

## THE BENETTON ADVERT

I expect most people will remember the Central Garage in Birchington, which is the starting point of this story. First of all, the garage (which stood on the corner of Station and Paddock Roads) closed and everyone was wondering what it was going to be. Lots of stories were running around the village, so Iris slipped a little story into the grapevine and that was easy. She waited for a time when she could get over the road to Ron Oliver, the Butcher. He was the best one for this sort of thing. He told the greengrocer and it was off! The story was that the garage was to be a "Drive-in Sex Shop". This went on until new plans had been made for the building. The next thing was, the site was boarded up ready for advertising.

There were all sorts of adverts, until one day the boards were covered with a Benetton's advert, which was not very good. It was of a new-born baby and it really did look awful and the people of Birchington didn't want it up there. As they went past Iris's shop they said, "Now come on Iris, get it down." After a while Iris was getting fed up with the interference. She wasn't doing much trade. SO - my orders were to go to "Brill's" for a tin of paint, to cover it. When we had the paint, we got the ladders out and the brushes. I had just had my hip done, so I was not 100%. Anyway, we had spectators watching while we painted over the advert, when all of a sudden there was a Police car with two officers, who said, "You are under arrest." Iris, who was up the ladder, made a fummy by pretending to upturn the tin of paint on the officer below. I said, "No!" I believe these officers were on their first arrest, so we made all sorts of excuses, as they kept saying, "Come on. Come on." After we put the ladder and paint away, we did get into their car and were taken to the Police Station, where we met with a higher ranking officer. He interviewed us one at a time and Iris went in first, while I was put in cell, which I must say was terrible and was filthy. Whoever had been there before, the toilet was overloaded and they had painted the walls and ceiling with the overflow - so you can get the picture of the cell that I was in. As I say, it was terrible and the smell!

After 2 hours they got me out, with intention of changing with Iris, but she didn't want to go into the cell, she said to the officer who was to put her in. So after a lot of banter, one way and another, they put her in an office. Then they gave me a going over and all this went onto tape - in case we got ourselves in the Nick again! Oh yes, I forgot to say, they emptied our pockets when we first arrived. Iris said "I must be getting more money than him." And she demanded more housekeeping money. But that didn't work.

Back at the shop, the two girls had been left on their own. They had phoned the news to the Chairman of the Council and he grabbed his cheque book and went to bail us out. So you can see what a stink we had made! It was our wedding anniversary and Iris was doing all the food and things for the Village Centre, where we were entertaining all sorts of guests the following day. When the information about the advertising boards got out, someone had painted on our white paint, "IRIS RULES O.K." Our daughter Barbara and family were in the USA and Fred Smale, our Vicar,

was out there with them, while their Vicar was over here. Their Vicar was coming to our reception and returning that day, so he soon got the news to Barbara in America.

During the evening at the Village Centre the next day, it was quite a do and Iris and I were called out for a presentation - which was a pair of hand-cuffs!! We thought that was wonderful. When Iris was getting the reception together she had said, no presents, but if they wanted to do anything, she put out a colourful box for donations. She did a lot for charities, so when the box was opened, there was close on £1,000, which was wonderful for her funds.