

FRIEND WILLIAMSON CHARITY

This account of the 'Friend Williamson Charity' was included in the Minutes of the charity for 17th May 1894. It was written by the Vicar, the Rev. J. Kirkham Fox of Birchington.

"In the year 1887 – a piece of land adjoining Coleman's Stairs Gapway – measuring about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre more or less – and left by Will of the late Mr Friend Williamson to the Parish of Birchington, was conveyed to the then Vicar, the Rev J. P. Alcock, Messrs R. Edwards and Charles Mare, Churchwardens – Mr Draysa (?) Overseer and Mr Geo: Cousins a former Overseer – and whereas this piece of land had by the action of the Sea become difficult of access – except over other properties, and therefore of little value – to the Parishioners - it was - by the Charity Commissioners, put up at Public Auction – and sold to the Monarch Building Society - for the sum of £105 – with part of which sum, after deducting £15 17s 6 for sale expenses, purchased £88 18s, in 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ % Consolidated Stock and transferred the same into the Name of the Official Trustees of Charitable Funds – and appointing as Administrating Trustees – The Vicar, Churchwardens and Overseers of Birchington (ex-officio) with the request that the Stock Receipt should be kept with the other Documents relating to the Charity."

The money from the Dividends was to be paid into an account held at the Lloyd's Bank branch in the Square. It was agreed at the meeting in 1894 that future annual meetings, for the distribution of the accumulated funds, should take place in January, according to the Charity Commissioners' instructions. The funds were to be distributed to the Poor of the Parish who were not in receipt of Parochial relief, and at the discretion of the Trustees.

8th January 1896 – There was £4 8s in the Bank to be distributed and it was shared between nineteen widows:- Widows Warner, Ames (from Mill Row), Fuller, Goodwin, Browning, Castle, Owen, Hutchieson, Sayer, Coleman, Witherden, Sayer, Sandwell (in Gas Lane), Bushell (15, Brunswick – the long terrace in Park Lane), Larkin, also Jane Adams, Susanna Brockman and Widow Williams – 3/- each.

In 1903, the list of widows had grown to 20 and their exact addresses are all given. During the following years, names only are given, and even these are frequently omitted. In 1931, a list of 17 is included with their addresses and a space for each to sign that they had received the gift. Interestingly, four of the widows could only make their mark.

The charity is still effective today (2005), making donations to local widows in the parish. The Trustees also run the 'Robinson' and the 'Friend' Charities, so the lists of recipients have now been amalgamated. The money from the Coleman Stairs land is now invested with the funds from the other Charities in 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ % Treasury Stock.