

BERESFORD HOTEL

Towns Top Hotel Closes - 1966

Birchington's plush Beresford Hotel is closing. This, the second blow to fall on Margate's top-class hotel line-up this year, was confirmed this week.

A spokesman for the owning company said it was true that the cliff top hotel would not be re-opening after the winter closure. His confirmation brings to a head many weeks of rumour and speculation about the hotel, one of the most lavishly appointed in Thanet.

Sale Hope

Mr. Hugh Taylor, chairman of the Beresford Company, said yesterday (Thursday) that they hoped to sell the hotel site if planning permission could be obtained for homes there. Contents would be sold by auction in about January.

"We had originally planned to sell off part of the property and so fund a scheme to condense and completely modernise the remainder of the hotel premises and cut running costs," said Mr. Taylor.

However, various plans submitted had been rejected by Margate Town Council and they had had to abandon this idea.

"On top of this, the R.A.C. and A.A. entirely withdrew our appointment," he added. (The Beresford was formerly listed as a four-star hotel.)

"I consider this was quite unjustified in view of the many compliments we received from guests, many of whom have been with us for years," he said.

This action by the motoring organisations had reduced the fill-in booking.

"At some time or other we may get planning permission and we will then sell," said Mr. Taylor. He said they were still proceeding with an appeal against planning refusal for 60 houses and garages on the hotel site.

There is a caretaker at the hotel who will pass on any letters inquiring about accommodation to the company's office at Richmond.

Mr. Taylor said the hotel had remained open during the last two winters. "But you just cannot make it pay in the winter," he added.

"The closure decision has saddened both myself and my wife. Every penny we have made has been ploughed back into improving the premises. But in present economic conditions we could only finance big improvement plans by selling part of the site with planning consent," he went on.

Mr. Taylor said he held no spite or pique towards the council following repeated planning refusals. As a local planning authority they had a job to do and had carried out their functions as they thought fit.

He emphasized that in addition to the caretaker, the hotel would be continually checked by security men to prevent damage or theft. Earlier this year, Mr. Taylor criticised Margate Council's repeated refusals for outline plans to build homes on part of the hotel site. In a letter published in the Isle of Thanet Gazette in April, Mr. Taylor stated: "Continuous refusals make it impossible for us to re-plan the hotel and bring it up to the requirements of modern standards.

"In this light it might well be that the council's actions would cause my directors to close the hotel, for we need to reduce the hotel site and at the same time capitalise the proposed alterations." At that time Mr. Taylor said they planned condensing the elongated shape of the hotel building and making it into an all-private-bathroom hotel.

The first of a series of planning applications turned down by the council concerned only a 2.34 acre part of the hotel site. The last outline planning

application, which was turned down by the council, was for the demolition of the hotel and the erection on a site of about 6½ acres of 60 houses – some detached and some terraced – with garages or parking space.

An appeal was submitted against this refusal and a council spokesman said on Wednesday that as far as they were aware the appeal was still on, although no date had been set for an inquiry by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government into the appeal.

Conferences

The closing of the hotel was reported to Margate Publicity Committee on Tuesday. Publicity Manager Mr. Peter Bedford, said that no conference delegates were booked into the hotel for 1967, so there was no question of having to find fresh accommodation.

“The loss of another hotel in the borough does, of course, increase the problem of dealing with conferences, especially concerning a headquarters hotel,” he said. Not only has the Beresford accommodated conference delegates and holidaymakers, but it has been regularly used for many years by some of the top names in stage, radio and television entertainment.

The Beatles stayed there when they played at Margate Winter Gardens. This summer the hotel also played host to singer Kathy Kirby and Frankie Howerd.

Among numerous political VIPs’ who stayed there was Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

Earlier this year the Grosvenor Court Hotel, often used as headquarters by conferences closed and has remained closed throughout the summer.



During WW1 in 1917, the hotel was used as a military hospital by the Red Cross for Officers.

Beresford Hotel in 1950

Site of the Beresford Hotel
2007



