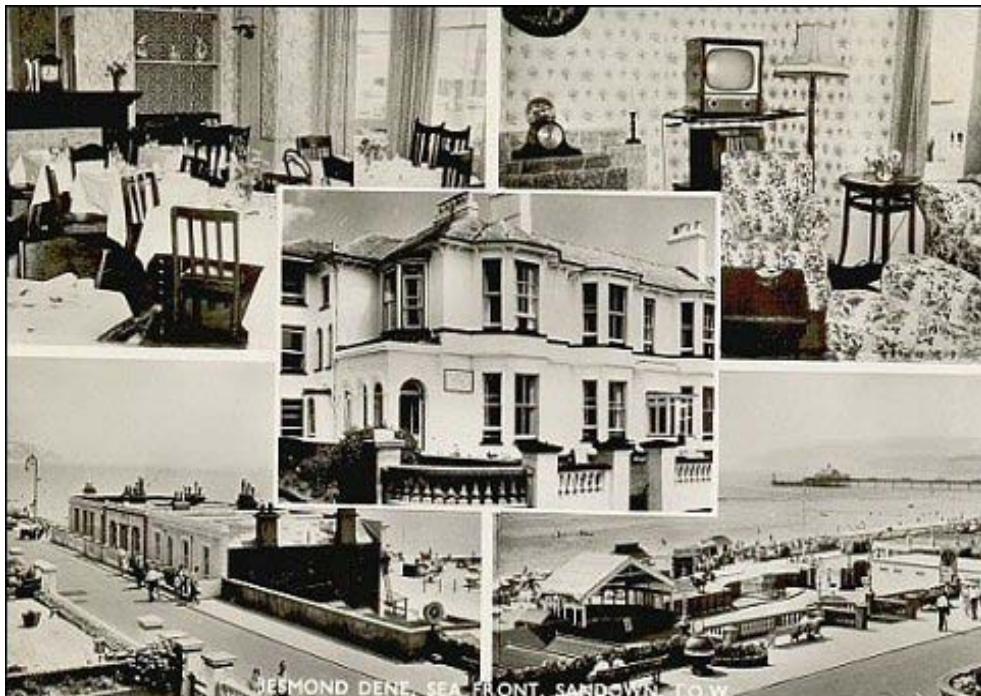


SANDOWN ISLE of WIGHT

By Dave Bambrough 2009.

The following short series of articles are an attempt to bring together an insight into the growth and partial history of Sandown, a town situated on the east side of the Isle of Wight. There is currently a lack of comprehensive documentation on the historic past of Sandown, once a small fishing village with one hostelry in 1845 that gradually grew to the seaside resort of today, entertaining thousands of visitors each year.



Culver Road in the 1950's with front gardens, three beach houses and the delightful Eastern Gardens.

A number of public houses have suffered the same fate, accompanied by some of the amusement arcades that were provided for people's pleasure, now unsustainable as times change into an electronic world. The life and times of some of these fallen pastimes are featured here in order that future historians are able to avail themselves of the services provided for people's delectation that no longer exists in this seaside town. Also included are local situations that have changed beyond recognition. The present High Street bears no comparison to the High Street of the aforementioned decades. Now devoid of the small next-door shop that brought meat and vegetables into our homes, they have been replaced by an assortment of lacklustre businesses that whilst serving a purpose do not contribute to the Street in the same way as their predecessors did. One of the main reason for this decline is the out of town superstore that sells most everything that the small shops did under one roof, and because of their size and buying power have proved convenient and slightly cheaper, perhaps? Present day Sandown has a growing compliment of coffee shops, restaurants, hairdressers, novelty shops and an increasing potential for non-sustainable shops, most of those that survived in the side roads and away from the High Street having already succumbed to the large grocery magnets.

Major changes addressed in the following articles include a 50 year survey of Sandown High Street (1957-2002) and also feature pastimes that attracted thousands of local people as well as visitors, now lost to the community forever: The Pier Pavilion, the Canoe Lake, Sandham Grounds Steam Railway and four of the Victorian Public Houses. Also on the missing list are: three of the esplanade amusement arcades and the towns two Cinemas, all of which once attracted people in large numbers. A once common site on a Saturday morning was the barrow boy with his luggage cart transporting visitor's luggage to and from the Station to make a bob or two. Two weeks previously they might have taken it from the Station to the Hotel or Guesthouse that the visitors were staying at, then hoping for the return journey with the generosity of the employer perhaps dependant on the type of week they had experienced. A long gone Saturday money making venture for local boys who relished a job. Times change, sometimes beneficially but not always.

Peak times were undoubtedly the 1950's and 1960's when four trains an hour were required to deliver the ingress of visitors to Sandown and its close neighbour Shanklin. Many hotels and boarding establishments that flourished during this period have now been demolished and resurrected as flats.