

= Butlins Skegness =

Butlins Skegness ( officially Butlins Resort Skegness ) , formerly Butlin 's Skegness or Funcoast World ; is a holiday camp located in Ingoldmells near Skegness in Lincolnshire , England . Sir William Butlin conceived of its creation based on his experiences at a Canadian summer camp in his youth and by observation of the actions of other holiday accommodation providers , both in seaside resort lodging houses and in earlier smaller holiday camps .

Construction of the camp began in 1935 and it was opened in 1936 , when it quickly proved to be a success with a need for expansion . The camp included dining and recreation facilities , such as dance halls and sports fields . During World War II , the camp was subject to a short military occupation when it served as a Naval training base , reverting to being a holiday camp in 1946 . Over the past 75 years the camp has seen continuous use and development , in the mid @-@ 1980s and again in the late 1990s being subject to substantial investment and redevelopment .

In the late 1990s the site was re @-@ branded as a holiday resort , and remains open today as one of three remaining Butlins resorts .

= = Holiday camp conception = =

In 1914 , Billy Butlin was living in Toronto with his mother and stepfather , when he left school and went to work for Eatons department store . According to Butlin , one of the best aspects of working for the company was that he was able to visit their summer camp which gave him his first taste of a real holiday ? indeed a taste of what was to become a very big part of his life .

The onset of World War I led to his leaving Eatons and enlisting in the Canadian Expeditionary Force serving in Europe , but seeing little if any action . After the war , Butlin made his way back to England where he used some of his last £ 5 ( 2011 : £ 189 @.@ 00 ) to purchase a stall in his uncle Marshall Hill 's travelling fair .

As a showman , Butlin quickly became successful , one stall becoming several , and several becoming his own travelling fair . Butlin soon had fixed fairground sites as well as his travelling fair ? the first was at Olympia in London outside Bertram Mills ' Circus . In 1925 he opened a set of fairground stalls in Barry Island , Wales where he observed the way landladies in seaside resorts would ( sometimes literally ) push families out of the lodgings between meals , and began to nurture the idea of a holiday camp similar to the one he had attended whilst an employee at Eatons .

In 1927 Butlin leased a piece of land from the Earl of Scarbrough by the seaside town of Skegness , where he set up an amusement park with hoopla stalls , a tower slide , a haunted house ride and , in 1928 , a miniature railway and Dodgem cars ? these were the first bumper cars in Britain , as Butlin had an exclusive license to import them .

= = Butlin 's camp = =

During the early 1930s Butlin joined the board of Harry Warner 's holiday camp company and in 1935 he observed the construction of Warner 's holiday camp in Seaton , Devon . Butlin learned from the experience of Warner , and employed the workers who had constructed the Seaton camp to come to Lincolnshire to build his new camp at Skegness .

Construction began in September 1935 with the local paper reporting the first sod being turned on the 4th of that month . Butlin designed the camp himself and said of the camp , " my plans were for 1 @,@ 000 people in 600 chalets with electricity , running water , 250 bathrooms , dining and recreational halls . A theatre , a gymnasium , a rhododendron bordered swimming pool with cascades at both ends and a boating lake . " However Butlin hired the architect Harold Ridley Hooper , to draw up the formal plans for the camp buildings . In the camp 's landscaped grounds , there were to be tennis courts , bowling and putting greens and cricket pitches . The total cost of the project was £ 100 @,@ 000 ( 2011 : £ 5 @.@ 7 million ) and despite having suffered a financial shortfall during construction , the camp opened on schedule in 1936 . One of the original 1936 chalet accommodation units is still present and is now a grade II listed building , recognising its

historical significance .

He opened his camp on 11 April 1936 ( Easter Even ) . It was officially opened by Amy Johnson from Hull , who had been the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia . An advertisement costing £ 500 ( 2011 : £ 28 thousand ) was placed in the Daily Express , announcing the opening of the camp and inviting the public to book for a week 's holiday . The advertisement offered holidays with three meals a day and free entertainment with a week 's full board , at a cost of between 35 shillings ( £ 1 @. @ 75 ) and £ 3 ( 2011 : £ 167 @. @ 00 ) , according to the time of year . The advert proved successful , and over the first summer season the capacity of the camp had to be increased from 500 to 2 @, @ 000 , to cope with the demand .

When the camp opened , Butlin realised that his guests were not engaging with activities in the way he had envisioned , as most kept to themselves , and others looked bored . He asked Norman Bradford ( who was engaged as an engineer constructing the camp ) to take on the duty of entertaining the guests which he did with a series of ice breakers and jokes . By the end of the night the camp was buzzing and the Butlin 's atmosphere was born . From that point on , entertainment was at the very heart of Butlin 's and Bradford became the first of the Butlin 's Redcoats . That night Butlin decided that for his camp to work he would require an army of people to carry out the same job as Bradford , and the role of Redcoat was formed .

In 1938 Butlin won the contract to supply amusements to the Empire Exhibition in Glasgow . After the exhibition was complete , Butlin returned with some of the infrastructure . His Clacton camp and Sheerness amusement park each received miniature railways , while Skegness received a building in the shape of the " Butlin theatre " which was later renamed the " Gaiety " .

Butlin continued to increase the capacity of the camp until 3 September 1939 when the Second World War was declared . The next morning , the campers were sent home and the site was taken over by the Royal Navy for use as a training establishment .

= = Wartime use = =

Once the Navy took over , the camp became known as HMS Royal Arthur and was used to train sailors for the war effort . In order to operate as a military base , many of the bright external colours were painted over , the dance hall became an armoury , and the rose beds were dug up , to become sites for air raid shelters .

While the outside was repainted , much of the interior décor went unchanged . Speaking of his time there George Melly reported that Royal Arthur had " a certain architectural frivolity inappropriate to a Royal Navy Shore Establishment . " Melly went on to mention how the main reception still had a sky scene with clouds painted on the ceiling and a large artificial ( though realistic ) tree in the centre of it . He also noted that their meals were served from an approximation of an Elizabethan inn named " Ye Olde Pigge and Whistle " .

During the war , the German airforce bombed Royal Arthur 52 times , including one incident on 21 August 1940 when an attack led to damage or demolition of 900 small buildings . By the end of the conflict however , the camp 's condition was good enough that it took only 6 weeks for Butlin to repair the wartime damage and reopen the camp to the public on 11 May 1946 . After reopening , some signs of military occupation remained with one observer noting that the blankets supplied to campers retained the insignia of HMS Royal Arthur .

= = Later history = =

In 1947 , Butlin had experimented with opening an airfield attached to his camp at Pwllheli . Patrons could fly in , to be collected by a Redcoat and transported to the camp . Flight Magazine reported that " flying visitors were unanimous in their praise of what they saw and experienced " , noting that the experience contrasted to the poor reputations the camps were given in the media of the period . Welcoming the experiment as a success , Butlin announced his intention to open airfields at his other camps . The following year he opened his next airfield at Skegness and announced that visitors could fly to the camp on a service run by BEA from 26 June . The airfield also allowed Butlin

's to offer services such as pleasure trips and sightseeing trips , as well as allowing private charters .

In 1948 Butlin 's also opened the Ingoldmells Hotel , which was situated outside the camp on the main road . In 1949 , the hotel became the first in Skegness to have a television for the use of guests . Situated in the hotel 's palm court function room , the TV was manufactured by R.G.D. but could be subject to interference from the hotel 's refrigerator .

Butlin 's had a long history of combining amusements with transport , starting with their first miniature railway at the Empire Exhibition in 1938 . Skegness was to receive its own miniature railway in 1962 . A chairlift system was installed at the same time . In 1965 , the camp became home to the UK 's first commercial monorail system . According to Peter Scott , who has researched the history of Butlin 's transport systems , Butlin apparently got the idea for the system from Disneyland . Construction began in 1964 with the cars being manufactured locally ; the total cost of the system was £ 50 @, @ 000 ( 2011 : £ 794 thousand ) . In 1974 a fire broke out in the kitchens of the Beachcomber Chinese restaurant leading to the complete destruction of the Princes building . In the Ballroom upstairs , a " Miss Personality Competition " was taking place when smoke was first spotted . The Redcoat in Charge of this event and the compère acted quickly , and were able to evacuate the building with no loss of life . To compensate for the loss of the entertainment venue , the fenceline was moved to encompass the Ingoldmells Hotel , which then became another venue .

In 1987 , the resort benefited from a £ 14 million ( 2011 : £ 32 @. @ 3 million ) investment and improvement scheme , following which the resort was known as Funcoast World . Around this time , many of the structures were subject to change with the demolition of many chalets and some central buildings including the Windsor dining hall and Empire theatre . The 1980s saw the removal of the miniature railway and chairlift system , but also saw the construction of a new indoor swimming pool named the Funsplash and an outdoor fun pool .

As with its Bognor Regis and Minehead counterparts , the Skegness resort underwent further improvement work in 1998 with the construction of the Skyline Pavilion . This tented structure is described by tourism writer Bruce Prideaux as a " Baby Millennium Dome " even though it pre @- @ dated the dome . The Pavilion contains entertainment facilities such as stages , bars , restaurants , shops and amusements . The improvement programme also included the construction of 1 @, @ 045 brand new accommodation units , making it the largest timber @- @ frame construction project in Europe that year . At the same time , the company dropped its use of the possessive apostrophe , changing from Butlin 's to Butlins ; after the refurbishment the resort was renamed as Butlins Resort Skegness , as it remains to date .

= = Butlins Resort Skegness = =

Today the resort caters for over 400 @, @ 000 visitors per year with 350 @, @ 000 being resident and 70 @, @ 000 visiting for the day . Along with the nearby Fantasy Island amusement park , the resort is the largest employer in the Skegness area , and currently employs 1 @, @ 200 staff each year , 40 of which make up the Redcoat team . According to the national police profile of the local residents , a large proportion of the Butlins workforce is now Eastern European in origin .

Over the years many of the attractions have been removed , including the monorail at the end of 2002 . However the resort still retains several swimming pools and a funfair . Today it provides a range of activities such as rock climbing , fencing , and archery . It also provides a wide range of entertainment , aided by the formation of strategic partnerships with popular brands , including The X Factor , Britain 's Got Talent , Thomas & Friends , Brainiac : Science Abuse , Guinness World Records , Bob the Builder , Pingu and Angelina Ballerina .

= = Pop Culture & Other Influences = =

In 1962 the Camp played its part in the formation of the rock band the Beatles , when Paul McCartney and John Lennon visited to meet Ringo Starr who was playing drums with Rory Storm and the Hurricanes at the time , to offer Starr the drummers position with The Beatles , who had just

secured a recording contract . Storm 's group had a summer booking at the camp , following on from the previous year . It was in 1960 whilst playing Butlin 's Pwllheli camp that Richard Starkey developed his stage name Ringo Starr . The first song McCartney himself ever sang in public was " Long Tall Sally " , at a Butlin 's talent competition .

For several years between 1956 and 1959 , the comedian and TV presenter Dave Allen worked as a Redcoat at the camp . For Allen it was his first experience of fame ( within the community of campers ) and he found that he could not escape it , saying , " You can 't get away once they know you ? unless you lock yourself in your chalet . If you put on a moustache and dark glasses they 'd think you were doing a stunt . "

Other acts who have performed at the camp during the careers include Laurel and Hardy , T 'Pau , and Suzi Quatro .

In his 2010 book How to Land an A330 Airbus ( And Other Vital Skills for the Modern Man ) , James May included a section entitled " How to Escape from Butlins " - specifically , Butlins Skegness in the event of hostile forces using it as an internment camp . He reasoned that it had already proved easily convertible to a naval base and that Britain was unprepared for sudden invasions as a result of overseas deployments . He suggests a tunnel in the style of The Great Escape , only with help from a microboring machine to aid the process , from a chalet to the static caravan park .

= = = Websites = = =

= = = News and Journals = = =