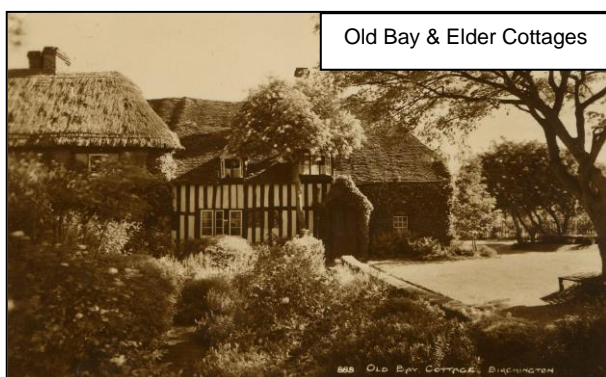
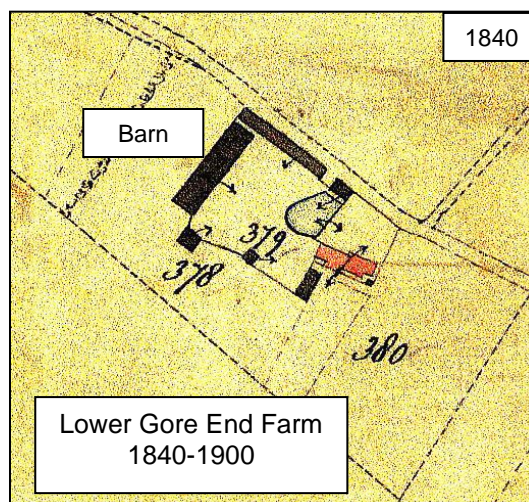


'The Bay Church' – Celebrating its 125th Anniversary 1885-2010

In the 1880s Minnis Bay was known as Birchington Bay and development was just beginning, with the building of four blocks of terraced houses. A farm stood where our two rows of shops are, complete with forge and pond, as well as a large barn on the corner of Minnis Road and Dane Road. A scattering of black weatherboard cottages stood off Old Farm Road, housing farm workers and men working on the newly established brickfield in the Ingoldsby Road area, lying between Minnis Road and the railway.

Old Bay Cottage and elder Cottage looked much as they do today, but were known as Lower gore End Farmhouse. On the other side of Old Farm Road were market gardens and strawberry fields. The rest of Birchington Bay was green fields, except for the Minnis Coastguards, who patrolled from here to Reculver.

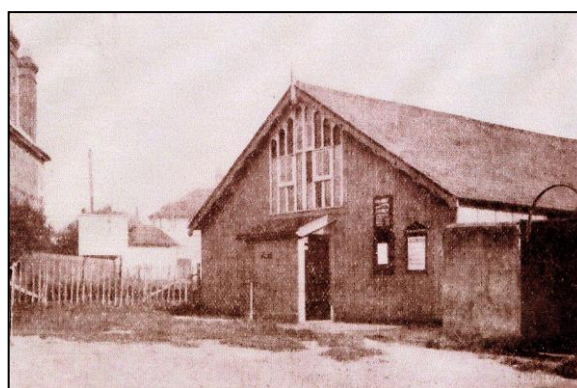


It was to this rural, seaside community that Charles Robert Haig and his family came to live in 1885. In that same year, Mr Arthur Rayden, a London Stockbroker and Parish Councillor in Birchington, organised a very successful Exhibition in his purpose-built exhibition building in the grassy hollow we know today as 'The Dip' – a children's play area.

Charles Haig, walking and talking to all, recognised the need for a Church for the people of

Birchington Bay. He bought the odd shaped piece of land next to the Coastguard Station and acquired timber left over from the Exhibition Building. He engaged the workmen who had been employed to put up the building and in about a fortnight, they had built the first Bay Church in Ethelbert Road – and the first service was held.

The local community formed a good-sized congregation – families from the farm cottages, the brick-workers, the foreman of the railway maintenance and his family along the line, plus the Coastguards and their wives and children (50 youngsters at one point!). The congregation numbers were swollen in the summer by many of the visitors to Birchington Bay. In addition to Sunday services they held prayer meetings, hymn practice, sewing meetings, lantern shows in winter time (precursor to slide shows!) telling about the mission work or stories telling the life of Christ and his saints (with or without a capital letter).



In the 1880s and 1890s the life of Birchington Bay revolved around the Bay Church. It was founded as an interdenominational church and as the text on the wall outside reads, we are:

“All one in Christ Jesus”

In the 1930s, the little wooden church was rebuilt with much help from the Coastguard crew – in both funding and labour – and has gone from strength to strength over the last 125 years.

(Most of this information has come from 'The History of the Bay Church (URC, Minnis Bay) 1885 to 2000' compiled by Margaret Haig & Elinor Isard)