Morecambe Chapter of On the Way of the Roses

If you ask Google 'is Morecambe run down?', its AI Overview agrees that it is. Ask if it's a nice place and it tells you that it has a nostalgic charm and is making an effort to improve.

Perhaps the main thing you learn is that whatever you ask AI, it will broadly agree with the sentiment implicit in your question in the hope that you will come back for more.

Still, there's no doubt that, like many other British seaside towns, Morecambe has struggled in recent years.

To support this proposition, the world's most popular search engine points to economic deprivation, empty properties and high crime rates.

When it is being more positive about the Lancashire seaside town, it highlights the Promenade, the views across the bay to the Lake District fells, its affordability, and the nice scenic walks – even though it can't resist pointing out that the walks are not as nice 'for those who dislike seeing evidence of decline'.

A contributor to a thread on reddit asserts that 'anyone who thinks Morecambe is a lovely beach town hasn't been to Morecambe'[1]. Another makes a reference to drug use, and a third says that 'the industry it was built on [tourism] has died'.

Once again, though, there are some positive comments. 'The front is genuinely very nice to walk/cycle along, and you have views of the Lake District hills across Morecambe Bay'.

There's also a reference to 'excellent potted shrimp', and the hope that 'perhaps the Eden Project scheme will turn things around'.

Google and reddit present the views of non-residents, but what do local young people think of their town?

In August 2025, Guardian journalist Helen Pidd went back to her home town and spoke to Morecambe youngsters there[2].

One person tells her that 'things to look forward to are so important', but there isn't much to do in Morecambe except 'walk up and down the Prom and maybe pop into Aldi'.

Another says, 'they need to think about the locals, because there's actual people living here. It's not just a destination'.

Leroy Lupton of the More Music association is the most lyrical of Pidd's interviewees. His view is that Morecambe has 'echoes of happiness. Because I think with a few of the seaside towns, they used to be holiday destinations, and since people started going abroad they kind of got left in the dirt and forgotten about'.

The economic facts back up Lupton's opinion.

Morecambe falls within an area designated Lancaster006D by the government in its Indices of Deprivation for England.

In the combined index, or Index of Multiple Deprivation[3], Lancaster006D is 155th out of 33,755 neighbourhoods, which puts it in the top 1% most deprived.

Morecambe's railway history began in 1848, when the Morecambe Harbour and Dock Company built a railway line the short distance from Lancaster to Morecambe and opened a station on Northumberland Street. In the same year, the Harbour and Dock Company became part of the 'Little' North Western Railway.

The Little North Western built a hotel where the Midland Hotel now stands, and a railway line from Lancaster via Settle to Skipton. Skipton was linked by rail to Ilkley, Leeds and Bradford, and this meant that Morecambe was now accessible to the masses

in the industrial towns and cities of West Yorkshire.

The first train from Leeds to Morecambe ran on 1st June 1850.

In fact, that train from Leeds would have been destined for Poulton-le-Sands, since there was no such town as Morecambe at the time. The name Morecambe was given to the bay by Ptolemy, who used it to designate the fourth inlet north of Wales on maps he drew up for the Romans, but it was only in 1889 that three hamlets – Poulton, Bare and Torrisholme – were amalgamated and named Morecambe.

The Midland Railway took over the running of the Little North Western in 1852.

The Stone Jetty was built in 1853. It was the west wall of Morecambe Harbour, as well as the embarkation point for ferry passengers. They would arrive in Morecambe by train and continue from the jetty by boat to Scotland, Ireland or the Isle of Man.

From 1898 there was a tramway along the jetty, and in 1901 it was electrified[4].

The trouble with Morecambe as a harbour and ferry port was that access was restricted by the tides. The sea goes out such a long way that at times you're not sure where it starts and what is just puddles. Boats can only come and go when the tide is in.

In 1904, someone did the sensible thing and built a deep-sea harbour at Heysham, down the road. From then on ferries called at Heysham instead of Morecambe, and Morecambe's harbour was no longer needed.

Morecambe Promenade Station was built by the Midland Railway Company and opened in 1907.

In 1933 the Midland Hotel replaced the earlier railway hotel, and in 1936 the Super Swimming Stadium opened.

While workers from the Lancashire mill towns and Manchester tended to go to Blackpool for their holidays, West Yorkshire families came to Morecambe, which got the nickname Bradford-on-Sea.

A history of the railway to Morecambe (the Bentham Line) gives a vivid picture of its heyday[5].

'Late trains on Saturday nights brought people home from dances in the Central Pier ballroom. In Summer, Irish labourers crossed to Heysham and travelled by train on to Bentham for the annual 'hiring day'.

Bell Busk Station was the gateway for thousands of visitors to the delights of Malhamdale. From Clapham, the more energetic to could head off up Ingleborough, perhaps returning via Ingleton.

There was plenty of freight too, and each station had its goods yard and cattle dock'.

The Bentham Line to Morecambe was also used for commuting.

'People flocked to Morecambe from the West Riding on day trips and holidays. But passengers were travelling in the opposite direction too, as businessmen based in Leeds or Bradford found they could conveniently make their home by the sea.

And so the Leeds, Bradford and Morecambe Residential Express became an institution, speeding the movers and shakers in the woollen industry to their offices in the morning and back home in the evening. Bradford-by-the-Sea was born'.

In his 1995 travel book Notes from a Small Island, Bill Bryson describes the Wakes Weeks when whole northern factory towns shut down and went on holiday. Up to 100,000 people at a time came to Morecambe.

Bryson lists some of the attractions at Morecambe in its peak years: '…eight music halls, eight cinemas, an aquarium, a funfair, a menagerie, a revolving tower [and] a boating garden'.

During World War II, Morecambe hosted evacuees from London, and so many civil servants that it was known as Whitehall-on-Sea. At that time, the Midland Hotel was turned into a hospital.

Morecambe's railway heyday lasted for about 100 years, from 1850 to 1950. After 1950, people and freight tended to use the roads instead.

Bryson says that Morecambe still had 1,300 hotels and guesthouses in 1956, but by the early 1970s its decline was precipitate.

I'm in Morecambe on an Autumn day when sunshine is forecast but never quite breaks through the grey gloom.

It's a Sunday, and plenty of people are on the Promenade – cycling, jogging, walking and dog-walking. Whatever other problems Morecambe may have, it's clear that the Prom is a fantastic facility for locals and visitors.

The obvious thing for me to do is join the promenaders and explore Morecambe on foot. I start at the former Morecambe Promenade Station.

Mill workers and their families who got off the train here would have been presented with a view of the sea the moment they exited the station.

For decades the station was thronged with passengers, but as Morecambe's popularity declined its four platforms were no longer needed, and it was replaced by a new, more modest, two-platform station a little further inland.

The old station is now an events and entertainments venue called The Platform.

A colourful electronic poster in the window advertises upcoming performances by bands including Quo Connection – a group that evolved from one featuring the original Status Quo drummer, John Coghlan, into one no longer featuring the original Status Quo drummer, John Coghlan.

Coghlan is still happy to endorse his old band mates ('close to the real thing – a must see') but it feels as though they are more like Tenuous Quo Connection. I'm sure it's a good evening of rock songs competently performed, but perhaps missing authentic star quality.

Morecambe Tourist Information is supposed to be inside The Platform, but the door is locked so I accept that I will have to inform myself about the town.

Beside the old station is a path with an intriguing name: A Flock of Words[6]. It's a typographic pavement with jokes, quotes, nursery rhymes, song lyrics, proverbs and sayings, all with a bird theme, and it leads to a small obelisk.

It was installed in 2003 as part of the arts-based regeneration initiative, the Tern Project.

The Tern Project celebrates the abundant birdlife in and around Morecambe Bay. As well as A Flock of Words the project encompasses other bird-related art works, including steel cormorants forever drying their wings in the sea breeze.

The Flock of Words path runs past Festival Market, which occupies the space where Promenade Station's platforms and sidings used to be. I look in at the market, but I'm not in the mood for keenly-priced trinkets so I head back towards the seafront.

Besides the sea, passengers arriving at Morecambe Promenade Station would also have been presented with a view of the Midland Hotel.

It was built in a style that was popular at the time, and is still popular (with me) today.

That style is a particular variant of Art Deco called Streamline Moderne. It emphasises long horizontal lines and curved forms, sometimes with nautical elements.

In his curved design for the Midland Hotel, architect Oliver Hill wanted to complement the curve of the Promenade and give hotel guests a good view[7]. He did a great job, because the café/restaurant along the sweep of the building's seafront side is always busy with patrons looking out.

The hotel as a whole was supposed to evoke a liner rising from the sea.

I learn from Bill Bryson that concrete was the fashionable construction material in 1933, but local firms didn't know how to build with it. Instead they used brick for the hotel, but then plastered over the outside walls so they looked like concrete.

The hotel hasn't had an untroubled history since its construction.

In the post-war years it began to crumble, and by 1999 it was unwanted and derelict.

It was renovated (2006-2008) by a company called Urban Splash. Because it was in such a pitiful state when they took it on, it must have been a long time before they got around to the finer details such as restoring Eric Gill's twin seahorse sculptures on the car park side of the building.

The Midland is now part of the Inn Collection Group, and seems to be doing alright. If Morecambe is to have a positive future, you'd think that a thriving Midland Hotel will be an essential part of it.

Beyond the hotel is the Stone Jetty.

It's my one chance to walk out seawards, since the West End Pier was washed away in a storm in 1977, and the Central Pier was damaged by fire and finally removed in 1992.

It is a pleasant walk past more Tern Project artwork to the Stone Jetty Café, which is in the jetty's old railway building.

After walking back onshore, I notice a large crater area immediately to the east of the Midland Hotel, where it is clear that *something* used to be. Four people are playing a desultory game of football in the Crater, but they don't seem to be using the space to its maximum potential.

This is the landward side of the old harbour. What happened to this area after Heysham had taken away the ferries?

It became a shipbreaker's yard owned by T W Wards of Sheffield[8].

You might have thought that noisy, heavy industry would be a blight on a tourist town, but Wards offered tours round defunct ships and sold fixtures and fittings as souvenirs. The demolition of a ship called the Majestic was repeatedly delayed due to public demand to visit it.

In the early 1930s, when the new Midland Hotel was being built, the council decided that guests should not look out onto a shipbreaker's yard, so it bought out T W Wards.

In place of the yard, the most remarkable thing appeared: the Super Swimming Stadium.

Morecambe Super Swimming Stadium was a public outdoor swimming pool, or lido.

It was opened by Director of the Bank of England Sir Josiah Stamp – who, according to the law of nominative determinism, should have worked for the Royal Mail not the Bank – on 27th July 1936[9].

At the opening he 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'.

The Super Swimming Stadium had a championship swimming pool, an artificial beach, a water polo area, a diving stage, a three-deck promenade, a sun terrace, a café and two grandstands. It was said to be the biggest outdoor pool in Europe, accommodating 1,200 swimmers and 3,000 spectators.

It had to be big, because Morecambe needed to outdo those cheeky upstarts down the coast at Blackpool with their South Shore Swimming Coliseum of 1923.

As well as welcoming thousands of bathers, the Super Swimming Stadium hosted swimming events, and Miss Great Britain and Miss World beauty contests.

It fell into disrepair, and closed in 1975.

That wasn't the end of swimming in the Crater, though.

Morecambe Leisure Park opened there in 1979, with a heated outdoor pool (Blue

Lagoon) that had its own wave machine, and a sun-trap terrace just in case the sun came out[10].

The Leisure Park was later renamed Bubbles, and a live music venue called the Superdome was added.

'Bubbles Bop in the '90s was epic – in a time when throwing chocolate bars into a swimming pool full of teenagers seemed acceptable. Great times,' says Annabel, quoted by the Manchester Evening News.

Bubbles closed in 2001, and the Superdome went the same way in 2008. Now Morecambe is left with the Crater, but there are plans to fill it.

The Eden Project North is heading this way, and it seems to be Morecambe's best hope for a prosperous future. It *should* open in late 2028.

The Crater is overlooked by Morecambe's war memorial. A (real) seagull is perched on the head of the (stone) lion that tops the memorial, and as I look at the impertinent bird a whiff of marijuana smoke blows towards me from an unseen source.

On the town side of the road, my gaze is drawn to a fish and chip outlet called The Chipsy King, and sub-titled Knockout Fish and Chips.

This is a reference to the boxer Tyson Fury, who is known as the Gypsy King. With his wife Paris and their seven children, he lives in the Lancashire seaside town. He says he is not tempted to move to California. 'Why would I? I would never leave Morecambe, it's true beauty'[11].

The Chipsy King isn't the only shop I know with a pun in its name.

I sometimes pass a salon in Bradford called Hair We Are, and Harrogate boasts quite a good clothing repair and alteration service called Sew Can We.

Morecambe has two sewing shops with creative names, even if they aren't strictly puns: Stitch in Time on Pedder Street ('been fantastic in prepping my jacket for the new season'), and Sew and Go on Queen Street.

Whatever they are called, I'm a fan of sewing shops because they help people extend the life of their clothes, and so live more economically and sustainably.

I don't know if Licensed Adult Store Sin-til-Late, also on Queen Street, is making a contribution to sustainability, but it gets full marks for the effort that's gone into its pun-name.

Is a pun in your shop's name good for business? I have no idea, and I'm very sorry but I can't consider the question right now because I'm fully occupied brainstorming possible alternative brands for The Chipsy King.

There's Hello, Mr Chips, but it's not Morecambe-specific. Or Every Day is Fry Day, which also lacks any reference to the Lancashire coastal town - but could that be an advantage? Because then you've got the option to build a global brand.

It needs further thought.

I trust my subconscious to work on it while my conscious attention is given to the Winter Gardens. I admire it from the outside because, like The Platform, it is locked and barred.

It's an ornate redbrick building with a cast iron and glass awning to stop you getting wet if it's raining and they won't let you in.

The term 'winter gardens' was originally used for buildings with large areas of glazing where exotic plants could be grown throughout the year. The glasshouse at Crystal Palace, built for the 1851 Great Exhibition, is a prominent example.

In the second half of the 1800s, winter gardens sprang up in seaside and spa resorts around Britain, as these places hoped to extend their Summer seasons.

The Winter Gardens at Morecambe first opened in 1897. Inside, there was a theatre, a ballroom and restaurants; and there were gardens at the back[12].

Stars who performed here include Laurel & Hardy, George Formby, Gracie Fields,

Vera Lynn, Abbott & Costello, the Who and the Rolling Stones.

A 1960 film called The Entertainer, about a fading music hall performer and starring Laurence Olivier, was shot in locations around Morecambe; the theatre featured in the film was the Winter Gardens.

The Winter Gardens theatre in Morecambe still hosts concerts and plays today. In the window I see a poster advertising the return of 1980s band Then Jerico as an upcoming attraction.

Further along the seafront I pass A J's Famous Double Burgers, which I haven't heard of before. I worry that someone might trump A J by selling triple burgers.

A few more steps bring me to the Eric Morecambe statue.

Graham Ibbeson's bronze was unveiled by Queen Elizabeth II in 1999. Like A Flock of Words, it's part of the Tern Project. Eric is wearing binoculars, which is a nod to his love of birdwatching.

The statue had to be taken away for repairs in 2014 after someone tried to saw Eric's leg off, but it's back in place now.

Words and jokes associated with Morecambe & Wise are inscribed on the ground by the statue.

The pair often closed their TV shows by singing Bring Me Sunshine. This is a verse of it:

Make me happy, through the years,
Never bring me, any tears,
Let your arms be as warm as the sun from up above,
Bring me fun, bring me sunshine, bring me love.

Next along the Prom is the Clock Tower, which dates from 1905. It helped promenaders without watches know when it was time to go back to their boarding houses for dinner. Its modest height, 14m, is the logical consequence of the fact that there was only a small budget to build it.

The Central Pier once stood here.

According to Bill Bryson, '[it] was one of the most beautiful and elaborate [piers] in Britain, with fabulous towers and domed roofs – an Arabian palace afloat on Morecambe Bay'.

The Central Pier is long gone, so I leave the seafront for a look at the town centre.

There are some good old-fashioned shops on Pedder Street, including a newsagent and sweet shop, the Little Shop of Hobbies, and Jigsaw Heaven.

On the other hand, Morecambe's Arndale Centre is small and tired-looking. I don't suppose the founders of the chain, Arnold Hagenbach and Sam Chippendale, ever considered it their flagship shopping mall.

Inside, there is a Poundstretcher and a Poundland. On a bench, a grey-haired man is whiling the day away staring into space.

By way of contrast, on the outside wall of the mall is an idealised bathing scene featuring Morecambe's motto, 'Beauty Surrounds, Health Abounds'.

Later, I see a huge end-of-terrace mural proclaiming 'A Bay of Big Skies and Shifting Tides. Come and Be Happy at Morecambe'. Again there's a disconnect between past public relations and current reality.

Around the corner from the Arndale there's yet another mural, this one dedicated to Wordsworth.

In his Guide to the Lakes[13], Wordsworth wrote of Morecambe Bay:

'The Stranger, from the moment he sets foot on those Sands, seems to leave the

turmoil and traffic of the world behind him; and, crossing the majestic plain whence the sea has retired, he beholds, rising apparently from its base, the cluster of mountains among which he is going to wander, and towards whose recesses…he is gradually and peacefully led'.

Just in case you're inspired by Wordsworth's romantic description of crossing Morecambe Bay on foot, I should mention that the only safe way to do it is on an official trip with the King's Guide to the Sands. The usual crossing is from Arnside to Kents Bank.

The tradition of a royally-appointed guide dates back to the 1500s. The guide gets a meagre £15 a year, but they also have the use of the Guide's Cottage at Kents Bank[14].

Wordsworth didn't write a poem about Morecambe or the bay, but if he had done so it definitely would have gone like this:

I wandered lonely as a gull,
That floats on high o'er Morecambe, you betcha,
Til it finds the seafront rather dull,
And visits the Arndale Centre Poundstretcher,
And instead of squawking you can hear it sing,
Please take me to the Chipsy King.

Having had a good look round Morecambe, I read up on the town's most famous son, Eric.

Eric Morecambe (John Eric Bartholomew, 1926-84) took his stage name from his home town.

From 1967 onwards he lived in Harpenden, Hertfordshire, and in one sketch he referred to himself as 'Lord Eric, Fourth Duke of Harpenden, and certain parts of Birkenhead'.

Eric started in entertainment very young. His mother Sadie enrolled him in the local Morecambe dance class when he was ten, and there he danced with a girl called Molly Bunting.

By the time he was twelve, he had started earning money by playing working men's clubs and singing at seafront hotels.

When Eric was thirteen, he auditioned for band leader and impresario Jack Hylton at a cinema in Manchester. That was when he first met Ernie Wise[15].

A few months later, they both performed in a travelling Variety show called Youth Takes a Bow. Sadie started looking after Ernie as well as Eric, and whichever town they were in they would all share a room, with Sadie in a single bed and Eric and Ernie sharing a double.

The boarding houses they stayed in were far from luxurious. In one joke told about such establishments, the landlady asks a new guest: 'Have you got a good memory for faces?'

'It's ok, why?' replies the guest.

'Because there's no shaving mirror in the bathroom'.

When the show was in Coventry Eric and Ernie stayed in Birmingham, and to pass the time on the train they worked up a double act. It was in 1941 at the Liverpool Empire that they performed it for the first time.

Sadie asked an American singer in the show, Adelaide Hall, to a suggest a stage name for Eric. Hall's husband said that a friend of his from Rochester, Minnesota, called himself Rochester. He asked Sadie, 'where do you come from?'

'Morecambe,' she replied, and so the double act became Morecambe & Wise.

Youth Takes a Bow closed in 1942, but after three months back in Morecambe and Leeds, Eric and Ernie went down to London and were hired for a show called Strike a New Note.

They were doing bits and pieces rather than their double act, but they were told that if comedian Alec Pleon was ever indisposed, they could perform it.

'Eric and I prayed every day that Alec Pleon would fall ill, or take the wrong bus, or be arrested – but he turned out to be the fittest man in show business,' said Ernie.

Ernie turned eighteen in November 1943 and joined the Merchant Navy. He trained as a steward, to wait on tables, but was sent to work as a cook on a ship called The Firelighter that took coal from Tyneside to London.

Being younger, Eric was conscripted six months later. He had to work in a coalmine in Accrington, and did so for nearly a year before he was invalided out with heart trouble.

Eric and Ernie reunited as a double act in Lord John Sanger's Circus and Variety show, performing in a big top in towns that were too small to have their own theatre.

That show finished in October 1947, and they went to London – separately at first, but then at Sadie's suggestion they moved in together. Work was hard to find for a while, but eventually they got a gig at the Windmill Theatre. That led to more bookings.

Variety shows were very popular at the time. As well as comedy, there was singing and dancing, knife-throwing, acrobatics, and sometimes more idiosyncratic acts. For example, at one time Eric and Ernie performed in a show that also featured Duncan's Collies: dogs in numbered jerseys played a football match, dribbling the ball with their noses; every goal was greeted with a huge cheer.

Another unique act was Wilson, Keppel and Betty, who did an Egyptian sand dance that was surprisingly popular.

Ernie had met his future wife Doreen Blythe when they were both in Lord John Sanger's troupe. In 1952, Eric met Joan Bartlett when they were both performing at the Edinburgh Empire, and they were married a few months later. They had two children, Gail and Gary.

Morecambe & Wise's first TV series was Running Wild (1954, BBC), which was not a success. Their next was Two of Kind for ITV, with scripts by Dick Hills and Sid Green. It ran for six series from 1961 to 1968.

Morecambe & Wise then returned to the BBC, where their shows were scripted by Eddie Braben and produced by John Ammonds.

These were their golden years, when they became Britain's most popular stage and television performers. Special guests on their TV show included Rudolf Nureyev, Laurence Olivier and André Previn. Their Christmas shows had particular appeal to the British public, and the 1977 edition was watched by 28 million people.

The duo went back to ITV in 1978, but never quite hit the heights of their BBC shows.

Eric had already suffered two heart attacks and recovered, but on 28th May 1984, at the end of a charity show in Tewkesbury, he collapsed with a third heart attack and died.

Eric Morecambe isn't the only showbiz figure associated with the seaside resort. Leeds-born playwright Alan Bennett came on long weekends to Morecambe with his family from 1940, when he was six.

'My mam always thought that Morecambe was that bit more genteel than Blackpool', recalls Bennett[16].

Everyone went on holiday at the same time, on Bank Holidays, so there would be no seats available on the train and it would be packed everywhere.

He and his family stayed at small boarding houses.

They would go to the cinema or to see Variety acts on the pier, and sometimes they would visit the funfair.

His dad wore a suit, a raincoat and a bowler hat, which was how men dressed in those days even on holiday.

Bennett's experiences in Morecambe inspired two television plays, Sunset Across the Bay and All Day on the Sands.

Sunset Across the Bay[17] is from 1974, and features a couple from Leeds who retire to Morecambe. The characters (called Mam and Dad in the script) are similar to Bennett's own parents in some respects.

On his last day at the factory in Leeds, Dad tells the gateman that he's off to Morecambe. The gateman says, 'We always go to the other side. Scarborough'.

Dad replies, 'Except I think it feels to do you more good, the west coast'.

Dad gets a toaster from the company as a leaving present. Mam comments wryly: 'I expect it'll be all toast for a bit, now'.

The sunsets are one of the positives of Morecambe. Dad says, 'You get some lovely sunsets here. Grandma always said that. The best sunsets she ever saw were at Morecambe, between the wars'.

Dad didn't find everything about retired life on the west coast so satisfactory, though. 'Trailing round the shops, looking in windows, sitting out on the front. There's no point in any of it'.

I won't spoil the ending of the play, in case you want to see or read it.

The second Alan Bennett play is All Day on the Sands, which aired on ITV in 1979[18].

The play's plot is thin, but that's not where the interest is anyway. It's in the nostalgic portrayal of a type of holiday that was on its way out, and in the well-observed lines that Bennett gives the actors.

The central characters are a family of four spending their holidays at a 'private hotel' in Morecambe.

The pokey old building and its shabby patterned carpets were probably intended to look old-fashioned even at the end of the 1970s.

The hotel is called Miramar, which is a stretch, but as the owner tells his wife, 'you have to have that Riviera feel… everywhere's half empty. It's down all over'.

In his autobiographical book Writing Home, Alan Bennett says it took him a long time to think of the hotel's name: 'What nobody ever says about writing is that one can spend a whole morning…just trying to think of a name…in this case the name of a boarding house…I eventually settle on Miramar'.

I think the time he spent was worth it.

In All Day on the Sands, 'abroad' looms over everything.

People had started taking foreign holidays, and fewer of them were coming to Morecambe.

Accommodation owners like the ones portrayed in All Day on the Sands felt that they had to ape the continental resorts that were taking their customers.

Bennett's hotel owner has an intercom system, or hyper-local radio, which he over-uses to keep hotel guests informed of administrative arrangements. For example, he tells them that breakfast is served in the Portofino room, and later that they can collect their 'eats' (packed lunches) from the Marbella lounge.

Part-way through the play, we discover that the family are only in Morecambe because dad is out of work. His daughter would have preferred to go to Menorca, as they'd done the year before.

The son tells his dad that he's bored in Morecambe, which elicits a classic Alan Bennett reply from dad. 'Well if you're bored now, you'll be bored when you grow up. It gets more boring as you go on'.

An older couple in the breakfast room get talking to the family. There's an element of 'keeping up appearances' about them, and the lines Bennett gives them gently mock their pomposity as they try to justify their presence in Morecambe.

'We like it in Morecambe', says the lady. 'I think Blackpool's a bit on the common side. Morecambe's more refined. Only they're trying to spoil it here now. Discos, Miss World'.

When the conversation turns to abroad, the older gentleman dismisses the whole of the rest of the world with a sweeping 'no, it's overrated is abroad'.

The mum of the family muses about pizza. 'Pizzas. We never had pizzas, did we? Still, it's only cheese on toast. It's Welsh rarebit really, except pizza's round and Welsh rarebit's square'.

With so little action in All Day on the Sands, I wonder if it would be commissioned today. It might not be exciting enough for today's audiences with their short attention spans.

Mine, on the other hand, was forged by a 1970s childhood when there was no such thing as endless scrolling on Bookface or Tok-Tik. Dopamine hits hadn't been invented, and we were often bored.

The televisual highlight of the week was The World About Us, which was even less racy than our family's Morris Marina.

I didn't watch All Day on the Sands at the time – perhaps my parents had found a way of permanently tuning our television to BBC – but I think I would have enjoyed it.

Its relaxed pace leaves plenty of space for the atmosphere of Morecambe in the late 70s to come through; and for Alan Bennett's characters to recite their northern lines.

What's the future for Morecambe?

In the mid-90s, Bill Bryson thought its best hope was being *not* Blackpool.

'That is what I liked about it – that it is quiet and friendly and well-behaved, that there is plenty of room in the pubs and cafés…One day, I would like to think, people will rediscover the charms of a quiet break at the seaside, the simple pleasures of strolling along a well-kept front, leaning on railings, drinking in views, sitting in a café with a book, just pottering about. Then perhaps Morecambe can thrive again'.

With the Midland Hotel revived and Eden North on the horizon, Bryson's recipe for Morecambe might be about to become reality. If the football club recovers from its plunge down the leagues, that will boost local morale too.

As my visit to Morecambe draws to a close, I'm still wondering what prepping a jacket for the new season entails, and whether I'm the only member of moderately polite society who doesn't know that you have to do it.

That apart, I have just one piece of unfinished business before I leave – the rebranding of The Chipsy King.

Luckily, I've come up with a new Goodbye, Mr Chips-based name: Tatty Buy, Mr Chips. I tell myself that if that doesn't draw in hordes of hungry chip-eaters, nothing will.

And with that, I'm off to Lancaster.