

CHARLES LAMING'S MILITARY SWAGGER STICK

Charles Laming was the Headmaster of the Boys' School at Park Lane. During the pre-First World War period, he organised a troupe of senior boys into a small squadron and as they left and volunteered for the Front during the war, they held his training in great affection.

After the war, those who survived and were able to return to Birchington formed an Old Boys Club under his direction. In 1919 these boys clubbed together some of their meagre earnings and presented Mr Laming with an ebony military swagger stick with a silver top and cartouche, which they had had engraved in his honour. The stick almost certainly remained at the school, where he would have used it on the military parades that still continued up until his retirement.

In 1926 Charles Laming helped the Old Scholars' Club to build their own club house in Park Lane. Land was bought from Major Percy Powell-Cotton and the hut (later known as The Band Hut, because of its long-time tenants) still stands to this day.

After he died, the school was having a 'rummage' sale (precursor to the jumble sale) in 1935 and an ex-pupil (Bernard Beadle) bought the swagger stick for a few pennies. In 2006 he offered it to the Birchington Heritage Trust, which we were delighted to accept. Sadly, Bernard has now died, so the story has truly come full circle.