

**Blackpool Railings, 1951.** (Pat Wilson (left) and Wendy Clarke (right) sitting on the railings at the promenade, July 1951, Blackpool)

This black and white photograph features two young women perch on metal railings on a seaside promenade. It's around midday, with short shadows, on a bright but gusty summer's day. The women are sitting close and turned in towards each other.

The woman on the right is smiling at her friend, mouth open as if caught in mid-sentence or laughter. She holds the other woman by the arm, with both hands, suggesting their connection or perhaps to steady herself. Her thick blonde hair is parted on the side and pinned up in jaw-length curls. She wears white sandals and a short-sleeved dress with large polka dots. The wind has lifted the skirt of the dress in a whirl blurred by movement, revealing one bare knee and thigh.

The other woman has dark curly collar-length hair. Her face is turned away from us but seems to mirror the lively expression of her friend. She's holding onto the railing with both hands one on either side of her. Her shoulders are braced – perhaps to keep her balance or out of shyness. Both feet, in thick-strapped Mary Jane shoes, are firmly pressed against the railing below. She wears a light-coloured, peasant style blouse, the collar and short sleeves gathered and tied with soft cord. It's tucked into a full skirt with a floral design around the hem that is belled out by the wind.

The railings have four horizontal bars fixed into cast iron posts that are decorated with floral motifs and the coat of arms of Blackpool Borough council: a shield showing a seagull flying over waves, with the word 'Progress' underneath. The top rail is about chest-high, so it must have been quite a scramble for the women to

climb onto it and turn round to sit, while the beach is a long way down, below the promenade. In the top half of this square photograph there is nothing but sky behind the women while the lower half of the landscape is cut into stripes by the black horizontal railings. There's a stripe of sea with a white ruffle of waves echoing the billowing fabric of the skirt, and below it three stripes of sand. The beach is so distant that people on it appear small enough to be held in the palm of the hand of one of the women on the railings: there are couples walking and a family of four playing rounders or cricket.

On the left-hand edge of the photograph, a boxy black handbag has been put down on the ground in front of the railings and through them, there is a glimpse of a building at the end of a pier.