Plymouth: More than the 'Centre of a Hundred Tours?'

Tourism in Plymouth in the 1920s

Gemma Canham

The problem of making Plymouth a holiday resort has not yet been solved. Visionaries come and visionaries go, but it seems to go on forever a holiday centre but not a holiday resort.

In the 1920s, outside visitors were not a new concept in the town of Plymouth. Since the advent of the railways and the extension of the line in 1848, visitors had been able to arrive at high speeds to Plymouth. In addition, the rail link allowed US ocean liners to dock in Plymouth and for their passengers to take high-speed rail to London and beyond. However, by the 1920s the landscape of work in Plymouth was changing. The Devonport Dockyards were shrinking, and following the end of the First World War, the requirement for dockyard and naval workers was reducing. Due to this, the need for new industries in the town was larger than ever.

Plymouth itself had a reputation as the 'Centre of a Hundred Tours', but was not, in itself, a tourist destination. Publicity throughout the period illustrated the need and desire to advertise the town itself as a place worthy of doing more than just passing through or as a base to explore the more 'exciting' landscapes of Dartmoor and Cornwall. While there was some small growth to the tourism industry over the course of the 1920s, Plymouth was unable to attain the status of a holiday resort, and it is this struggle that will come across throughout this exploration of tourism in Plymouth.

This article will commence with the rise of rail and how this brought tourism to the region, and what was on offer for tourists at the time. It will then explore the diminishing Devonport Dockyard and the new industries that were rising in Plymouth at the turn of the new decade. The focus will then turn to the advertising campaigns throughout the decade and the success of these, along with the entertainment options available in Plymouth during the decade. The article will then cover hotels, accommodation and regional transport for tourists, and finally, the special events of the Mayflower Tercentenary (1920) and Plymouth Week (1926–30).

While the 1920s had an effect socially on the whole of society, specific changes to the manner in which tourism was carried out in Plymouth were not in themselves forthcoming until later in the 20th century. Plymouth as a town, however, was increasingly aware of the necessity of tourism and the need to explore alternative industries. The struggle of providing for and drawing in tourists will be seen throughout this article.

The coming of rail

The first forays of tourists, though they were not known as such at the time, into Devon coincided with the Napoleonic Wars and the presence of the Royal Navy at Devonport. However, this tourism, as will be a theme throughout this article, was not to Plymouth itself, with Plymouth a through point only. Naval commanders preferred to dock their ships in sheltered Torbay rather than in the exposed Plymouth Sound, and their wives and families soon arriving to visit.[1] Torquay, Kingsbridge, Salcombe and Hope Cove continued to attract visitors throughout the 19th century.

The first tourist attraction in Plymouth was arguably Napoleon himself when his exile ship docked in Plymouth Sound: 'A crush of small boats set out from the town, as people struggled to catch a glimpse of the little figure on deck.'[2]

The railways cemented Devon as a destination with the opening of the Great Western Railway (GWR) main line from London Paddington to Exeter (via Bristol) on 1 May 1844. This line gradually expanded through South Devon, reaching Plymouth in 1848. A year later, the line extended to Millbay to serve the docks and packet ships.[3] Transoceanic Liners would dock here and their passengers could immediately board a fast train to London, reducing their journey by a day or more.[4] By 1922, 21,692 passengers landed from these liners.[5] Shipping companies that operated into Plymouth included Cunard, the White Star Line, Compagnie Generale Transatlantique (which would stop in Plymouth after departing from Le Havre), NDL and United States Lines.[6] In the 1890s, developments by London and South Western Railway brought a second route to Plymouth. After development of the Stonehouse Pool Branch passenger ocean terminal in 1904, the line offered competition with the GWR in speed to London.[7]

However, with the advent of the railways came the advent of handbooks and the package tour, meaning that the tourist traditions and expectations established in the mid-1840s endure to this day.[8] While these books touted Plymouth as the Centre of a Hundred Tours, easily accessible by rail, and the ideal base from which to visit Cornwall, Dartmoor and South Hams, the attractions of the town itself did not receive the same attention. This continued through the 1920s.

In 1914, Plymouth, Devonport and Plympton amalgamated to become the borough of Plymouth.[9] Railway hotels sprung up in almost all leading cities across the UK but one could

[1] Felicity Goodall, *Lost Devon* (Birlinn Limited, 2007).
[2] Ibid.
[3] Helen Harris, *Devon's Railways* (Bossiney Books, 2001).
[4] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).
[5] Alfred H Shorter and Edward T Woodley, 'Plymouth: Port And City', *Geography,* 22:4 (1937), 293–306, p. 12.
[6] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).
[7] Helen Harris, *Devon's Railways* (Bossiney Books, 2001).
[8] Erika Behrisch Elce, 'Cornwall and Kamtschatka: Domesticating Cornwall through Pedestrian Travel in Wilkie Collins's Rambles Beyond Railways (1851)', *The Wilkie Collins Journal,* 14 (2017), p. 3.
[9] Daniel Barrera-Fernández, *Attracting Visitors to Ancient Neighbourhoods: Creation and Management of the Historic City of Plymouth, UK* (InPlanning, 2017), p. 41.

not be found in Plymouth.[10] The outbreak of war dramatically affected some holiday resorts in Devon, but this was not the case for Plymouth. In 1916 and 1917 visitors arrived by train and could be found enjoying trips and amusements.[11] By the 1920s, the first manifestations of mass tourism were underway, facilitated by the railways.[12] At this time, additional weekend trains were running between London and Plymouth aimed specifically at tourists, taking approximately four hours non-stop.[13] The cost of a ticket in third class was 39s 8d.[14] By June 1922, wages had stabilised downwards after wartime inflation and the average wage for a builder's labourer was 54s 1d per week and an agricultural labourer earnt between 30s and 36s per week.[15] Millbay Station, also the arrival point for trains from Paddington, was perfectly located near shops and hotels.[16]

However, car ownership was on the rise and by 1929 there were more than five times as many cars registered as there were in 1920. In 1920, 187,000 cars were registered in the UK,[17] in 1925 there were 580,000 and by 1930, this figure was 1.098 million.[18] Though motoring was generally seen as a middle-class pastime, car ownership was not limited to the middle classes; it was gradually becoming possible for a small proportion of the lower-middle and wealthier working classes to gain access to a car.[19] By 1925:

> There would appear to be no doubt that it is to the motor car that Plymouth owes its growing popularity as a holiday centre. Tourists included Plymouth in their itinerary as being a town where hotel accommodation would be easily obtainable, and discovered that, apart from the amenities of the Three Towns themselves, quite a large number of gems of Westcountry scenery were within comfortable travelling distance. Many of these beauty spots have little or no accommodation for the visitor. The solution was to make Plymouth his centre and starting place.
>
> Several of the managers of the most important hotels in the town agreed that motorists having booked accommodation for one or two nights only decided in many instances to prolong their stay and what is more, found that they could fill every one of those additional days with enjoyment and pleasure. Discussing this tendency with a late holiday-maker, our representative found that the chief complaint of the tourist, next always to that of securing suitable hotel accommodation, was that after a long day of sight-seeing, the smaller towns and villages in Devon and Cornwall had little or no

[10] Jack Simmons, 'Railways, Hotels, and Tourism in Great Britain 1839–1914', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19:2 (1984), 201–22, p. 205.
[11] The Devon Remembers History Project, *Devon During the First World War* (Short Run Press Ltd, 2018).
[12] Stephen Essex and Mark Brayshay, 'Devon Tourism: The story of the county's economic leviathan', *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 150 (2018), 177–222, p. 11.
[13] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).
[14] Ibid.
[15] *House of Commons, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: The Official Report* (vol. 155) (Hansard, 20 June 1922).
[16] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: More Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1996), p. 37.
[17] B. R. Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics I750–I970* (Macmillan, 1978), Table F4, p. 35I. The figure includes taxis.
[18] S.M. Bowden, 'Demand And Supply Constraints The Inter-War UK Car Industry: Did The Manufacturers Get It Right?' *Business History*, 33:2 (1991), pp. 241–67. The figure includes taxis.
[19] Sean O'Connell, 'The Social and Cultural Impact of the Car in Interwar Britain' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 1995), pp. 233–37.

> attraction to offer the visitor, and he opined that this was an important factor in the growing attraction which Plymouth exercises towards the tourist.

Tourists, then, were coming to Plymouth, and they were staying in the town and availing of its attractions. However, Plymouth struggled to move beyond this reputation as a 'centre' into a place to visit on its own merit.

Devonport Dockyard and beyond

During the First World War, Devonport Dockyard played an essential role. Approximately 20,000 people worked there[20] and following conscription, women took on much of the previously male manual labour on the base.[21] Post-war austerity along with the Great Depression reduced the workforce to approximately 11,436 in 1925 and 10,854 in 1927.[22]

Some workers from the dockyard may have found new jobs on the small crafts bringing mailbags and passengers from the transoceanic liners to shore, for their transition to the GWR trains at Millbay. By the end of the 1920s, 700 liners called at Plymouth, twice the number that had been calling at the start of the decade.[23] However, even after the Second World War, the city's economy was almost entirely built around the dockyard,[24] indicating that tourism had not taken a significant enough hold in Plymouth during the interwar years as to structure a modern city around it.

Advertising and publicity

Throughout the 1920s there was constant mention of the need to advertise Plymouth and how, with only a little advertising, Plymouth would come into its own as one of the finest holiday resorts in the country. An interesting dichotomy is present throughout the period, with newspapers and reports stating in the same breath that: 'There seems little doubt that Plymouth, like other towns on the Riviera coast of England, is not merely increasing its popularity amongst visitors, but is achieving an extended season.'[25]

And that there was a need in 1930 'to make Plymouth's commercial and holiday attractions better known'.[26]

Publicity may have assisted in making Plymouth more popular, but even by the end of the decade it had still not achieved the popularity that the committees and advertisers felt it deserved. Each year, the publicity efforts were to be 'one of the finest investments that

[20] Alfred H Shorter and Edward T Woodley, 'Plymouth: Port and City', *Geography,* 22:4 (1937), 293–306, p. 11.
[21] The Devon Remembers History Project, *Devon During the First World War* (Short Run Press Ltd, 2018), p. 105.
[22] John van der Kiste, *Plymouth: History and Guide* (The History Press, 2009) p. 114.
[23] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).
[24] Jean L. Braithwaite, 'The Post-War Industrial Development of Plymouth: An Example of the Effect of National Industrial Location Policy', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 45 (1968), 39–50, p. 39.
[25] '1929 a Record of Popularity', *Western Morning News,* 10 September 1929.
[26] *Plymouth Week Programme*, 1930, p. 3.

Plymouth has ever made.'[28] The sentiment throughout the decade was that Plymouth was just on the verge of coming into its own as a holiday resort, but it never quite got there.

Two strands of publicity attempted to draw the tourist to Plymouth during the 1920s. The first of these, established in 1904, were the GWR series of booklets and books illustrating the place to which one could travel by train.[29] *Holiday Haunts in England and Wales: The official guide to the holiday resorts served by the G.W.R., with particulars of accommodation for holiday makers and travellers generally* was published annually between 1906 and 1947.

These were not specifically geared towards bringing tourists to Plymouth but to all over the GWR network. *Holiday Haunts* cost sixpence and featured lists of hotels, activity ideas, maps and advertisements. In 1926, the railway companies worked with the municipalities to push the 'Golden West,' and 200,000 copies of *Holiday Haunts* were printed – 50,000 more than in 1925.[30] GWR also offered special 'excursion' tickets over the summer where cheaper fares were on offer to travel to Devon and Cornwall along with other holiday resorts in Kent, Sussex and even the Channel Islands.[31]

> The railway companies, though they have no method of ascertaining whether arrivals in the town are on business or pleasure bent, nevertheless assert that the loading of the trains from London and the North has during the height of the season been remarkable, whilst every advantage has been taken of the numerous cheap and day excursions which have enterprisingly been arranged.[32]

These excursion tickets were not only available in the summer; they could also be purchased for Christmas Holidays.[33] Tourist tickets were also available that permitted breaks to be taken in the traveller's journey.[34]

Other guide books were produced. For example, *Edmund and Lock's Guide to Plymouth 7th Edition* featured:

- Excursions by River and Sea
- Short Walks around Plymouth
- Excursions by rail, road and moorland track
- Motor and Cycling trips
- Short excursions into Cornwall

The second strand was the creation of various responsible bodies for publicity and advertising, such as the Mercantile Association and the Advertising Subcommittee of Plymouth Town Council. One of the main goals of publicity was recognised by the various

[28] 'Advertising Plymouth', *Western Morning News,* 30 May 1922.
[29] Jack Simmons, 'Railways, Hotels, and Tourism in Great Britain 1839–1914', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19:2 (1984), 201–222, p. 217.
[30] 'The Great Western and Southern Railway Companies', *Western Morning News,* 30 March 1926.
[31] *Ealing Gazette and West Middlesex Observer*, 26 February 1921; *Daily Herald*, 24 July 1922; *Gentlewoman,* 12 April 1924.
[32] 'Plymouth's Fame as a Holiday Centre – Growing Number of Visitors', *Western Morning News,* 30 September 1925.
[33] 'Christmas Excursions', *Western Morning News*, 8 November 1922.
[34] 'Capturing the Americans', *Western Morning News*, 24 March 1927.

committees for publicity and advertising: 'to induce a greater proportion of the 1000s of voyagers that pass through it every month to stay and make its acquaintance'.[35]

However, this was an issue that was not resolved throughout the 1920s. By 1929, discussion were still occurring on how Plymouth could attract these tourists (mostly from the USA) to visit the town, but with an awareness that the money was not available to organise the level of campaign that was required.[36] To modern eyes and hindsight, the endless committees and subcommittees mentioned throughout the newspapers at the time seem slightly inefficient at best.

The railway companies did cooperate with the committees of the town on its advertising attempts. A poster competition took place in 1922 to produce a poster for display on GWR stations. The Plymouth Mercantile Association paid £300 for this poster to be displayed over the course of three years.[37]

> "As far as Plymouth Week Committee is concerned," he said, "we have already embarked upon a publicity scheme which will bring the claims of Plymouth before people all over England and Wales. There are in hand 3,000 posters, to be printed in eight colours, with a beautiful picture sketched from the Hoe Promenade, showing Drake's Island, Mount Edgcumbe, the Breakwater and Sound, which has been produced in co-operation with the Plymouth School of Arts and Crafts. A thousand of the posters will be placed on the railway stations of the Great Western and Southern Railways, free of charge."[38]

By 1925, there were suggestions that a film featuring the attractions of Plymouth and its surrounds might be made and sent it to London and other populous towns to encourage their residents to visit.[39] The meetings of the committees also featured many discussions around ideas to draw more visitors to the town, such as the creation of a concert hall for a municipal orchestra[40] and a Winter Garden.[41] Many individuals had excellent ideas, but there did not appear to be much action taken on these and the holiday offerings in Plymouth generally did not change year on year.

Those that made it to Plymouth sang its praises:

> I have travelled all over the world. I have seen many beautiful things. I have never looked upon a scene so lovely as the vision of Plymouth Sound from the Hoe this morning.
>
> "It is," they said, "impossible to exhaust the attractions of Plymouth in one week. We are coming again next year."[42]

---

[35] *Plymouth Week Guide*, 1930.
[36] 'Publicity Needed – Attracting American Tourists to Plymouth', *Western Morning News*, 19 January 1929.
[37] 'Posters to Advertise Plymouth', *Western Morning News,* 17 October 1922.
[38] 'Capturing the Americans', *Western Morning News*, 24 March 1927.
[39] 'Advertising Plymouth's Attractions', *Western Morning News,* 28 December 1925.
[40] *Western Morning News*, 25 September 1922.
[41] 'Prospect of Winter Gardens Shattered', *Western Morning News*, 12 July 1923.
[42] *Western Morning News*, 26 August 1926.

The Plymouth Mercantile Association had created an Enquiry Bureau, which provided information and issued a daily programme of events, approximately 2,000 copies per week. They also produced an *Illustrated Guide to Plymouth*, with a list of apartments, which they began selling at the Enquiry Bureau and also sending overseas. Over the course of the first half of the 1920s, the number of individuals requesting information at the bureau over the course of the holiday season increased substantially. In 1922, visitors of a number of nationalities were making use of the bureau; Great Britain, the United States, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Italy and France.[43]

Year	Bureau Visits
1921	3500
1922	3159
1923	3226
1924	4486
1925	5693

According to hotel proprietors, these guides did not assist much in bringing tourists to their establishments.[44] Additionally, despite all of the advertising, summer tourism in Plymouth did seem very weather dependent with large crowds arriving with good weather in 1925,[45] and 1927 being seen as a worse year due to poor conditions.[46] Despite this, Plymouth was considered to be suitable for holidaying all year round.[47]

Commented [BD1]: AQ: Do you have a date for the reference to the WMN in the footnotes?

Entertainment for the tourist

Having established that Plymouth was not a classic seaside resort,[48] nevertheless, it had some of their features, and there was plenty to do in Plymouth for those that did wish to pass time there.

The main seaside attraction was Plymouth Hoe with its beach and pier. The top two-thirds of Smeaton's Tower (the third Eddystone Lighthouse) was relocated to the Hoe in the 1880s and opened to the public.[49] The Bandstand on the Hoe was an exceedingly popular attraction with regular performances by the Royal Marines Band.[50] Additionally, visitors could stroll on the Hoe Promenade, watch Punch and Judy shows[51] and visit the pier. Constructed in 1884, Plymouth Pier was, at the time, the centre of seafront tourism.[52] However, by 1922, interest in the pier was beginning to wane.[53] Despite this, the pier still offered a variety of activities for the willing tourist.

[43] *Western Morning News*, 24 January 1922.
[44] Western Morning News, 2 April 1927.
[45] 'Plymouth's Fame as a Holiday Centre – Growing Number of Visitors', *Western Morning News*, 30 September 1925.
[46] *Western Morning News*, 2 April 1927.
[47] 'Why Plymouth Excels', *Western Morning News*, 6 September 1928.
[48] Daniel Barrera-Fernández, *Attracting Visitors to Ancient Neighbourhoods: Creation and management of the historic city of Plymouth, UK* (InPlanning, 2017), p. 123.
[49] 'Smeaton's Tower', *Visit Plymouth,* 2024, https://www.visitplymouth.co.uk/things-to-do/smeatons-tower-p258003 [accessed 21 August 2024].
[50] Derek Tait, *Plymouth Through Time* (Amberley Publishing, 2010), p. 14.
[51] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: More Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1996), p. 17.
[52] Derek Tait, *Plymouth Through Time* (Amberley Publishing, 2010), p. 23.
[53] Derek Tait, *Plymouth from Old Photographs* (Amberley Publishing, 2011), p. 73.

Dances at the pier remained its main attraction all year round. Inside was a reading room, post office, slot machines, a skating rink, a stationers and a bookstall.[54] It held afternoon and evening concert parties and dances, and the Royal Marines Band would play on Sundays.[55] Dances at the pier were an essential part of the yearly 'Plymouth Week' from 1926. The pier would have been crowded with handcarts selling wares such as ice cream.[56]

The Pavilion Theatre at the pier attracted audiences to various types of entertainment. These included boxing and wrestling matches. Additionally, at the start of the 1920s, the 'Old Cosmo' or 'Hancock's Winter Gardens' hosted a weekly boxing show; however, this only lasted until 1924.[57] Variety and cabaret performances could also be enjoyed at the pier.[58]

Bathing facilities were available adjacent to the pier and west of Tinside. These had previously been separated by gender; as of 1919, this was no longer the case, and the pools could be enjoyed by women and men at the same time.[59] Significant work had been done at the tail end of the 19th century to make bathing in the area more attractive for tourists, such as the creation of steps to the water and the removal of rocks.[60] Additionally, in the years before the war, the facilities were further improved by adding 'an artificial beach, an area for learner swimmers, changing rooms and refreshment areas'.[61] Those that wished to could also enjoy swimming in the sea near Plymouth Hoe and could participate in swimming contests.[62] It was also possible to dive from the pier itself.[63]

Shopping was another draw for the tourists of Plymouth, both national and regional. In the 1920s, several department stores opened on Bedford Street, including Pophams, Goodbodys Dingles, Yeos and Spooners.[64] Pophams was known as the 'Harrods of the West'.[65] Spooners put on fashion parades in the Guildhall and its own theatre.[66] Goodbodys hosted the Royal Marines Band in its popular restaurant and the George East Orchestra performed at Dingles.[67] Smaller shops including tailors, confectioners, hatters and watchmakers, could be found on George Street in the town centre.[68]

Various cafes and restaurants were also advertised:

> William's Plymouth Dairy Café, 199, Union St, opposite Derry's Clock, 2s, 4-course Luncheon – Daily – Afternoon Teas, or from the Grill – Open on Sundays. The Globe

[54] Ibid., p. 8.
[55] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: More Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1996), p. 19.
[56] Derek Tait, *Plymouth Through Time* (Amberley Publishing, 2010), p. 26.
[57] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).
[58] *Plymouth Week Guide* (1930), p. 47.
[59] Derek Tait, *Plymouth from Old Photographs* (Amberley Publishing, 2011), p. 74.
[60] Daniel Barrera-Fernández, *Attracting Visitors to Ancient Neighbourhoods: Creation and management of the historic city of Plymouth, UK* (InPlanning, 2017), p. 124.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Derek Tait, *Plymouth from Old Photographs* (Amberley Publishing, 2011), p. 79.
[63] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1994), p. 76.
[64] John van der Kiste, *Plymouth: History and Guide* (The History Press, 2009), p. 114.
[65] Derek Tait, *Plymouth from Old Photographs* (Amberley Publishing, 2011), p. 14.
[66] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1994), p. 32.
[67] Derek Tait, *Plymouth from Old Photographs* (Amberley Publishing, 2011).
[68] Ibid., p.11.

> Restaurant – Table d'hôtel. Luncheons, 2s and 2s 6d – Parties arranged for at short notice – Fully licensed – Tel: 1501.[69]

During the 1920s, the world of entertainment was changing. The town's theatres remained open but cinemas soon began to rise and take their place.[70] One of Plymouth's theatres was the Repertory Theatre, visited by Lord and Lady Mountbatten on their honeymoon in 1922.[71] Another was the Theatre Royal, which seated 1,192 and offered a varied programme including opera and musical comedy.[72] The Grand Theatre was especially popular for pantomimes.[73] The Globe Theatre was a smaller and more intimate venue.[74] The *Western Morning News* aimed to draw tourists to the theatre, including the Palace Theatre of Varieties: 'A visit of the very successful new Wylie-Tate production "The Passing Show of 1920" will be welcome to holiday-makers at Plymouth next week.'[75]

And the Hippodrome: 'Holiday makers will be well catered for at Devonport Hippodrome, where the musical comedy, "The Catch of the Season," by Seymour Hicks and Cosmo Hamilton, will be staged.'[76]

The Hippodrome became a cinema in 1929.[77] The Palladium had been a roller-skating rink and was converted into a cinema in 1922.[78]

Carnivals were also a popular form of entertainment, both for locals and visitors to the town. These were not just traditional carnivals; due to the rarity of car ownership at the time, car carnivals were popular events.[79] Huge crowds were drawn to the Annual Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport Carnival, which was a week-long event that raised money for the Royal Albert Hospital and would feature traditional carnival royalty.[80] Pageants were also an essential form of entertainment, distinguishable from the carnivals in their production of short pieces of drama or songs. Plymouth Week featured pageants as did civic events, and, most famously, the Mayflower Pageant was performed at the Tercentenary.

As today, tourists wished to enjoy sporting activities while in Plymouth, and the town was more than equipped to provide these. There were four eighteen-hole golf courses situated within easy reach of Plymouth at Mount Batten, Yelverton, Whitchurch Down (Tavistock) and Whitchurch Bay. Additionally, putting and bowling greens were located on Plymouth Hoe, Devonport Park and Victoria Park. Public tennis courts were available at West Hoe.[81]

---

[69] 'Large Influx of July Holiday-makers – Plymouth', *Western Morning News,* 6 July 1928.
[70] John van der Kiste, *Plymouth: History and Guide* (The History Press, 2009), p. 115.
[71] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1994), p. 22.
[72] Ibid., p. 34.
[73] Ibid., p. 54.
[74] Ibid.
[75] 'Plymouth Palace Theatre', *Western Morning News*, 11 September 1920.
[76] 'Devonport Hippodrome', *Western Morning News*, 14 May 1921.
[77] Derek Tait, *Plymouth from Old Photographs* (Amberley Publishing, 2011).
[78] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).
[79] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1994), p. 19.
[80] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: More Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1996), p. 9.
[81] *Plymouth Week Guide* (1930), p.47.

Plymouth became an important centre of boating and sailing. For the general public, rowing and sailing boats were available for hire at the sea front and Barbican quays.[82] There were four main yacht clubs, the Royal Corinthian, the Royal South-Western, the Royal Western and the Minima. Additionally, the annual Plymouth Regatta attracted thousands of visitors and competitors, including ultra-wealthy yacht owners from outside of the area.[83] In 1927, this coincided with the naval edition of Plymouth Week and was advertised in the guide.[84]

For those that wished to watch sport, Plymouth Argyle played their home games at Home Park, having joined the Southern League in 1903.[85] Plymouth Argyle, along with the shopping on offer, was one of the main attractions for 'local' tourists from Devon and Cornwall.[86] Additionally, charabanc excursions were available to watch the races at Newton Abbot.[87] The races at Chelson Meadow were also popular throughout the decade.[88]

Devonport Dockyard itself also became a tourist attraction and visitors were shown around.[89] During the Mayflower Tercentenary, an invitation-only tour was offered of the dockyard[90] and during the naval edition of Plymouth Week in 1927, this was suggested as one of the potential attractions.[91]

The Municipal Museum and Art Gallery opened in 1910. The aquarium was situated near Plymouth Hoe and was open on Monday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm. Entrance cost 6d and was half price on Wednesdays and Saturdays after 2pm. An illustrated guide to the aquarium cost 1s.[92] The athenaeum also had a collection of artefacts, such as the remains of prehistoric animals.[93]

At the end of the 1920s, interest in historic Plymouth was increasing. In the 1920s, the Barbican was not the popular tourist attraction that it is today and Plymouth's historic buildings were not preserved.[94] Slum clearance programmes also placed the entire Barbican at risk.[95] However, in 1926, the Old Plymouth Fund purchased and restored 32 New Street (now the Elizabethan House), and in 1929, the building was given to the city and became a

[82] Ibid.
[83] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).
[84] *Plymouth Week Guide* (1927).
[85] Derek Tait, *Plymouth Through Time* (Amberley Publishing, 2010), p. 75; Derek Tait, *Plymouth from Old Photographs* (Amberley Publishing, 2011), p. 49.
[86] Daniel Barrera-Fernández, *Attracting Visitors to Ancient Neighbourhoods: Creation and management of the historic city of Plymouth, UK* (InPlanning, 2017), p. 128.
[87] Martin Dunning, *Around Plymouth: Photographic Memories* (Frith Book Company Ltd, 2000).
[88] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).
[89] Daniel Barrera-Fernández, *Attracting Visitors to Ancient Neighbourhoods: Creation and management of the historic city of Plymouth, UK* (InPlanning, 2017), p. 124.
[90] Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alex Hutton and Paul Readman, 'Historical Mayflower Pageant', *The Redress of the Past* https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1166/ [accessed 4 April 2024].
[91] *Plymouth Week Guide* (1927).
[92] *Plymouth Week Guide* (1930).
[93] Derek Tait, *Plymouth Through Time* (Amberley Publishing, 2010), p. 36.
[94] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth: As Time Draws On* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 1988), p. 6.
[95] Daniel Barrera-Fernández, *Attracting Visitors to Ancient Neighbourhoods: Creation and management of the historic city of Plymouth, UK* (InPlanning, 2017), p. 46.

Drake and Mayflower Museum.[96] Additionally, Prysten House in St Andrews was also restored and by 1930 it was recognised that the restorations, 'are symptoms of changed and better mind. They have also added much to the attractiveness of historical Plymouth for visitors'.[97]

Hotels and accommodation

At Millbay docks, three of the most prominent hotels were located: The Albion and Continental, The Duke of Cornwall and the Grand Hotel.[98] The Grand Hotel occupied 'the finest position in Europe' on the Hoe, boasting a sea view.[99]

The hotel offerings, despite being more than in the villages of Devon and Cornwall – one of the aforementioned draws for the motor car tourist – were thin on the ground. At the time of the Mayflower Tercentenary, the hotels in the town were not sufficient to accommodate all of the visitors and requests were put out to the population to offer rooms to let. In 1925, the *Western Morning News* suggested that the hotels of Plymouth would not be able to accommodate 800 visitors midweek.[100] In *Kelly's Directory* in 1923, twelve hotels and five 'Private Hotels' – individuals offering rooms to let – were listed. In 1930, the number of hotels listed had only increased by one and the number of 'private hotels' had decreased by one. Though there was a general increase in the availability of hotels in Devon in the seven years between directories, the vast majority of hotels listed in the directory were based in Torquay, Ilfracombe and Paignton.[101]

Transport

Thanks to the availability of ex-army lorries and drivers, an 'interesting new avenue opened': The charabanc.[102] Constructed on lorry chassis, charabanc trips were extremely popular, especially among the majority of the population who did not have access to their own private vehicle. These were not necessarily seen as being specifically a tourist attraction and locals also used them. However, in 1925:

> The Charabanc proprietors all report that the 1925 season has, aided by comparatively fine weather, been considerably in advance of previous years, it having been noticed

[96] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008), p. 46.
[97] *Plymouth Week Guide* (1930).
[98] Daniel Barrera-Fernández, *Attracting Visitors to Ancient Neighbourhoods: Creation and management of the historic city of Plymouth, UK* (InPlanning, 2017), p. 126.
[99] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth: As Time Draws On* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 1988), p. 45.
[100] 'American Tourists in Plymouth', *Western Morning News*, 10 July 1925.
[101] *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire* (Kelly & Co, 1923) pp. 1110–12; *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire* (Kelly & Co, 1930) pp. 1138–44.
[102] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008), p. 13.

> that many who participated in this ubiquitous method of transport have obviously been visitors and holiday-makers.[103]

These trips went to a variety of destinations including Whitsands, Cawsand, Saltash Passage, Mount Edgcumbe Park and Burrator. A popular day trip included a charabanc trip to Cawsand followed by a walk along the coast to Mount Edgcumbe, finishing at Lady Emma's Cottage Tea Room in the grounds of the park.[104] Visitors to Mount Edgcumbe could also take in the strange folly that stood on the cliff edge.[105] Mount Edgcumbe opened on Wednesdays and some Saturdays.[106] Another option was the 'Mystery Trip' where sometimes even the driver was not sure of their exact location at any given moment.[107]

Charabanc tour operators during the 1920s included: Purple Tours, the Cooperative Society, the Devon Motor Company, and the Embankment Motor Company.[108] These tended to depart from Princess Square and were not well regulated.[109]

Trips to the moor could also be taken by train from Millbay Station at a cost of 6½ d for a half-day return.[110] Another option of a visit by train was from Friary Station to Oreston, where a short walk followed to Jennycliff.[111] From St Budeaux Station, a train journey of a few minutes was popular with travellers who wished to visit the Saltash Passage.[112] By the mid-1920s, travelling around Devon by bus was also a possibility.[113]

From the pier, by descending iron stairs, visitors could board pleasure steamers. However, in 1922, the Pier Company sold its fleet of steamers.[114] Despite this, visitors could still board from the pier and could take a trip up the River Tamar.[115] The Turnchapel and Oreston Steamboat Company continued to provide boat trips as did The Plymouth Piers, Pavilion and Saltash Three Towns Steamship Company:

> From 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. ten trips (one per hour) will be made to the Yealm by the Alexandra and Princess Royal for 2s return. At 11 a.m. the Express will take trippers on a circular trip up the Hamoaze, the return fare being 1s 3d. At 2.45 the same vessel will leave for Calstock, the return fare being 2s 6d. For 1s 3d excursionists can proceed by the Prince Edward to Cawsand for Whitsands, commencing at 11 a.m. and at

[103] 'Plymouth's Fame as a Holiday Centre – Growing Number of Visitors', *Western Morning News,* 30 September 1925.
[104] Derek Tait, *Plymouth from Old Photographs* (Amberley Publishing, 2011), p. 51.
[105] Ibid., p.52.
[106] *Plymouth Week Guide* (1927), p. 24.
[107] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).
[108] Ibid., p.13.
[109] Ibid..
[110] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1994), p. 70.
[111] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: More Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1996), p. 24.
[112] Derek Tait, *Plymouth from Old Photographs* (Amberley Publishing, 2011), p. 101.
[113] 'Capturing the Americans', *Western Morning News*, 24 March 1927.
[114] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).
[115] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: More Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1996), p. 20.

intervals of two hours till 7 pm. Holiday-makers can avail themselves of the circular trip by steamer to Yealm and rail to Plymouth for 2d 3d.[116]

By 1926, coal restrictions did not affect the operation of the boating companies as petrol motor boats were able to replace the coal-fired steamers.[117]

Another option for a day trip was to go to Bovisand Bay. Bovisand was already popular by the 1920s, but by 1923 motorboat trips from Plymouth made it much more accessible than it had been.[118] The return fare was 1s.[119] In the summer of 1924, approximately 4,000 people per week visited Bovisand.[120] Other options for crossing to Bovisand included a train trip from Friary Station[121] or travelling to Turnchapel via the steamboat,[122] both followed by a walk across the cliffs. Due to the popularity of Bovisand, a Sunday train service was introduced in 1925.[123] A private company, Saunders Bros and Co., purchased the entirety of Bovisand and began to develop it for day trippers.[124] A pier, cafe, and holiday bungalows were constructed along with camping grounds.[125] There were amusements and refreshments available.[126]

Agreements were made with the Oreston and Turnchapel Steamboat Co. who rented part of the pier and ran a direct service to Bovisand every half an hour by 1927. Any private boatmen who wished to run a motorboat service could do so but they had to apply for permission from the Steamboat Company. Tensions did rise in 1927 between the 'official' boatmen and those that were running a service without permission and with the 'official' boatmen being blocked from loading passengers in Plymouth.[127]

Air travel, and especially commercial air travel, was still in its nascency in the 1920s. In 1919, the first ever transatlantic flight landed in Plymouth and was welcomed by the Astors and Mayor Joseph Brown.[128] The first non-stop transatlantic flight was managed two weeks later.[129] There were attempts in Plymouth by the Chamber of Commerce in 1923 to showcase the speed of air travel for passengers and parcels, but this did not progress much further. In 1928, Roborough Airfield was purchased but commercial flights would not develop much until the early 1930s.[130]

[116] 'Whit Monday Excursions', *Western Morning News*, 1923.
[117] 'Coal Rationing – The Effect on Plymouth Holiday-Makers', *Western Morning News*, 9 June 1926.
[118] 'Popular Bovisand – Invaded by Visitors on Bank Holiday', *Western Morning News*, 8 August 1923.
[119] 'Whit Monday Excursions', *Western Morning News*, 1923.
[120] 'Better Bovisand – Plans for Making It A Holiday Resort', *Western Morning News,* 29 October 1924.
[121] Guy Fleming, *Plymouth: More Pictures from the Past* (Devon Books, 1996), p. 24.
[122] 'Popular Bovisand – Invaded by Visitors on Bank Holiday', *Western Morning News*, 8 August 1923.
[123] 'Turnchapel Trains – Sunday Service to be Started', *Western Morning News,* 25 May 1925.
[124] 'Better Bovisand – Plans for Making It A Holiday Resort', *Western Morning News,* 29 October 1924.
[125] Ibid.
[126] *Western Morning News*, 2 October 1930.
[127] 'Plymouth Boatmen and Competition', *Western Morning News*, 17 August 1927.
[128] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).
[129] 'Alcock and Brown Fly Across Atlantic', *The New York Times*, 16 June 1919.
[130] Chris Robinson, *Plymouth in the Twenties and Thirties* (Pen and Ink Publishing, 2008).

Mayflower Tercentenary

From 3–10 September 1920, the first commemoration of the departure of the Mayflower in 1620 was held: the Mayflower Tercentenary. Two key drivers for the commemoration during the 1920s rather than at any previous time may have been the influence of Nancy Astor (newly elected MP for Plymouth at the time and Anglo-American herself) and James Rendel Harris (a Quaker minister and biblical scholar),[131] and the still relatively new links to the USA via the transoceanic liner that frequently docked in Plymouth's ports along with the post-war strengthening of Anglo-American relations. As with all celebrations, the Mayflower Tercentenary was feted as an opportunity to draw more visitors to the town and the need to impress them. However, this was not the only motive, commercialism was balanced with 'high-level cultural diplomacy and sincere religious celebration'.[132]

Plymouth had been attempting to position itself as a centre for Mayflower tourists from the USA for approximately 30 years by the time of the commemoration[133] but 12,000 were expected to arrive in the town for the purpose of the Tercentenary. The two main organisations that were propelling the celebrations forward and organising a variety of events around Plymouth were the Mayflower Council of England and the Anglo-American Society, however other organisations such as the Masons,[134] the Salvation Army[135] and the town council[136] had their own plans for the commemoration.

Calls went out to the population of Plymouth to open their homes and let out rooms to accommodate these visitors.[137] Clearly, the availability of hotels and other accommodation was not sufficient to cater to the number of potential visitors. However, by 31 July 1920, only 250 offers of accommodation had been received from householders.[138] Following a further appeal, by Tuesday 31 August, there appeared to be a surplus of offers to provide accommodation and an understanding that if those rooms had not yet been allocated to tourists by the committee that there would still be visitors who would be arriving to Plymouth with the intention to rent a room.[139]

The full programme of events is included below. It is firstly clear that the events available were split between those available 'by invitation only' and those open to the general public giving further credence to the idea that the attraction of tourists would have been only one of the goals of the commemoration and that fostering the political relationship was a main driver of the event. The centrality of religious celebration is also obvious from the programme of

[131] Tom Hulme, 'The *Mayflower* and "Mother Plymouth": Anglo-America, Civic Culture and the Urban Past', *Cultural and Social History,* 18:4 (2021), 517–53, p. 524.
[132] Edmund Downey, Tom Hulme and Martha Vandrei, 'The Mayflower and Historical Culture in Britain, 1620–2020', *English Historical Review,* 138:593 (2023), 898–923, p. 31.
[133] Tom Hulme, 'The *Mayflower* and "Mother Plymouth": Anglo-America, Civic Culture and the Urban Past', *Cultural and Social History,* 18:4 (2021), 517–53, p. 522.
[134] *Western Morning News*, 17 July 1920.
[135] *Mother Plymouth: A Souvenir of the Mayflower Tercentenary Together with the Story of the Pilgrim Fathers 1620–1920* (Plymouth, 1920).
[136] 'Mayflower Celebrations', *Western Morning News*, 13 January 1920.
[137] *Western Morning News*, 6 April 1920; 'Mayflower Celebrations', *Western Morning News*, 4 June 1920.
[138] *Western Morning News*, 31 July 1920.
[139] *Western Morning News*, 31 August 1920.

events. In addition, the fact that the programme included activities for the general public and not just the elite illustrated the change that was taking place in post-war society; the engagement of the lower classes, both local, regional and national, in the event would not come from the opportunity to see their 'betters' participating in the performance of civil society, but in their own enactment of these rituals from which they were previously excluded.[140] Concern around the 'fanatical disease called Bolshevism'[142] was constant during the post-war period and the need to distract and occupy the working classes was here exemplified.

Secondly, the programme provides a good indication of the types of activities that visitors to Plymouth would have enjoyed, one the very intentions of the commemoration being to showcase the best that Plymouth had to offer.

Friday 3rd September, evening

- Mayoral reception and concert at the Guildhall.

Saturday 4th September

- Literary and historical conference at George-Street Picture House, Dr Rendel Harris chairing. Papers by Dr D. Plooji and Prof. Eckbog, Leyden, Rev. D. Macfayden and Rev. W.H. Burgess, Plymouth.
- Swimming gala off Promenade Pier, including competition for the Mayflower Trophy Silver Cup (Americans only).
- Young people's gathering in Drillhall.
- Production of Rev. Carey Bonner's cantata, "The Ship of Adventure."
- Garden party (by invitation of Miss Rooker, Manhamead).
- Steamer trip up the Hamoaze, to Cawsand Bay, and around the Breakwater.
- Mayflower festival at Guildhall by massed local choir of 600 voices and special soloists, conducted by Dr Henry Coward.
- United religious celebrations in Guildhall, the Mayor presiding. Speakers: Bishop of Exeter; Rev. Dr Scott Lidgett, hon. secretary, Free Church Council; President Lynn Harold Hough, North-Western University, America; Commandant E.J. Higgins (representing General Booth); Rev. A.A. Green (representing the Chief Rabbi of England).

Sunday 5th September

[140] Ben Roberts, 'Entertaining the Community: the Evolution of Civic Ritual and Public Celebration, 1860–1953', *Urban History*, 44:3 (2017), 444-63.
[142] 'Historical Mayflower Pageant (Plymouth, 1920)' *Voyaging Through History: the Mayflower and Britain* https://humanities-research.exeter.ac.uk/voyagingthroughhistory/items/show/142 [accessed 4 April 2024].

- Service at the Mayflower Stone, Barbican, conducted by Rev. E.P. Powell, Exeter. Addresses by Dr Parkes Cadman, Brooklyn, USA; Rev. Arthur Pringle, Surrey; Rev. E.W. Coltman.
- Mayor and Corporation attend St Andrew's Church.
- Service of praise in Drillhall, Dr Henry Coward, Sheffield, conducting.
- Men's mass meeting at Peverell Park Wesleyan Church, speaker, Rev. Dr Scott Lidgett, chairman, Sir. A. Shirley Benn, supported by the Earl of Reading (Lord Chief Justice), Deputy-Mayor (Alderman J.Y. Woollcombe, Revs. W.A. Chettle, T. Wearne); music by Cecilian Male Choir, conductor Mr T. Downing.
- United Sister and Brotherhood meeting, Charles Parish Church. Subject: "The Message of the Mayflower." Speaker, Rev. E.S. Lines, Bishop of Newark, USA, a descendant of Elder Brewster.
- Mayor and Corporation attend Sherwell Congregational Church; preacher, President Lynn Harold Hough, USA; subject "The Ampler Puritanism."
- Service of praise in Drillhall; Mayor to attend, and Dr Henry Coward to conduct. Special services in the churches throughout the borough.

Monday, September 6th

- International conference at Corn Exchange: "The call of the present situation to international Protestantism"; speakers: USA, Prof. Benjamin W. Bacon, Yale University; Great Britain, Rev. Thomas Nightingale, general secretary, National Free Church Council; France, Rev. Pastor J. Jezequell; Holland, Prof. Van Nes, University of Leyden; Switzerland, Prof. Choisy, Geneva.
- Opening of Sailors' Hostel, the Octagon, by the Earl of Reading, supported by Lady Astor, M.P., Sir A. Shirley Benn, M.P., Admiral Sir Cecil Thursday, Sir Chas. Tarring, Messrs. J. Butler Wright, USA Charge d'Affaires, London; Rev. T. Eynon Davies (general secretary, British and Foreign Sailors' Society), the Mayor of Plymouth to preside.
- Similar ceremony at the Sailors' Home, Vauxhall Street.
- Foundation stone laying, Salvation Army, Mayflower Hall, Exeter-street.
- Civic Mayflower luncheon at the Guildhall in honour of the Mayor, Mayoress, and Corporation, and people of Plymouth, under the auspices of the English-Speaking union, the Earl of Reading presiding.
- Pageant procession from Millbay Park to Barbican to join the civic procession to the Hoe.

- Civic and historical celebrations at Barbican and Hoe. Presentation of freedom casket to representative of late Dr Page and procession to the mass gathering of young people on Hoe. Children's choir from Plymouth schools conducted by Rev. Carey Bonner.
- National tribute to the Pilgrim Fathers by the Prime Minister and other recognised leaders of British thought. The Earl of Reading presided, other speakers included Sir Arthur Shirley Benn and Viscountess Astor.
- Musical Hour in the Guildhall, conducted by Mr T. Martin, Plymouth.
- Mayoral banquet at Assembly Rooms (by invitation only).
- Free Church demonstration, Guildhall; chairman, Rev. Dr F.B. Meyer, president, National Free Church Council; speakers, Dr Parkes Cadman, Brooklyn, USA; Professor Van Nes, University of Leyden; Rev. Pastor Jean Antrand, of Le Vigan, France.

Tuesday 7th September

- Motor charabanc excursion to Princetown, Ashburton, Newton Abbot, Torquay (by invitation only).
- Lecture by Dr Rendel Harris, at George-Street Picture House, on the finding of the Mayflower; luncheon at Torquay Town Hall; tour around Torquay; and garden party at Torre Abbey (all by invitation only).
- Depart Torquay, stopping at Totnes, where the party will be officially welcomed by the Mayor and members of the Council at the Guildhall, and ancient monuments will be given by Alderman Windeatt and Mr H.R. Watkin.
- Public meeting at Plymouth Guildhall. Mr Francis E. Powell, vice-president of the English-Speaking Union, will preside.

Wednesday 8th September

- Lady Astor's garden party at Saltram (invitation only).
- Theatre Royal gala performance.

Thursday 9th September

- Visit to Devonport Dockyard (by invitation).
- Opening of St Budeaux Red Triangle hut by Viscountess Astor, presided.
- New Palace Theatre gala performance.

Friday 10th September

- Gala performance of The Mayflower by W. Edward Stirling and Alfred Hayes, at the Repertory Theatre.
- In addition to the above programme, excursions by road and rail to various places of interest, and plays and items connected with the departure of the Pilgrim Fathers from Plymouth, at various places. Band performances daily on the Hoe.[143]

The Mayflower Pageant was one of the most important events that took place during the commemoration that would have drawn in locals and visitors alike, though the figures do not distinguish. Between 1–13 September, there were eighteen performances of the pageant; those on 13 September had to be added at the last minute due to the level of demand.[144] This Pageant was commissioned by the Mayflower Council and written by Hugh Parry. The performance took place in the Millbay Drillhall[145] and between 30,000–40,000 people are estimated to have watched it during the commemoration.[146]

The commemoration also saw the availability of souvenirs, including a souvenir programme entitled *Mother Plymouth: A Souvenir of the Mayflower Tercentenary Together with the Story of the Pilgrim Fathers 1620–1920*, which was sold at a cost of 3s and included pictures of the events and messages from the various key dignitaries such as Nancy Astor. Postcards were also available for purchase.

Though the Mayflower Tercentenary may have drawn a large crowd of visitors to Plymouth, this was an entirely one-off event. Though Mayflower tourism did continue over the course of the 1920s and beyond, the hoped-for goal of getting people in the USA talking about Plymouth as a destination and inducing them to visit did not seem to materialise.

Plymouth Week

Plymouth Week was first conceived of by the Rotary Club of Plymouth in 1924 with the intention of drawing more tourists to the town and providing them with a variety of attractions and activities to enjoy during their stay. The programmes followed a similar format to that of the Mayflower Tercentenary, with a mixture of more official civic events and sporting and social events to appeal to the general public. Events included pageantry, a children's carnival, massed bands, swimming galas and car parades.

The first Plymouth Week took place in 1926 and each had a theme. In the 1920s, the featured themes were carnival week, civic week, naval week and empire week.[147] Each of the weeks

[143] Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alex Hutton and Paul Readman, 'Historical Mayflower Pageant', *The Redress of the Past*, https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1166/ [accessed 4 April 2024].
[144] 'Pageant Presents', *Western Morning News,* 13 September 1920, p. 8.
[145] 'Mayflower Celebrations', *Western Morning News*, 11 March 1920.
[146] 'Historical Mayflower Pageant (Plymouth, 1920)' *Voyaging Through History: The Mayflower and Britain*, https://humanities-research.exeter.ac.uk/voyagingthroughhistory/items/show/142 [accessed 4 April 2024].

[147] *Plymouth Week Guide* (1930), p. 10.

featured events related to the theme. For example, during naval week, ships from the Royal Navy were docked in the Sound and visits to the dockyard were organised.[148]

Conclusion

With the extension of the railways to Devon in 1844, the tourism industry began to develop. Soon the fast train from Plymouth meant that those arriving to the UK by boat could speed to London in record time. Infrastructure began to develop in Plymouth for those wishing to holiday in the surrounds. However, it was not able to become a resort in the same way that nearby Torquay, Dartmouth or Hope Cove achieved.

As 1920 dawned, the great and the good of the newly amalgamated borough of Plymouth made it clear that they had but one intention, to draw visitors into Plymouth and to induce those that arrived on the ocean liners to remain and to appreciate the attractions it had to offer. Unfortunately, on the eve of 1930, the same desire was voiced yet again. Despite their best efforts, Plymouth was not able to morph into a destination in its own right. The tourist patterns of the 1800s had solidified and Plymouth would remain but the '*Centre* of a Hundred Tours'.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Anne Corry, whose thorough research through the newspaper archives has been indispensable in the preparation of this article. Also to Dr Julia Neville who encouraged my participated in this project and provided a variety of useful resources. The archivists at The Box in Plymouth and the Mayflower Museum also assisted me greatly in locating information. Any errors are my own.

[148] *Plymouth Week Guide* (1927).