

BIRCHINGTON ENGINEERING Co. & TAPLIN COURT

Lt Col Harold Taplin (affectionately known as 'Taps') started his business of wire-drawing in the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Albion Road in 1946, after difficult negotiations with Margate Borough Council. Born in 1891, he had served in the Air Force in both wars and used his engineering skills to fill a gap in the market for precision parts in manufacturing. His wire-drawing machinery was so accurate that the work was produced with an accuracy second to none in the British Isles. A man in the north of Scotland spoke to a Birchington holidaying there and once he discovered where she came from said "You have a firm that produced the most accurate extrusions in Britain. For those of a technical mindset, there is a fuller explanation of this process at the end of this article.

The business went from strength to strength and by 1950 he was able to build a second two-storey unit beside the chapel, thus trebling his work-space. Apart from his wire-drawing section, he also continued a lifelong passion for radio-controlled aeroplanes and boats. He invented a new form of carburettor, which he called the 'Taplin Twin', greatly enhancing the performance of the models he made for racing purposes. By 1963 these were produced by his son Michael in the family's subsidiary business in Margate, trading under the name of Dinton Engineering. This business also made 'patch-boards' for transmitters and assembled the radio transmitters as well.

When Col Taplin died in 1969, Michael and his brother John took over both works, but unfortunately Michael developed Leukaemia and died in 1976. John found the pressure of coping with the two businesses more than he could manage after a while and he sold both businesses to 'Cupform' of Lewes, Sussex, who later moved the two sections to Pysons Road, Ramsgate, selling off the original sites.

Both the old and the new Albion Road buildings were eventually demolished by 1989 and the site lay dormant for a while. McCarthy & Stone acquired it and began building in 1999. They asked the local people for suggestions for a suitable name for the new block of apartments they were building. The most popular – and appropriate - name was 'Taplin Court' and the present residents are now in the happy position of being right in the hub of the village, in beautiful new premises.