

POLICING BIRCHINGTON IN THE 'THIRTIES

My father loved the gee gees and the dogs; Dumpton Park had a fascination for him but only accompanied. One summer in the early thirties we had two families staying with us. He and the two dads went off to Dumpton where they enjoyed the dogs and the modest imbibing between races. Consequently they were just a little bit merry on their return to Birchington, so much so that, instead of staying on the bus to the station, they alighted in The Square.

In those pre-war days the local cinemas, there were half a dozen of them, advertised their programmes on boards which stood outside various shops, the shopkeepers receiving complimentary tickets in return.

Shortly after leaving The Square these three gentlemen looked at one of these boards and decided to carry it home. But, reaching the next they deposited the first and carried on with a new one. So it continued down the length of Station Road until they were about to enter the front gate of Bridge House.

Unbeknown to them, one of the village constables, in his puttees and wheeling his "sit up and beg" bicycle, had been following the trio at a discrete distance.

As they reached the gate he caught up with them. "May I ask, gentlemen, what you plan to do with that board?" said he. "We don't like the picture," said one. Then

came an example of good policing. "I think, gentlemen, that you ought to put them all back, don't you?"

This they did, escorted by said constable. All returned, he accompanied them back down Station Road to ensure they didn't get up to any more "naughties". At the front door they exchanged pleasantries. "Good night, constable." "Good night gentlemen."

Next morning my father went to the nearby sweetshop, C R Edmonds, and bought the largest box of chocolates on sale. I was despatched to Prospect Road to give to to the constable's wife.

Ah, well, changed days, eh?