

Derek Pemble

Derek was born 20th January 1929 and baptised on the 3rd March in All Saints Church, Birchington. He was the only child of Herbert and Elizabeth Jessie (née Baldwin) Pemble. She was known as Auntie Jessie and had come from Garlinge, but she and Herbert were married in All Saints Church, Birchington. When Derek was born, his parents were living in 'Albert Villas', Prospect Road. Derek was baptised by the Rev. Royston Cole, who has now become famous in Birchington because of his connection and correspondence with Queen Sophie of Greece.

When Derek left school he joined his grandfather's firm of O.B.D (Operative Builders & Decorators), and trained as a plasterer. At aged 18, soon after WW 2, Derek did his National Service in the Royal Air Force. On his return to Civvy Street, he continued in his trade as a plasterer. It was during this time in the early 1950s, that he became a founder member of the Minnis Bay sailing Club. He used to cycle down to the club with any gear he needed strapped onto his bicycle, as he peddled down Minnis Road. He had a very good friend Peter Hunt who also belonged to the club.

Peter later moved to Devon and bought a caravan site. When Derek decided to leave home he went down to Peter and asked to live on his site, doing odd jobs around the site to earn his keep. After his father died in 1977, his mother continued to live alone in their Kent Gardens home, but eventually she became so frail that a neighbour in Rutland Gardens contacted Derek and suggested he perhaps ought to come home and see if he could help her, which he did. After his mother died in - - - - - he continued to live in the house alone.

Derek's great hobby was marquetry, at which he was very skilled and his home was full of examples of his beautiful work. He was always willing to repair damaged marquetry pieces for local people.

At some time in the 1960s or 1970s he became the keeper of a **diary** written in WW 1 by his grandfather, Ashton Pemble, who had helped found the O.B.D firm, and Derek took great care of the little notebook. He read it through several times over the years and recently mentioned it to his neighbour, Edith Winch. She suggested it should be shown to the Birchington Heritage Trust members and from this, a PowerPoint programme was put together telling the story of Ashton Pemble's time during the First World War, first in Russia, and later in France. His time spent in Russia was in 1917, in the midst of the Russian Revolution and his account of these events is gripping.

The day before Derek died, a photograph was lent to the Trust showing Ashton Pemble and his O.B.D workforce outside a development which his firm was working on in about 1925 - '30. Derek's grandfather and two friends had set up the business before the war and it continued right through hostilities and was still trading in the 1970s. Derek was very proud of this connection.

His next door neighbour, June, had to call the police because she was sure something had happened to him. When they broke in they found Derek unconscious in the kitchen.

Derek died in the QEQM Hospital on Friday 15th November 2011 within a few days of being admitted.

*Derek Ashton James Pemble March 1929 – November 2011
Photo taken in the 1950s or 1960s*

