Crystal Palaces Beside the Sea

A strong theme in seaside imagery is the view seen through glass: rough seas from the promenade shelter, families taking tea in the winter garden, sea front hotel guests at leisure in the conservatory, the resort seen from the pier pavilion. By the late 19th century the sea had become an object of curiosity, and improved methods of iron and glass production enabled the visitor to view storms and sea monsters with equanimity. Only a few of the seaside crystal palaces remain, but shelters and conservatories still suggest that combination of safety and novelty so sought after by the Victorians.

By the middle of the 19th century, the Victorian passion for exotic flora and fauna had entered the home, via ferneries, aquaria, Wardian cases and conservatories. Part interior decoration, part education, part amusement, and very much a part of social life, these natural elements in the Victorian home lent a romantic air to the domestic scene. Even poorer homes could display pottery or picture frames decorated with flowers. The suburban greenhouse, a miniature version of those found in country houses and botanical gardens, acted as a conversation piece and social centre. Joseph Paxton's 1851 Crystal Palace offered a model for all, its initial use as an exhibition centre followed by its reconstruction in Sydenham in 1852-54 where it became a winter garden. It was the apotheosis of the iron and glass building, and its contents, the best of British industry succeeded by the wonders of the natural world, enthralled much of the nation. The success of the Crystal Palace encouraged Paxton in 1855 to propose a scheme for a glass-covered and tree-lined avenue circling London. It was to be called the Great Victorian Way, and was intended to provide an exotic environment for pedestrians and carriages. Owen Jones, designer of the colour scheme for the interior of the Crystal Palace, suggested a Palace of the People for Muswell Hill, London in 1858; it was to be a gigantic winter garden including a concert hall, museum, galleries and other attractions. Although these plans came to nothing, many smaller scale people's palaces, as winter gardens with an entertainment function came to be known, were proposed and sometimes built in the latter part of the 19th century. Iron and glass structures as adjuncts to houses and hotels, the conservatories and foyers, continued to be popular after the turn of the century as informal social settings, though the emphasis on plant life generally declined from its Victorian peak.

By the 1870s the winter garden was perceived as an ideal entertainment venue for a seaside resort, combining overtones of educational recreation with the possibility of using the space created for concerts and even dances. Large scale aquaria, too, were promoted at the seaside, often in conjunction with winter gardens. At the English and Welsh resorts, 40 limited liability companies were set up between 1864 and 1907 specifically to promote the construction or takeover of winter gardens, aquaria or both, and many other seaside entertainment companies also expressed interest in running similar attractions. The promotion of winter gardens and aquaria was most popular in the 1870s, when 22 of the 40 companies were incorporated, but

only 11 winter gardens, some including aquaria, and five separate large aquaria were ever built, though many smaller ones undoubtedly existed.

Eugenius Birch designed the first English recreational aquarium for a site on Brighton sea front; it opened in August 1872. It was a large and influential structure costing £130,000, and at the time was given as an exemplar in the architectural journals when such buildings were discussed, which was rarely. Not only were resorts by definition provincial, but entertainment buildings had an ephemeral image in comparison to ecclesiastical work or public buildings. Birch, whose Brighton West Pier was completed in 1866, was inspired by the aquarium at Boulogne and other continental examples to suggest the erection of a similar structure in England. A Parliamentary Act was procured in 1868 to obtain the site needed by the Brighton Marine Aquarium Company, and work began in 1869. Birch's original design included a number of towers and turrets, but this was rejected because of the deleterious effect on sea views; in the final plan the Aquarium was set into the cliff face and topped by a promenade. Its terracotta facade was Italianate in style, and its decorative though dim interior soon became a popular meeting place, where ladies and gentlemen could talk, lunch, read the papers, listen to music and even study the fish. One of the unusually large 24 ft wide tanks contained half a million litres of salt water, enough to house dolphins or small whales.

Birch adopted a water circulation Nystem in which each tank had its own separate reservoir, though the tanks were aerated by a stream of air generated by a steam engine and the reservoirs were not strictly necessary as the- tanks were so large. An alternative to this system used a constant current of water circulating through all the tanks. The Brighton Aquarium proved a successful enterprise, and its facilities were extended in 1876 by the addition of a skating rink, cafe, and chess, billiard and concert rooms. Birch moved on to design the exotic Indo-Moorish Scarborough Aquarium, which cost £111,000 and opened on Whit Monday 1877. Unlike the Brighton Aquarium, which still exists (though much altered), almost nothing is left of the Scarborough Aquarium, which was sited beneath the Valley Bridge. It covered 2 ¼ acres, was lit by 1,600 gas jets and had a wildly extravagant interior, with long vistas of Moorish arches and much of the decoration based on that of Hindu temples, notably Binderabund, which Birch had used as a model for his Blackpool North Pier Indian Pavilion of 1874. At 36 ft square, one of the tanks was the largest in the world and held 300 tons of water; it was sometimes used for swimming exhibitions. The Aquarium buildings included a concert hall, reading room, dining room and fernery and, with its Japanese theatre and villages, the whole was something of a 19th century theme park. Red, buff and black encaustic tiles with a central hawthorn blossom pattern ornamented the dados, while those used on the floor were patterned with shells, seaweed, starfish and dolphins. Amid this colourful mass of international motifs, English pastoral scenes in oils were intended to add light and interest to the concert hall.

This wonderful accumulation of decoration was probably Birch's most important architectural commission, many of his pier pavilions being smaller, though almost as ornate. Birch (1818-84) was the son of an architect and at an early age was able to observe some of the great canal and railway construction then taking place in London. By the age of 16 he was employed at an engineering works in Limehouse, and later trained as a civil engineer. He went into partnership with his elder brother, John Brannis Birch, in 1840, and they were both deeply involved with railway building after 1845, first in England and then in India, where they designed all the bridges and viaducts for the East Indian Railway between Calcutta and Delhi. Perhaps Eugenius Birch's personal experience of India led him to incorporate Indian motifs into his later designs for piers and pier pavilions. He made the first application of screw piles to pier construction at Margate jetty in 1853-56, and went on to equip much of the English and Welsh coastline with piers, pavilions, aquaria, docks and railways. His last great scheme was the Marine Kursaal, a plan to extend Brighton Chain Pier with a massive winter garden at its head end. An Act of Parliament was pushed through in 1883 to grant permission, but the pier was found to be so weak that work never began. The two-storey iron and glass rectangular hall with its pair of long transepts would have been the ultimate pier pavilion.

Despite Birch’s reputation, the Scarborough Aquarium was not a financial success, and it was sold in 1886 to the manager of Blackpool Winter Gardens, William Morgan, for £5,150. Morgan’s policy of charging 6d admission for an entire day’s entertainment made the Aquarium briefly successful. A swimming bath was added in 1893, a theatre in 1907 and a skating rink in 1909, but the crowds stayed away; by 1914 the Aquarium was in the hands of liquidators. Scarborough Council ran the buildings as Galaland between 1925 and 1966, but demolition, and the loss of one of the best of the seaside pleasure palaces, came a few years later.

Other aquaria were less flamboyant than Brighton or Scarborough; Dr Cocker's Blackpool Aquarium, opened 1875, was simply an extension of his private aquarium and menagerie, sited on the sea front. Although Cocker provided a bazaar, gardens and music from an orchestrion, (a keyboard instrument imitating an orchestra), his Aquarium was not an elaborate edifice with indoor entertainments like the Birch ones. The remainder of the grand seaside aquaria were built as part of winter garden developments, and normally sited in the basements of the buildings. The aquaria were but one element in the array of attractions necessary to produce sufficient income from the seaside crystal palaces.

The history of the winter garden as a seaside entertainment building is peculiarly unhappy, involving several financial disasters and the destruction of all but one of the pure iron and glass designs; two winter gardens with brick facades also survive. Architects had experimented with cast iron from the early 19th century, but John Nash gave it respectability with his innovative use at the Brighton Royal Pavilion (1815-21). Following the Great Exhibition, cast iron became fashionable, especially when used with glass,

though many architects preferred to disguise its use by hiding it behind a brick or stone facade, which could be described as architecture rather than engineering. The popularity of prefabricated conservatories and glasshouses between the 1860s and 1890s must have confirmed this view of winter gardens as nothing but engineering structures. Prefabricated winter gardens were used at seaside sites, and this may have given added weight to the opinion that seaside architecture, like industrial architecture, was not of primary importance to the ambitious architect. John Weeks & Co of Chelsea, a company with a long tradition of glasshouse manufacture, built the winter garden at the Royal Pavilion Hotel in Folkestone (1885), one of many at seaside hotels. Weeks & Co could provide a complete conservatory package for customers, even including plants. The glasshouse contractors not only dealt in horticultural or small domestic and hotel conservatories; manufacturers Fletcher, Lowndes & Co of Westminster built the elegant Bournemouth Winter Garden in 1875-76, the gentle curves of its transepts belying its origin.

The first joint stock company to intend building a seaside winter garden was the Torbay Hotel and Winter Garden Company, incorporated in 1864. However, the company was a London-based speculative venture which never traded, and it was 1874 before recreational winter gardens were built at Southbourne (now part of Bournemouth), Eastbourne and Southport. These were all pure iron and glass designs; the first of the facaded winter gardens was erected two years later. The South Bourne Winter and Summer Gardens Company was incorporated in 1871 with a nominal capital of only £2,500. It was supported by a small number of local people, including landowner and developer Dr Thomas Armetriding Compton and architect Peter Tuck. It was a small-scale effort compared to those in the larger resorts, but its single share value was set at £5, around the norm for the time. By the 1890s, new winter garden companies usually set out to raise a large capital base, sometimes over £100,000, and used £1 shares to encourage investment; the £1 share became popular with limited companies in general from the 1880s. The South Bourne Company bought an existing winter garden from Tidworth House near Andover and erected it at Southbourne, where it proved popular but financially unsuccessful; the Company was wound up in 1883.

Eastbourne Winter Garden was built by the Devonshire Park and Baths Company in 1874, its architect Henry Currey, architectural consultant to the Duke of Devonshire between 1859 and 1900. It formed part of the amenities of Devonshire Park, and was built by George Ambrose Wallis, a speculative builder who was also agent for the Duke's Sussex estate. Currey had trained under Decimus Burton, designer of the Palm House at Kew Gardens with Richard Turner. Currey's Eastbourne design was an iron and glass pavilion in Classical style with Gothic decoration, which was an adjunct to the swimming baths, tennis courts and later theatre.

Southport Winter Gardens was the first of the seaside winter gardens intended for the mass leisure market; opened on 16 September 1874, the sea front building was in the form of two pavilions connected by a covered

promenade, and was designed by Maxwell & Tuke of Manchester. One of the two Germano-Gothic pavilions held a concert hall, the Pavilion, while the other was the iron and glass Winter Garden. The Pavilion had a capacity of 2,500 and the Winter Garden was 180 ft long with a maximum height of 80 ft. (In comparison, the central section of the Kew Palm House is just over 137 ft long and 63 ft high.) Southport Winter Garden was advertised as the largest conservatory in England. Refreshment rooms and an aquarium filled the basement level.

Although it was one of the biggest edifices ever to grace an English sea front, the Winter Garden was not a great commercial success. The Southport Pavilion and Winter Gardens Company which promoted it was locally based and had wide support in the town and throughout the north-west with 350 shareholders at its peak, but the addition of Frank Matcham's Opera House on an adjacent site in 1890-91 strained the capital base too far, and the Company went into liquidation in 1898. Companies then rapidly came and went in an effort to make the Winter Gardens pay. Entertainments were driven downmarket; the Winter Garden was converted to a ballroom and roller skating rink, and the Pavilion became a cinema, but eventually both were demolished, the Winter Garden in 1933 and the Pavilion in 1962. Southport, although a rapidly growing resort, could not support an attraction needing such a large audience.

Bournemouth Winter Garden (1875-76) was the second of the large iron and glass seaside crystal palaces, at 220 ft long and 50 ft high. Supervision of construction of the Fletcher Lowndes design was undertaken by Peter Tuck, associated with the earlier Southbourne venture, and another local architect, E. J. Cumber. Tuck and Cumber were founder subscribers of the Bournemouth Winter Garden Company, in which Fletcher Lowndes held 2,355 £1 shares. The conservatory manufacturers' design resulted in a winter garden with a tall, square central section and two apsidal-ended transepts; overtones of the Classical horticultural glasshouse were swept away by the delightful decorative ironwork. After its opening for the winter season on 16 January 1877 another sorry tale of lack of support and liquidated companies followed; Bournemouth Corporation eventually took it over in 1893 and it was altered for use as a concert hall, but it was demolished in 1935.

Torquay Winter Garden was the third and last of the huge iron and glass seaside winter gardens. It opened on 1 June 1881 and, of the three, most resembled a horticultural glasshouse, without a curved pane of glass or much in the way of decoration except floral motifs on the ironwork trusses. Its length was 170 ft and lantern height 83 ft; the height of the lantern and the positioning of the two short transepts beneath it gave the severe structure a fantastic quality, tier upon tier of glass rising from the base. The architects were local men, John Watson and William Harvey; Watson was a shareholder in the Torquay Aquarium, Winter Garden and Skating Rink Company, while Harvey was a member of the family of architects responsible for much of the development of Torquay from the 1820s to the 1860s. Work began on the Winter Garden in February 1878, the ironwork carried out by Jesse Tildesley

of the Crescent Iron Works, Willenhall in Staffordshire. The tender price for the ironwork alone was £4,278, and the cost of the entire building was estimated at £12,783. The Company never prospered, and architects, ironfounder and local builder William Goss were all forced to accept payment for their work in Company shares.

Although the Winter Garden was home to several events in its early days, including the first lawn tennis tournament to be held in the town, less than a year after its opening the Company was in difficulties. The building was put up for auction in June 1883, but there were no buyers, and the Winter Garden continued in fitful use until 1903. Its then owner, developer R. F. Yeo, attempted to sell it to Torquay Council; they refused, so Yeo approached several other resorts. Great Yarmouth Council bought the Winter Garden on 22 April 1903 for £1,300, dismantled it, and shipped it round the coast to Great Yarmouth, where it was erected on the sea front, almost on the beach, next to the Wellington Pier. It opened in 1904, a stylistic complement and contrast to Cockrill's new Wellington Pier Pavilion; Great Yarmouth enjoyed some of its most successful years as a resort in the Edwardian era. Both Pavilion and Winter Garden still function on the sea front, a unique pair. The Winter Garden is the only remaining example of the large iron and glass Victorian seaside winter gardens.

Great Yarmouth was also intended as the site of the first of the facaded winter gardens, a monumental structure designed by John Norton and Philip E. Masey of London in 1875. The plan for the main part of the building showed a grand hall, 194 ft in length with an aquarium beneath, and was in Italian Renaissance style; attached to its southern end was a winter garden 136 ft long, sited over a skating rink. The grand hall was marked by twin towers with cupolas, while the winter garden was in classical conservatory style, albeit on a large scale. The foundation stone for this massive undertaking was laid in 1875 by Lord Suffield, and the contractors were Aldin & Sons of Kensington. It comes as no surprise to find that, after £20,000 had been spent and with an estimated £30,000 more necessary to finish the project, the money ran out.

Construction of the winter garden section never began, and only a much modified version of the grand hall and aquarium reached partial completion. The Aquarium, as it was known, opened in 1876 but was a failure, despite visits from the Prince of Wales in 1881 and 1882, after which it took the title Royal Aquarium. It closed in September 1882 and was sold, the new owners rebuilding the main section as a theatre to the design of local architects Bottle and Olley. They used buff brick and terracotta for the Renaissance style facade, while the interior of the theatre was fairly plain, with a barrel-vaulted roof and partly raked floor. The Aquarium reopened in July 1883 and was a great success, with drama and opera in the theatre and a banqueting hall to seat 1,000 in what had been the aquarium. The building still exists, but was converted to a cinema, the Royalty, in 1970.

Norton and Masey, architects of the original Aquarium, were deeply involved with plans for several English winter gardens in the 1870s. John

Norton (1823-1904) was one of the more unlikely seaside architects, as he had a thriving ecclesiastical and country house practice based on his home town of Bristol, though he also ran a London office with his partner of many years standing, Philip Edward Masey (1823-1897). Norton was architect to the Crystal Palace Company estate, the Totland Bay Estate Company in the Isle of Wight and the Langland Bay Estate Company in South Wales; although a Gothicist, he created the Indian interiors of Elveden Hall in Suffolk for the Maharajah Duleep Singh in 1863-70. Norton may have become involved with resort developments through Philip Masey, as barrister Thomas Adair Masey was not only director of the Royal Aquarium, which opened in Westminster on 22 January 1876, but chairman of the company promoting the Great Yarmouth Aquarium and on the board of the Tynemouth Aquarium and Winter Garden Company at its inception in November 1875.

Thomas Masey appears to have been the driving force behind the setting up of at least four aquarium companies in the mid-1870s, including the abortive Weymouth venture, which was seen off by the townspeople. The Royal Aquarium was only briefly successful and its parent company, the Royal Aquarium and Summer and Winter Garden Society, incorporated July 1874, was wound up in 1904. The Yarmouth Aquarium Society was incorporated in 1875, as was the Tynemouth company, and the Weymouth Aquarium and Winter Garden Company followed in January 1876. Although enthusiasm for winter gardens was at its peak, this headlong rush to set up companies and foist substantial buildings on small resorts smacks of profiteering, if nothing worse. Certainly the directors, architects and contractors would have been paid while the building was under construction; subscribers would have been encouraged to invest in their local winter garden company, despite the poor financial record of similar projects. Thomas Masey succeeded in involving a local worthy with his Weymouth company, but the townspeople greeted with scepticism an offer by the Royal Aquarium Company to erect an aquarium in Weymouth free of charge. The result was the setting up of a competing and locally based company, the Weymouth Hotel and Floral Hall Company, in 1877. It had the support of local architect George Rackstraw Crickmay and, although its plans came to nothing, it served as a focus for opposition to the London speculators. The Weymouth Jubilee Hall, a metal and wood structure designed by Crickmay, was completed in 1887.

Tynemouth Winter Garden turned out to be the most long-lasting and successful of Norton and Masey's winter garden designs; it was built almost to their original plan and is still extant and partly functioning. The proposal for a Winter Garden at Tynemouth was well supported locally. The Company attracted 251 shareholders drawn largely from Tyneside, and the Sheriff of Newcastle was on the board of directors. The Duke of Northumberland provided the site, on the cliffs above the Long Sands beach at Tynemouth, for a peppercorn rent of £1 a year. Norton and Masey's design showed great similarities to the grand hall section of their Great Yarmouth Aquarium, but at Tynemouth a wrought-iron, ribbed winter garden behind an Italianate brick

facade replaced the grand hall, while the aquarium was again at basement level. Building work, by contractors Charles Aldin & Sons, as at Great Yarmouth, commenced in 1876, but was delayed by problems with digging down to a firm rock base through the sandy cliff. The Winter Garden finally opened a year behind schedule on 28 August 1878, and guests were entertained to a jolly luncheon with a menu including Ice Pudding a l'Aquarium. The building was spectacular, with three storeys of arcaded buff brick rising from the sands, and the glazed roof curving over the galleried winter garden, which was over 200 ft long. The towered end pavilions contained refreshment rooms, offices and two large water tanks. A fish motif decorated iron columns in the aquarium area. The total cost was £82,500.

The late start and loss of the summer season's takings exacerbated the Company's troubled financial position; by February 1879 the directors were forced to dispense with most of the concerts and readings and bring in more popular entertainments. A new general manager was appointed, with experience of the Royal Aquarium and Crystal Palace, and attractions such as Herr Blitz, plate charmer and equilibrist, and the Great Elva, king of the slack wire, drew good crowds. The first People's Day, a Monday on which the admission charge was sixpence, filled the Winter Garden to near capacity. Despite these efforts, which brought receipts for the 1878-79 season to just over £7,000, the Company collapsed in early 1880. The Winter Garden was sold at auction in January 1880 for £27,000, and has continued to change hands at irregular intervals ever since. The glazed roof was replaced by corrugated iron in two phases between the turn of the century and the 1930s, and many other alterations, internal and external, were made, but the Winter Garden was rarely profitable. Demolition was proposed in 1929 and again in 1971, but the building still stands, partially in use as an amusement arcade and known as the Tynemouth Plaza. Despite alterations, the basic structure of this unique building, the only remaining facaded seaside winter garden, is still intact; it deserves listed building status.

Facaded winter gardens were opened at Margate in 1876 and Morecambe in 1878; the brickbuilt Blackpool Winter Gardens, less a winter garden than a number of glass-roofed areas centred on a theatre, was also opened in July 1878. The architect of the massive Margate Aquarium and Marine Polytechnic was Alfred Bedborough, who produced an elegant Second Empire stone facade for his winter garden on Margate sea front. A pair of three-storey pavilions was connected by the winter garden element, which had a domed central entrance. Bedborough, who began his architectural practice in Southampton and later moved to London, also designed the Royal Aquarium, just to the west of Westminster Abbey on Tothill Street. Bedborough also produced a design for an aquarium at Plymouth in April 1876, which included a concert hall and conservatory. He proposed a stone facade, again with twin towers, in Second Empire style, opening on to a long glazed hall, but the aquarium was never built.

Morecambe Winter Garden was built by the Morecambe Baths, Winter Gardens and Aquarium Company, a Bradford-based concern incorporated in

1876. Its highly ornamented two-storey facade, possibly in stone, had twin copper domes connected by the great glazed arch of the Winter Garden behind. Internally, the £45,000 Winter Garden resembled a miniature Crystal Palace, with cast-iron galleries and balconies and much vegetation. The architect of the idiosyncratic Baroque-facaded Winter Garden is unknown, but was said to be famed for his aquarium designs. Assuming this is correct, the field is small: Eugenius Birch, Alfred Bedborough, and London practice Driver and Rew, who built the Crystal Palace Aquarium at Sydenham in 1871. Driver and Rew also produced a design for an aquarium and winter garden at Llandudno in 1877, adopting the Indian style for the iron and glass winter garden, which was never built. It is also possible that a Bradford architect was involved, in particular the practice of John Waugh and Herbert Isitt, who built an office and warehouse in Bradford in the 1880s. Waugh, a civil engineer and one of a Bradford family of builders, was a founder subscriber of the Winter Garden Company. However, Waugh was hardly a well-known architect and is more likely to have been involved, if at all, as contractor or supervisor. Given the twin-towered Baroque design of the People's Palace and Aquarium, as the Morecambe Winter Garden was first known, Alfred Bedborough was possibly the architect. The facade of his Plymouth aquarium design bears strong similarities to that of the Morecambe Winter Garden, and both designs would have been produced in 1876-77.

The original promoting Company was taken over by the Morecambe Winter Gardens Company in 1896; it was Morecambe- rather than Bradford-based and, though some shareholders came from Lancashire, the majority was from Yorkshire. In 1897 the new owners converted the Winter Garden to a ballroom and built the adjacent Victoria Pavilion theatre. The Oriental-style Empress Ballroom accommodated 2,500. Despite spending £105,000 the new Company was soon in trouble; by the end of 1901 it owed over £50,000. The Ballroom and Pavilion changed hands several times and closed in 1978; the Pavilion still stands but the Ballroom was demolished in 1982 and replaced by a crudely designed amusement arcade.

A few smaller seaside winter gardens were built after the 1870s, mainly serving as shelters or foyers rather than entertainment centres. At Weston-super-Mare, local architects Hans Fowler Price and Wooler designed a winter garden as a foyer to the town's Victoria Hall; it opened in 1885. The Local Board was behind the construction of the Victoria Pavilion winter garden at Ilfracombe, to celebrate Queen Victoria's golden jubilee in 1887; it was a 200 ft-long shelter designed by Board architect W. H. Gould. It opened in 1888 and was known locally as the Cucumber Frame. At Douglas on the Isle of Man a winter garden erected to house the 1892 International Exhibition of Industry, Science and Art remained for some years as the Belle Vue Summer and Winter Gardens. At Southend another municipal initiative, the Pier Hill Buildings, which included a small winter garden, were built in 1896-98 to a design by James Thompson.

Municipal ventures continued into the 20th century with the largely iron and glass Floral Hall Theatre at Scarborough, opened 1911, but later

municipal entertainment buildings often appropriated the term winter garden for buildings far removed from the original iron and glass structures.

Very few buildings remain from the heady days when aquarium and winter garden companies flourished. Of the aquaria, only the much altered Brighton Aquarium remains and, of the winter gardens, just two have survived, iron and glass Great Yarmouth and facaded Tynemouth, the latter much changed internally. These two winter gardens reflect the general division of opinion over the role of structural ironwork as architecture or merely engineering. London-based and nationally known architects tended to favour facaded designs while local men, perhaps less concerned with theoretical discussions, produced pure iron and glass structures. Although aquaria and winter gardens were few in number, they sadly account for four of the best lost buildings of the English seaside: the massive Southport Winter Garden demolished 1933, elegant iron and glass Bournemouth Winter Garden dismantled 1935, Birch's exotically decorated Scarborough Aquarium demolished soon after 1966 and Morecambe Winter Garden demolished 1982. Over a century after the creation of the first people's palace, the image of the winter garden is still strongly evocative of leisure and good times, and the winter garden style of construction has become popular with modern developers. Ironically, one of the largest new winter garden centres is at Southport (1990-91), almost on the site of its predecessor.