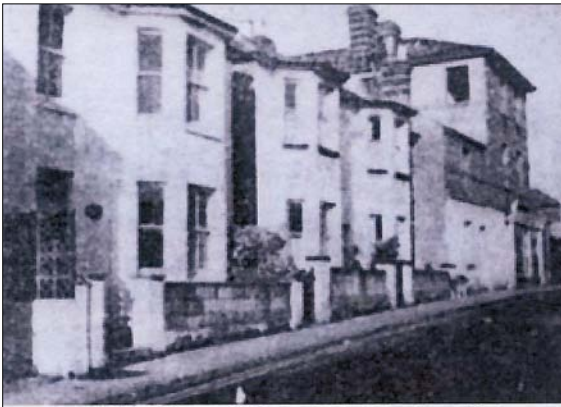


GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

By Dave Bambrough December 2006



All buildings still intact in St. Johns Road in January 1975. Demolition was not far away.



Dramatic changes by the summer of 1976.

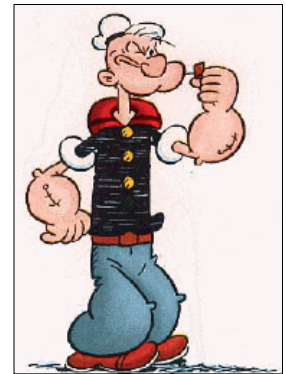
Station Avenue and Fort Street had provided land for which to park cars in the 1960's, inevitably, further land would be required with the ever increasing number of locally purchased vehicles and the gradual move from public transport to their private cars by the incoming summer visitors. With parking restrictions increasing in the High Street, traders were calling for an accessible car park near the shopping centre. The approved site was .33 acres of land in St. Johns Road, Sandown.

Planning permission for the conversion of this land was initially applied for in November 1967 and refused. The premises of number 31 St. Johns Road was an early casualty, being demolished during December 1969. Further planning approval was then applied for on May 30th 1974, this time successfully. The above illustration depicts how this part of St. Johns Road looked up until early 1975 when the decision was taken to demolish No.s 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27 and 29. The lone shop at number 21 had served the town as Alex Bruments photographic shop (prior to him moving to No. 111 High Street Sandown), Crawford's Radio shop and finally, pre-demolition, a café.

The car park was opened in time for the summer of 1976 but the public conveniences took many more years before planning permission was granted. The Commercial Hotel (now renamed The Old Comical) stands immediately to the left of the first building.



Sandown offered two main cinemas for many years. The Rivoli, Station Avenue, (opened Thursday March 17th 1921 seating 600) and the Queens Cinema in Albert Road (opened December 6th 1928 seating 500) for family entertainment, but on May 22nd 1947, a cartoon cinema opened within the White City amusement arcade. A mixed variety of cartoons were shown



daily, the main feature every day was a Max and Dave Fleisher Popeye cartoon. The whole show lasted for half an hour with the opportunity of watching them repeatedly for an entrance fee of sixpence. Although a large sum of money to young boys at this time, six pennies could be quickly attained from the many pinball machines in the surrounding amusements, some of which were open to dishonest handling by the experienced youngsters. By spending their ill-gotten gains within the arcade the amusement proprietors had not actually lost anything, but hadn't exactly furthered their profits either. If caught "fiddling machines", the participant would be quickly shown the nearest door and that was a mandatory sentence for the rest of the summer.