

THE EXHIBITION BUILDING

Alfred Walker

1885 – It stood in the hollow (now known as The Dip) at Minnis Bay and was built by Mr Arthur Rayden, a London stockbroker and great friend of Mr Haig – the father of Miss Margaret Haig.

He built it to house an Exhibition to help cover the costs of running the Institute in Birchington – founded by Major Bell and Rev. J.P. Alcock etc. The Exhibition was a great success and made a profit of £240.

Next to the Exhibition building was a conservatory where Mr Rayden kept rare tropical birds.

He was also the chairman the old Birchington Bay Estate Co. He charted special trains and subsidised the fares for the public to visit the Exhibition. He also promoted the sale of his plots of land in the Bay. The Thanet Gazette had a whole page advertisement.

With the timber left over from the Exhibition building, along with the labour from the Minnis Bay Coast Guard crew members, Mr Haig organised the building of a little wooden Church (called Bay Church). Coastguards helped to keep this church clean and holy-stoned* the wooden boards. *(A soft sandstone used for scrubbing decks)

There was a great storm of 1897 when the surf boat at Margate was sunk with the loss of 9 lives in an attempted rescue. The sea wall at Minnis Bay was broken down and the Hollow (Dip) was flooded. The Exhibition building was repaired after the flood of November 1897 and Anglican services were held there until at least 1908. Much valuable property belonging to Mr Rayden in the Exhibition building was very badly damaged. Unfortunately it was not insured.



The Exhibition Building after the 1897 storm

