

**SGRAFFITO PANELS at The PORCH**  
 Thanet Times 1970s  
 Miss Beck (owner) and Mrs Maureen Ford (artist)

Not many people know that Thanet has an interesting link with Sir George Frampton, the sculptor who created the world famous statue of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens, later the statue of Queen Victoria in Lahore, and after the first world war the statue in London of Edith Cavell, the courageous nurse who saved the lives of many British wounded.



Mrs Ford working on the sgraffito with  
 Miss Beck watching her progress

Frampton as a youth was a friend of the artist Solomon J. Solomon, a well known artist of his day, who had bought the annex, "The Porch," in Spencer Road, Birchington, which was the coach house to his main house called "Whitecliff" – one of the famous Tower Bungalows.

George Frampton came to live with the Solomon's when he was a penniless sculptor, fresh from years of apprenticeship to his profession. Solomon wanted to help Frampton and suggested that he might create frescoes round the upper part of his new house.

Frampton made this a labour of love. He was 22 years old at the time - 1882. Much later he was knighted. As Sir George Frampton (born in 1860), his name is among the lists of the great ones in art. But the name of his benefactor is almost forgotten - but not Frampton's frescoes.

### **POET'S CORNER**

There has long been confusion as to the name of the artist who made these at Poet's Corner, Birchington. A few years ago Miss Eileen Beck who came to live in the neighbourhood 30 years ago acquired the property and one of her praiseworthy acts has been to restore the frescoes which had in the past been badly treated.

### **RENOVATION of the PANELS**

One day Miss Beck came across a woman admiring the house. She said she was the daughter of Mr. Solomon J. Solomon and she told Miss Beck the story. There was no doubt, she said, but that they were the work of Sir George Frampton when he was a young and penniless man.

So far as she knew he had done none of the frescoes on other property in the area and it is to be thought that other owners copied the idea of Frampton's frescoes to adorn their property.

Miss Beck was helped by well known local artist Mr. Henry Campbell who recommended the services of a local artist friend, Mrs. Maureen Ford, who is art teacher at Holy Cross School, where Mr. Campbell himself once taught.

Earlier this year Mrs. Ford tackled this big work. She had an advantage over Frampton who had to stand on ladders to apply the plaster in which he worked his frescoes. Mrs. Ford could stand on a porch roof and a platform was made for her in the more inaccessible spots.

"It was cold weather, the light was never good but I regarded it as a challenge," says Mrs. Ford. "Some of the frescoes were nearly obliterated and I had to shadow the plaster with my hand to decipher their line. Many of the faces were wiped out and I had to trace the plaster surface to recapture the feel of a face.

"They are all cherubs in the Roman style and although I don't particularly like the finish of the feet, everything Frampton did went into the expression of the faces and this I have tried to bring out.

"Who am I, after all, to criticise a master?"

"I used Minerva grey to bring out the frescoes and it has been a great joy to recreate this really wonderful work of art." Mrs. Ford pays tribute to Miss Beck for making all this possible.

"All too often people do not think it worthwhile to spend money to bring back for us the work of the really great artists and sculptors. The sgraffito panels of The Porch are not only worthy of preservation, they are things of beauty that all can see."



