

GUY FAWKES NIGHT in BIRCHINGTON – 1950s

By Ann Rowe

Come the evening of the 5th of November in the 1950s, a much looked-forward-to celebration took place in Birchington Square in front of the Powell Arms.

As dusk descended a merry crowd gathered around and local dignitaries arrived, including, as far as we can remember, his worship the Mayor of Margate, to form the Judge and Jury at the trial of the much maligned 'Guy Fawkes' – some say the only one worthy to enter the Houses of Parliament!

With shouts and cries of "Burn him! Burn him!" and "Guilty! Guilty!", the crowd roared even before the open-backed lorry arrived, complete with an effigy of Guy Fawkes, strapped in a chair on the back.

A goodly trade was enjoyed by the pub's landlord, Arthur Finch, as pint after pint - but not too many per person – were consumed by the local populace, including the visitors and said dignitaries. Amid further cries of "Guilty!" and "Burn him!" – to the delight of all assembled in the Square, the Judge, Jury and the crowd all got their "Guilty" verdict, with more rousing cheers all round.

A flaming torchlight procession made its way (or more likely wobbled its way) along Albion Road to Epple Bay cliff top, preceded by the Guy on his "hearse". As they processed along Alpha Road and Epple Road, small Jumping Jacks and Bangers were let off, causing much merriment.

A large bonfire had been built on the cliffs and as the effigy was placed a-top, the lighted torches were flung on the great pile of wood, which soon crackled and blazed away.

A good time was had by all as a firework display followed, while hot-dogs, jacket potatoes etc. were served to mark the death of the poor old Spaniard – GUY FAWKES!