

Tourism

Hotels Guest Houses and Cafes

The slump in tourism happened after 1909 - Whitehead was now a residential town - had there been neglect by Larne Rural District Council?

Whitehead got its own Urban District Council in 1927.

In 1929 Devenny ran tours from the hotels. Encell Tours began.

In 1939 Devenny enlarged the Royal Hotel and renamed the Prince of Wales as Royal George. Post war Devenny was the sole Tour Operator in Whitehead - he died in 1956.

In the early sixties there were four hotels in Whitehead - the Royal, the Royal George, Esplanade and the Whitehead. Now there are none.

Cafes

The Victoria was beside the railway station and was popular for tourists and business meetings. The cafe was destroyed by fire in 1909 and the site is now Whitehead Fire Station.

Chichester cafe or Kennedy's cafe was established in 1885 and after a fire was never rebuilt. The Golden Dawn cafe was built nearby and it was burnt down in the 1970's.

Hotels

The Cliff Hotel was destroyed by fire in 1901.

The Royal Hotel was the centre for the Devenny Tours. In the winter the hotel hosted whist drives, local weddings and dances. The hotel was bombed in 1973 and is now Victoria Court buildings. The Queen's Hotel and Cafe was built 1896/7 and was destroyed in a fire - 1903. The Whitehead Hotel was built in 1894 in Chester Avenue. The hotel had lockup garages. In 1942 the hotel was extensively damaged in a fire. The hotel was renamed Whitecliff Inn and was bombed to bits in 1975. The Royal George Hotel is now not in use. The ground floor of the Woodlands Hotel is now McKees Bakery. The Grand Hotel was bought by the High School in 1956 and used by them until 1986. Sunshine House Hotel was designed by Berkeley Deane Wise and opened in 1903. It is now privately owned.

The Marine Hotel was built in 1890 - renamed Esplanade and then renamed the Dolphin. It was the last hotel to close. The Marine Bar is still open to the public.

Education

Whitehead High School

The first location was number one Cable Road - 1897 until 1903. The school was called Mount Oregon. Between 1919 and 1957 the school used the Bishop's House. In the 1950's the school was renamed Whitehead High School. Closure came in 1986 and the site is now Chester Nursing Home.

Primary Schools

Whitehead National School was built in 1899. It became Whitehead Public Elementary School and then Whitehead Primary School. Lourdes Primary School opened in 1909.

A new school was built in 1971 and this school was closed in 2011.

The Promenade

In 1900 the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway Company built a seafront promenade made of railway sleepers. In 1922 most of it was washed away. In 1936 a new promenade was constructed

using concrete and tarmacadam. Kennedy's Point car park was built in 1968. In 1970 a severe storm did extensive damage and so major work was carried out on the full length of the promenade.

Entertainment

In 1900/01 a focal point bandstand was built by the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway. Whitehead organised a Recreation Society and a large tent or pavilion was erected beside the bandstand. Mr McClelland Martin was in charge and early 1915 he hired the POPINJAYS entertainment troupe as part of the summer programme. They were very popular that year. In August 1959 the Council agreed to flatten the bandstand.

Recreation and Sport

The First Regatta was held in 1879. The main event was races for sailing boats. This was followed by races for different classes of rowing boats, swimming and field activities - running and jumping. Bands played on the day. The Co Antrim Yacht Club has taken over the organisation of the Regatta.

Small boats became summer season tourism. Hugh and James Service hired out rowing boats and stored them at the White Harbour. They built their boats at their White Harbour premises. This stopped after 1929. In 1935 James Clements built a workshop and made a slipway and then launched many fine boats. He owned two motor boats and organised trips to the Gobbins and also day return trips to Bangor. Interest in rowing boats started to wane in the 1960's. Today there is a revival of interest in rowing clubs around the north coast.

The County Antrim Yacht Club

The Club was formed in 1902 at a meeting in Victoria Cafe. The Whitehead Sailing Club aspired to "encourage and promote amateur sailing". In 1909 County Antrim Yacht Club became the new name because most members lived outside Whitehead. There was tragedy in 1950 when four young club members drowned whilst returning from Ballyholme Bangor. Their Waverley boat had capsized. Waverley class yachts were designed by a local man and Club Captain - Mr John Wylie. Eighteen were built and all were called after characters and places in the novels of Sir Walter Scott. Other boats popular at the club were Mirror, Laser and Scorpion.

The CAYC has very fond memories of summer 1988 when they hosted the European Scorpion Championship. This was a four day event. Forty one boats and fifteen crews travelled over from Britain.

Whitehead cricket stopped 1934/35 - there was a failed restart in 1957.

Swimming

In 1896 the Railway Company built ladies and gents bathing places. The White Rocks swimming area remained unsegregated. Long distance swimming became popular - Bangor to Whitehead - a distance of eight miles.

The Pond Swimming Pool

The Urban Council decided to build a pool - labelled pond because they decided to make it circular. It opened in 1931. The complex included Whitehead's first town toilets. By the early fifties the complex was very popular. In June 1954 the cafe and changing rooms were gutted by a fire. The damage was repaired by 1956. In 1988 the Carrickfergus Borough Council closed the pond.

Whitehead Amateur Swimming Club prospered in the forties and fifties and sixties. Swimming, diving and water polo matches were held. Whitehead Rangers Supporters Club now own the complex.

Road running

The Athletics Club - namely road running - has always been associated with Whitehead. In 1925 the Club organised a six mile race for the Whitehead Cup - the race was an Easter Monday tradition. This annual event has been revived by the Community Group.

Fire fighting

Records report that locals fighting a house fire in March 1924 enlisted help from a Welsh football team who were visiting Whitehead on their tour of Co Antrim.

In May 1928 the Urban Council discussed the purchase of a fire appliance for the town.

A Minimax fire engine arrived. Between 1939 and 1945 a local man used his Morris 8 car to tow a trailer pump to "the scene of the fire". Until early 1970's Whitehead depended on Carrick Fire Brigade for all emergencies. In 1973 a sectional corrugated iron building in Beach Road was used as a fire station. In July 1981 a new fire station was built to service the needs of Whitehead and Islandmagee.