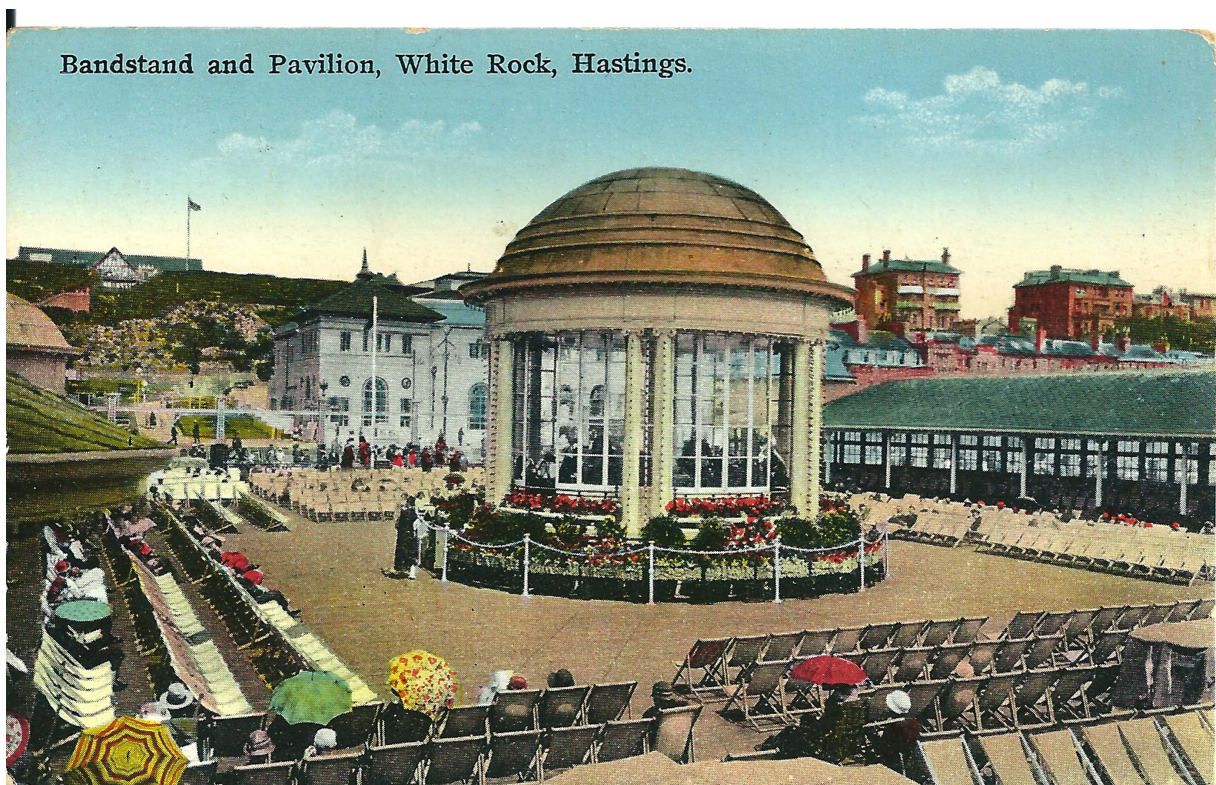


# HASTINGS PIER CHARITY

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## The Story of the Pier Bandstand



The Pier bandstand, (HPC006.116)



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## The Story of Pier Bandstand

The bandstand on the Pier was built as part of a large-scale 'Improvement Scheme' adopted by the Council in 1913, aimed at turning the White Rock area into the centre of the town's tourist attractions. During that year, the Council began shaping part of the former estate of the Brisco family into White Rock Gardens as they are known today, and also purchased the East Sussex Hospital opposite the Pier to replace it with 'winter gardens' (in practice, this was to be the site of the White Rock Pavilion, now called the White Rock Theatre, built in 1927).

The 1913 project originated in a plan to buy the shoreward end of the Pier, enlarge it and install a large bandstand on it. The Council had been discussing the idea with the Pier Company directors throughout 1912, reaching an agreement in January 1913. This prompted councillors to look at all the Pier's surrounding area, resulting in the adoption of the Improvement Scheme in December 1913. But during public discussion on the scheme many people suggested putting the bandstand in White Rock Gardens, which the Council already owned, and where there was plenty of room. However, councillors controversially decided to push ahead with siting it on the Pier.

The Council agreed to buy 220 feet of the Pier for £7,100, and to acquire enough of the surrounding land to make a box 220 feet square. The Council also had a 12-month option with the company to buy all of the rest of the Pier for just £10,000, but this never came to fruition.

Widening the shoreward end of the Pier required parliamentary approval, and this took until August 1914, when royal assent was given to the Hastings Corporation (Pier) Order 1914. This authorized the Council "to acquire the shore end of the Hastings Pier and adjoining property and to utilize the site for extending or widening the esplanade". This enlarged area of the pier was known as the 'parade extension' or the "apron". The Council's aim was to build a large circular bandstand in the middle of it, with two flanking curved bandstand shelters, seating 650 people each, plus room for another 2,000 in deckchairs in the open space. The Pier Company was planning to use the proceeds of the sale



to improve the rest of the pier by erecting shops, a restaurant and a new arcade at the new entrance, and providing shelter out to the very decorative pavilion.

The 220 feet of the pier changed hands in September 1914, just as the First World War broke out. The war delayed much of the 1913 scheme, but the parade extension went ahead immediately. The tollgates and the four-year old joy wheel were removed and by the end of 1914 new columns and girders were being installed.

The official opening ceremony of the new extension took place on 19 April 1916, in weather that was almost identical to that on opening day of the pier in 1872 – driving rain and strong wind. The ceremony was held in and around the new bandstand, which had just been finished. Over the following four months the two curved shelters were put up, along with a building which formed the Pier Company's frontage onto the Council's extension. By mid-summer 1916 the new-looking Hastings Pier was in operation. Visitors coming in from the seafront first saw the bandstand and shelters, then passed through the new entrance foyer.



The Pier bandstand before the shelters were built, 1916 (HPC006.051)

In May 1961 the 45-year old bandstand was found to be in a dilapidated condition, so it was removed in May, and in June was replaced by a new moveable bandstand.

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