

HERBIE FLOWER

Notes by Jennie Burgess, with help from Jane Flower - September 2007

Herbert Flower was born in Ramsgate in 1924. During the Second World War, he joined the RAF as an air gunner. He met his future wife Jane Rankin during the war. They had two sons, Kenneth, who was born in 1947, who now lives in Herne Bay and John who was born in 1950 and now lives in Margate.

Herbie joined the local Police Force in 1951 and was posted originally to Tonbridge. However, the authorities were unable to find him accommodation for his wife and two sons, so he was moved back to Thanet and was given a house in the Margate area. He was on duty in Margate on the night of the great storm of 1953, when miles of Kent's coastline was inundated by the sea. In an article in the Thanet Gazette in February 2004, he described his experiences that night in some detail. Soon after the flood he was moved over to Birchington, where he became our own Police Constable, staying here 14 years. His home in those early days was in Stone Barn Avenue, and he was still living there in 1974, not long before he eventually retired.

At the start of his service with us, his reporting point was at the Police Box in the Square, which was still functioning in 1959-60. This type of box was made world famous by becoming the 'Tardis' for the "Dr Who" series. In about 1964 the new Police Sub-Station was built at the entrance to Birchington Railway Station. When it was closed in the early 1970s it was bought by the Masonic Lodge of Birchington, who built an extension behind for their meetings.

In about 1968 the Police Force was reorganised in the Kent Division and the local community discovered that Herbie was due to be moved to Margate, after spending 14 years serving us here. Birchington people were so upset about this that, under the leadership of Mr D. A. P. Hampshire, they organised a petition asking Thanet's Police chief (Chief Superintendent Clifford Greenwood) to let Herbie Flower remain with us. Despite the fact that there were around 1,000 names on the petition, it failed to prevent the move taking place. His next job was based in Margate, but he continued to live in Stone Barn Avenue, Birchington.

In 1971 they had a wonderful trip to the United States for a month. They stayed with Jane's Father and his second wife, who had moved to the States in c. 1950. While they were in the USA together,

Herbie visited a Police Depot in California, where he shadowed one of the officers in their force. He and the US officer exchanged badges at the end of the day. Herbie and Jane also went to see the Queen Mary while they were in the States.

During his fifties Herbie began to suffer joint problems and eventually in 1978, at the age of 54, he took early retirement from the Force. He joined the civilian part of the organisation for another ten years. When he finally retired in 1988, Herbie and Jane moved to Sewell Close until earlier this year.

Jane coped with Herbie's increasing physical difficulties for three years with help from the medical services, but it became obvious that Herbie needed to live on just one floor. So in 2007 Herbie and Jane moved into a pleasant top floor flat in Taplin Court. On being asked what the views were like from her elevated position, with her usual humour, Jane's reply was "We've got a lovely view of Albion Road Car Park!"