



Birchington Heritage Trust

Reg. Charity No.1099250

LOCKDOWN NEWS SHEET

August 2020

Since the lockdown many of us have had to do their food shopping locally in the village. Traders have had to abide by government guidelines, as well as coming up with their own ideas to keep customers and themselves safe, such as installing screens in till areas and offering delivery options etc. I hope folk will continue to support them once we are able to return to something like normality.

Until the mid 1950s most of the buildings on the left side of Station Road (as viewed from The Square) were residential. As more shops were opened these properties were converted into shops. The shop my father Ronald Robinson opened in 1955 at number 36 was one of them. I remember the conversion work was carried out by shop fitters F.J. Pike Ltd of Ramsgate, also fitting out the shop next door at number 34. My father rented the premises from Denis Poupard who had a shop at 40 Station Road, also had branches in Margate Cliftonville and Broadstairs, all trading as Henry's which many readers will be familiar. My fathers shop was a stationers, he also did picture framing in the backroom. The other new shop next door sold decorating equipment, they later moved to Cliftonville trading under the name 'James Decor'. 'The Stationer' was operational until 1960; the shop was taken over by Nicholas Kingsman Ltd who were bakers. Sometime around 1970 it became 'Cinderella Shoes' and then a florist. Kelly's directory has it listed as 'Mimosa Tea Rooms' in 1974. Around 1999-2014 it was a dress shop 'Gemini Fashions'. It changed again in 2014 to a sweet shop 'Sweet Moments'. At the time of writing it is a nail shop 'Happy Nails' who took this over in 2017. So, in the 65 years it has been a shop, it has changed hands 8 times. The longest established shop in Birchington is Courts the chemist at number 69 Station Road. They are listed in the Kelly's directory in 1929. They later expanded acquiring the premises next door at No.67. The photo below shows it before the expansion. The next longest established business is the Band Box at No.79, they sold women's clothing and haberdashery. The shop began in 1937, and is run today by the founder's daughter Jill Edwards. This business also expanded, taking over the premises next door in 1985.



Lower Promenade Walk

The lower promenade from Beresford Gap to Epple Bay finally received approval to be constructed in November 1979. Prior to this several houses along this stretch had parts of their back gardens fall into the sea, so this decision was welcome news.

Since the easing of the lockdown, it's been noticeable that increasing numbers of walkers (and cyclists) have been exercising along the lower promenade between Minnis Bay & Epple Bay. Likewise folk from Westgate travelling in the other direction. More than a few have been somewhat surprised that the promenade is not continuous; there is a gap of some 245 yards from Epple Bay towards Westgate.

The area concerned belonged to the Ecclesiastical Commission. They leased the land to Kent County Council to enable Sea Road to be constructed & improved. To enable the promenade to be built, the Commission had to be approached again for approval. The council were confident this would be straightforward as the Commissions land would have the added protection from the strengthening of the sea defences. They were rather surprised that although permission was granted, the council would have to pay an additional charge of £25 per year for the privilege. This did ruffle a few feathers among some councillors, but the necessity of strengthening the sea defences outweighed the monetary sum involved. So on this point agreement was reached. Then in 1986 a dispute arose on who would actually pay the costs of the scheme. The Kent County Council said the government should pay as it is sea defence work. The Department of the Environment countered and said Kent County Council should pay because the road is a highway. So the argument went on and on, and finally reached stalemate. Probably the issue will be raised again only when an unprotected area of cliff face falls into the sea and threatens the use of Sea Road.

The jig-saw shape of the coastline in this area does come very close to the road in several places; see the photograph I took recently. At least this part has cliff and promenade protection.



Those travelling from Westgate come to the end of the promenade near Epple Bay.