

The BERESFORD HOTEL

The Hotel was designed by John Seddon, in about 1878 as two quite separate bungalows called "Thor" and "Haun", which were then immediately both bought by Major Morrison Bell, a retired serviceman from the Indian Army. He soon joined the two properties together with a large conservatory facing the sea. While he lived there, the property was always known as "Thor and Haun" throughout his lifetime. He became a much loved philanthropist in the village and enjoyed hosting his many visitors in his beautiful home.

When he died in 1900, his home was bought by Lord Decies, who renamed it "Beresford Lodge" and stayed there intermittently for the next five years, even building his new wife a very grand 'Cattery' for her many cats. By 1910, he had got plans going ahead to turn the place into a first class hotel. All was going well, including much additional accommodation for both visitors and staff, and the establishment was due to open in 1914, but WW 1 intervened. The Hotel was requisitioned to provide recuperation facilities for war wounded, with Lord Decies own choice of head of staff in overall charge.

It took a little while after the war to get the hotel, which he named "The Beresford Hotel", up and running, mainly due to much need redecorating and then reapplying for the necessary licences for running the Hotel. (The original ones had all lapsed during the wartime period.) By late in 1919, all was ready and the hotel was able to open its doors officially in 1920. It was during those early days that it won its name as a really first class establishment. During this time it was used by many of the rich and famous from the world of stage and screen.

The guest list for those days read like a "Who's Who" of that world. It was during this period that John Betjeman paid his visit to the hotel. The "Beresford" held onto its five-star position until the Second World War. It was again requisitioned for military purposes for the next six years, but restarted as a hotel again in about 1946. A number of nearby properties had also been incorporated into the original holding, so that the site was now the largest hotel complex at the western end of Thanet.

However, it never quite managed to return to its original high status. It held the five stars for a very short while, but it was a struggle and by the late 1950s it was no longer held in such high esteem. It staggered on through the 1960s but by 1966, the management decided to close the hotel. Many of the old clientele were now following the latest fashion and going abroad for their holidays, where the weather was always guaranteed to be good.

By 1967, while the hotel was awaiting demolition, there was an accidental fire which hastened its demise and the new estate of Moray Avenue and St Magnus Close was built soon afterwards. The old entrance to the hotel can still be seen on the right hand side at the top of the Beresford Gap.