

The Sea View Hotel

When the hotel was built in 1865, it was called the "Railway Hotel & Tavern". It was built very shortly after the opening of the final section of the London to Ramsgate railway in 1863. At this date there were no other houses in the street except two or three old, almost derelict cottages nearer the Square.

By 1882 the Hotel had been renamed "The Sea View Hotel", which today seems rather odd. However, at that date Minnis Road had only the first two of the large 'observatory' houses and the little terrace below them. The next building was down the hill at Upper Gore End Farm. So the sea was clearly seen from all the bedroom windows.

In the early census returns, Station Road was simply called 'The Street', but had become known as Station Road by 1881. The first part of the building on the corner of Prospect and Station Road was a three storey one, but soon after, the two storey section was added. The whole building still retains much of its air of Victorian gentility, especially in the coloured glass windows. The rooms upstairs are well proportioned with pleasantly high ceilings. There were once five doors onto Station Road, as well the one in Prospect Road.

During March 2002, the Shepherd Neame Brewery, who owns the Sea View, awarded the Hotel 'The Most Improved Pub of the Year', in one of their annual awards. This event was recorded in the Isle of Thanet Gazette of 22nd March 2002. At that time, Mrs Denise Stewart and her son Andrew Tonkiss were its landlords. They had only taken over the previous year and had worked very hard to get the hotel upgraded. Although there is only a small garden at the rear of the hotel, the building stands directly opposite Dog Acre, a permanent open, green space at the west end of Station Road. This means that the inside of the bars are always light and airy. Each of the landlords has worked hard to improve the place and the present ones are no exceptions.

In the garden there stands a huge pair of ribs forming an arch. They were taken from a whale that beached itself at Minnis Bay in 1919. The landlord of the time, Walter James Baker, was down at the Bay when the carcass was being dismembered for disposal and asked for the ribs, to act as a feature in his garden at the Sea View. Mr Baker's granddaughter visited the hotel in 1999 and remarked about the incident to one of the staff. She was delighted to see that the ribs were still there. In Birchington's archives are quite a number of records of whales being washed up along our three bays dating back over the centuries. One is even included in the 1688 map of Birchington. In the 1909 Appendix to J.P. Barrett's book '*The Ville of Birchington*', (1893) he includes the account of a whale beaching itself just west of Birchington in August 1898. This one was eventually buried on the Minnis behind the beach.