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# Welcome to Blackpool! Mass Observation, Health and Leisure

*My project is concerned with the intersection between health and leisure in interwar Britain. During this period, leisure time greatly increased, and began to be seen as a right to which everyone was entitled. The most popular holiday and leisure destination was Blackpool, which was also chosen as a site for participant observation by the Mass-Observers, a research group concerned with the study of popular culture. Their field notes from Blackpool provide the basis for an illuminating study of the interwar Briton at play, and the role that health played in their leisure pursuits.*

## Sun, Sea and Snake-Oil

*A major aspect of Blackpool's fame as a holiday and leisure destination was its environmental image. People came for the 'fresh air' and for a level of annual sunshine much greater than in the surrounding towns. Another great attraction was that of 'alternative' medicine, particularly astrologers and herbalists, who offered cures for common industrial diseases such as nerves, rheumatism and asthma. Chemists also found that many customers desired remedies to help them deal with the stress and exertion of actually being on holiday. Ironically, tourism made Blackpool into a place of ill-health, particularly with regards to sex and pollution. Meanwhile, the industrial towns from which people had travelled became much healthier over the holiday week as a result of the factories being closed.*



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## A Change Is As Good As A Rest...

*Although many people sought to get as far away from their working life as they could, many practices prevailed. The strict rules of boarding houses meant that the meal-times and daily schedules of holiday makers were regulated; holiday makers had by no means escaped the tyranny of the second hand. Even sexual practices remained much the same. While the men did have a break from the factory floor, the presence of children was a cause of stress and worry, often for both parents, not least they were costly, time consuming, and often unwelcome in boarding-houses.*

*Other aspects of interwar leisure which are included in this study include: the growth of 'healthy pursuits', such as cycling and hiking; the foundation of institutions like The Women's League of Health and Beauty; and the role of 'environment' in interwar health and leisure.*

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