

PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL

The old Chapel was built in 1875 for the Primitive Methodist sect. They had broken away from the main Methodist congregation, because they wished to return to what they saw as the original ways of the Wesley brothers, when Methodism was first established. They felt the need to be much stricter in the observance of the 'rules' the two brothers set down in their earliest days, when they were battling with the very lax standards of Christian life in the Anglican church of the time.

The group in Birchington only lasted for about ten to fifteen years in Birchington, mainly because the local congregation saw the exit of this group as 'wake-up' call to the rest of them, and it reminded them from whence they had been created, so many of the members of the breakaway group came back to the fold. The Chapel in Albion Road was already being let out to other users by 1890 as the few sect members who stayed loyal, did not have enough money to continue as sole users. The earliest members of the Scouting troupe formed in Birchington used to meet there as did members of other organisations, like the Baptist Church, the Catholics some of the men's groups, especially when there was not enough room for them in the Institute.

In about 1892, Mrs Susan Gray bought the Chapel and began to let it out at an extremely reasonable rent to the people of the village. One urgent request came from the National School in Park Lane, as they needed a site for a new Infant School. Until then, they had very few children under 7 years old, but these numbers were rising quickly as the population in the village grew, after the arrival of the railway in 1863. Mrs Gray let it to the School for a peppercorn rent and several of the older members of the community can still recall their earliest schooling starting in Albion Road.

A recent visitor to the Birchington Heritage Museum brought in a beautiful prize book given to the lady's father at the age of 6, while he was a pupil there. The dedication page is seen here on the right. The book is slightly larger than A4 format and has a page for each month plus the dedication page at the start and a poem and wish for the New Year at the end of the book.

After WW2 the chapel was bought by Col. Taplin and used for his Engineering factory from 1946 to the 1980s and demolished soon afterwards.

