

PRINCE DORIA & BIRCHINGTON

Memories of his time here

Agneta Williams, a friend of Princess Orietta, Prince Doria's daughter, asked Orietta what she remembered of her visits to Birchington.

Orietta remembered going to the little bungalow at Birchington for some holidays, but said it was sold in the early 1930s. Her father had bought the bungalow in 1927 and he was listed in the 1928 Kelly's Directory as the occupant, even though he was only there part of each year. By 1930 her father had bought the two plots next door and built very pleasant and much larger houses on both the plots. Orietta remembered that the bungalow was one of 'several' houses in Harold Road that her father owned. She recalled that the properties were 'away from the sea' (which is quite correct, as they were at the south end of the road). She couldn't recall the names of the properties nor the numbers. They were not numbered in those days but were, in fact, 'Minnis Cottage' – 2 (the bungalow) which was later renamed 'Flagstones', the next door house was then named 'Minnis Cottage' - 4, after his first love, and the second house he built was called 'Melfi' – 6, after one of his palaces in Italy.

Orietta did not think much of her father's delight in this tiny Kentish seaside town and his 'little' houses. She was used to palaces with up to one thousand rooms! Prince Filippo Doria Pamphilj was very unconventional and liked the simple life – for all his immense wealth. Despite being one of the three leading families in Italy, with his most beautiful Palazzo Doria in Rome, he much preferred to go about incognito in old casual clothes (which he could do in Birchington without even raising an eyebrow) and enjoyed riding on buses and trams in both England and Rome.

While they were in Birchington, they were staunch supporters of the little Roman Catholic Church in Minnis Road. It was still housed in its converted wagon shed at this time. Orietta was confirmed here on the 19th October 1931, as the records in the church show. She continued to remain loyal in her faith to her dying day, attending Mass daily. On the 12th November 1933, Prince Filippo and Princess Gesine (Mary) stood as sponsors for a number of children who were confirmed by Bishop William Brown that year.

Her address in Rome in February 1999 was -

**Principessa Orietta Doria Pamphilj
Palazzo Doria
Via del Corso
ROME
Tel: code for Italy 678 84 23**

Much of this information came to Brenda Kirby in a letter from Marie-Jacqueline Lancaster of 42a Palace Gardens Terrace, LONDON W8 6RR dated 24th February 1999. The rest comes from our records in the Birchington Heritage Trust Museum.