

## **A walk home from St. George's School in Church Road around 1938**

At the end of the school road there was Pig's Alley that connected to the High Street. There was a slaughter house at the top of the alley and the shop at the bottom was a pork butchers well known for its' sausages and chitterlings. I don't remember animals there but they must have been delivered during school hours. I have recently noticed that there is a large iron ring low down on the outside corner of the shop that must have served some useful purpose in days gone by, I thought at one time it was for tethering animals but now believe it more likely to have been put there for the brewers draymen to attach a pulley to while delivering to the cellar of the Free Mason's Arms, the public house next door.

Sometimes I would walk home via Effingham St: just to gaze at the gleaming new Leyland Fire Engine at the Fire Station and at other times I would walk down to the harbour to see what was happening. Timber ships arrived and the loose timber was first stacked on the quayside. From there, it was taken on 'limbers' to the various Timber yards in the town and there were at least three. The limber was basically a long pole on two axles, with cross pieces to support the long lengths of rough sawn timber and drawn by teams of horses. As the wheels were steel rimmed, driving up through the town created a lot of noise and there was no need to warn people to keep out of the way.

Grain was unloaded from the holds of Thames sailing barges, initially with baskets and a crane but then they installed an electric powered hoist that lifted the grain with small buckets on a continual belt, tipped it into a storage container from where it dropped via a flexible hose into large closed trailers, the trailers would then be towed away by a three wheeled motor vehicle known as a mechanical horse. By this method they could move one trailer when it was full and leave an empty one in its place to be filled. The grain was taken to Hudson's Mill at the top of Margate road. This Mill was still in use until a few years ago, but had been supplied with grain by road tankers instead of sea going barges, for very many years.

Coal was also unloaded by the basket and crane method and taken by open horse drawn carts to the various coal yards in the town. As soon as the coal boats left, men would be there with nets dredging for any coal that had fallen into the sea. If they were out of work this was one of the few perks that were available to them to help them to live and it was not unusual to have men singing in the streets, or playing a 'Barrel Organ' to earn a little extra money. Bulk salt came into the harbour by ship and was unloaded and taken to a water pumping station near the junction of Whitehall and Margate road, no longer there, to be used in the water softening plant.

There was also a very interesting ship repair service at the main slipway. It was here that I first saw a portable electric drill in use. It was being used to make holes in a sheet of steel prior to the sheet being riveted onto a ship's side. The steel was on the quayside and supported on wooden planks, a bracket had been bolted to the sheet in such a way that when the drill was placed vertically between the bracket and the steel, the necessary pressure could be applied to drill through the steel plate. Riveting was a fascinating job to watch. There would be one man on the quayside operating a small portable forge, after heating the rivet to the correct temperature

he would toss it to another man, or one or two other men depending on the distance from the forge to the position on the ship where it was needed, and here it would be placed into the prepared hole. The men would catch the rivet in long handled metal cups and insert it into the hole with tongs. It would then be held firmly in place with a heavy hammer whilst the riveter would attack the glowing end with a pneumatic hammer. To keep the plates tightly together the holes each side of the rivet hole were first drawn tight with nuts and bolts, these would then be removed for these holes to be riveted. Apart from these ships and a few fishing boats owned by local fish shop proprietors there was very little else in the harbour. My parents said that when they first came to Ramsgate it was virtually possible to walk across the inner harbour by stepping from deck to deck of the fishing fleet.