

## **GRENHAM HOUSE SCHOOL**

A brief history of the school – Jennie Burgess MA

The School was originally begun in Minnis Bay, When Mr B. V. C. Ransome JP, MA bought No: 18 Minnis Road in 1901 (now Nos: 140-142). It was called 'The Bay School for Boys' at this time. In 1905 Mr H. E. Jeston MA then joined Mr Ransome, and in July 1907, All Saints Parish Magazine contained a report of a concert given by the pupils of "The Bay School", under the direction of Mr H. E. Jeston. By 1910, the partners decided to buy a ten and a half acre site next door to the Bungalow Hotel in Lyell Road, which they bought from St John's College Cambridge. At the time this area was all open farmland, with only a footpath leading down to Minnis and Grenham Bays.

The new School was built and opened by 1911 and was named Grenham House School, after the bay nearest to the site. When the road was made up from Lyell Road to Green Road, Mr Butterworth, the Borough Surveyor for Margate, was asked to think of a name for it. As he lived in Semaphore House in Semaphore Road, which opened into this new piece of road, he felt it should be named after the school – hence its name of 'Grenham Road'.

In 1911, the country celebrated the coronation of King George V. To honour this event, the pupils at Grenham House School planted an oak tree in their grounds, which from then on was always known as the Coronation Oak. In 1935 an acorn sprouted beneath the parent tree. This was moved to a more suitable site, but unfortunately it did not survive. A second seedling did, however, grow and thrive. When the school was finally sold to developers in 1984, both trees were in fine form, but were illegally removed during the building of Homebirch House.

The house in Minnis Bay, where the school was begun, eventually became the St Valerie Club soon after the Second World War, then very soon after it became the St Valerie Hotel for a number of years.

Denys Jeston MA joined his father in running the school from 1946, after Denys had been demobbed at the end of the war. Mr Ransome had died in 1940, just as the school was evacuated. Denys and his father worked together until Henry died in 1953. Denys realised it really needed two people to manage the job, so he looked for a colleague to join him. An ex-army friend, Jack Lidgate and his wife, Agreed to share the responsibility and the financial risks with Denys and his wife Eve.

In 1961 the Old Boys from the school raised the money to present two beautiful wrought Iron gates to the school, in memory of those Old Boys who had been killed in WW 2. The gates were still there when the building was sold to the developer in 1984. By some error, the gates were disposed of to a third party. The name of the buyer and the fate of the gates were not traceable, but the developers decided to have replicas made, much to the relief of the Old Boys, and these now stand at the main entrance into Homebirch House.

Denys Jeston and Jack Lidgate sold their school to Mr Basil John in December 1981. He only ran the school for three more years, before selling it to a developer. The people of the village felt he had bought the school under false pretences and probably intended selling it from the outset. The school was demolished in 1987 and Homebirch House (warden supervised apartments for retired people) was built roughly on the site of the old school building. The playing fields, which had been home to the village Cricket team for many years, was used to build the Hunting Gate estate, despite pleas from local people to save the ground.

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