

West Dean Village History Trail

GARAGE AND PETROL STATION

No 23

A great variety of activities took place on this site over the years.

James Reynolds, who established himself as a wheelwright by 1890 and became postmaster in 1903, (*see neighbouring history trail boards*), was also the village undertaker. A carpenter had a



THE PETROL SIGN AT THE TIME OF THE 1960 FLOOD

workshop on the site where the coffins were made. When James Reynolds died his top hat and frock coat were passed to his son Carl who carried on as undertaker. Coffins were conveyed to the church on a four-wheeled handcart surrounded by the bearers and with Carl in front leading the way.

Carl Reynolds had returned from the First World War to replace Mrs Beauchamp's horse drawn cab with a Model T Ford taxi service, probably the first car in the village. During the 1930s more people began owning their own cars and petrol was needed locally so Carl installed a petrol pump and took on dealing with mechanical faults and breakdowns. He also charged accumulators – wet batteries needed for the increasing number of wireless sets, today called radios. Each home in the village had two accumulators, one in use and one at the garage being charged. In addition Carl produced electricity from his generator and supplied it to a number of houses in the village. [It should be noted here that mains electricity did not reach the village until 1948].

The garage and petrol station continued to operate until well into the 1960s.



THE PETROL SIGN IN 1962