

## Slender and elegant

Like John Betjeman I've been a lifelong fan of seaside piers and have long been minded to agree with him that the 'most beautiful' pier in England is that at Clevedon on the Somerset coast of the Severn Estuary. There is now a café at the start of the pier in a very modern glass box from the facilities of which you can look through a large porthole window up the length of the pier below the walkway. But other than that, it is almost exactly as Betjeman would have known it when he became involved in its restoration after a partial, but near catastrophic, collapse during routine safety testing in the 1970's.

No tourist train here, no fish and chips, no ferris wheel or music hall, no penny arcade, or candy floss stall. Just a simple boardwalk on a tracery of wrought iron rails as uniquely slender and elegant as on the day they were first installed, reaching out to a tiered landing stage still visited on selected summer days by an estuary paddle steamer. There are brass name plates on every weathered board and seat; fishermen regularly spaced, casting their bait to the swirling tidal flow below on its forty foot rise or fall; and at the end, crowning that landing stage, there is still an elegant two storey pavilion, from which waiters once served tea in white tie and tails ...

*Brunel's surplus irons  
ringing to the rhythm of  
summer syncopation  
a lone saxophonist  
salutes the setting sun*

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