



## Weston's Grand Pier

*'Of Glistening Sand, up which the ocean rolled  
And where bright groups of summer idlers strolled'.*

*From the poem, A Seaside Episode, by J.P. Ritter, Jr., 1888*

These words would have chimed with the visitors to Weston-super-Mare, but how much better, they thought, to be able to promenade over the sea as well as next to it. Especially in the case of Weston when the sea was often a long way out. Many other seaside towns at this time had piers or were planning to build them, so Weston had to be competitive.



*Weston's first Grand Pier in the 1920s*

There was a pier at Birnbeck from 1867 and this proved very popular with visitors and travellers to and from Wales, but it was thought to be too far from the centre of town. So, in the late 1800s money was raised from local inhabitants and shareholders from South Wales. Construction of the pier was agreed by an Act of Parliament, but work didn't begin until November 1903.

On 11 June 1904 the first section of the pier, measuring 324 metres, was opened. This included a Pavilion, which became a very popular venue for entertainments of all types. From opera to boxing, many famous faces of the time appeared there. There was also space for roller-skating and a well-used bandstand.

On 16 May 1907 a further 450 metres was opened. This was intended to be used to run a regular passenger service to Cardiff, but, because the tide in Weston is the second highest in the world, it was impossible to moor the ships to a regular timetable. In 1916 it was decided to dismantle most of the extension to the pier. Ten years later light entertainment was added to the main pavilion.

Another idea to make the visitor's life more comfortable was the building of glass screens down the centre of the walkway in 1927.



*The second Grand Pier as it looked in 2005 ©Mike Buck*

Tragedy struck on 13 January 1930, when the pier was destroyed by fire. It was underinsured and £36,000 had to be found to rebuild the structure. With a change of owner later that year the planning went ahead and the new pier was opened in 1933. This time it housed a funfair – the largest on any pier in the country, instead of a theatre.

In July 1946 the pier was bought by Mr. A Brenner, a local businessman. The Brenner family owned it for many years, carrying out numerous renovations and repairs, as was necessary on a structure in this position. It was always a popular place to spend time as a holiday maker or local, either to go on the fair, play the machines or just sit and enjoy the sea air (with attendant sea gulls).



*The Grand Pier on fire in July 2008 © Dave Cozens*

In 1974 the Pier became a Grade II listed building as a monument of historic importance. The pier continued to be cared for by the Brenner family until they sold it to another local family, brother and sister Kerry and Michelle Michael, on 6 February 2008.

The Michael siblings installed some new rides including a go-kart track, but on the night of 28 July tragedy struck again. The pier, with the exception of the entrance gateway, was totally destroyed by fire.

Rebuilding began quickly. The wreckage was removed in September 2008, and the new pier, designed by Bristol architects Angus Meek, soon began to take shape. It re-opened on 23 October 2010 and was visited on the first weekend by over 100,000 people.



*Weston's new Grand Pier © Geof Sheppard*

The Pier now contains many rides, games machines, conference rooms and a tea room. The design also retained an enclosed glass walk way to keep visitors dry in poor weather.

**Weston's Grand Pier has come full circle and now hosts many concerts performed by famous artists, and is a lovely place to take in the views.**



Weston-super-Mare  
Town Council