

CARMEL COURT

Carmel court was built around 1900 for Mr Herbert Bentwich. It is listed in Kelly's Directory for 1906-7 under Beach Avenue, although its front door faced towards Spenser (sic.) Road. The grounds covered the plot between the four roads, Spenser, Rossetti, Shakespeare and Beach Avenue. The Bentwich family continued to live there until 1929, but soon after this the house was taken over as an annex for the Beresford Hotel and is listed under Spencer (now spelt with a 'c') Road.

By 1937, Carmel Court was listed under the name of Mrs Naomi Birnberg. Her husband Jonas was a Mathematics teacher in London. After the Second World War, Naomi Birnberg ran a small private school in the house during term-time. They had two sons, Benedict, the elder, who became a lawyer and Teddy who was a French teacher. When the two boys were at home, they used their two bedrooms upstairs on the two outer wings of the house. Naomi's cousin Mary Davis also lived with them. They employed a cleaning lady called Mrs Mann in the early 1950s. The grounds around the house were quite large. The house faced towards the sea and behind it butting onto Shakespeare Road was a good-sized orchard, with a pleasant lawn between it and the house. Across Gainsborough Road between Mansfield House and White Lodge, Mrs Birnberg had a kitchen garden, where the children used to help her gather the vegetables and fruit.

Carmel Court School was in operation after World War 2 and had about 12 pupils at a time. One at least was a boarder, and the day pupils all came from in and around Birchington. The house had a large number of rooms, only some of which were used by the pupils.

During the years the house functioned as a school, c. 1949-1956, some of the children who went there were:

Sheila Herriott (now Philpott), Zenobi Solomon, Deirdre Vanderville, Anthony Greig, Gerald?, Anthony Fairbrass, and Ros Cossey's cousin. Sheila vaguely recalled that Deidre used to stay across the road in "Fairfield", Berkeley Road, with her Nanny. She used to play with Ann Wallace, whose grandmother knew Mrs Vanderville. Nina Wallace, Anne's mother, remembers that the two girls used to play in a tree house in gardens. She also recalls that Deidre had an older brother called Colin and that the Vanderville family used to come down to Birchington to stay in the Beresford Hotel. She last saw Deidre when she was about 19 or 20, and knows that she later married. Nina now lives in Sandpiper Court, which was built on the orchard of Carmel Court.

While Sheila Herriott was at the school (early 1950s), the pupils put on a performance of 'Alice in Wonderland' out in the gardens. Sheila took the part of Alice, While Gerald? and Anthony Fairbrass were Tweedle Dum and

Tweedle Dee. There is also a photograph of Sheila with Deirdre, Zenobi Solomon, Anthony Greig and an unknown girl, taken on the lawn behind the house in about 1952.

Soon after 1955 until about 1960, the house is listed as a nursing home with Mrs. M. M. Kirk as 'Principal', but by 1961, it is no longer included. It was bought by a developer soon afterwards and pulled down to make way for Carmel Court flats in the mid 1960s and then Sandpiper Court was added in 1985, on the site of the old orchard.