

Village Echoes

Re-Purposed Buildings - 1

Although old photographs of Goudhurst centre show little change from today, apart from the traffic, some old buildings have changed their use. The first such building is The Old Fire Station on the Plain.



The Shand=Mason Steamer fire engine outside the Old Fire Station in 1930

This was not the first fire station in Goudhurst but one that replaced the original wooden building in North Road. This housed a manual engine that needed eight to ten men to pump the water by hand to the hose. However, when a decision was made to upgrade to a 'modern' steam fire engine in 1874 it seemed that a new, more substantial station would be needed especially when the old one subsequently burnt down in 1875.

The Shand Mason engine was collected from Paddock Wood station and pulled by four horses amid great ceremony to Goudhurst. It stopped at intervals on the way for rest and refreshments in Brenchley and Horsmonden. The opportunity was also taken to demonstrate the hose power by utilising ponds near the road. Finally, with crowds ever larger it was heaved up Clay Hill and given its final trial using water from the village pond. It

was noted that by housing the headquarters of the fire brigade at Goudhurst a view of the Weald could be observed from the Church tower showing the early location of a fire.

It was built on the site of the Old Manor Pound and cost £120. The state of the art engine model was retired in 1930 to be replaced by a more powerful version bought second hand from Sittingbourne that remained in service until 1940, when more efficient equipment was needed for the duration of the war. In 1942 it was decided to build a new fire station to accommodate the extra vehicles and equipment needed to cover Cranbrook and Hawkhurst during this period. A temporary building was erected on part of the land owned by Goudhurst Club that housed sleeping quarters, kitchen, kit-room, toilets, showers, office and pump-room and had an air-raid siren on the roof.

When the war ended the Club bought the building for a games room, later demolished, and a new site was sought for the larger facilities needed. None of the three proposed sites were suitable but this became academic after the Goudhurst Fire Service was axed by Kent County Council in about 1948 and the equipment moved to Tunbridge Wells. The building nowadays has become a centre of wellbeing.

Goudhurst & Kildown Local History Society

Email: info@goudhurstlocalhistorysociety.org

Website: www.goudhurstlocalhistorysociety.org