

# The History of the Sandown Conservative Clubs 1878 - 2004.

By Dave Bambrough June 2005.



1878

Have you ever pondered how in the residential area of Station Avenue, situated approximately halfway between St. Johns Road and Albert Road, there was enough spare land with which to lay out a car park? An obvious consideration would have been a bombing raid by Hitler's Luftwaffe during the Second World War or even a spare piece of land previously used as an allotment, not so. Most of the land was once owned by Sandown Conservative Club who in desperation sold it to Sandown and Shanklin Urban District Council in 1957 to help pay off their spiraling debts.

Considered at the time by the committee that it would not only assist in paying the overdue rate bill but also supply members with an opportunity to park their cars free of charge, without any encumbrance on the clubs flagging financial situation. The Council then acquired two houses in York Road, demolished them and developed the present car park making it accessible from both the aforementioned roads. Within a very short space of time the council levied charges for the privilege of parking on the land and the Conservative Club were left to rue the day that they had sold their land. The money had been immediately absorbed with no material benefit felt and the free parking for member's cars had proved to be very short lived.

Sandown Conservative Club has been in existence since 1878 with no less than four different buildings involved in their pursuit of the ideal club big enough to provide for the members comfort and recreation. From a very cramped beginning at The Old Hall in Bridger Street (now St. John's Road) the members subscribed to a purposely-built club in Pellmont Street, (now also St. John's Road) this building sufficed for a period of twelve years when once again the burgeoning number of members necessitated the consideration of yet even bigger premises for the Conservatives of Sandown. The land for the building of the third club was located in Pell Street (now Station Avenue) and opened for members late in December 1894 with the official opening held in January 1895. At its conception there were many honoured gentlemen serving on the committee, being business men they tried many ways of securing the club's well-being with money making projects, often thwarted by similar ventures opening elsewhere in the town. They also took exception to the working class members who frequented the club at this period with the end result in yet another Conservative Club opening its doors within Sandown. Anybody wishing to equate themselves with the year-by-year fortunes that have beheld the present club's existence can do so in a comprehensive book now available at Sandown Library. It lists most of the committee members throughout the 126 years, their businesses, where they lived and when they died. There are sporting details, changes of stewards and comprehensive lists of Chairmen, Hon. Secretary's and Treasurers documented. One of the clubs suffered burglary, another was raided and predictable closure became imminent in the late fifties for the present club, but within four years a renaissance had occurred. Within ten years it was big business and has now settled into the steady club that was initially strived for in 1878 by the gentlemen of Sandown. (Copyright 2005 © Dave & Linda Bambrough)