

RED CROSS in Birchington

Some of our activities

Mrs Jarman (Madam Mum) was the Area Director of the Red Cross. Red Cross in Birchington was already functioning before 1967, based in the Methodist Hall. Jumble Sales, Coffee Mornings and Bazaars were held to help fund the purchasing of 4 Paddock Road. The older members of the group ran the "Nearly New" Boutique at 4 Paddock Road each Thursday morning. Many Bazaars and Coffee Mornings were organised to raise funds. There were First Aid Lectures, Nursing and Welfare Courses and the house was open to the public throughout the year. They ran a 24-hour Medical Loan Service, where the required items were delivered to the houses.

Eileen Bonsor was the Centre Manager, while other officers were Maisie Maple, Yvonne Braginton and Pam Hudson. The Instructors were Ted Gower, Head of Casualty at Margate A & E Department, while Jim Edwards was the practical instructor. Dr John Hayden from Birchington and Dr Taylor from Westgate were the examiners.

"Lest We Forget", an Ex-Servicemen's support group, used to bring down a group of ex-Servicemen and Chelsea Pensioners each summer. They were met by the Red Cross at Margate Station and taken to the Sundeck for fish and chips. They then either stayed in Margate or had a coach trip into the surrounding countryside, returning to the Sundeck for tea. At the end of the day we waved goodbye to them at Margate Station for another year.

Other duties undertaken by the Red Cross Volunteers included Pantomime duty for the Enterprizes Drama Group and First Aid Duty for the Road Runners in their races. On Remembrance Sunday both Seniors and Juniors attended the Parade and the church service at the War Memorial and in All Saints Church. We also did nursing in people's own homes, including washing the patients.

At Carnival-time, we usually got together a float to advertise our presence in the community. In the summer months there was also beach duty at the Red Cross Hut, just below the slope near the Minnis Restaurant & Bar. From 1970 to 1986 we always attended the big Quexpo events to supervise any first aid requirements.

The Junior Red Cross members were always trained via a series of course in First Aid, Nursing and Welfare. We included visiting Retirement Homes, any elderly people known to us in their own homes for a chat and also the Sea Bathing Hospital patients. We also tried to include visits to children who were disabled and attended a party given for them.

Early in 2000 it was decided that the expense of keeping up 4, Paddock Road was more than the Thanet Committee felt was viable, so they decided to close down our Birchington headquarters, much to the sorrow of the local community. By then there had been a Red Cross group in Birchington for at least 40 years. Many members of the old brigade still keep actively involved in local events, for which people in the community are very grateful.