

ACOL

Notes from Neil Lawrence's talk at the Parish Breakfast (1.10.2011)

PLAGUE

16 – 33 plague victims out of a population of about 140 people
2011 - 240 voters

CROWN & SCEPTRE was two buildings in 1660 when it became an ale house
There are two bricked-up ovens in the cellar, suggesting that it was once a
bake-house. The Holloway family lived there in 1660

In 1770 John Friend of Birchington bought the inn when horse-drawn coaches
were calling at the inn. By this date they were on their way to London or travelling
over to Margate and Ramsgate

ACOL PIER – the pond that stood where the house in the hollow near the inn now
stands ('The Elms'). When the horses were unhitched at the inn ready to harness
a fresh pair, they were taken to the pond for a drink and a cool down. In order to
get them right into the water, a pier was built across the pond so that the grooms
could walk the horse right across to the other side.

'SURPRISE HOUSE' – later called 'The Elms'

This is the large house on the corner of the Street and the Shottendane Road
corner. It used to have a large pond in its garden (see note on Acol Pier). There
is a separate clear sleeve in this file with information about the property in its
present condition (2011), as it has come up for sale this year.

EGERTON MANOR – used to be called **ACOL HOUSE** until Miss Stephens and
her family bought it in 1953.

The present appearance of the house was made in 1710 but it has much
earlier sections in the inner parts of the building.

Egerton Barn is dated about 1610. It used to be thatched with heather, but
is now covered with straw.

METHODIST CHAPEL

Built in 1866 under the leadership of the Rev. George Sicklemore

Cost £107 to build – was in use until 1966, but by then the numbers were too
low to keep it going and most people had access to a car, so could go into
Birchington for their services.

Bought by the undertaker W. S. Cole of Monkton as his Chapel of Rest in 1967

ST MILDRED'S CHURCH

Built in 1876 (gutter hoppers have this date). There is an odd picture of it showing it as if it stands on the top of the hill. In fact it is hidden down in what is possibly a flint or chalk quarry up Plumstone Lane, and only the cross and bell-housing can be seen from the bottom of the lane. It cost £790 to build and was shepherded through by Birchington's first full Vicar, as against a Curate. The Rev. John Price Alcock came to Birchington in 1871 and petitioned the Dean and Chapter at Canterbury Cathedral to make Birchington a parish in its own right, along with Acol, which had been joined to it since about 1565.

By this date the arrival of the railway (1863) had led to a rapid increase in population. Alcock also saw the need for a small school in the parish and having been gifted the piece of land for the church, along with the field on the left of the church site for a teacher's house, he asked that the building be a dual purpose one, which was known as a 'school-church'. (Note – not a Church School) The school children were provided with two toilets on the north wall of the play area. These were only recently converted into storage facilities for the upkeep of the grounds. The one big drawback of the scheme was that no proper funding for the upkeep of the school and the paying of the school teach was ever set up. The Crispe charity was persuaded to contribute the necessary funds at the outset, but these were not adequate fro a well trained member of the profession.

The school-church functioned for just 10 years (until 1886), when the Crispe Charity withdrew its funding, as it was felt that not enough children were using the school. The size of the building was inadequate and the very limited play area were not much use for games activities. The Charity's funds were then sent to the school in Park Lane for a short time, until the scheme was completely re-ordered by the Charity Commissioners to provide apprenticeships and further education for pupils leaving school.

WILLIAM COBBETT came through this way on his Rural Rides in 1824. He was very derogatory about the state of the poor in Thanet.

LAUNDRIES - There were two Laundries – one was on Acol Hill – a flint building - The other was in Plumstone Lane and is described quite clearly by Alf Bedwell in his book "A Life Well Lived".

BLACKSMITHS – There were two blacksmiths. The one was opposite the Methodist Chapel and the house still stands there today.

The second one was behind Neil Lawrence's house and was working in the 1930s. He had a younger brother in Minster and would cycle over there once or twice a week

POEM - The poem was by Frank Dilnott and was titled "Willett's Lament" – written in 1993.