The Creation of Skegness as a Resort Town
by the 9th Earl of Scarbrough

THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED

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In his PhD Thesis on English seaside resorts, J. A. Barratt concludes that “Skegness is, without doubt, the finest example of comprehensive resort planning”. It is also one of only a very few resorts where development can be traced almost step by step. Yet no one, to my knowledge, has yet written an account of the creation of the town. An article which appeared recently on Skegness in Lincolnshire Life misspelt the name of the landowner who created Skegness, the 9th Earl of Scarbrough, and stated that the railway arrived in 1875 when in fact it came in 1873. Both errors are frequently made, the second even in what was, until very recently, the only general history of Skegness. A study of the creation and development of Skegness, let alone of the problems involved is therefore, I think, necessary.

The problems may be divided into three: the problem of risk, (Section I); the problem of raising the necessary money, (Section II); and thirdly, the technical problems inevitably involved, (Section III). Section IV describes the first years of the new town, the building boom of the late 1870’s and early 1880’s and the hard years which followed, as Skegness felt the effects of international depression.

I

Landed investment in urban development was common enough, but coastal development was more risky, and success depended on the social habits of the middle classes, which, even by the 1870’s, were by no means very certain. The pattern of one-man resort development was, however, long established. New Brighton, Fleetwood and Herne Bay had been so founded in the 1830’s, Llandudno in the late 1840’s and Saltburn in the 1860’s, and the use of strict covenants with the builders to minimize risks had become the accepted convention. Not all the precedents were successful though. Llandudno’s growth was long delayed and New Brighton hardly grew at all. Also, such a venture was bound to be ultimately a matter of luck. However, success in the case of Skegness was not unlikely.
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Long before any development plans had been laid, Skegness was known as a watering place frequented by the local gentry. By the 1870's there were 3 hotels. One, the 'Sea View', standing to the north of the village, had only been built in 1862. The 'Vine' (originally known as 'Skegness Hotel') had been built 200 years before and the 'Hildred's' (originally known as the 'New Hotel') around the turn of the century. Bathing machines on the beach were first mentioned in 1784 though they were clearly not new even then. In 1829 Edmund Oldfield wrote that "occasionally very great" numbers were to be found staying at the two hotels enjoying "the fresh breezes from the German Ocean" and in 1806 the Stamford Mercury reported "several respectable families are taking small houses along the shore in order to enjoy it for some time." Throughout the nineteenth century the Stamford Mercury abounds with references to sea bathing at Skegness and to accommodation in the hotels and in private houses, and in 1842 White's Directory described it as "fast rising in celebrity". The 1872 edition listed 9 lodging houses besides the 3 hotels.

Skegness in 1873 though, when the first plots of the first development plan were laid out, and when the railway was brought the 5 miles from Wainfleet, was still very much an undeveloped village of fishermen, farmers and farm hands. Indeed, between 1842 and 1872 the population had fallen slightly. With its firm sands and healthy climate already well known and with Cleethorpes and the Yorkshire resorts the only rivals, the possibilities and scope for expansion presented by the arrival of the railway could not have been in much doubt. By the railway, Skegness was linked to a vast hinterland of still rapidly rising East Midlands and South Yorkshire towns and cities.

The excise trade and not, as has been stated, the possibilities for opening the rich agricultural land, was the first object of the railway. In a note written to the Earl in 1871 concerning the proposed railway, the Earl's agent, Henry Tippett, advises the Earl to "Ask what they (the promoters) wish to do for traffic in the winter months as the chief support will be derived from passengers going to the sea in the summer." And while the success of the railway depended upon the success of Skegness, it was itself the vital precondition for successful full scale development. Without it Skegness would probably never have won the attention of either Earl or agent, and it dictated the holiday catchment area which has remained virtually unchanged ever since.

Once the railway had been laid, though, success or failure in developing Skegness depended very much on how far the railway company would co-operate with the Earl. Unlike Mablethorpe, Skegness never enjoyed direct investment from the railway, but through the persuasion of Tippett, profits and petitions from Nottingham and Derby, the numbers of both very cheap excursions and ordinary trains were increased, especially from London. New platforms were laid, Skegness was advertised in Great Northern stations, hotels and receiving offices, and petitions from Skegness and Wainfleet complaining that the Sunday trains led to "Sabbath desecration, dissipation and vice" were ingored. The idea of advertising the town by displaying "a very handsome picture" was one of many suggestions made by Tippett in a letter to Mr. Cockshott, the superintendent of the line in January, 1882. He also suggested that a free pass over the Great Northern system be granted to a Mr. Oliver who would "canvass and get parties up", that a "much larger excursion traffic from London" be run, that excursions be run from Sheffield, and that the Company pay Lord Scarbrough a farthing for every excursion ticket issued to Skegness so that the Earl might allow excursion ticket holders into the Pleasure Gardens free. All these proposals were granted, and although complaints about the railway service and the need for a double line appeared regularly in the Herald throughout the early 1880's, the part of Tippett in improving the service was obviously considerable. Inadequate rail facilities had been a principal argument in favour of the Lincoln-Skegness Railway and Skegness businessmen giving evidence at the House of Commons Committee spoke of the August Bank Holiday of 1882 when 20,000 excursionists arrived and, because there was only a single track, the last train did not leave until 2.30 on the Tuesday morning, with "many
hundreds spending the night in waiting rooms or in the streets”. By the summer of 1883 the line had been doubled from Skegness to Cowbank, (about a mile of track) and by the August of 1886 the editor of the Herald was praising the Great Northern’s willingness “to do all they can for the interests of Skegness”.

When the railway arrived in 1873 Tippett had already had the valuer, J. H. Vessey, inspect the foreshore at Skegness with, to quote his report, “a view to offering the land for the erection of villas” and the Wainfleet surveyor, R. S. Booth, had drawn up a plan showing the building plots for sale and the new roads needed “should the whole scheme be carried out”. The decision to create a completely new town complete with Pleasure Gardens, Pier and Cricket Ground probably did not come before 1876. In October the surveyor, G. B. Walker, charged two guineas for making a “General Plan shewing the whole scheme of New Roads”. Development had to be in stages with the risk of failure faced at every auction sale of building lots. The grand plan of the proposed town so praised by Dr. Barratt was not drawn up until sometime in 1878 (the precise date is not known) but by 31st December 1877 £4,073 2s. 0d. had been spent, and by the following November £1,456 15s. 2d., with £15,146 5s. 5d. estimated as necessary for 1879.

Some of the risk involved could be passed on to the builders who bought, or leased, the plots of land. Following the precedent of resort developers like Sir George Tapps-Gervis at Bournemouth or Sir Richard Hotham at Bognor Regis and the advice of J. H. Vessey, the Bill of Sale for the first series of building lots, dated June, 1873, states that “two villas of not less value than £1,000 must be erected, or one house of the same value (on each plot) and in all cases the Plans of the House or Houses proposed to be erected, must be submitted to me, before the building is commenced, for the approval of the Earl of Scarbrough”. Lots 32 to 46 were let to the Nottingham architect, Mr. Hine “on condition that he puts up £5,000 worth of Building next year . . . and erect an hotel in Lot 32 to cost not less than £3,000 within 3 years”. The only other recorded purchaser, Mr. Hobson Dunkley, had to build four villas “exactly 50 feet from the boundary line”, agree to their being inspected “from time to time” and assure that “all the buildings - namely the four houses with outbuildings complete - be entirely finished, fit for occupation by the 1st day of June, 1875”. The Bill of Sale of nineteen building lots staked out on the proposed Lumley Road stated that “Buildings of not less value than £500 to be placed upon each lot, and should any lot not be built upon to the amount named within three years from the commencement of the lease, the lot shall be forfeited to the Vendor . . . No buildings to be commenced until the plans have first been submitted to and approved of by the Earl of Scarbrough, or his Agent”. By inserting these clauses the Earl avoided the risk of having builders purchase lots and then be slow to build for fear of insufficient demand, and kept control of the style and quality of the buildings erected, avoiding the risk of lowering the tone of the resort. In the case of Lumley Road the builders were given no choice but to build terraced houses, for the Bill of Sale states that “The frontage of the buildings to be placed upon each site must be to the new road, and must extend the full width of the lot as marked on the plan, that the whole of the south side may be closed in”.

Of course the risk that the lots would not be bought, or that no building whatsoever be done, could not be entirely avoided. Whenever all the lots were sold at an auction, we are told of it. A bill for 1877 from the solicitors Tweed and Stephen of Lincoln reads on September 27th “attending sale at Skegness when all the lots were sold” and when charging for their part in the sale of land in Algitha Road in 24 lots, add “all the lots were sold”. There is no mention that all 19 lots offered in 1876, all 6 lots offered in 1877 forming Lumley Terrace or all 4 lots offered in August 1878 were sold. The printers’ bill for printing 300 Bills of Sale and for advertising in the Daily Telegraph and in Bradford and Doncaster, Derby and Nottingham, Manchester and Sheffield, Leeds and Leicester, Burton and Grimsby and Boston and Stamford newspapers for just one auction ran to almost £40. Much trouble, work and
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expense was involved in staking out the plots sold in 1873 but there is no record of either Dunkley or Hine building any villas at all.

The plan of 1878 shows that 787 houses were to be built in the new town and in 1877 in his report on the proposed sewage works for Skegness, the engineer, Mr. D. Balfour of Newcastle, stated that "the development plan provides for 660 new houses, say 5,000 of extra population", but not until sometime between 1911 and 1921 did the population exceed 5,000, and then much more as a result of development by speculators like J. H. Camming and T. Lawrence Kirk on land not owned by the Earl. By 1905 only Lumley Road, Lumley Avenue, Algitha Road and Rutland Road of the plan of 1878 were completely built along, and not until the 1920s did development begin of that part of the original plan north of Scarbrough Avenue. To say though, that the plan of 1878 was too ambitious is unfair since no one can say by what date it was hoped theory would become fact. The problem was recognised and only the southern half of the plan developed, and, with the exception of the Market Place and the Aquarium and Winter Gardens, almost perfectly in accordance with the plan, even to the position and ground plan of reading room and school. The architect responsible for laying out almost all the foreshore development in the '20s and '30s, R. H. Jenkins, believed that Scarbrough Avenue and not Lumley Road was supposed to become the main shopping street. This is probably true but cannot be proved, and Lumley Road was certainly the first of the proposed roads to be laid out, being adjacent to the old High Street and close to the railway station, and described by J. H. Vessey when being staked out in November 1876 as "a main street . . . which will greatly improve the property." The Market Place came to nothing because it was realised that Skegness's hinterland was too limited and already served by markets at Wainfleet, Alford and Burgh, the last much in decline. A fortnightly cattle market established in 1880 on land adjacent to the railway station was never a success and had closed down before 1914.

II

The risks involved in creating a seaside town like Skegness were always great because the cost was necessarily very great, and this is especially true in the case of Skegness where the overwhelming proportion of investment and outlay came from one man, with the work of freehold land societies and other landowners very much on the periphery. By November 1878 the Earl had laid out nearly £11,000, nearly £5,000 of that being in road making alone. During the following ten months over £15,000 was thought necessary, and if this estimate is as correct as that for 1878 was, then it would be about right. We know that up to the end of June 1879 about £35,500 had been spent in building the sea wall, laying the roads, laying the drains and building the sewage farm and water works, without any of the £5,000 thought necessary for investing in the Pier Company, or the £1,400 for the Gardens Company having been spent. During the following four years over £20,000 was spent in laying and repairing roads and in expenditure at the Earl's gravelworks at Skegness and at the sewerage, water and brick works. Much of the £20,000 was, of course, long term investment like the £2,000 invested in the newly acquired brickworks in 1883, and the expenditure on the upkeep of the roads was to end when this responsibility was taken over by the Local Board. Unfortunately there seems to be no record of expenditure on, or receipts from Skegness after 1883, when both are rising.

To provide facilities like the Pleasure Gardens or the Pier, Gasworks or Brickworks, Steambouts or Bathing Pools, companies were created, but in almost every case the incentive came from Tippet, persuading the Earl to give a lead by investing heavily himself. At the foot of the estimate for expenditure for the Spring of 1879 made in the January See Plate 5.
writes: "The Earl of Scarborough agreed to take shares in the Pier Company to the amount of £3,000, but I think he ought to go to the extent of £5,000." And, as on most occasions, the Earl took his advice.

Businessmen from the Midlands, notably from Nottingham, and local farmers like James Martin, the Chairman of the Firsby and Wainfleet Railway Company, to whose memory a clock tower now stands in Wainfleet Market Place, and William Everington, a tenant of the Earl, whose family had farmed at Skegness for centuries, and who now paid over £1,000 a year in farm rental, contributed the other £16,000.

Forming companies was one way of overcoming the problem of raising the money, while at the same time encouraging investment from outside, but rapid development was not always possible through companies.

To form the Brickworks leased in 1878 to Messrs. Thompson and King, a company with £5,000 capital was formed. To build the Swimming Baths in 1882 a company was formed with £3,000 capital by selling 600 £5 shares. The directors numbered the Earl himself, Henry Tippett, two businessmen from Nottingham, one from Long Eaton, two from Spilsby and one from Sleaford and three local farmers. When a steamboat was thought necessary, a company, again with £3,000 capital in £5 shares, was hastily formed by Tippett in the winter of 1883.

The pleasure Gardens Company, of which the Earl was, as usual, the chief shareholder, lacked "sufficient spirit and energy" said Tippett in a letter to Mr. Cockshott of the Great Northern, in January 1882 and Tippett persuaded the Earl to buy the shareholders up with the intention of "expanding a considerable sum of money in beautifying them and improving them" and from the comments of the editor of the Skegness Herald in the paper's first edition in June 1882 it seems he succeeded, while the Estate Account for 1883 shows that after only two years, and despite the cost of improving them, the Pleasure Gardens were bringing in £357, which meant a 50% profit margin. Early in the 20th Century the 10th Earl (the founder's son), was to buy up the Pier Company as well. I have been unable to discover the reasons for this, but in March 1883 a fairly healthy financial position was reported at the third Annual General Meeting held at the Estate Office, with gate receipts £486 13s. 4d. up on the previous year. A year later though, the company had had to fight an application in the Court of Chancery brought by the contractors, Messrs. Head and Company, to wind up its affairs, the contractors claiming that the Pier Company owed them £2,700, and although they won the case, the Pier Company had to pay £2,359, raising it by issuing £3,000 worth of bonds. One of the most successful companies seems to have been the Gasworks Company. Formed in 1877 with £3,000 share capital it built a gasworks and supplied gas at 6½ for every 1,000 cu. ft. and giving a dividend of 7½% - 8%.

One could not form a company to erect a church or school, and virtually all the initial expenditure in building the new church of St. Matthew came from the Earl, and most of the final £8,000. He gave the site for this, two Methodist Chapels, a school to which he gave £450, a cattle market complete with pens and costing him £2,000, and a very fine cricket ground, probably still the finest in the county, costing him £2,276 to lay out complete with pavilion and grandstand.

To provide the town's water supply the Earl undertook the entire expenditure himself, an outlay of £2,000, to enjoy handsome profits - nearly 100% in 1883. To ensure that the builders should not be without bricks and that development should not be slow for the sake of brick supply, the Earl bought up the brickworks of Messrs. Warth and Dunkley in 1882. He had leased them to Mr. James Warth, a local farmer, in 1875 but, says the Herald, the firm had "found it impossible to meet the demand for bricks." In April 1883 the paper announced that new sheds, offices and kilns had been built and two new machines installed, one capable of producing a thousand bricks an hour.

The Earl had to maintain the momentum of growth created by initial investment by
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continued investment. When current receipts began to exceed current expenditure I cannot say, but although expenditure exceeded receipts in 1883 by about £1,500,41 which meant that the gap had been widening successively from the beginning, this may be more than accounted for by the purchase of Warth and Dunkley's brickyard and the expenditure on it, which receipts from the sale of bricks could not be expected to approach.

To encourage speculators the leasehold rents offered were very low and in 1883 the farm rental was almost five times as great as the leasehold rental, £2,949 11s. 6d. compared with £600 4s. 2d. and the total rental in 1880 exceeded that of 1851 by only £433 7s. 6d.42 The half acre building lots advertised in 1873 were to be leased originally at a ground rent of only £2 a year, though in the end for £3 and for ninety-nine years. J. H. Vesey had advised that "as it is a new place" with "hardly any Villa residences on the foreshore" the Earl should offer the lots on "a longer term as an inducement, say, up to eighty years" rather than for the more usual sixty years. The ground rent for the lots sold on the south side of Lumley Road is not known but Vesey advised Tippet to put reserves of from £3 to £1 10s. on them for fear that there might not be the "demand we anticipate".43 Good farmland was not taken by creating Skegness and few evictions, or much compensation, were necessary. A map of 173244 describes it as "New Marsh" and shows the farmland lying to the south and south-west (as it still does).

Creating Skegness was very much a long-term enterprise. To raise the capital for just 1879 and 1880 the Earl's solicitors, Messrs. Few & Co., advised on March 18th 1879 that he sell not only the outlying Lincolnshire properties in Blyton and Gelly, but also the lands at Tetney and Holton, only recently enclosed and still rising enormously in value. In the end a mortgage was raised instead. A sum of £100,000 was raised from the Clergy Mutual Assurance office in April 1880, but developing Skegness was only one, and not the largest item of expenditure to be covered by the mortgage. Only £10,600 was designated for "further outlay at Skegness", with the stipulation that £3,000 was to be added to the £2,000 already invested in the pier Company, and £1,750 to the £250 already set aside for the building of St. Matthew's Church "without taking into consideration any further outlay at Skegness for:-

1. Water Supply: 2. Sewerage: 3. Roads, or any possible purchase of land at Skegness." These items it seems, were to be paid for by the current receipts. The bulk of the £100,000 was to be expended in paying off a £40,000 mortgage left on the estate by the late Earl and a £27,600 loan raised by the Earl from his bankers, Messrs. Child & Co., a sum very probably raised for "Resettlement of the Scarborough Estates from 1866 to 14th November 1878", as a note, admittedly with no reference to Messrs. Child & Co., calls the aggregate of £11,456 15s. 2d. spent on Skegness up to that date, £11,203 spent on building a new chapel and farm buildings at Sandbeck Park and a new vicarage at Malby, and £4,000 spent in preparations and festivities for the 21st Birthday of Lord Lumley, the Earl's son. At least £22,000 of the expenditure on Skegness was probably therefore borrowed money, but while raising this the Earl was enjoying the interest on £15,000 which he felt able to advance even while creating a new town. His accounts show that he advanced £21,000 between 4th February 1868 and 11th March 1878, £15,000 of which was after January 1875.45

III

The raising and risking of capital were the most immediate and most important problems facing the landowner wishing to create a new town, but there were, of course, technical problems. The land to be developed had to be cleared of tenants before any building could begin, legal actions might be necessary and compensations paid. Laying the drains and the roads naturally incurred technical problems. Materials and men might have to be transported, changes in the plans might be necessary or foundations found deficient.
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Many tenants must have lost much or even all of their lands when the railway was laid out, before any development was even begun by the Earl. Mr. Vessey's bill for work done between October 1872 and 1873 reads for October 1872 "Personal inspection and report upon the Estates in the parishes of Skegness, Croft, Winthorpe and Ingoldmells in the County of Lincoln as to the desirability of making a general rearrangement of the farms and occupations consequent upon the alterations to be made by the new line of railway to Skegness." There is no more mention of this so presumably few difficulties arose, although the railway took at least 9 acres of land.\textsuperscript{35} The earliest development accounts show that up to September 1878, 82 acres had been taken "from tenants . . . for building and other improvements" and a further 57 acres for the sea bank, the coal yard, the brickyard leased to J. G. Warth, the gas works, Lumley Road and the plots staked out on either side, Lumley Terrace and a few plots other than those leased to the builder George Dunkley.\textsuperscript{28} By January 1879 just over £500 had been given in compensation, and the only record of any compensation given after that date is a receipt for £142 paid by the Earl in July 1879 to a Mr. Covill, "being the balance of purchase money and interest due for House and Garden situate at Skegness in the County of Lincoln." Where the Earl’s jurisdiction could not be questioned there could be little difficulty in evicting tenants, but those tenants living on the Roman Bank came under the jurisdiction of the Commissioners of Sewers, and to obtain their eviction, the solicitors Tweed and Stephen of Lincoln were involved heavily. Early in July 1877, after much correspondence, the Solicitors, Tippet and the Commissioners of Sewers met "to endeavour to arrange for obtaining the possession of the houses on the Roman Bank" and in the following month a Mrs. Pape and a Mrs. Almond were served notices to quit by the Commissioners. However, not until 23rd November did Mrs. Pape, through her solicitor, Mr. Thimbleby, accept Lord Scarbrough's offer for her house, which Tweed and Stephen had called "definite and final" on September 27th.\textsuperscript{55}

The laying of roads and drains was the accepted role of the landowner developing his estate. As with local authorities laying out an industrial estate today, the laying of roads and drains was part of the inducement to builders. For the sake of caution when laying out the first building plots in 1873 Vessey advised only making a "good stone road" from an existing track and offering at first only those plots adjacent, but added that "should there be a demand for these allotments it will be necessary to make a provision for the drainage by forming a main drain parallel to the road . . . ." The agreements concluded with both Hine and Hobson Dunkley\textsuperscript{29} stated that the Earl would lay the main drain and road while they, to quote Dunkley’s agreement, would "do all levelling and fencing . . . . and lay all sewage drains to, and connect them with, the main sewer". The sewerage works were completed in 1879 with cost the main problem. The Sanitary Authority contributed £1,600 and the Earl, £5,000.\textsuperscript{30} The report of the engineer, Mr. D. Balfour, appeared in 1877 and suggests no serious technical problems.\textsuperscript{41} The sewage was pumped to a sewerage farm one mile south of the town and disposed there by intermittent filtration. By 1901 a scheme had been laid for changing to a bacterial and septic tank process,\textsuperscript{42} but in 1882 the editor of the ‘Herald’ could write that "every house in the town is effectively drained".\textsuperscript{43} Tweed and Stephen seem to have been very active in bringing the drainage scheme to fruition, arranging meetings with Tippet and Balfour throughout 1877 and 1878, writing to Balfour "pressing him to commence the drainage" in September 1878, having already written in the previous February to the Local Government Board "pressing them to institute an inquiry as to the drainage at once", which the Board had done, sending a Major Hector Tulloch of the Royal Engineers three weeks later.\textsuperscript{44}

Although guides, directories and ‘Herald’ editorials praise the width and grandeur of the streets they had at first only a gravel surface. In July 1883 the Earl proposed that responsibility for the upkeep of Wainfleet Road, Rutland Road, Alexandra Road and the Parade be taken over by the parish, but only the first two were accepted.\textsuperscript{45} At the parish meeting
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it was said that the Parades needed paving, the gravel surface being removed whenever the Parades were cleared of sand, and Alexandra Road, thought unfit at the parish meeting, was called "disgraceful" in a letter to the 'Herald' later in the year.64 As early as September 1877, before any other road had been completed, repairs had to be made to Lumley Road.65 However, cost was again the principal problem. Without including the cost of the land in forfeited rent, the cost of filling the ditches in, or supplying gravel from the Earl's pits at Skegness, or planting saplings brought from Sandbeck Park, £2,540 had been spent up to the end of September 1883 in laying, and then repairing the roads.66

As far as laying out the roads was concerned, the Skegness estate was almost self-sufficient with the main material, gravel, in plentiful supply. To build the sea wall though, the stone had to be brought from Roche Abbey quarry on the estate at Sandbeck Park. By 31st December 1877, £175 had been spent in "leading stone" from the Roche Abbey quarry to Doncaster station in carts, with the value of the stone and the cost of labour coming to a further £382.67 Much of the labour force for laying out roads, drains and Pleasure Gardens, and building the pier, church and sea wall was supplied by the local people.68 The more skilled workers were almost wholly settlers; if builders, then building their own homes along with those for sale. White's Directory of 1882 lists fourteen builders and contractors, none of whom was listed in 1872. Even Hobson Dunkley, the first building contractor in Skegness, did not settle there until May 1874, although he had built the Sea View Hotel twelve years before. But a small village such as Skegness was in the early 1870's could not supply all the lesser skilled labour necessary and, besides settlers, many had to come in by train from Wainfleet. In December 1882, when reporting that the Grosvenor Road Freehold Land Society was laying our roads and drains and advertising building plots, the 'Herald' said that the houses to be built would be "suitable for mechanics and others of the working classes who now come here mornings by the early train from Wainfleet and return in the evening."

Once a start had been made in laying roads and drains and in building the sea wall, the sale of plots could begin in earnest. This presented problems besides risk and cost. Surveyors, solicitors, printers, auctioneers and valuers had to be consulted and letters sent and meetings held before any plot could be sold. Difficulties might arise. When the Earl wished to lease a brickyard to Messrs. King and Thompson, the solicitors had to be heavily engaged in determining his right to do so, and when selling the first plots along the sea front in 1873, the surveyor had to change the plan twice owing to his finding the land "much altered" after the first attempt.69

Once the lots were sold the problems of building and selling the houses were those of the builders. The only house built by the Earl was that for Henry Tippett, the Estate Office, with raising the £3,000 the main problem.70 When it was found that the foundations of St. Matthews Church had subsided at the west end and that it would not be possible to erect a 130 foot tower and spire,71 the church and town lost much in architectural beauty, but the Earl gained much in the money saved.

IV

The successful return of the Earl's investment depended, however, on the successful growth and development of the town. If houses could not be sold, builders would not buy building lots. Success in selling houses depended very much on how well the Earl had provided the town with water, drainage and roads, with amenities like the Pier and Pleasure Gardens, either alone or through forming companies, on how well the plans had been drawn up, and on the quality of the railway facilities and service, something beyond his control but not beyond his influence.
During the last years of the 1870's and the first years of the 1880's Skegness enjoyed a building boom. Balfour estimated that there were 170 houses in Skegness by 1877; by August 1882, with the most hectic period of the boom still to come, there were 368 houses and 36 more were being built.\(^5\) Between 1871 and 1881 nearly a thousand people settled in the town, swelling the population from 349 to 1,322,\(^6\) two thirds of them coming since 1877,\(^7\) and by August 1882 a further 600 had settled.\(^8\) In June 1882 the editor of the 'Herald' could write, "Skegness . . . is now rapidly taking its rank amongst the most fashionable watering-places in England, and is destined ere long to become, what Brighton is to London, the favourite resort of the hundreds of thousands residing in the large towns of the midland counties and in the north . . . ." "... during the season of last year it was visited by upwards of 300,000 persons, and the number of visitors increases yearly", and by 1890 a Guide Book was describing Skegness as "one of the most crowded and popular seaside resorts in England for day-excursionists from the midland counties".\(^9\)

The Earl's comprehensive and generous provision of water and drainage, wide tree-lined streets and attractive Pleasure Gardens, Cricket Ground and Pier, churches and schools almost ensured that Skegness would be an immediate success. The Earl's liberal provision of amenities was quite remarkable. White's Directory of 1882 described the water as being "of the purest quality, obtained in the very centre of Skegness," and the Skegness Herald\(^10\) spoke of its "rare quality" in its first issue in June 1882. The same issue also stated that because of the rapid growth of Skegness, plans were already being laid to provide water from Claxby, ten miles away, "at a cost of many thousands of pounds . . . . for the town of Skegness, the interests and welfare of whose inhabitants the noble Earl has so much at heart". Both the 'Herald' and White's 1882 Directory mention that the Pleasure Gardens had been greatly improved by the Earl, the former, again in its first edition, praising the "rustically constructed and beautifully designed arbors". Both speak of the excellence of the Cricket Grounds described with some exaggeration in the 1910 Guide as "one of the best grounds in the kingdom",\(^11\) the efficiency of the drainage system, "the magnificent promenade pier" stretching 1,843 feet out to sea, (600 feet longer than originally planned, and the fourth longest in the country), and the "magnificent parade . . . . abundantly supplied with seats and light".

By 1880 one of the three new hotels listed in 1882, the 'Lumley', had been completed,\(^12\) the others being the Pier Hotel, opposite the entrance to the pier, and the Lion Hotel, facing the 'Lumley', on the corner of Lumley Road and Roman Bank; the old Wildred's Hotel had been enlarged in 1874 and the Sea View Hotel in 1873, and terraced houses lined only the western end of Lumley Road and the road to the gasworks, Alexandra Road. The newly laid out roads ran between lines of staked out plots; the Pier, Pleasure Gardens and Cricket Ground had been completed as had the gas, water and drainage systems and, ready for rapid growth, the speed of growth was quickening and gaining momentum.

By 1882 houses and shops stretched almost the whole length of Lumley Road, and boarding houses were beginning to appear along the parades and on Drummond Road, Rutland Road and Algitha Road.\(^13\) In January 1882 Tippett could tell Mr. Cocksrott of the Great Northern that "Skegness is steadily and satisfactorily advancing; there are more buildings now in progress than at any other time since we started, and of a better class. There is not a house to be let in the place; the amusements and attractions for visitors are increasing every year, and there is now accommodation for an unlimited number of people. We only want them down, and they will readily come if the facilities are offered them of doing so."\(^14\) Even the Rector felt it necessary to comment on the number of houses that had been built in 1881, writing in the 'Church Review' in August 1882 that "If Skegness goes on increasing during this winter and as many houses be erected as there were last winter, we ought to try and get the Chancel begun next Spring."

In September 1882 Birch Reynardsdon, a landowner owning land to the north of the Earl of Scarbrough's property, had a plan for the development of his property drawn up,
and in the December one of the five freehold land societies owning land in Skegness was laying out a new road (now known as Grosvenor Road), laying the drainage pipes and about to offer the building plots for sale, with "no doubt" said the 'Herald' that they would be "rapidly taken up and built upon". At the same time the Bathes were being "rapidly pushed forward by Mr. G. Dunkley", "the remaining opening in Lumley Road" was to be "filled with buildings erected by Mr. W. Hall and others"; "excellent houses" were being built in Rutland Road, and "villa residences" in Algitha Road and on the Wainfleet Road near the railway station; a Mr. Spinks was "building a dwelling house and refreshment rooms" in the old High Street next to his 'Whale Museum'. The erection of a "large number of houses" was "contemplated" and the demand for bricks was so great that Messrs. Warth & Dunkley sold out to the Earl and a Yorkshire businessman, John Carter, opened a new brickyard in Burgh Road.

The boom continued into 1883. In February the 'Herald' reported that a row of seven houses, begun "a few weeks since" in Drummond Road for a Mr. Carver of Nottingham, were "being rapidly proceeded with" and that "another similar row of houses in the same road" would "be erected forthwith". A week later the 'Herald' stated that houses were usually "being let before being completed, and at good rents, in view of the coming season .......". "At no time" said the 'Herald', "since the development scheme of our town commenced, has there been such a demand for good houses as at the present time". The auctioneer, Mr. Mackinder, had just let a block of six houses at £30 each, a block of four at £45 each, "a grand block of livery stables . . . for a term of years", and a number of houses in a block of fifteen still being built.

But this was the peak. In May 1884 the 'Herald' stated that "not many new buildings have been erected in Skegness during the past winter", the only record being of ten cottages completed by Joseph Crawshaw in a new road off Wainfleet Road and advertised in March. The only other report of any building comes in July when the paper reports that "a gentleman from London" would "shortly commence to erect some first class houses . . . . in one of the avenues near the church" and this is the last reference to building activity before the September of 1885 when the 'Herald' reported that a Derby land society had been laying out three new roads, one linking Grosvenor Road with the Burgh Road and two others at right angles. The following month the 'Herald' reported that Messrs. Loversied and Gardner of Nottingham had contracted Joseph Crawshaw to build four houses on the Grand Parade for £22,000, the lowest of nine tenders. When these were eventually sold is not known, but the houses which today line the roads laid out by the Derby Land Society dates only from the early 1900's. As early as September 1883 one builder, T. J. Rusell, had gone bankrupt, having failed to sell any of the "beautifully situated terrace houses recently erected in Rutland Road" first advertised in July 1882.

By mid 1883 the growth momentum was slowing and throughout that year Crawshaw was advertising four eight-bedroomed houses in South Parade, two six-bedroomed houses with shops in Lumley Road and two six-bedroomed villas in Wainfleet Road. The Rector wrote in January 1884 that 1883 had been "a very trying year" and described Skegness as resembling "a plant suddenly brought from the warmth of a hothouse into the colder atmosphere outside, to shift for itself," adding "it is certainly now bearing a great strain but whatever comes we may almost rest satisfied that this winter is now seeing its worst and the tide must soon turn for the better." The tide did not turn. Two years later the situation was much worse for by then Skegness was suffering the effects of a general depression. Some idea of the extent of the effect is given by the figures of the numbers of excursionists carried by the Great Northern to Skegness from 1881 to 1885:-
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April — September 1881 195,671
" " 1882 230,277
" " 1883 213,299
" " 1884 224,225
" " 1885 118,473

There is no comment in the 'Skegness Herald' on the fall in numbers in 1883 to give an indication of the cause, but when only 8,624 excursionists came in May 1884 compared with 23,700 the same month the year before, the editor blamed "the depression of trade in Nottingham".99

At an auction held in May 1885 four houses and two building lots failed to reach their reserves, and while there was some building, a land society's declaration that "notwithstanding the prolonged depression in trade all over the country, Skegness has continued not only to hold its own but to become more widely popular" is true only for August Bank Holiday Monday when 25,000 people arrived in the town, 17,000 by excursion train, the second highest figure ever. This may have marked the turning of the tide, though. Unfortunately 1885 is the last year for which 'The Herald' published figures of the number of excursionists, but the editors' resumé of 1886 says that "considering the continued bad state of trade throughout the country" the season had been "on the whole a prosperous one".91 In 1888, though, the Rector was writing that the winter of 1887-88 was seeing "more houses closed than at any previous time".92

The population figures of both Kine and Pearson show nothing of the real extent of the effect of the depression. Showing a slight rise from the 1,332 of 1881 to the 1,488 of 1891 they suggest that the rate of growth had simply slowed up, as one would expect it to. In fact, if the Census taken in August 188293 can be relied upon at all, then these figures hide a very dramatic fall in the population sometime between August 1882 and the time when Kelly's Directory was published in 1892. According to the Census the population had risen to 1,934, a not unlikely figure considering the building boom then in progress, and we have no reason to doubt that the population did not continue to increase rapidly for at least another year.

It was during this initial building boom that the accommodation pattern for the future was established. By 1882 the first boarding houses had been built along the sea front parades but Lunney Road's terraced houses and old High Street's converted cottages were still far more important. Within a year or so a new concentration had developed along the sea front parades. At the same time the first summer residences for East Midland businessmen had begun to appear off tracks, later roads, running up to the sandhills from Drummond Road.94 Although the population was to rise to 2,146 by 1901,95 the accommodation pattern was but a development along established lines. By 1900 the Earl (now the 10th Earl) had despaired of selling the plots along the parade north of Scarborough Avenue. Instead, he created The Park, described in 1901 as "little more than a section of the sand dunes railed in".96 In this a switchback railway was soon to be built, little summer shows given and here, twenty years later, Billy Butlin was to begin his climb to fame and fortune. Rapid accretion and accumulation of sandhills in front of the town soon after the sea wall had been completed in 1878 forced the Earl to lay out the Marine Gardens south of the Pier to preserve the attractiveness of the sea-front. They were completed in 1888.97

Because it was developed to a generous and comprehensive plan, the growth of Skegness was both rapid and orderly. Mablethorpe, developing without co-ordination or planning but reached by the railway in 1877, increased its population by only 172 between 1871 and 1881, and by only 193 between 1881 and 1891. In 1871 Mablethorpe's population was
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nearly twice that of Skegness and in 1876 had eighteen boarding houses compared with only ten at Skegness, but by 1881 Skegness's population exceeded Mablethorpe's by 200 and shrugging off the effects of the depression in the 1890's grew rapidly, so that by 1921, with a population of over 9,000 Skegness was almost twice the size of Mablethorpe. Today, some of the legacy of controlled development is seen in the neat symmetry of the avenues and streets of Skegness, a sharp contrast to the highly disjointed street patterns of unplanned Sheringham or Mablethorpe, and in the ideal accommodation zoning which the town enjoys. This latter advantage is a tribute to the flexibility of the planners. The original intention had been simply the building of villas for the seasonal residence of the wealthy, as at Bournemouth and Torquay, but as soon as the new trend, the 'fortnight holiday' in boarding house or hotel, had become apparent they changed their minds.

Developing ones estate to create a new resort was a form of land exploitation, almost something of a game, that greatly attracted nineteenth century landowners, and profit was usually the first motive. Leasehold ground rents at Skegness were low, not because the Earl's object was not profit, but because success demanded that low rents be charged to induce speculators. Those who did risk their life savings in freehold land societies, or in one of the many new companies, or in opening a little shop in Lumley Road, or raised credit to build a row of houses, demonstrated a degree of personal enterprise and initiative equal to that of an earl who could afford to lend £15,000 and spend £4,000 on his son's 21st Birthday Party. But the Earl not only gave the businessman, builders and local farmers opportunity for profitable investment by laying out streets and drains and staking out plots and forming companies, even though an earlier attempt to sell plots along the foreshore for building villas seems to have come to nothing, he risked thousands of pounds to provide amenities on a remarkably generous scale, to ensure both immediate and lasting success; to ensure that builders should not be deterred by shortage of bricks, or visitors by shortage of amenities or by the accumulation of sandhills in front of the sea wall, and this at a time when private enterprise in municipal development was giving way increasingly to public enterprise, with the development of local government.

In resort towns large scale estate development is possibly better represented than in any other type of town, and there is probably no finer example of resort development than that of Skegness by the Earl of Scarbrough.
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Notes

1 I would like to thank all those who have helped me in the research and writing of this article. I must especially mention the Earl of Scarbrough for so willingly allowing me access to his family papers; Mrs. Valey and all the staff of the Lincolnshire Archives Office; and Dr. Alan Rogers of Nottingham University. Mr. Bernard Field of the Skegness County Library and Lieut/Cdr. F. S. W. Major, all of whom have readily given me the benefit of their time, knowledge and criticism.
4 G. H. J. Dutton’s A History of Skegness. In February, 1969 a second, and much better general history of the town appeared - Skeggy; the Story of an East Coast Town by Winston Kime (pub. Seashell Books)
5 Kelly’s Directory of Lincolnshire, 1892.
6 Barratt. op. cit.
9 Edmund Oldfield: A Topographical and Historical Account of Waltham and the Wapentake of Candle- 
  sho in the County of Lincoln, 1829.
10 White’s Directory, 1872.
12 Scarbrough Papers EMA/312
13 Ironically, this was partly because the railway company, the Great Northern, prevented a rival line being built direct from Lincoln. Had it been built the catchment area might well have been reorien-
  tated in favour of the West Riding.
15 Skegness Herald, August 11th, 1882, June 22nd, 1883, August 20th, 1886.
16 Scarbrough Papers EMA/312; EMA/310.
17 This is almost certainly the plan of Skegness dated 1877 to be found at the Lincolnshire Archives 
  Offices; L.A.O. Ex/32/4/1.
18 Copies are kept at both the Sandbeck Park (Yorks.) and Skegness Estate Offices.
19 Scarbrough Papers EMA/312; EMA 280.
20 Geoffrey Martin: The Town.
21 Pearson, p. 130.
22 Scarbrough Papers EMA/312.
23 Ibid. EMA/310.
24 Ibid. EMA/312.
26 Talk with Lt/Cdr. F. S. W. Major.
27 1906 Ordnance Survey Map. (Copy at L.A.O.),
28 Pearson, pp. 123, 130.
29 Scarbrough Papers EMA/312.
30 Pearson, p. 110.
31 Scarbrough Papers EMA/280.
32 Ibid. EMA/312.
33 Ibid. EMA/86, EMA/291.
34 Ibid. EMA/312.
35 Skegness Herald, March 9th, 1883; July 21st, 1882; December 29th, 1882.
36 Scarbrough Papers EMA/310.
38 Skegness Herald, June 20th, 1882.
39 Ibid. March 9th, 1883.
40 Ibid. May 23rd, 1884.
41 Ibid. March 7th, 1884; White’s Directory of Lincolnshire, 1882.
42 Scarbrough Papers EMA/290.
44 White’s Directory, 1882.
45 Scarbrough Papers EMA/312; EMA/291.
46 Skegness Herald, December 7th (and December 14th).
47 Scarbrough Papers EMA/310.
48 Skegness Herald, April 20th, 1883.
49 Scarbrough Papers EMA/291.
50 Ibid. EMA/291.
51 Ibid. EMA/312.

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92 Hand-painted map of the Skegness and Winthorpe estates of the Saunderson family, (from whom the 3rd Earl of Scarbrough inherited the estates in 1723) found recently in the Skegness Estate Office.
93 Scarbrough Papers EMA/280.
94 Ibid. EMA/310.
95 Ibid. EMA/280.
96 Ibid. EMA/312.
97 Ibid. EMA/280.
98 Ibid. EMA/280, 310.
99 Ibid. EMA/312.
100 White's Directory, 1882.
101 Scarbrough Papers EMA/312.
102 1901 Ward Lock Guide.
103 Skegness Herald, June 30th, 1882.
104 Scarbrough Papers EMA/310.
105 Skegness Herald, July 20th, 1883.
106 Ibid. November 30th, 1883.
107 Scarbrough Papers: Skegness Time Sheets (not listed by the H.M.C.).
108 Ibid. EMA/280; EMA/312; EMA/86; EMA/291 (a summation of estate accounts).
109 Ibid. EMA/312.
110 Talk with Lt/Cdr. F. S. W. Major.
111 Skegness Herald, March 13th, 1885.
112 Scarbrough Papers EMA/310.
113 White's Directory, 1882.
114 Wilson op. cit.
115 Skegness Herald, September 1st, 1882.
116 Kelly's Directory of Lincolnshire, 1892.
117 Scarbrough Papers EMA/312 (Balfour's report on sewerage works).
118 Skegness Herald, September 1st, 1882.
119 Handbook of Lincolnshire, 1890 (pub. John Murray).
120 The Official Guide to Skegness; the Borough Pocket Guides.
121 Pearson p. 130.
122 White's Directory, 1882.
124 Skegness Herald, September 29th, 1882; December 1st, 1882; December 8th, 1882.
125 Ibid. February 2nd, 1883 and February 23rd, 1883.
126 Ibid. March 7th, 1884; May 30th, 1884; July 25th, 1884; September 11th, 1885.
127 Ibid. October 9th, 1885.
128 Church Review, January, 1884.
129 Skegness Herald, October 27th, 1882; October, 1884 and December 1885.
130 Ibid. October, 1884.
131 Ibid. May 14th, 1885; September 4th, 1885; August, 1885; December 31st, 1886.
132 Church Review, January, 1888.
133 Skegness Herald, September 1st, 1882.
134 Talk with Lt/Cdr. F. S. W. Major.
135 Kelly's Directory, 1901.
137 Pearson.
138 Ibid.
139 Barratt.
140 Ibid.