

## **Blackpool's Golden Mile: the town's supercharged microcosm.**

(Detailed abstract)

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This paper discusses The Golden Mile (with illustrations), as it was from 1946 to the mid sixties – its golden age. It was then a maelstrom of ninety properties: stalls, games, pubs, palmists, shooting galleries, mini theatres, a mock auction, amusement arcades, cafes and exhibitions of the improbable and impossible - all crammed into less than a quarter mile strip of Promenade in the centre of the town. Like much of Blackpool, The Mile therefore, epitomised exaggeration.

The author spent much of his misspent youth 'hanging about' on The Golden Mile and later worked as a Spieler (Barker) on various game stalls and on a mini theatre nude show (Le Palais d'Etranges Demoiselles). In 1959 he wrote a dissertation on The Mile for a scholarship. Much of this paper derives from this 50 year old research.

Ideally situated, The Mile's rateable value, (representing reasonable annual rent) was in 1959, £37,000.<sup>1</sup> Related to a strip of land less than a quarter mile long and deserted for two thirds of the year, it demonstrates how sites were much sought after and competition had to be keen to support such valuations. Competition meant adaption to new tastes and The Mile continually adapted. It therefore emerges as a valid indicator of taste and, in changes in its use of sites, of changes in tastes over time.

The paper gives a breakdown of different classes of sites on The Mile and discusses their clientele by age and gender. It assesses the range of practices and techniques that were honed to attract and retain these different customers - from appeals of friendly familiarity to deferential subservience; from greed and the excitement of lust to awakening the curiosity of the gullible. In doing so it explores the vital role, nature, techniques and practices of persuasion, deceit and cheating.

The staffs of stalls are considered in terms of ethnicity, alternative employments, gender and prestige. (Women were never found as Spielers or in any active or outdoor role). The nature of staff bonding, distinctions within them and their argot are discussed. The principle changes in taste as manifest in property use are compared pre and post WWII - curiosity v. sex; participative v. passive involvements and home grown as against American influences.

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<sup>1</sup> Give comparative economic data to appreciate scale.