at Westcliff-on-Sea on what was virtually a greenfield site, after negotiations with the land agents Tapp and Jones who agreed to share the costs.<sup>67</sup> The station made the proposed development much more attractive to prospective residents and visitors from London. A similar arrangement was made with the Burgess family in 1908, the LT&SR building a station on what was still open farm land in Southchurch, later developed into the garden suburb of Thorpe Bay. In this case the Burges family covered the full £12,000 cost of the venture.<sup>68</sup> The LT&RS responded to increasing demand by providing more services catering for the growing number of residents working in London. Up until 1894 there were just three morning services for London workers, the first at 7.44 am.<sup>69</sup> This had risen in 1902 to six trains between 6.10 am and 9.35 am, the same number back between 5.pm. and 7.pm.<sup>70</sup> By 1912 there were twelve peak hour services to and from London each week day, evidence of the growing commuter traffic

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<sup>66</sup>V.E. Burrows, *The Tramways of Southend* (Huddersfield: The Advertiser Press Limited, 1965) pp.15-18.

<sup>67</sup>National Archives (NA), RAIL 473/7, *LT&SR Board and Proprietors Minutes, 1892*.

<sup>68</sup>NA RAIL 473/12, *LT&RS Board and Proprietors Minutes, 1908*.

<sup>69</sup>NA RAIL 981/351, *LT&SR, Timetable July 1894*.

<sup>70</sup>NA RAIL 981/303, *LT&SR, Timetable June 1902*.

identified by Walton.<sup>71</sup> The GER however, only provided a limited service for commuters before 1911, with only three trains up to London between 8.am and 11.am and three return trains between 5.pm and 9.pm. This was increased to five trains each way in 1911 in response to the increasing demand.<sup>72</sup>

### *Summary*

This dissertation has argued that Walton's claim that commuters were the main ingredient in bringing about Southend-on-Sea's rapid population growth during the Edwardian period was not an adequate explanation. While commuters were important, the process was more complex, involved several other factors and was spread over a longer period. In this chapter three additional factors contributing to Southend's growth have been examined in addition to those on discussed in chapter three. Firstly the significant contribution made by land agents and speculative builders in developing housing estates which attracted large numbers of middle-class residents in pursuit of the suburban idyll. Secondly, the pivotal role played by Southend Municipal Council in controlling and shaping the town's development during a period of rapid growth. It provided essential infrastructure including a tram system, public utilities and additional amenities, enabling further expansion. Bye-laws were used to insulate residential areas from the holiday crowds during the summer months. Finally, the railway companies, particularly the LT&SR, facilitated the development of residential areas in the town by providing special trains to sales events. It offered cheap season tickets, agreed to open new train stations, servicing the new suburbs and provided additional train services to suit London commuters.

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<sup>71</sup>NA RAIL 163/125, *Midland Railway Working Timetables LT&SR, 1912-1913*.

<sup>72</sup>NA ZSPC 11/52810, *GER Timetables 1909-1911*.

## 5. Conclusion

This dissertation set out to investigate and evaluate Walton's claim that commuters were the 'main ingredient' in explaining Southend's rise to third most populous seaside resort during the Edwardian period.<sup>1</sup> Walton not having presented any evidence in support of his assertion or a clear explanation of what he meant by it. Walton while identifying a number of similar characteristics that English seaside resorts shared in their development, also illustrated the great diversity in their economic and social structures. He called for further research at the level of the individual town 'to explain the enormous variety of resort experiences.'<sup>2</sup> This dissertation has made a further contribution to this research process. It has provided additional evidence illustrating the diversity of circumstances leading to resort development and urban expansion. Southend's rapid growth in the period 1891 to 1911, while showing some similarities with resort and urban development elsewhere, arose from a particular combination of factors.

It has been argued in this dissertation that although commuters played a significant role in Southend's rapid growth in the Edwardian period, Walton's explanation was not a sufficient one for what was a more complex process. Walton was right to draw attention to the growing number of commuters becoming an important factor contributing to Southend's rapid population increase in the Edwardian period. However, evidence from census data showed

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<sup>1</sup> John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort, A Social History 1750-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), p.67.

<sup>2</sup> Walton, pp. 225-226.

that Southend's population had begun to grow rapidly during the 1880s, accelerating further during the 1890s. This was long before commuters became a significant presence in Southend.

It was a unique combination of geographical, economic and social factors that came together to produce the extraordinary population growth experienced in Southend between the years 1891 to 1911. Southend's close proximity to London - expanding exponentially during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century - was an important influence on Southend's development, both as a seaside resort and as a residential town. Southend had attracted a small but growing number of middle-class visitors and residents since the late eighteenth century. It was its growth however, as a resort catering for working class trippers from London that provided the initial impetus for the town's rapid growth. This was facilitated by improvements in rail connections with London in the late 1880s. The two rival train companies began to provide faster, more frequent train services and cheaper fares. Growing numbers of working class Londoners were able to afford an outing to the seaside. Opportunities for London workers to enjoy such outings came later than some other parts of England such as Lancashire and west Yorkshire where tradition holidays had provided time and regular work the money to afford an excursion fare decades earlier. Only with the emergence of the half day Saturday, bank holidays and rising real wages in late nineteenth century, were many working class Londoners able to afford a day trip or short break at the seaside.<sup>3</sup> Southend being the nearest and after 1889, the quickest and cheapest seaside resort to reach by train, began to attract ever growing numbers and stimulated seasonal business and employment opportunities. These

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<sup>3</sup> John K. Walton, 'The Demand for Working-Class Seaside Holidays in Victorian England', *The Economic History Review, New Series*, Vol. 34.2, (1981), 249-265 (pp.252-253)

opportunities drew in large numbers of migrants from the surrounding countryside where employment was becoming increasingly scarce due to prolonged agricultural distress and structural changes in farming.

The close proximity to London, good rail links cheap fares and the attractions of the seaside, also began to bring growing numbers of residents eager to escape the confines of the ever expanding London. Those who wished to aspire toward the middle-class suburban idyll of home and family. In Southend this trend was promoted by land agents and speculative builders. They were eager to exploit the possibilities afforded by falling land values due to prolonged agricultural depression. Marketing suburban developments aimed at a middle-class clientele. These activities were aided by a municipal authority keen to expand the town. A number of its prominent members were linked with property development interests. It implemented policies which helped to protect and promote the development of residential areas. Middle-class families saw the opportunity of securing a suitable property in a good environment at a reasonable rent. This included commuters and their households in growing numbers, particularly after 1905. However, also many who made a living locally, and those moving to the town in retirement.

Therefore, Walton's claim that commuters were the most important 'ingredient' in Southend's rise to the third largest resort in the Edwardian period, while having some validity, particularly for the period after 1905, only identified one of many important factors which contributed to the town's extraordinary population increase. It does not provide an adequate explanation of what was a more complex dynamic. It pays insufficient attention to the rapid population growth which began to develop in the 1880s and which accelerated in the 1890s.

This dissertation has only focused on one small aspect of Southend's development over a relatively short period of twenty years. More research is required over a longer period to provide a fuller picture. For example future projects could include a study of the social impacts of the town's rapid growth, or an investigation of the increasing tensions between the residential and resort functions of the developing town. Southend's urban expansion continued in the inter-war years and the post war periods leading to the emergence of large modern suburbs. A study of the nature of this suburban development could form the basis for another local project, contributing further to the national account of urban development and change.

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