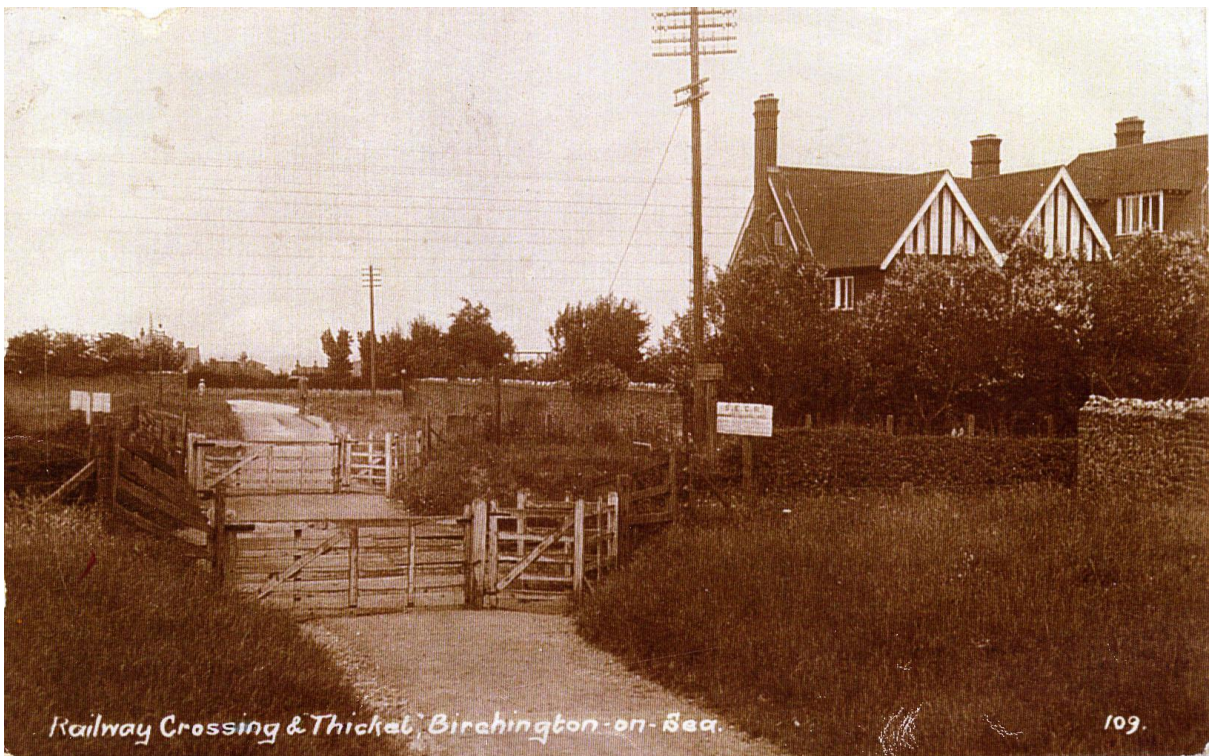


## The Railway Crossing & the Thicket Coleman's Stairs Road



This photo was taken just prior to the First World War. The Railway is the old South Eastern and Chatham Railway. Farm wagons could cross the railway here by opening the gates. The railway came to Birchington in 1863.

At first it was only a branch line of the old London, Chatham and Dover Railway from Faversham. Birchington really began to grow after the coming of the railway.

The Coleman family farmed in Birchington from the 1600s until the mid 1800s. They held office as Churchwarden and Overseer of the Poor.

The "Thicket" (also known as "St Michael's") was built by Dr Cross in memory of his wife who died with cancer in about 1899. The Thicket was given as a Convalescent Home to the Parish of St Michael's, Chester Square in London, for its poor parishioners. St Michael's was his Parish Church near his home in London. He built the Thicket in 1900 and it was used immediately as a hospital during the Boar War. It was given over for the time being to the Household Cavalry

as a Convalescent Home, because Dr. Cross's brother was their Colonel.

Miss Denning who lived in Epple Bay Road (and aunt to Elizabeth Denning) was Matron at the Thicket for 31 years. There were only three matrons of the home. Following Miss Denning in 1931 was Mrs Hiscock and she was followed in 1948 by Mrs Wiggins, who remained there until the Home closed in 1967.

Cross Road was named in honour of Dr Cross.

In 1903 the Rev. James Flemming BD, Vicar of St Michael's Chester Square resided at Erin Dene, 38 Shakespeare Road, during the summer months when he and his family came for holidays.