

NORMAN 'SONNY' MILES

We have recently lost one of our long-time residents, who made a large impact on Birchington's building scene for many years. 'Sonny', as he was familiarly known, was born in Garlinge in 1910 and then moved to Margate soon after. This was followed by a move to Minster, where his father, Archibald, ran the Bell Inn for some time. Sonny went to Chatham House School in Ramsgate and when he left school was apprenticed to W.W. Martin the well-known builder, under whose guidance he learnt carpentry and qualified as a master builder.

By this date World War Two loomed over the horizon and Sonny was employed for the duration of the war by the Air Ministry on building and repairing Barrage Balloon sites around London. After the war, he set up in the building business in Birchington with his father, who also had skills in the building trade. His main output was in building bungalows that were known all over Thanet for their superior finish and quality. He used his skills in Kingsgate and around Northdown Park, Margate as well as Manor Drive, Albion Road and Minnis Bay, Birchington, besides other areas in Thanet. Even today, estate agents will advertise one of his bungalows with the proud description "This is a Miles' Bungalow".

He had a builder's yard in Minnis Road, which was always a hive of activity, as the writer of this note can vouch. In searching for rockery stones in 1963, visits to the yard were always a fascinating venture! People who lived in one of Sonny's bungalows would always proudly boast of who their builder was.

Sonny was Chairman of Margate Football Club for a number of years and was a long-standing member of Birchington & Westgate Golf Club, which he captained and was also their Chairman. His generous help to the younger members is still spoken of today. His tall figure was seen playing the greens with great skill and huge enjoyment, till age began to take its toll.

Sonny was married to his wife Elaine for 66 years. She was a great supporter of the Guild of Players for many years, but sadly died a few years ago. When Sonny died on the 9th April this year, aged 97, he left a daughter, Shirley, son-in-law Robert Cross, two grandsons - Matthew and Daniel - and four lovely great-grandchildren.

Long may we hear that boast - **"This is a Miles Bungalow!"**

