

Historic Townscape Characterisation Assessment

North Promenade, Blackpool



AHP Architectural
History
Practice

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blackpool's North Promenade was developed between the mid 19th-century and early 20th-century, with an emphasis on high quality hotels fronting the sea, and still includes some of the resort's most distinctive and imposing hotels. The study area stretches from the Metropole Hotel in the south to the former Cabin Lift at the north, and is defined to the east by a range of narrow service streets parallel to the Promenade serving the hotels. The west boundary is the sea wall, with lower and middle Promenades at a lower level to Queen's Avenue, the principal thoroughfare.

The area can be divided into two distinct characters, defined by different phases of historic development, to the north of Gynn Square and to the south. Buildings north of Gynn Square were constructed in the early 20th-century. Prior to this the area was open coastal terrain, with a track linking Gynn Square with Uncle Tom's Cabin (demolished in 1908). The Promenade was constructed in the early 20th-century, later intersected by east-west streets developed in the interwar period, creating blocks filled principally by hotels. On the seaward side a series of colonnades, a range of artificial cliffs, a boating pool and a Cabin Lift, the latter linking the Promenade with the lower walkway, were developed in the interwar years as an alternative source of recreation in contrast to the entertainment complexes around the piers and Blackpool Tower. The area south of Gynn Square was developed from the 1860s to c.1900 following the speculative development of the Claremont Estate; in this way its character is broadly linked to parts of North Shore. The Promenade at the south end of the area was in place by 1877, laid out to promote the area for a 'better class' of visitor. This phase of development is characterised by a range of early buildings at Claremont Crescent, the Grade II listed Imperial Hotel (started 1866), and terraces of high-quality lodging houses. Claremont Park provided facilities for lawn tennis, and Cocker Square was linked to the Central Promenade area by the electric tramway, opened in 1885.

The concept of quality and the gradual development of buildings from south to north give the area a distinct character. North of Gynn Square the buildings are within a grid formed by the intersecting east-west streets and are generally of a common scale, but south of Gynn Square the buildings are more loosely arranged along the Promenade. This layout is extant today as are most of the original buildings. Hotels are the most prominent building type in North Promenade, with the Cliffs and Savoy hotels being the most significant later examples, and the Imperial an important early building reflected in its listed building status. Many of the individual boarding houses have been amalgamated into small hotels. There are no public buildings on the Promenade; the striking 1930s Derby Baths were demolished in 1990 and replaced by the Stakis Hilton hotel, a building of modest design quality. The seafront landscape is much as it was in the interwar period, and far-reaching views north towards the Lake District and out to sea are enhanced by the low building density of the area. The recreational facilities on the seafront remain intact, although the

boating pool is now a go-kart track and the Cabin Lift, an important feature, is closed.

The amalgamation of boarding houses into hotels has resulted in alterations to the sea-facing elevations, notably with ground floor extensions over gardens and added attic storeys. Boundary walls and front gardens to the former boarding houses have almost all been removed to allow for off-street parking. Modern alterations such as inserted uPVC windows and the rendering or painting of elevations are ubiquitous and have eroded the unity of formal groups. The larger hotels such as the Imperial still retain a good deal of original detail, including their striking red-brick elevations and stone or terracotta details and decoration. These hotels also retain their boundary walls to Queen's Drive. The area appears to be well-maintained, with street and footway surfaces of a high-quality. Jubilee Gardens, an area of open space on the sea front, is well kept and a vital green space in the town.

The whole area was assessed for townscape and heritage merit as part of the study and twelve potential buildings chosen for a potential Local List. The Imperial Hotel is the only listed building (Grade II) in the area, and at its south end the area abuts the Town Centre Conservation Area. The Cabin Lift has strong potential for national designation. Buildings of positive value in the north of the area include the Boston Hotel, the Chequers Plaza, the Crown Plaza, and the Doric; and to the south the Cherry Blossom Hotel. Regent Court, at the south of the area, and the Stakis Hotel have a more negative impact on townscape quality, but overall this is an area of positive value, with some strong architectural highlights enhanced by the setting and inherent distinctiveness of the Promenade.

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All images AHP unless otherwise stated

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Architectural History Practice Limited [AHP] was commissioned in September 2008 by Blackpool Council (The Council) to prepare a characterisation assessment of the North Promenade area in the context of developing plans for regeneration.

1.2 The Brief

The brief for this project was issued by The Council in July 2008. The Brief explains the reasons for the assessment, the outputs, the local and national context, a summary of matters to be covered by the characterisation assessment, and resources available from The Council. The project has also been undertaken with reference to guidance from English Heritage on urban characterisation, including on the assessment of historic significance in areas of low demand housing.

1.3 Authors

This characterisation assessment was prepared by Marion Barter, BA MA IHBC, Director of AHP, Clare Hartwell, BA MA, Director of AHP and Samantha Barnes BA MA, Associate of AHP.

1.4 Acknowledgements

AHP is grateful for assistance and advice offered during this project, in particular from Carl Carrington of Blackpool Council; Ted Lightbown; Tony Sharkey and the librarians at Blackpool Library and John Rylands University Library, Manchester (JRULM).

1.5 Location of study area

North Promenade is a linear area which runs north-south immediately adjacent to the sea wall. It stretches from the Metropole Hotel in the south to the former boating pond and Cabin Lift to the north, and is defined to the east by a range of back streets, also running north-south, and to the west by the sea wall adjacent to the beach. The study area includes several of Blackpool's major hotels, including the Grade II listed Imperial [See Fig.1 for a map of the area.] The NGR centred on the middle of the study area is SD305376.

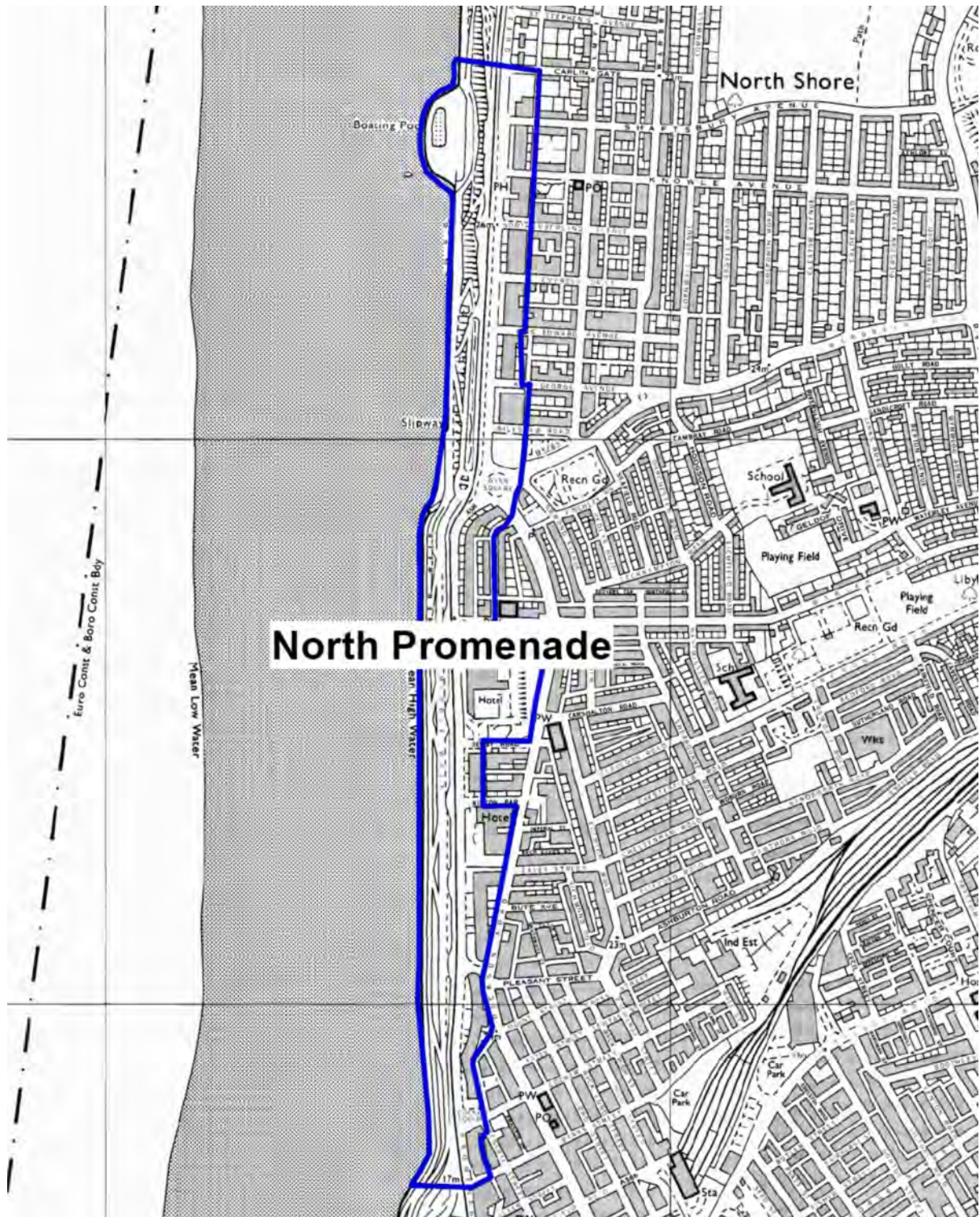


Fig.1: Location of study area

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2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Assessment

The work was undertaken as an intensive assessment of the whole area. The project was divided into an initial research phase and a detailed fieldwork phase, which included photography, GIS mapping and an assessment of potential Local List buildings.

2.1.1 Research

Secondary research was carried out at the Local History Library at Blackpool Library. This consisted of a detailed review of historic maps and trade directories, a general review of works on the history of Blackpool, its architecture and housing, and its development through to the twentieth century. Relevant websites on the history of the area were reviewed, including the collection of historic photographs available at <http://www.blackpoolimagegallery.org.uk/>. Photographs in the Local History Library collections were also consulted. Additional historic maps were obtained from the John Rylands University of Manchester Map Collections. See the *Bibliography* for full details.

2.1.2 Fieldwork

North Promenade was physically assessed on foot in November 2008. The fieldwork took place after the research had been undertaken and took into account its findings. Where public buildings were of interest and accessible (i.e. churches and hotels) the principal interiors were assessed; however, generally the assessment is based on what could be seen from the public highway and frontages.

2.1.3 Knowledge Gaps

There are a number of additional lines of research which might produce additional historical information on the history and development of North Promenade such as rate books, insurance and drainage records. However, whilst further research may provide greater detail and depth to an understanding of how the area developed, it is not considered that this will significantly alter the overall findings of this assessment.

2.2 Limitations

AHP were commissioned to assess the architectural and historic character of the buildings of North Promenade as part of a characterisation assessment, including the heritage significance of the area. This study has not assessed other important factors which may be relevant to a decision on the future of the area's buildings. Relevant factors which AHP has not assessed include the physical condition of the buildings, their internal or external facilities, thermal performance, repair costs and viability, market value, potential for adaptation, environmental consequences of demolition and rebuilding, and quality in relation to current standards or any other factors that are not directly related to their heritage value.

2.3 Consultation and Community Involvement

This draft report will be subject to community consultation, including with the Heritage Forum and may also be available on Blackpool's Council's website. Following initial consultation, the report may be amended to take account of any new information that emerges and of the views of local people, particularly in relation to significance.

3.0 PLANNING AND REGENERATION CONTEXT

3.1 The Blackpool Local Plan

The Local Plan was adopted in June 2006. The Proposals Map identifies North Promenade as a resort neighbourhood (including the inland area of North Shore). The whole of North Promenade is located within the defined inner area. The Promenade is part of a primary distributor route which runs along the seafront, and is also part of the National Cycle Network.

3.2 Heritage assets and regeneration

The protection of the historic environment is a Government priority, enshrined in planning legislation and guidance, such as PPG15 *Planning and the Historic Environment*. The level of protection depends on the value attached to the historic building or asset and Planning Policy Statement 1, *Delivering Sustainable Development* states that ‘a high level of protection should be given to the most valued townscapes and landscapes...’; this encompasses designated heritage assets such as listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and conservation areas. There is also now recognition that local heritage merits attention; that people care about the historic environment (*Power of Place*, p.4) and the community should be consulted on masterplans and regeneration proposals. However, it is also recognised in national planning policy that not all aspects of the historic environment can be retained; PPG15 notes that ‘the historic environment is all-pervasive, and it cannot in practice be preserved unchanged’ (para 1.3). It is therefore important to understand the relative value of the historic environment before making decisions about the future of an area (*Power of Place* p.5).

The Government recognises that heritage assets can play an important role in the success of sustainable urban regeneration, helping to create distinctive places with a strong identity. English Heritage, the government’s advisor on the historic environment promotes the re-use of historic buildings in regeneration; their published guidance includes *Regeneration and the Historic Environment*, *Low Demand Housing and the Historic Environment*, both issued in 2005 and *Regeneration in Historic Coastal Towns*, 2007. English Heritage guidance on townscape and heritage characterisation developed from a methodology used by EH in Anfield, Liverpool in advance of housing market renewal. In autumn 2008, CABE and English Heritage jointly issued guidance on townscape appraisals in housing market renewal areas, emphasising the importance of understanding and assessing an area before decisions are made on its future regeneration.

The contribution that historic buildings can make to sustainable development was investigated by a 2004 House of Commons Select Committee, which reported that ‘it is simply better in sustainability terms to use and recycle old buildings than to demolish them and build new ones.’ *Heritage Works*, a good practice document produced jointly by RICS, English Heritage, British Property Federation and Drivers

Jonas in 2006 advises that 'there is a strong economic case for regenerating historic buildings', but also notes that 'critical to the success of regeneration is finding a viable economic use that can support initial refurbishment, provide the owner or developer with a reasonable return...and which generates sufficient income to ensure (the) long-term maintenance...'. Viability, as well as heritage value is therefore a critical factor in determining the future of an area.

4.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH PROMENADE AREA

4.1 Location and brief description

North Promenade is located on the western seaward side of Blackpool to the north of the principal seafront area of the town. It stretches from just north of the Metropole Hotel in the south to the former boating pool and Cabin Lift in the north. To the east the area is bounded by a range of service streets at the rear of the Promenade buildings, which are mainly hotels. To the west the area is contained by the sea wall. The architectural and historic character of North Promenade is different to its southern counterpart, and the area contains several good-quality hotels. Queen's Drive (the principal thoroughfare) is wide and there are attractive Promenade walkways adjacent to the colonnades, set lower than the road itself and adjacent to the sea wall.

4.2 Historic development: Context

4.2.1 An overview of the development of Blackpool

Modern Blackpool developed from the medieval manorial holdings of Bispham to the north, Layton, to the south, and Marton and Carleton to the east, with each being further divided into townships. A settlement pattern of small nucleations in the manors probably changed little from the medieval period to the 18th century. The reclamation of mosslands, on which Blackpool is built, began in the 16th century. Following the reclamation there was pressure to enclose the land and the creation of farmsteads (including Foxhall and Raikes Hall) formed a farming community which may have been supplemented by fishing. Fragments of Bispham's 12th-century parish church incorporated in its 19th century successor, and a few 18th and early 19th-century cottages and farmhouses are almost all that survive of Blackpool before about 1850.

In the early 18th century the manorial land was owned by Alexander Rigby, but as a result of debt the land was dispersed of under an Act of Parliament in 1715 and again in 1731. The result of this was that most of the land surrounding the settlement of Blackpool was freehold and held in small estates, allowing its development to be piecemeal and unplanned. By the late 1780s there were about 50 houses on the seafront and the population, excluding visitors, in the early 1820s was about 750. The steady subsequent growth over the following 50 years was focused along the one mile stretch of coastline as demand grew from increasing visitor numbers as Blackpool became recognised for its seaside location. One of the earliest recordings of Blackpool as a visitor attraction was made by Bishop Pococke in the early 1750s, who recorded that accommodation was available for those who came to bathe. Blackpool as a seaside resort developed in the early 19th century from a growing interest from the working classes of Lancashire and Yorkshire's textile districts; by the 1830s there were more than a thousand visitors a year. However, unlike Fleetwood and Lytham, Blackpool was not planned as a seaside resort. Expansion and improvement in the

early 19th-century was hampered by poor communication systems and its layout was conditioned by patterns of landholding. The 1838 Tithe map (Fig. 2) shows that the mile-long stretch of houses on the seafront had evolved into a double row of buildings, with inland development to the south. Between 1841 and 1851 the housing stock grew by 83%, and a number of new streets were laid out in a grid behind the seafront, but this expansion was not governed by planning principles; the priority for new development was to be as close to the foreshore as possible. Between 1841 and 1861 the resident population had risen from 1,378 to 3,506, and although this was still less than at rapidly developing Fleetwood, by the middle of the 19th century Blackpool was considered a significant resort and in 1842 was described as 'the Brighton of Lancashire' (Redding & Taylor, 1842).



Fig. 2: Detail of Tithe Map of Blackpool, 1838 (Blackpool Local Studies)

The period of greatest 19th century development was the 1860s, with the fields to the east of the established centre being built upon. The Preston and Wyre railway opened a single line to Blackpool in 1846, with the Blackpool and Lytham railway adding to passenger numbers in 1862; the coming of the railway is seen by many as the start of an era of rapid expansion with the construction of respectable accommodation and public buildings. The first attraction of Blackpool was its sandy beach and the possibilities for sea bathing. By the end of the 1860s there were two piers (North and Central), and the construction of a new promenade was begun in 1868; the latter was both a tourist attraction and part of the town's sea defences. Building development, untrammelled by dominant landowners or effective local government, was initially undertaken piecemeal in small freehold units. New blocks of lodging houses, first established in the 1840s, were built in the 1870s on the fringes of the built up area, surrounded by houses for artisans employed in the tourism industry or the railway industry. The housing needs of Blackpool were met by brick-built terraced housing to the east of the town centre; however, the number of bedrooms in individual houses was maximised so that housing intended for domestic use could be adapted to offer holiday accommodation. Hotels of the period included the Imperial (1867) at North Shore, an area developed as an enclave for middle-class residents and visitors.

By the 1870s, the population was around 7,000 and visitor numbers were estimated at more than one million, as the decade saw the first large-scale visitor attractions promoted by entertainment companies. These inaugurated the rise in a new sort of commercial entertainment, with large-scale theatrical presentations heralding the modern world of show business. The first purpose-built theatre was the Theatre Royal (1868), followed by pleasure gardens at Raikes Hall estate in 1872 and from 1878 by the Winter Gardens. The 1870s boom was supported and promoted by the Corporation, who saw improvement of the town for tourism as their single-minded goal. Provision for visitors included increasing numbers of 'company houses', respectable boarding houses aimed at working-class visitors. The promenade was lit by electricity from 1879, placing the town in the vanguard of electric street-lighting, the famous electric tramway was inaugurated in 1885, and by the end of the century many amenities were controlled by the Corporation which had been formed in 1876. The latest technological advances were swiftly adopted in a policy which aimed at attaining a high profile and creating a new kind of mass holiday-making.

Blackpool became the resort with the greatest number of attractions in Europe, crowned in the 1890s by the opening of the Tower in 1894 when in six years, in addition to the Tower, investors in commercial entertainment constructed the Grand Theatre, Empress Ballroom, gigantic wheel, the Alhambra (1899), and a third Pier (1893), soon followed by the Pleasure Beach. The promenade was extended in 1895 to the north of the town centre and expanded in 1902 and 1905, extending the sea front 100 feet beyond the high tide mark.

The population in 1901 was 47, 348, although Blackpool had absorbed surrounding settlements such as Layton and South Shore. Tourist numbers rose to four million in 1914, while the resident population had risen to almost 60,000; between 1911 and 1939 the town more than doubled in size. In 1912 the Corporation inaugurated the Illuminations which popularised and extended the autumn season. The prosperity and draw of the coast ensured expansion through the inter-war years, and in response to booming populations of both residents and visitors, North Shore was earmarked for extensive development in the 1920s and '30s with avenues of detached and semi-detached houses. Between 1925 and 1935 around 12,500 houses were built, and a significant number of the properties were lived in by retired people, who constituted for a significant proportion of the population increase. One significant response to an influx of visitors in the 1930s, one of the earliest by any municipal authority, combined provision of multi-storey and underground car parks with investment in the tram system.

There were few large scale developments after the Second World War. Tourist facilities continued to grow; for example by 1936 there were 15 cinemas, including the Odeon on Dickson Road which catered for 1,800 and was then the largest Odeon ever built. The growth of the Pleasure Beach also quickly became a forerunner to the giant themed amusement parks of the later 20th-century. The population of the town peaked at 153,183 in 1961. Ambitious plans to redevelop the centre stuttered to a halt in the early 1970s but later developments including the Hounds Hill shopping centre provide for both residents and visitors. New hotel developments such as the Hilton, and the constant requirements for budget accommodation have ensured that many of the purpose built boarding houses have remained in use.

4.2.2 The historic development of the North Promenade area

North Promenade is principally a mid to late 19th-century development, with the area north of the Gynn being mainly early 20th-century. The earliest available map of Blackpool, Yates' map of 1786, shows that the North Promenade was probably only a seafront track with no built-up development north of Talbot Square through to the location of the present Gynn Square. North of this the land was coastal terrain, with no development at all. The historic development of the area outlined below is therefore divided into north and south zones around Gynn Square

4.2.3 North of Gynn Square

Early mapping suggests that development north of Gynn Square did not occur until the early 20th-century, and a seafront track was the only thoroughfare on the 1893 OS (Fig. 45). The track connected the Gynn Inn with Uncle Tom's Cabin, an entertainment area set up by gypsies in 1810. The cabin was a mix of ramshackle huts around a larger building, located precariously on the cliffs; it was replaced in the 1880s by a public house inland after being undermined by the sea and completely demolished in 1908.

The 1912 OS map shows that a grid of streets had been laid out between the Promenade and the inland areas of North Shore, with some building development occurring north of Gynn Square. Starting at the Metropole Hotel, Queen's Drive was the principal Promenade road and continued along the top of the cliffs to Gynn Square, where it became King's Drive. East-west roads such as Empress Drive and Northumberland Avenue were developed, and throughout the early and mid 20th-century were gradually formulated with terraces and semi-detached properties (Fig. 3).

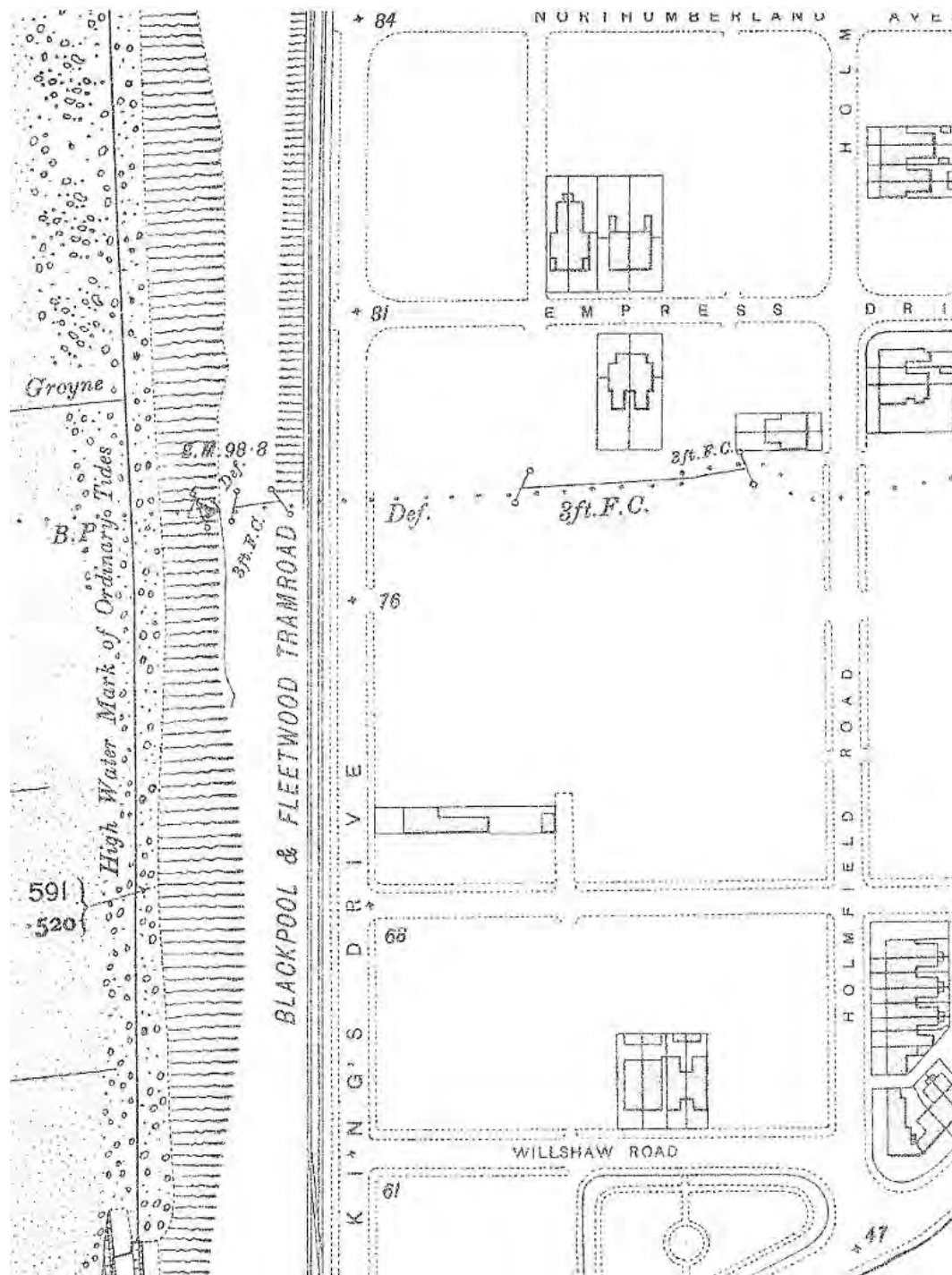


Fig. 3: Detail of 1912 OS map (1:2500) (Blackpool Library)

The North Promenade survey area, however, was characterised by large hotels, each located on an island site created by the east-west streets. These included the Cliffs Hotel and the Savoy Hydro Hotel (opened 1915), interspersed with sea-facing terraces, first shown on the 1932 OS (Fig. 46). The Cliffs Hotel was built in the 1921 and partially rebuilt in 1936-7 at a cost of £80,000 by Halstead Best, an architect responsible for many of Blackpool's new public buildings in the 1930s (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Advertisement for the Cliffs Hotel from a 1938 holiday guide to Blackpool (Blackpool Library)

Improvement works to the coastal defences at the turn of the 20th century enforced a ban on fairground entertainments and stalls, creating a contrasting social zone to that on the Central and South Promenades, and especially the developing Pleasure Beach to the south of the town. The higher status of the area was characterised not only by the large seafront hotels, but by additional activity areas; artificial cliffs on the lower walk, a Cabin Lift with lavatories below (opened 1930), and a large boating pool projecting onto the beach were developed as part of the improvements and provided a contrast to the gaiety of the Tower Buildings and piers (Fig.5). The

Blackpool and Fleetwood Tramroad ran along Queen's Drive, with a station near Uncle Tom's Cabin pub.



Fig. 5: North Prom from the air, c.1930, showing part of the artificial cliffs, the cabin lift, boating pool, Uncle Tom's Cabin pub, and 'The Castle', a private residence. (Image from www.rossallbeach.co.uk)

4.2.4 South of Gynn Square

The development of the area south of Gynn Square is linked at its southern end, near the Metropole Hotel, with that of Talbot Square and the Central Promenade area of Blackpool. A seafront road marked on the 1786 Yates map had disappeared by the time of the 1818 Greenwood map, but appears again on the 1829 Hennet map, leading up to 'The Hill' and 'Ginn' (Fig. 47).

The 1838 Tithe map which covers the centre and south of Blackpool does not cover north of the Metropole Hotel, but by the time of the first OS map in 1847 (surveyed 1844; 1:10560) a principal road ran diagonally east inland from the junction with today's Pleasant Street to the Gynn; this is now Dickson Road. There was no seafront development west of this road, and the only properties at this date were located around Cocker Square. Gynn Inn, to the north-east of Gynn Square, was an 18th-

century accommodation house and stood alone until the 1860s when high-quality buildings were developed on the Claremont Estate.

By 1877 the area had been greatly developed and many of today's extant buildings, such as the central block of the Imperial Hotel (started 1866-7) and Claremont Crescent, had been built. The inland road was named Warbrick Road, and sites between the Promenade and this street were beginning to be filled with terraces on the seafront and the east-west streets such as Derby Road (Fig. 6). The latter was the northernmost street before Gynn Inn where the Promenade road petered out to a seafront track, with the made road continuing east to Warbreck.

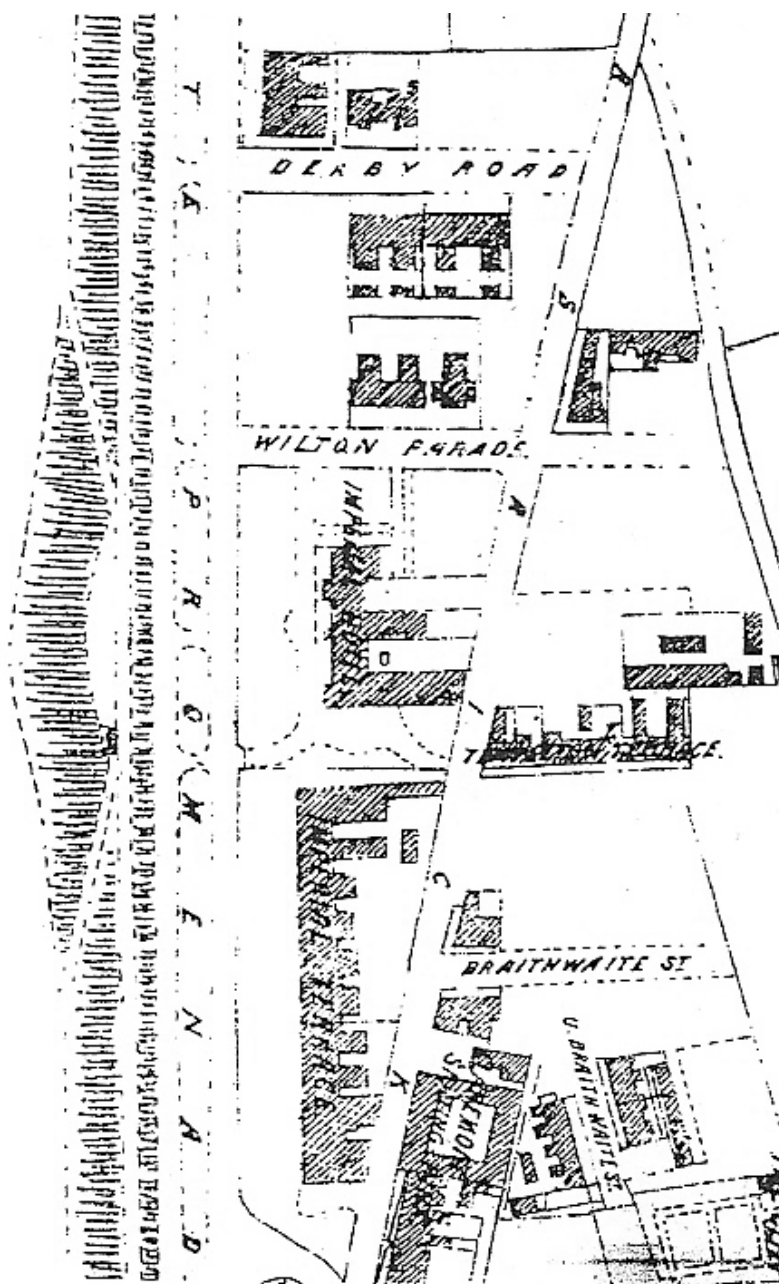


Fig. 6: Detail from the 1877 plan

The Promenade itself was also in place by 1877, having been developed under the Blackpool Land, Building and Hotel Company which was registered in 1863. It was formed to promote the area as one for 'better class' residents and visitors, and therefore a number of large, high-quality hotels were established along Queen's Drive. The 1877 map shows it as a single road labelled as a 'Private Promenade'.



Fig. 7: North Promenade south of the Imperial Hotel c.1890 (Image from Lightbown, 1994)

Detailed OS mapping from 1893 shows that the Promenade had been developed to form three adjacent thoroughfares, similar to today: Queen's Drive, Promenade and the Lower Walk (Fig.8); the developments began in 1893 so the mapping may show the projected plans. When completed in 1899 the scheme had cost almost £145,000. Toll houses were positioned at the southern end of Lansdowne Terrace and near Gynn Square, enhancing the higher status of the area. Queen's Drive was lined with terraces, including the mid-19th century Lansdowne Terrace (now Claremont) and hotels, both large and small, such as the completed Imperial Hydropathic Hotel (extended 1875 and 1904) and the Claremont Hotel. Between the Imperial and Gynn Inn were Claremont Park, a large open area with lawn tennis facilities, and a small number of sea-facing terraces, probably boarding houses or small hotels. At its north end Queen's Drive merged into Gynn Square, and the road continued east towards Warbreck, outside the survey area. Until 1900 the tramway extended along the Promenade only as far as Cocker Square, from which date it was extended along

Queen's Drive to the Gynn. The stretch from Cocker Square to Dean Street in South Shore was the country's first permanent electric tramway, opened in 1885.

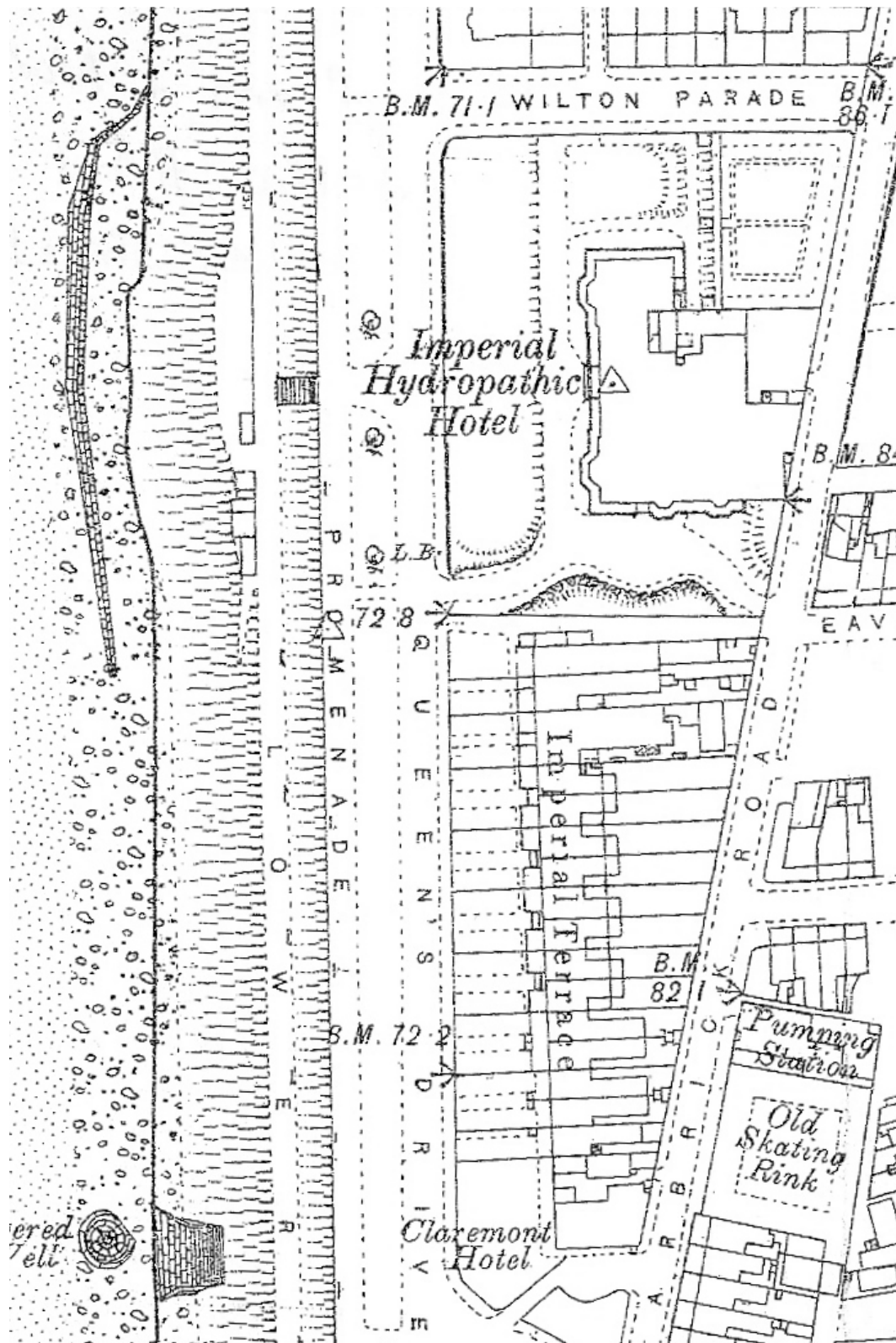


Fig. 8: Detail of 1893 OS map (surveyed 1891; 1:2500) showing the three promenades, the Imperial Hotel and a high quality terrace (Blackpool Library)

Until the 1930s there was little change in the area south of to Gynn Square. Gynn Inn, on the north-east side of the square, was demolished in 1921, and the Derby Baths were begun in July 1938 on allotments on the site of Claremont Park, and opened in July 1939 (the baths were closed in 1988 and demolished in 1990). The Middle Walk Colonnades were completed in 1925, running from opposite Cocker Square to opposite Warley Road (Fig.9).



Fig.9: The Lower Walk, Middle Walk with colonnades, and the upper promenade (Queen's Drive), North Promenade, c.1920
(Image from www.rossallbeach.co.uk)

5.0 NORTH PROMENADE: CHARACTERISATION ASSESSMENT

5.1 Character and appearance

As defined in *Section 4*, North Promenade has been divided into two character areas defined by the historic growth and pattern of buildings, shown on Fig.10.

North of Gynn Square the street pattern to the east of the Promenade developed in the interwar period is more rigid, affecting the layout of the buildings fronting Queen's Drive; each block between the east-west streets generally contains a large hotel. This area is also characterised by interwar developments such as the boating pool, Cabin Lift and artificial cliffs.

South of Gynn Square the buildings are generally of a late Victorian date and are more loosely arranged along the Promenade. Alongside smaller boarding houses, there are several large hotels here, including the Grade II listed Imperial, and the character of the area is shared between these prominent buildings and the impressive stretch of the Middle Walk Colonnades set below the roadway on the seaward side.

The character of the areas was assessed during field work and the principal characteristics recorded; these are set out in sections below.

Fig. 10: North Promenade character areas

5.2 Spatial attributes, views and open spaces

The spatial character of the area is derived from a combination of the underlying topography of the area, and the pattern of superimposed development, generated by the attractions of the sea itself. The Promenade increases slightly in height, rising from 24 metres to around 28 metres above sea level at its northern end. The underlying geology consists of Permo-Triassic sandstones masked by drift deposits of Aeolian-deposited sand and alluvium. The soil was described in 1838 as being composed of fine sand and gravel (LHTS, p10).

Due to the reduced density of the area, many different views can be achieved around the North Promenade. The most prominent is that along Queen's Drive, where its straightness at the north end provides one of the most impressive and far-reaching vistas within the town, with the panorama of buildings to the east, and the eye being drawn naturally out to the sea to the west. On a clear day the hills of the Lake District can be seen (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11: View north-west from the promenade towards the hills of the Lake District

In other views along the Promenade, North Pier and the Tower are prominent to the south, and a slight rise in level near Gynn Square provides good views towards the square and north to the cabin lift (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12: View north towards Gynn Square

The variety of seafront improvements on the promenade increases the variety of views; for example both the colonnades and artificial cliffs contribute significantly to views looking north along the lower walkway (Fig.13).



Fig. 13: Looking north along the lower walkway



Fig. 14: Looking north along the artificial cliffs to the north of Gynn Square

Views are also achieved down the east-west streets between blocks of buildings; the streets were developed in the 1920s and '30s as wide avenues lined with semi-detached houses and the Warbreck water tower is a prominent landmark in these views (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15: View to the Warbreck water tower

The higher standards required during the historic layout of the area provides a more spacious feel than that on the Central and South Promenade due to the looser building grain, height of buildings and broad width of the principal thoroughfare. There are also a number of important open spaces, including Jubilee Gardens, Cocker Square (now a car park), and Gynn Square; this is now a roundabout, but with a recreation ground to the east (out of the area) and a surface car park to the south of the Savoy Hotel it contributes to the feeling of space in this area. The site of the Derby Baths, adjacent to the Hilton Hotel, remains open, but does not appear to have any public use (Fig. 16).



Fig. 16: Open space adjacent to the Hilton Hotel

5.3 Historic and current uses

The buildings at North Promenade were constructed for accommodation purposes and individual premises within terraces are listed in the Barrett Trade Directory for 1898 as 'lodgings'. Boarding houses and private hotels were opened into the early 20th-century, when the Imperial was the only large hotel in the area. By the early 1930s there were more private residences, converted from boarding houses, probably due to the influx of large hotels in the area and the resulting closing-down of small boarding houses. Apartments were still listed, interspersed with large hotels such as the Savoy and Cliffs on Queen's Drive. It is obvious that there were hardly any retail premises.

The buildings in the area primarily have the same use today, with a large concentration of hotels and bed & breakfasts of differing sizes, many keeping their original name, a few private residences, and no retail outlets. The consistency of use is probably due to the demand and pressure on the area not being as great as on Central Promenade, for example.

5.4 Materials and construction

5.4.1 Structure and roofing

The hotel buildings on the North Promenade are predominantly of early 20th-century red brick construction, probably on a steel frame, with the Imperial Hotel (1875) and the Stakis Hilton Hotel (1982) also of brick. A garage on King George Avenue is faced in sandstone ashlar, and the Circus Casino is constructed mainly of sandstone (Fig. 17).



Fig. 17: No. 64 Queen's Promenade

The brick buildings are decorated in a range of materials, ranging from yellow sandstone to terracotta faience; the latter is particularly prominent on buildings constructed or altered in the 1930s such as the Cliffs Hotel. The Cabin Lift is also of red brick with creamy faience details.



Fig. 18: Yellow terracotta faience details to the Cliffs Hotel

The terraces of boarding houses on the Promenade were also constructed of brick, although these have now invariably been rendered and painted. Historic photographs show that Imperial Terrace had details in stone or terracotta with a gabled-dormer roofline; the terrace is now a range of small hotels, with alterations including an attic storey and ground-floor extensions.

Where roofs are visible, as many of the hotels have parapets or gables to the roofline, they were originally of Welsh slate. Inevitably many have been replaced, concrete tiles being the most common material.

5.4.2 Doors and windows

There are few examples of historic joinery on North Promenade, due to weathering and the need for insulation and sound proofing. The Ambassador Hotel is one example of retained timber sash windows, some having coloured glass. The majority

of windows are uPVC and although these replacements keep to the original fenestration pattern, the design of the windows is often out of character (Fig. 19).



Fig. 19: Sash windows to the square bays of the Ambassador Hotel, and unsympathetic uPVC replacements in the neighbouring building

5.4.3 Shopfronts and fascias

Commercial premises are centred on the south end of North Promenade, particularly at Cocker Square where there are several examples of decorative timber shopfronts with classical-style pilasters and deep entablatures (Fig. 20). Inevitably these have been altered with modern display windows and steel roller-shutters.



Fig. 20: Timber shopfront to the south side of Cocker Square.

Other frontages, to hotels specifically, are usually of a late 20th century date, and comprise boxy extensions to ground floors, usually with extensive glazing and modern signage.



Fig. 21: Ground floor extension to the President Hotel

5.4.4 Signs and details

In direct contrast to the cluttered streetscene of Central Promenade, there is less street furniture, and that which exists is of a high quality. There are few directional signs and street-name signs are generally modern and located at pavement level. One example of a finger-post sign is extant on the lower walkway near the colonnades (Fig. 22).



Fig. 22: Finger post on the lower walkway

5.4.5 Boundaries

The principal boundaries on North Promenade are the balustrades on the seaward side of the area between the footway and the lower walkway, and the latter and the sea wall. Those to the upper footway are integral to the colonnade scheme, square in section and geometric in design with Neo-Classical elements (Fig. 23). The balustrades are divided into bays by chunky brick piers, rendered, and part of the structure of the cantilevered walkway connecting the bowed colonnades.



Fig. 23: Piers and balustrades to upper walkway

Those to the lower walkway are probably of a late Victorian or early Edwardian date and are plain with twisted uprights (Fig. 24). This type is also used at the south end of the upper walkway, before the colonnades.



Fig. 24: Balustrades to lower walkway

Other boundaries include concrete 'post and rail' fencing at the north end of the Promenade (Fig. 25); modern galvanised steel barriers to the roadway and tramway and a 'chain' fence with cast-iron uprights surrounding the crazy-golf course at the south of the area.



Fig. 25: Concrete fence at north of Promenade

Boundaries to the terraced buildings on the east side of the principal thoroughfare are few, although the larger hotels have generally retained or rebuilt low brick walls to surface car parks in front of the hotels. Where boundary walls have been removed there is direct vehicular access to parking areas. At the rear of the Imperial Hotel, on Dickson Road, some late Victorian cast-iron railings have been retained; historic metalwork is scarce in Blackpool and this survives as an important example (Fig. 26).

Other areas where boundaries have been removed include a car park at Cocker Square; the square was laid out at the turn of the 20th century on the site of a post office. The traffic island shown on the 1932 OS is now a car park with other public amenities such as WCs. There is no boundary between the car park and the footway (Fig. 27).



Fig. 26: Cast-iron railings at rear of the Imperial



Fig. 27: Cocker Square car park

5.4.6 Roads and footways

The main thoroughfares, North Promenade and Queen's Drive, have tarmac surfaces to both the roadway and tramway. In some cases historic stone setts have been exposed under the modern surfacing (Fig.28); this is particularly visible on back service lanes. The roadway to the lower walkway is covered with red asphalt.



Fig. 28: Exposed stone setts on Banks Street

Footways to the main road are also of tarmac with tactile paving to pavement edges and crossing places. The lower Promenade walkway is set with coloured rectangular paviours. Historic materials are again found on back service roads, including natural stone slabs and kerbs to Banks Street (Fig. 29).

The tram stops at North Promenade are modern, glazed on a steel frame, and are fewer than along Central Promenade.



Fig. 29: Natural stone slabs and kerbs to Banks Street

5.4.7 Street furniture

As previously noted, there is little street furniture on North Promenade. There are a few benches on the upper Promenade, probably made to a historic pattern, with timber slats, but these are surprisingly few for an area which focuses on long seafront walks.



Fig. 30: Bench opposite Claremont Crescent

Within Jubilee Gardens there are modern steel benches, and other paraphernalia including rubbish bins and modern signage. A large modern steel archway is located at the entrance to the gardens.



Fig. 31: Jubilee Gardens

There is no historic lighting along North Promenade, with streetlights being tall and modern, and doubling as part of the structural frame during the Illuminations. Some remnants of historic street furniture survive in the back streets, such as a cast-iron late Victorian former gas standard to the rear of the Cherry Blossom Hotel (Fig.32).



Fig. 32: Redundant gas standard on a back street

5.5 Architectural character

The character of the area is split between the two zones north and south of Gynn Square. To the north the character of the buildings is undoubtedly 'modern'; that being of the 1920s and '30s, with geometric design and details combined with Neo-Classical flourishes, such as that on the Cliffs Hotel and to the Cabin Lift (Fig. 33). The largeness of the hotels is in direct contrast to the rows of semi-detached houses built around the same time which lead east from the seafront. This northern area is

characterised by a regulated scale to the buildings, and the hotels are linked by a predominant use of red brick and terracotta faience.



Fig. 33: Architectural details on the Cabin Lift

South of Gynn Square the architectural character is more of the 19th century and the terraces here are larger versions of the boarding-house type seen in southern Blackpool, with double or full-height bay windows, Classical-style doorcases, and small architectural details, such as colonettes to windows. Although most of these buildings have been altered, rendered and painted, the style and scale is generally coherent with few buildings being over four storeys.

5.6 Degree of completeness

The North Promenade area has a certain feel of completeness which is not apparent in other areas of Blackpool. This is due to the early 20th-century setting being retained with only minor alterations, and the buildings themselves retain a large amount of their original character; this is especially evident north of Gynn Square. As is synonymous with most of the buildings in Blackpool, original window casements have been replaced with uPVC double-glazed units although some attempts have been made to keep to the original fenestration pattern, such as on the Cliffs Hotel and the Imperial, which also retains many timber sash-windows on its return elevations. The overall character of the large hotels (Imperial, Cliffs and Savoy) has

been retained, and extensions and additions have been made in a sympathetic style (Fig.34); this is reflected in the latter pair having local list potential.



Fig. 34: Cliffs Hotel

Other hotels north of Gynn Square, such as the Elgin and the range including Hackett's Yorkshire Hotel, are more altered, with ground floor extensions and obtrusive modern signage; however above the ground floor the buildings are almost complete.

South of Gynn Square the area comprises rows of terraces facing the sea, and has much in common with the Central Promenade area. The rows of 19th-century boarding houses have been significantly altered, including the early 19th-century Claremont Crescent, with the addition of ground floor and attic extensions, uPVC casements and the removal of front boundary walls to create car-parking areas. In many cases the architectural detail of the buildings has been hidden behind paint and render; this is especially clear on Imperial Terrace (Figs 35 & 36) where there is little architectural detail remaining to identify the original terrace in its original form.



Fig. 35: Imperial Terrace in c.1890 (image from Lightbown, 1994)



Fig. 36: Imperial Terrace in 2008

By comparing OS maps, there is also a low ration of demolished historic buildings, although the loss of the Derby Bath (Fig. 37) and the construction of the Stakis Hotel on an adjacent site have impacted on the townscape.



Fig. 37: The west elevation of the Derby Baths in 1941
(image from the *Original Architect*, May 1941)

Other features such as the former boating pool, Cabin Lift, artificial cliffs and the lower and middle walkways (all virtually intact), along with the wide Promenade itself, are remarkable survivors, although the Promenade is now little more than a through-road from the north to the centre of the town. The expansion of the Illuminations has brought additional clutter to the streetscape, but this should also be seen as an intrinsic part of Blackpool's character. There is little other clutter, and the walkways are an important part of the make-up of the town, providing a place for leisurely walks.

5.7 Archaeological potential

Early mapping suggests that before the Modern era the area was mainly open land or in cultivation with little evidence for human settlement. The remains of any pre-18th-century structures along the principal historic routes are unlikely to have survived constant building and rebuilding, and the current state of knowledge suggests that the archaeological potential is low. Further advice on specific sites should be sought from Lancashire County Council in advance of major redevelopment.

6.0 SIGNIFICANCE

6.1 Assessing significance

The relative significance of buildings in the study area has been assessed using a variation of the assessment criteria developed and used in the AHP characterisation assessment of The Welsh Streets, Liverpool in 2007. The key issues that contribute to heritage significance are the historic context and the architectural merit of the buildings. The following factors have been taken into account:

- Buildings surviving from the earliest phases of development (prior to 20th century) and as part of the early 20th suburban development, and surviving in anything like their original form;
- Intrinsic architectural or historic merit, including association with significant event or individual;
- Relationship with other groups of significant buildings or landscapes, which have a designated merit, e.g. conservation areas;
- The relationship between otherwise unremarkable buildings and the wider urban landscape, to create townscape of value in the context of the wider area.

These attributes in some cases overlap. They have been used to determine significance values of buildings and groups of buildings or spaces, according to the following five categories of significance.

- **Protected:** buildings, features or spaces that are protected by way of listing, scheduling or being within a conservation area or registered park. There is one listed building in the area, the Imperial Hotel. The Town Centre Conservation Area immediately adjoins the south of the area.
- **Local List Potential:** buildings, features or spaces of clear local interest. Although not candidates for listing, they make a positive contribution to the street scene and could be retained unless it can be demonstrated that redevelopment would be of greater benefit to the character of setting of adjoining buildings and spaces or that there are overriding social or economic factors. The majority of buildings of local list potential in North Promenade are large hotels and leisure features constructed in the early 20th-century.
- **Positive value:** buildings, features or spaces of clear local interest, but of lesser quality than potential Local List buildings, or altered superficially. They make a positive contribution to the street scene and should be retained as part of future regeneration, if practicable. Several smaller hotels, such as the Elgin, come under this category

- **Neutral:** buildings, features or spaces which although of little individual merit, for example due to the level of later alterations, combine with other buildings and spaces to create a townscape of value, which could be recreated through careful new development that complements the townscape.
- **Negative value:** buildings, features or spaces which have an adverse impact on any aspect of the significance or heritage value of the townscape or other buildings, and where redevelopment or removal is positively encouraged.

6.2 Summary of significance of North Promenade

6.2.1 Character summary and designation status of the area

The character of the area can be summarised by its inherent high significance as an almost complete townscape of large hotels and leisure features developed in the early 20th century, with half of the recommended local list buildings falling into this category. The spatial qualities of the area are also of significance, as there are good views to the north and the Promenade and seafront walkways have retained their original layout. The area is formed from a grid of east-west streets creating blocks between with the Promenade and a range of narrow service streets, running north-south; a looser building grain is created from this pattern, and most of the buildings are set back from the footway by large forecourts behind low brick boundary-walls. The southern part of the area is less complete, but retains some good mid 19th-century buildings and continues the character values expressed at the north end of Central Promenade. Architecturally the character varies, but its historic development is distinguished in the zones north and south of Gynn Square. The contribution of the buildings to the streetscene is shown in two maps in Appendix 2.

The Imperial Hotel is the only listed building (Grade II) in the area, and at its south end the area abuts the Town Centre Conservation area. There are a number of interesting and important buildings along North Promenade which have local list potential, and the Cabin Lift has potential for national designation.

6.2.2 North of Gynn Square

The area between Gynn Square and the Cabin Lift is characterised by large red-brick hotels, of three to five storeys, with dressings either in yellow sandstone ashlar or terracotta faience. These buildings are set back from the footway, with large forecourts (now used for parking) and with the spacious aspect of Queen's Drive, the principal thoroughfare, and the two Promenade walkways to the west and the far-reaching views over the sea, the townscape has a loose built-up character. In contrast to the brash commercialism of the Central Promenade, North Promenade was historically aimed at quiet recreation, and there are also several public open spaces.

The larger hotels occupy island or near-island sites created by the east-west streets feeding onto Queen's Drive. The hotels are served by narrow back lanes, with high brick walls to the rear of buildings and back yards (Fig.38), creating a dense building grain.



Fig. 38: Service lane to the east of the Cliffs Hotel

The strongest architectural asset at North Promenade, apart from perhaps the Grade II listed Imperial Hotel, is the Cabin Lift of 1930; it has strong potential for a local list and for national designation. The artificial cliffs and former boating pool also have local list potential for their contribution to the seafront landscape (Fig.39).



Fig. 39: The artificial cliffs, cabin lift and former boating pool off North Promenade

Other buildings of local list potential north of Gynn Square include the Circus Casino (an eccentric private residence built in 1906) and Uncle Tom's Cabin public house, a replacement for a refreshment stall and popular entertainment area set up by gypsies in the 1810s, but gradually undermined by the sea. The Savoy Hotel and Cliffs Hotel are two purpose-built hotels which are of positive character and also have local list potential. Other hotels of positive architectural value include the Boston Hotel, the Chequers Plaza (although this has been altered on all elevations), the Crown Plaza, and the Doric. The Elgin Hotel, and the group Nos 6-20 Queen's Promenade which is divided into smaller hotels and is much simpler architecturally, are of neutral value (Fig. 40).



Fig. 40: Nos 6-20 Queen's Promenade

6.2.3 South of Gynn Square

Between the Metropole Hotel and Gynn Square the buildings are generally late Victorian, and are a mix of terraces, including two mid 19th-century crescents, and large detached hotels such as the Imperial. Due to the changing nature of the town as a resort, many of the terraces have been altered with attic storeys or ground floor extensions added, and most have been rendered with replacement roofs and invariably with uPVC windows. These alterations reduce most of the terraces to neutral value only; examples include the Stretton Hotel to the south of Claremont Crescent. Claremont Crescent is an important example of the large terrace-type which was built at North Promenade in the mid to late 19th-century. At its south end Nos 240-242 retain the most original form and detailing, although this too has an added attic storey. The rear faces Dickson Road and is therefore treated with little difference to the principal front, with the inevitable additions of service flues and steel fire escapes. Although the entire crescent has a ground floor extension facing the Promenade, and is broken up into several small hotels with various additions and parking to the front, with no boundary to the footway, the crescent is an important and early example of the building type in the area and has local list potential.



Fig. 41: Claremont Crescent

Other buildings of note include Nos 412-414 Promenade, The Sherwood Hotel, the central pair of a terrace of three-storey apartments, with faience enrichments and interesting doorcases (Fig. 42).



Fig. 42: Doorcases and details on the Sherwood Hotel

Positive buildings include the Cherry Blossom Hotel on the corner of Warley Road, which retains an attractive fenestration pattern (although partly altered), corner 'tower' and a hipped roof behind a parapet (Fig. 43).



Fig. 43: The Cherry Blossom Hotel

Regent Court, on the corner of Banks Street, is of negative value as it is out of scale and character with the surrounding buildings; the same can be said for the Stakis Hilton Hotel.

The seafront is characterised by hard-landscaping, sweeping down from the middle to lower walk; the historic character of the seafront walks has been retained, although some of the surfaces are hard or unsympathetic. The middle walk colonnades are an important contribution to the seafront townscape and have local list potential.



Fig. 44: Hard landscaping at the south of the seafront area

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The significance of the area is set out in *Section 6.2*. Recommendations are based on heritage value, as assessed in earlier sections of this report and do not take detailed account of other factors such as economic viability or sustainability. To protect buildings of positive significance, a Local List containing the buildings identified in this report could be established and maintained, informed by relevant policy and guidance in the Local Development Framework. It is not considered that any part of the area merits being designated as a conservation area, or as an extension to the current town centre conservation area.

7.1 Impact on adjoining conservation areas

The Middle Walk Colonnades form a scheme with the Princess Parade Colonnade built below the Metropole Hotel in 1912, which is within the Town Centre Conservation Area, and therefore contributes positively to the conservation area. It would probably be impractical to extend the conservation area to include the Middle Walk Colonnades only.

It is unfortunate that many of the buildings at the southern end of North Promenade, abutting the conservation area, have been altered and their Victorian character eroded; Regent Court is of negative value and impacts on the setting of the Metropole Hotel.

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APPENDIX 1: Historic maps

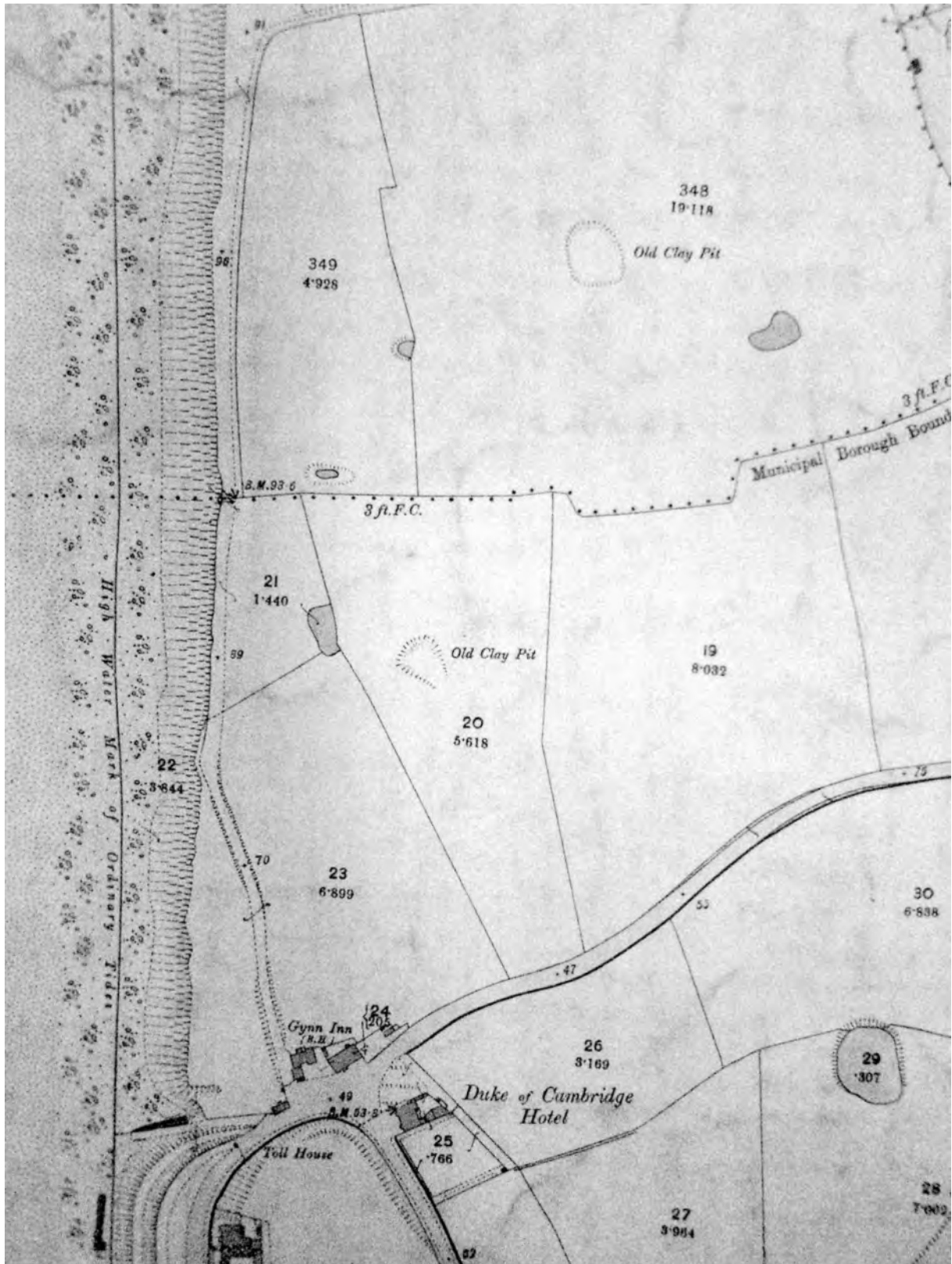


Fig. 45: Detail of 1893 OS map (1:2500), showing the area north of Gynn Square before development in the early 20th century (Lancashire Record Office)

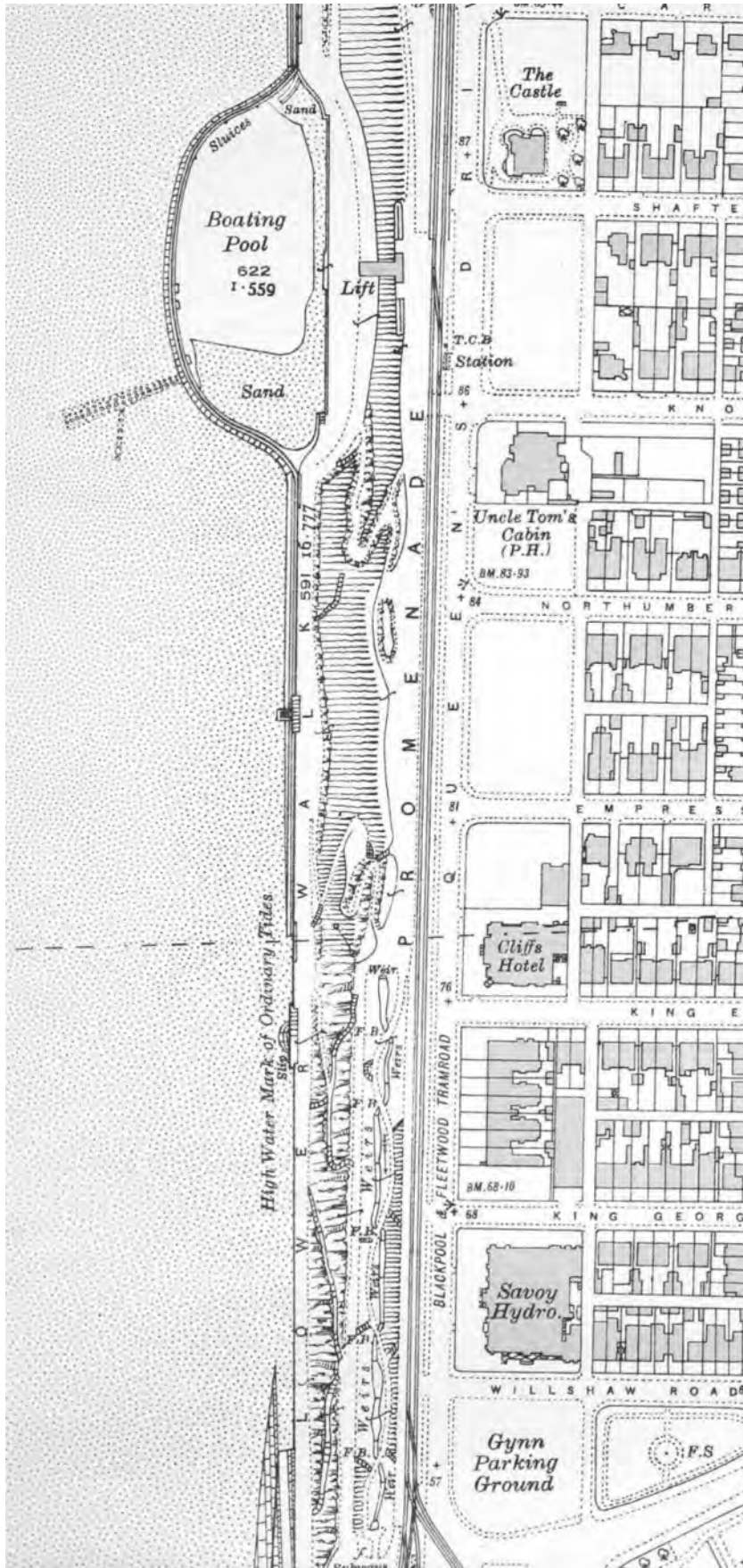


Fig. 46: Detail of 1932 OS map (1:2500), showing the 'new' hotels on the seafront (JRULM)



Fig. 47: Detail of 1829 Hennet map showing the seafront road between the town and 'Ginn' in the north (from <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/oldmap/index.asp#lancmaps>)

APPENDIX 2: Characterisation maps



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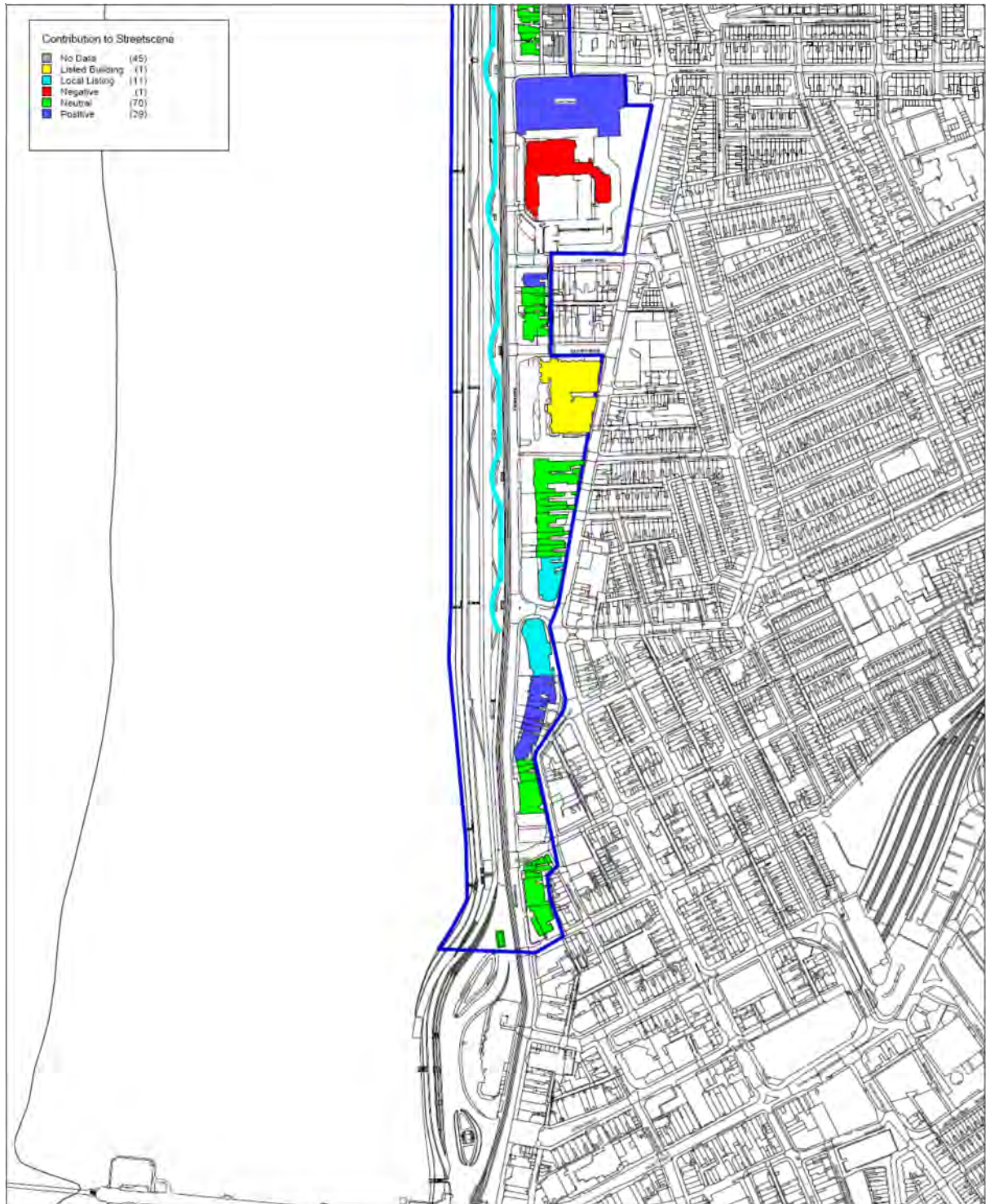


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