

Lych-Gate's New Home

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The gateway to the church

I expect that most Birchington residents, and all who use Birchington Square, have noticed the improvement brought about by the erection last week of a lich-gate at the entrance to All Saints Church. The gate has certainly achieved the aim of the Vicar of Birchington (the Rev. C. W. Donaldson) to tidy up the appearance of one of the best-known places in Thanet.

You may remember that the lych-gate was a parting gift to Birchington from the Principal of Woodford House School (Mr H. R. Bickerstaff) when the school moved from the village to Margate in December last.

The gate was originally presented to the school by some of the Old Woodfordians as a memorial to Mr. H. A. Erlebach, the founder of the school, who died in 1928.

Birchington lych-gate dedicated

The memory of Woodford House School, which was for many years at Birchington and which has now moved to Margate, will be retained by the gift of the lych-gate which originally stood at the entrance to the school grounds and now forms the entrance to All Saint's Church, Birchington.

On Sunday morning the Bishop of Dover (the Rt. Rev. L. Meredith) dedicated the gate "to the glory of God and in memory of Woodford House School."

The gate was erected by old boys of the school in 1929 in memory of its founder, Mr. Henry Arthur Erlebach.

The Bishop led the way from the church to the gate after morning service accompanied by the Vicar (the Rev. C. W. Donaldson) and the choir. Under the lych-gate itself, stood Mr. Roger Bickerstaff, headmaster of the school, and Mrs. Bickerstaff, while a number of pupils of the school in their maroon and blue uniforms, together with old boys and girls of the school, formed a group around the gate.

There were also present Mrs Hodges, widow of Mr. A Hodges, a former principal of the school, and daughter of the late Mr. H. A. Erlebach, Miss E. Erlebach, another daughter, Mr. and Mrs. H. Erlebach, Mr. E. J. P. Wenman, president of the Old Woodfordians' Association, and Mr. E. Newnham, secretary.

The developers of the Woodford House site are Cheviot Properties Ltd., of Croydon, and when Mr. Bickerstaff intimated that as the lych-gate had been presented to the school by former pupils he would like it at his new premises, they readily agreed.

Subsequently, it was found impossible for such re-erection to take place and the suggestion was made that the gate should be presented to the church subject to the church being responsible for its removal and re-erection.

When this suggestion was put to Cheviot Properties Let., they agreed and decided to join with Mr. Bickerstaff in presenting the gate to the church and, with him, contributing part of the cost of the necessary removal.

Representatives of the firm received an invitation to attend the dedication ceremony.

Rev Frank Fordham on All Saints Gift Day



Lych Gate:

Inscription on the brass plate on the left of the gate (viewed from the Square)
5½ ins x 7½ ins

**IN MEMORY OF
HENRY ARTHUR ERLEBACH
THIS GATE WAS SET UP
BY THE OLD BOYS, THE SCHOOL
AND IT'S FRIENDS
1929**

The gate was originally placed at one of the entrances to Woodford House playing fields, which lay behind the school and stretched across to Albion & Alpha Roads.