

Minnis Bay 'Run' - 1820

On the night of July 22nd 1820 a smugglers' run at Minnis Bay was ambushed. Five smugglers and a horse and cart loaded with contraband were seized. A Margate magistrate committed the men to Dover Gaol. On the way to Dover, one of the men, Thomas Bishop of Birchington aged 24, escaped and, even with a £50 reward for him, remained at large.

A large crowd gathered outside Dover Court in anticipation that the justice would realise the local support and be lenient with the smugglers. Many of the local magistrates and gentry were involved in the illicit trade anyway.

On July 31st, three of the smugglers were taken from Dover Gaol to the guard ship in the Downs. The Kentish Gazette of Tuesday 1st August tells how the men were escorted by a strong military guard, assisted by magistrates and a party of constables.

A great number of men, women and boys were assembled on the beach. Stones were thrown at the guards, but the magistrates and constables rushed amongst the crowd and succeeded in controlling them. The smugglers were committed to prison, along with a man who had tried to rescue them!