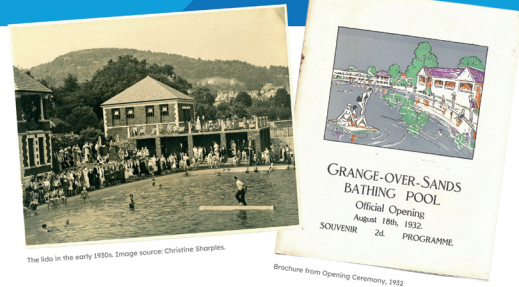


The history of Grange Lido



SAVE GRANGE LIDO



The lido in the early 1950s. Image source: Christine Sharples.

Brochure from Opening Ceremony, 1932

Grange-over-Sands is everything a seaside town should be. With its beautiful buildings and amazing views, it's one of those small places which feels like it has lots of history and stories tucked away.

Behind this hoarding lies Grange Lido, an Art Deco open-air swimming pool. It is Grade-II listed and the only remaining seaside lido in the Northwest.

This information board has been produced by Save Grange Lido, who are working hard to ensure this lido is reopened as a swimming pool. The board tells the history of the pool, from its opening in 1932.

Beauty surrounds, health abounds

Grange-over-Sands began to become the resort we know today in 1857, when the last stretch of the Ulverston and Lancaster railway line was built through the town. Before the railway, Grange was hard to access. Large groups of people could only come on steamers from across the bay or attempt to cross the sands. Thanks to the trains, more people could visit from further afield. Later, the Furness Railway company took over the line. Their investment led to some of Grange's most iconic landmarks, including the promenade.

At the same time, throughout the 19th century, there was a growing belief that fresh air and being by the sea cured all sorts of ailments.

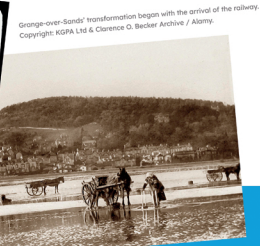
Grange's coastal location made it the perfect place for sick people to recuperate. The Grand Hotel, built in 1880 by the Furness Railway company, was originally called the Hazelwood Hydropathic Establishment - a place for people to receive all kinds of miracle maritime medicines.

Oh, we do like to be beside the seaside

The patients flocking to Grange needed to be entertained, so throughout the rest of the 1800s, public attractions were created, like the bandstand and Grange's ornamental gardens. These plans to provide entertainment for the unwell meant that seaside towns like Grange began to attract healthy tourists too.

In Grange's case, many of those early beachgoers would have been enjoying their Wakes Week - a holiday which working people in Lancashire have observed since the Middle Ages. Whole towns would empty, and the mills would fall silent, as the workforce left to take in the delights of Blackpool, Morecambe, and Grange. It's an incredible part of Lancashire's history, because ordinary people were travelling for pleasure.

Beyond Lancashire, only the very wealthy could afford holidays. But gradually, this economic freedom and legal right spread. It was a slow process but by the early-to-mid 20th century, almost everybody, rich or poor, liked to be beside the seaside. Grange, and towns like it, became tourist hotspots, full of people looking for a good time.



Grange-over-Sands' transformation began with the arrival of the railway. Copyright: KOPA Ltd & Clarence O. Becker Archive / Alamy

The opening of Grange-over-Sands Bathing Pool

In 1932, Grange opened the ultimate seaside attraction, which people of all ages and backgrounds could enjoy - Grange Open-air Swimming Baths, better known today as Grange Lido.

The lido opened with a huge gala on the 18th of August 1932. The day featured swimming races, fashion shows, and even something called a motionless floating display - an early version of synchronised swimming! It was a glamorous occasion that marked the lido as a jewel in Grange's crown.

'When we get down to swimming, we get down to democracy'

In 1956, while opening Morecambe's lido, the governor of the Bank of England said: 'Bathing reduces rich and poor, high and low, to a common standard of enjoyment and health. When we get down to swimming, we get down to democracy'.

He was right. In a swimming pool, with no posh clothes, with people of all ages taking part together, everyone is equal. Lidos like Grange's symbolise that great effect that swimming can have - it was something anyone could do, whoever they were. Between 1930 and 1939, at least 180 open air pools and lidos were built in Britain.

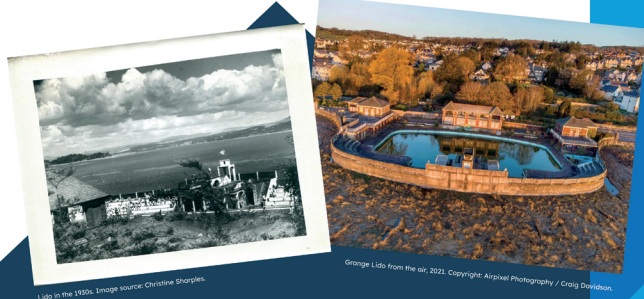
By the 1940s, improvements in transportation, an explosion of public entertainment, and increasing seaside tourism, had combined to make Grange one of the most popular places to take a holiday, and the lido was its greatest achievement.

The lido and the post-war years

The pool remained in active use throughout the second half of the 1940s, and the 1950s and 1960s, reportedly attracting over 60,000 bathers a year. In 1972, it celebrated its 40th anniversary with a celebration gala.

In 1975, following the creation of the new unitary authority of South Lakeland District Council (SLDC), a detailed condition report was carried out, to assess the pool. This led to substantial investment, to ensure the pool was safe for the next 10 years. Despite this investment, a severe storm caused damage in 1977, when the sea crashed over the lido's outer wall.

By the mid-1980s, concerns about the pool's viability began to surface and, despite various attempts to raise further investment, the pool finally closed in 1995.



Lido in the 1950s. Image source: Christine Sharples.

Grange Lido from the air, 2021. Copyright: Airspirel Photography / Craig Davidson.

The site and its buildings

The lido site consists of four separate building structures: a central entrance building; the ladies' changing block (to the north); the gentlemen's changing block (to the south); and the diving stage which housed the pool's filtration unit beneath it.

As well as the main pool, a small children's paddling pool sits to the east of the ladies' changing rooms.

The central building originally served as the entrance to the pool. It also contained staff offices and, on the first floor, a covered balcony for spectators.

Above the men's changing area was a café and kitchens, and over the Ladies changing area was a sheltered 'Sun lounge', which also housed the ladies private cubicles and the only warm showers on site.

Art Deco elegance

The diving platform is a work of Art Deco elegance. At 5m above water level, the top platform was either enjoyed or endured, depending on how terrifying divers found it!

The original cost of building the bathing pool was around £17,000. The main pool has a unique mushroom shape, characteristic of swimming pools of this era. The deepest part of the diving area is over 3m deep and it's just over 50m long.

The pool was originally filled with cold seawater, with water stored in large tanks under the terraces.

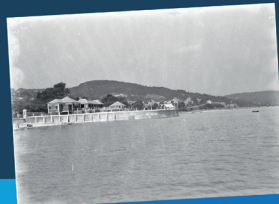
Grange Lido is the earliest remaining example of a complete, 20th century seawater lido in England.



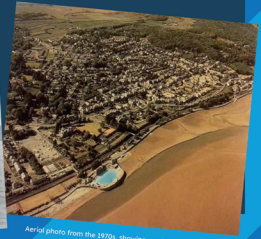
Brochure celebrating the lido's 60th anniversary, 1992



Diving boards, 1970s. Image source: Andy Chard.



Early photo of the lido. Copyright: Sankey Photography Collection.



Aerial photo from the 1950s, showing mushroom shaped pool.