

## **Birchington Bay Flooded Destruction of the Sea Wall, and Promenade**

From the Isle of Thanet Gazette 29-11-1897

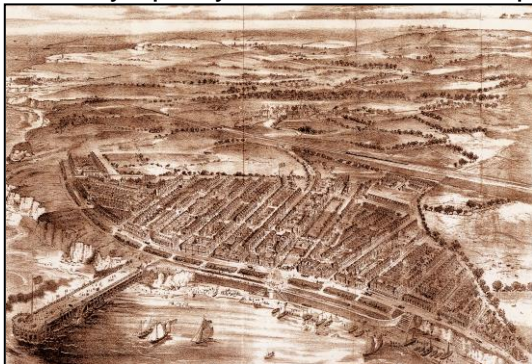
The visitation at Birchington was of a brief but destructive character. "It was all done in twenty minutes," says Mr Alderman Rayden, the owner of the Birchington Bay Estate, with its sea wall and promenade. The damage even in this time must be some thousands of pounds in its extent.

The promenade, which commences at a raised point to the east of the Bay and extends for about a mile in the direction of Reculver, has been much damaged, though it does not present anything like the scene of destruction at Westgate.

The extraordinary violence of the hurricane, however, tore up the surface in many places and at some points deep fissures have been cut into the wall, and large portions either carried away, with the receding waves, or dashed with other wreckage across the wide drive which runs along the sea front. In a valley behind the sea wall, and in front of the residences erected in the locality, stands what has always been known as the "Exhibition Building" a large erection of a somewhat temporary character [made entirely of wood], which Mr Rayden generously put up many years ago for the purpose of holding an exhibition on a large scale for a charitable object [though also to sell plots of his land for development]. This building now stands in the midst of a lake and very little more than the roof is visible.

During the afternoon of the storm, the waves poured over the damaged sea wall into the valley without let or hindrance, changing a pretty spot into a temporary swamp. There are two large conservatories near the building and these were also flooded in eight or ten feet of water. We regret to hear that much valuable property of a perishable character belonging to Mr Rayden, was stored in the Exhibition Building, as well as a number of family relics. It is feared that most of these have been rendered valueless. In a few days, however, the whole of the water will be pumped out, and every effort made to speedily repair, as far as possible, the damage done.

While the cost of the larger disasters at other places round the coast will in every case be distributed over a number of persons, the damage at Birchington falls entirely on one man, Mr Alderman Rayden. This gentleman has spent a fortune, to say nothing of the most persevering efforts over a number of years in developing the estate and protecting the sea front. He has accomplished this in the face of many difficulties and discouragements and much sympathy is felt for him in the present disaster.



Proposed development at Minnis Bay in 1885



The Dip after the 1897 storm