

Pierdom



Blackpool South. Designed by TP Worthington and JD Harker. Opened 1893.

British photographer [Simon Roberts](#) has photographed all 58 surviving British pleasure piers. Roberts' focus is Britishness – he is no architectural photographer, he is a “human geographer” – but these structures hold a fascination beyond the great seaside holiday.

Writing in Roberts' new book, “[Pierdom](#),” on their history (beginning in the early 19th century) [Francis Hodgson](#) says “The piers acquired a common vocabulary of style quite recognizably their own. Gothic filigree lightness of ironwork is everywhere. A strong penchant for the Moorish is recognizable in a thousand details; its exoticism survives in the very word ‘kiosk,’ which derives through Turkish from Persian. St. Annes-on-Sea even has pavilions recognizably descended from Chinese models.”

Engineer [Eugenius Birch](#) was the most prolific designer of pleasure piers and his innovations were influenced by travels in, among other places, India, where he had advised on the design and construction of the Calcutta to Delhi railway of the East Indian Railway Company. Piers were often made from prefabricated sections – according to the book, at one, in Morecambe in the north-west of England, the components used were originally destined for a city in Chile.

“[Pierdom](#)” is a meaty book and lists the designers, construction materials, and all the various tragedies that have befallen each pier, and is out now ([Dewi Lewis Publishing](#)). There is an exhibition of prints running through December 21st, 2013, at [KLOMPCHING](#) Gallery in New York.