

## The seaside in the Georgian period



Last year's Summer 2021 Newsletter featured Tickhill people holidaying on the east coast in the Victorian and Edwardian eras. This page takes a step back to the east coast resorts in the Georgian period. Here is another of George Walker's depictions from his 'Costumes of Yorkshire in 1814' series. Women would have been completely covered in a plain shift as they took a dip after hiring a bathing machine in which to change from their regular daytime outfits then being towed into the water. Men tended to plunge into the sea (at a different stretch of the beach) in the buff. The text which accompanies the picture notes:

'Scarborough, Bridlington and many other places on the coast of Yorkshire, are well known as the resort of much company for the purposes of bathing. They are all well provided with warm sea-water baths, and with machines for the open sea. These latter differ in several respects from those in the more southern districts, and particularly in their having no awning to screen the bathers from the public eye. This frequently occasions very ludicrous scenes. The group here represented is in Bridlington Bay, with a distant view of that beautiful promontory, Flambro' Head.'

Sea bathing and breathing sea air were already recognised as beneficial to health in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but access to the coast could take many hours. For example, a stagecoach service three times a week from York to Bridlington took nine hours including two stops for refreshments. Only the very wealthiest people from this area would have been able to travel to the coast before the coming of the railways. Most local people would never have seen the sea.

To get a sense of what Bridlington was like in 1814 the following is an item from the *Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette*, Saturday, 13 August 1814, page 3: 'Bridlington Quay at this time exhibits a very gay appearance and seems to acquire great celebrity as a watering place, the many beautiful rides and walks around the adjacent country, the Chalybeate Spa [situated in gardens about five minutes' walk from the Quay, its spring water contained various minerals as at Harrogate Spa] and the excellent accommodation for bathing etc render it a delightful place of public resort and it may now be said to vie with the most noted watering places for beauty, fashion and elegance.'

### SEA BATHING AT WHITBY

**THE Nobility, Gentry, and Public in general,** are respectfully informed that they may be accommodated with Lodging, Board, and every other convenience, on as reasonable Terms as at any town in the kingdom, with all due attention and civility.

N.B. A Chalybeate Spring, of excellent quality, situate at a short distance from the Piers. The Bathing machines are entirely new and every attention will be paid to render the situation agreeable to those Strangers who may honour the town with their Company. *Whitby, May 20, 1800.*

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Scarborough and Whitby as well as Bridlington were vying for seasonal visitors, as shown in the advertisement, left, proclaiming Whitby's attractions. At first rooms were let in tradesmen's premises before boarding houses were built. Social life was centred on assembly rooms; the earliest to be built was at Scarborough where balls and concerts took place as well as card games and billiards.

For more details see Allen, L., *The Georgian Seaside*, 2016. Also see the British Newspaper Archive website.