

Birchington's Fire Brigade and the Anchorage

Captain Ashton ran Birchington's Fire Brigade for a while at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Its headquarters were at "The Anchorage in Alpha Road (now the site of "Geoffrey Court"). He was also the head of Westgate's Fire Brigade at the same time.

In checking Kelly's Directories, it has been discovered that he did not reside at The Anchorage during this period, so it would appear that the various residents allowed the use of the 'garage' just for storing the engine. There is one photo showing the men assembled outside the property, so the men must have also met there and possibly done their various drills in the extensive grounds.

The notice about payment was supposed to have been printed in c. 1875, but the Brigade was not at the Anchorage then, as it was not built until c. 1885-90.

There is a photo of Birchington Fire Engine and crew outside Walker's Garage at the Station dated c. 1900, so it would appear that this was roughly when the headquarters were moved to Walker's Garage.



Walker's Garage c. 1900



Photographed in 1902 are members of Birchington's first fire brigade, outside The Anchorage, Alpha Road, Birchington. The story of these men is to be found on this page.

FIRE !

Birchington-on-Sea FIRE BRIGADE

In consequence of the difficulty in obtaining the FIRE BRIGADE CHARGES it has been DETERMINED that in CASE of FIRE the BRIGADE will proceed to the Scene of CONFLAGRATION at once, but unless the PROPERTYOWNER will sign a GUARANTEE for EXPENSES INCURRED, the BRIGADE will PACK UP and Return within Half-an-Hour.

W. JONES, Secretary.

BIRCHINGTON-ON-SEA FIRE BRIGADE.

The comments on this page last week about the old Birchington Fire Brigade have aroused considerable interest, and it appears that the cost of calling out the brigade was often as much as the amount of damage caused by the fire! As proof of this, a charter hangs in Pearson's, estate agents, Station Road, Birchington, dated between 1875 and 1900, and signed by the original secretary, Mr. W. Jones.

I am also indebted to confectioner Mr. W. Holton, of Station Road, Birchington, who supplied me with the photograph of the Birchington Fire Brigade (top of page). The seven men on the left of the picture were also crew members of the Birchington lifeboat, and the man fourth from the left on the bottom row is believed to be the founder of the brigade, probably a Mr. Ashton. Behind the men is the horse-drawn fire engine and, of course, the horse.