

# BIRCHINGTON – ABOUT 100 YEARS AGO

Just before the coming of the railway in 1862.

## Population

1851	885	with 181 houses
1861	813	
1871	1152	of these 965 were poorer inhabitants, chiefly agricultural.

The village centred round The Square.

This appeared bigger than now as there were no footpaths or traffic markings.

It was a meeting place of roads – and of people.

**ROADS** led to -

1. To Sarre and Canterbury – down Church Hill – with the pond at the bottom.
2. To Margate – along the Street by Birchington Hill.
3. To Gore End and the sea – now Station Road and Minnis Road.
4. To Quex and Acol – by Brunswick and The National School.
5. Coleman's Stairs Road – to the sea – now Albion Road.

## Houses

Mainly situated round The Square

And a little way down the road to Gore End as far as Frederick's Bakery & the newsagent's.

The Central Garage was on the corner of Station Road & Paddock Road – (Northend House).

Also there were only a few down Church Hill, and towards Margate – as far as Park Road.

## Station Road

Continued to 'Gore End' (Minnis Bay)

There was a footpath from where now Kent Gardens goes across fields to Upper Gore End Farm – across Stones Field. (Stone was the tenant at Upper Gore End Farm for many years. However, the field was full of flints, so its name may be derived from that.)

Just before where railway bridge now is, road branched – or forked to what is now Grenham Road – and that joined up with Green Road – leading from Gore End Road to the sea at Sebastipol Gap (now Beresford Gap).

## Canterbury Road

Was simply known as 'The Street' in all the earliest census returns.

There was a Bridle Path by Kent Gardens to Upper Gore End Farm and joined up with path from the end of Paddock Road.

The path from the end of Essex Gardens is very old. It was the path from the sea at Gore End straight up to Quex House, passing Bedlam Cottage, which stood in Bedlam Fields (now the farmland on the south side of Essex Gdns).

This path was used by Riding Officers and Preventive Men - and probably smugglers!

There was another path by the mill to Great Brooks End Farm – still used by walkers today (2016).

Some of these paths now gone, others incorporated into present roads.

### **State of roads**

No footpaths.

Not maintained as today – not even gritted.

Highways Surveyors appointed by the Vestry in charge of roads.

Roads were maintained by local farmers, bringing stones from fields and sea shore to fill up the holes and labour was provided by paupers.

No street lighting.

No street drainage.

Waywardens or Surveyors appointed annually (as a result of a law passed in Queen Elizabeth I 's reign) in charge of roads until the Highway Act **1835**.

The Surveyors were such men as John Friend and James Neame, large landowners.

**1811-12** Roads were so bad that carts from Monkton and Minster were forbidden to carry beach sand or shingle through the parish in wet weather.

**1862** Vestry meeting – bad state of roads brought forward. Farmers using it were requested to take 60 loads of stones on to waste land near the road after which the Surveyors will organise the repair of the roads.

**1878** Station Road.

Highway Board was asked to make a foot path in front of the newly built houses in Station Road – but instead the villagers asked the Highway Board to raise the road and take other steps for removing surface water.

**1910** Parish Council decided that speed of motor cars limited to **8mph** passing through the village.

Epple Road was in a bad state.

**Farms** – most people employed on the farms. Only a few on the sea and fishing, few only smuggling.

**Street Farm** lies just below Church House on the same side. Some of these old buildings have been renovated. The farmhouse was originally built in 1450.

**Southend Farm** – now Court Mount – 15<sup>th</sup> century wing at the rear.

**Church Hill Farm** – nearly opposite Church House, was John Bridges Farm.

The map of 1688 was drawn up for him when he bought the farm at that date.

**Neame's Farm** – part of it was where now block of shops near Yew Tree Houses.

His farmhouse was called Evergreen – now called The Smugglers.

**East End Farm** – next to Birchington Hall (Spurgeons').

There was also **Quex Farm, Upper Gore End Farm, Lower Gore End Farm, Great Brooks End Farm,** and **Little Brooks End Farm.**

**The Houses** – mainly cottages, many thatched. Most had wells.

Also earth closets, and later cesspools.

Chief ones were

**Square** – Verger's House, now sweet shop, and occupied by Mr. Busbridge. Also the Powell Arms, Laburnum House, Grove House etc.

**Mills** – 1. Hudson's Mill.

2. Seed Mill, near Bungalow Hotel, with a Malt House next door.

3. Griggs' Mill stood just SE of the Quex estate – and was owned by them, though run for them by the Griggs' family

**Churchyard** – stopped at the bank where there was a wall and a gate which led through the barns and farm land belonging to Street Farm. The two old farm cottages still stand on the opposite corner of what is now Kent Gardens. Street Farmhouse still stands at the foot of the dip, consisting now of Nos: 230-238 Canterbury Road. The large front section with the old roof was built in c. 1450 and has two inglenook fireplaces, installed in c. 1600.

**Brickfields** – There were 3.

1. At Epple Bay on the large dipped green. [Powell-Cotton]

2. At Minnis, just below railway bridge where Ingoldsby Road now stands. [Stephen Holness]

3. In Park Lane where Holton Close and Stringer Drive are now situated [Jesse Last]

**Minnis or Gore End** – was an inlet of the sea, marshy and covered at high tide up to where present shops.

No houses beyond railway, only farm buildings until after about 1880.

Coast Guard Stations built at Epple, Minnis – far end, and later at The Moorings etc.

But these were much later.

**People** – were mainly poor and worked in agriculture. Many were on poor relief.

**1834** the person that keeps a dog, or ass, a cow or a horse was to have poor relief

**Epple Bay** – About **1900** an attempt to form a company was formed to erect a **pier** at Epple Bay where steamers could land passengers

**1874** – There was a boating accident at Epple Bay. 2 Coastguards drowned. The Vicar and Church Wardens collected over £500 for the 2 widows and the 9 orphaned children.

**Before Railways** – Stephen Busbridge was the **parish clerk** and the **sexton** – but he also supplied **coal** to district and chartered many vessels for the purpose which used to **discharge their cargo at Epple Bay.**