

# Birchington Heritage Trust

Registered Charity No. 1099250

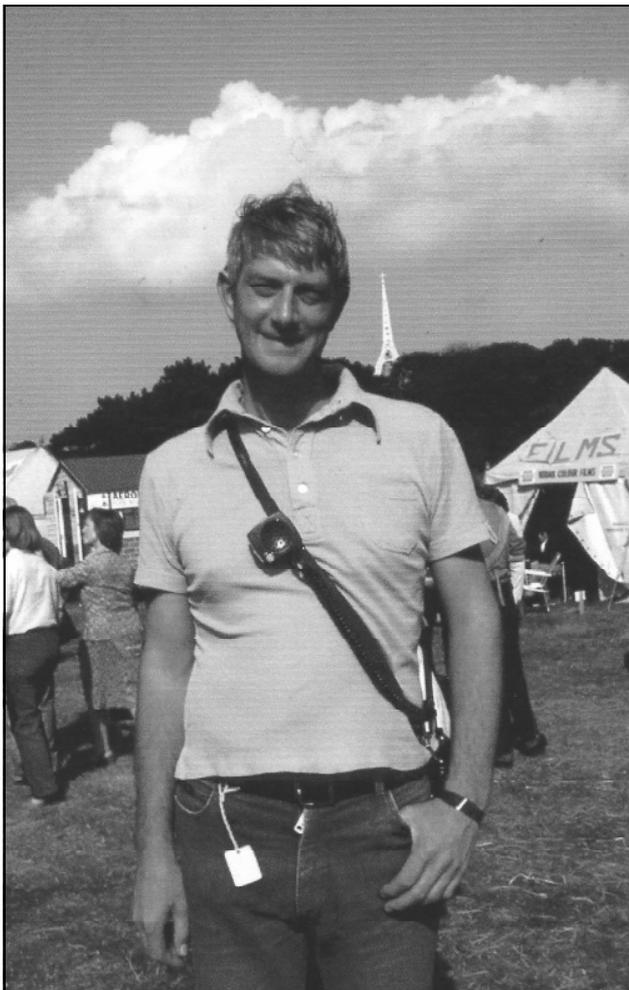


## NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 6

November, 2003

The Trust has now passed its first major hurdle with the award of charity status. Many thanks are due to the trustees who worked so hard to perfect our submission before it was finally accepted by The Charity Commission. We are now in a position to apply for grants to promote our aims and we are currently working on producing our museum plan which will be needed if we are to make use of the funding available for such projects.



Derek Raven on duty at Quexpo in 1979

## Trust will work on to achieve dream

### Derek Raven and The Birchington Heritage Trust

The idea of the Birchington Heritage Trust was a vision that Derek formulated at the start of 2000, after visiting a short exhibition of Birchington photographs at the Burley Gallery. He felt very strongly that the material displayed there and also held locally in various venues, should be available for everyone to experience on a permanent basis in our own museum in the village.

After the exhibition, he presented his initial plans to Jennie Burgess, who fully agreed with them. The exhibition he had visited was connected with a degree course she was taking at Kent University at the time and so she suggested that he wait until she had completed it before furthering his plans. To this he agreed.

From the end of 2001, he became the driving force in what was to become a fully recognised charity by the first week in September of 2003. It received its Charity Commission number just a few days after Derek's death on August 31<sup>st</sup>. His enthusiasm and dedication have kept us all going and we shall miss him greatly. However, the Trust that he has set up can now move forward under its own momentum. With an equally dedicated band of like-minded people, whom Derek had gathered around him, we now aim to achieve his vision of a Birchington Museum in the not too distant future.



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# NOVEMBER HERITAGE NOTICEBOARD

## "DANGEROUS COASTLINE"

A reminder that Jennie is taking advance orders for Derek Hart's book about wartime Birchington. The deposit is £5 and anyone interested should contact Jennie Burgess at 6, Alpha Road, CT7 9EQ.

## ALAN KAY

Members will be sad to learn that Alan will be leaving Birchington in the near future. Following the death of his wife, he has decided to move to Eastbourne to be with his son. We thank Alan for his expertise and for all his hard work on the committee. We shall really miss his enormous knowledge of Birchington which he was so happy to share with us. We wish him all happiness in the future.

## TRANSPORT TO MEETINGS

Remember, if you find it difficult to get to General Meetings and would like a lift there and back, please contact Pat Orpwood on 847843 before the meeting.

## FRIENDS OF ALL SAINTS

The Friends have organized three talks by Mr. J. Graham of Broadstairs on Smuggling in Thanet. The first two were excellent and you still have the chance to attend the third in the series at All Saints Church on:

Wednesday 26th. November: Preventive Service

There is a modest entrance fee on the door and light refreshments are included.

## NEW MEMBERS

We now have 130 fully paid -up members. A special welcome to new members this quarter:

Mrs L. Holloway-Hambidge  
Mrs Sandie Tiley Mr D.T. Graves  
Richard and Sylvia Wallace  
Mrs M. Kent Mrs P Back

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Would all members please notify Colin of any change of address to ensure you receive your newsletter promptly.

Please contact Colin (843279)

## THANET ARTS COUNCIL

The Trust is now affiliated to Thanet Arts Council and will be using its newsletter to advertise our events.

## MEMBERS' SUGGESTIONS

If you have any ideas about future speakers, social events outings, or any other activities you would like The Trust to consider, please contact: The Secretary on 847843.

## FORBUOYS

We are all extremely grateful to Mo at Forbuoys for allowing us to use her side window for temporary exhibitions. Do have a look if you have not yet seen it. The new display will be up in November.

# AUTUMN SEASON OF EVENTS BEGINS ON A HIGH NOTE

The Trust started its Autumn programme with two well-supported events. On Friday, September 26th, David White gave an illustrated talk on Woodchurch, attended by about 60 members and guests who were fascinated to learn that the church and village of Woodchurch were once as large as Birchington itself. Unfortunately, the church was maintained by Christ Church Priory in Canterbury and with the Reformation and the subsequent loss of funding, the church fell into decline until all that remains of the church now is a small hump. We are very grateful to BHT member, David White, for presenting this fascinating talk.

On a completely different note, our Social Committee organised a highly successful Jazz Night on Saturday, October 4th, which was attended by 120 people who thoroughly enjoyed the evening. The quartet of Dave O'Higgins (saxophones), Tom Cawley (piano), Sam Burgess (bass) and Simon Lea (drums) played a variety of standards ranging from Lee Morgan to Herbie Hancock numbers as well as blues, ballads and more modern pieces. A raffle was drawn in the interval, during which John Skerrett Smith entertained us admirably on the piano. The event was organized by Social Committee member, Mary Tranter, to whom we are all most grateful. This event raised over £300 for Trust funds, whilst the raffle organised by Gillian Lodge made £127.

Our theme for November is the Twenties in Birchington. At the General Meeting, we shall be looking at some of the celebrities who frequented the village during this time and, in particular, the great stage and screen actress, Gladys Cooper. This is followed on Friday December 5th by The Twenties Dance, featuring Brian James and his popular Bay Jazz Band who will, perhaps, take us back to the songs that Gladys and her friends danced to at The Bungalow Hotel. It should certainly be an enjoyable evening. Finally, we shall have a small exhibition of the twenties in the window of Forbuoys in Station Road. We do hope to see you at our two events and do please spread the word and encourage others to come along too.



**BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST**



## TWENTIES DANCE



**8p.m. Friday December 5th**

Birchington Village Centre

Live Music featuring

**The Bay Jazz Band**

Bar open to 11pm Fancy Dress Optional

Prize for best dressed male and female

**Tickets £3.50**

From Oma's, Bandbox or on the door

## Birchington in the Twenties

### Some Snippets from The Gazette

**13th September, 1919**

The Reverend H.A. Serres was quoted from his parish magazine, "I do not remember any season when we have seen Birchington so full of visitors. The Birchington Improvement Society must have had a record season in the letting of tents, bathing machines and chairs. It is a pity that they have not provided boats also, but they will be provided in time, no doubt."

**7th August, 1920**

There were complaints about "offensive smells" emanating from rotting seaweed in Epple Bay and several other bays.

**27th September, 1920**

The Parish council discussed widening the railway bridge. They also accepted that their recent experiment in turning off street lighting on moonlit nights to save money had been a failure.

**6th August, 1921**

The Reverend H.A. Serres reflected on the drought and urged his Birchington parishioners to thank God for the rain received. The "astonishing strides in popularity" of the railway were noted, with nearly 400 visitors arriving by rail the previous week.

**17th June, 1922**

It was noted that Birchington had for a number of years been "famed as a seaside resort" and that Major Paget, the famous racehorse owner, had taken a bungalow for the summer.

**4th August, 1923**

"Mr. W.W. Walker's char-a-banc will leave for an outing from The Square on Sunday next at 2 o'clock sharp for Perry Woods".

**18th August, 1923**

A new bus service was announced from Birchington Square to Minnis Bay. There were more complaints about the seaweed.

**11th July, 1925**

Visitor numbers were "steadily increasing" and we are told, "The Wayside Café in Station Road is the resort of many of these visitors, many of whom are well-known people and the catering of this establishment is greatly appreciated."

## DANGEROUS COASTLINE 1939 – 1945

### Wartime Childhood in Birchington

by Derek Hart

This book was written soon after Derek retired, but unfortunately he died before he could get it published. His widow Maureen has given the manuscript to the Birchington Heritage Trust and after a small amount of editing, and the addition of some extra photos, it will soon be on sale. It makes fascinating reading, telling the story of Birchington's war from a new angle. All profits from the sale will go to the Trust.

We have been extremely fortunate in having the support of local artist, Charlie Smart, who many will recall recently had an exhibition at The Burley Gallery. He has painted an original picture depicting a scene from the book for the cover which looks really superb.

The book will cost about £7 and as there will probably only be 500 copies so you may wish to reserve yourself a copy now. We are asking for a deposit of £5 per copy, together with your name, address and phone number – to Jennie Burgess, 6 Alpha Road, CT7 9EQ.  
(47 copies are already booked!)

## Picture This

BHT member, Bernard La Roche, has enjoyed a tremendous response to his request for old documents and stories for his book, "Chronicles of Birchington and Around the Edges" which he is hoping to publish.

The finished book will be hard back with 150-200 pages in both black and white and colour. Finished with gold leaf embossing, it should be a memorable tome.

Bernard is still seeking Birchington memorabilia in whatever form. He says, "I have knocked on doors, pestered people in the street, written to magazines and newspapers, seeking out those old memories. But, no doubt, there are still more to come.

One question which is puzzling him at the moment is what the little sign on the wall below the old cottages at Epple Bay said. He has enlarged the old photographs of the cottage as much as possible, but he still cannot read what it says. Does anybody know?

Bernard thanks everybody so far for their tremendous help in supplying him with material and information, especially Jennie Burgess, A.A. (Active Archivist!)

## BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST



### GENERAL MEETING



**7.30, Friday  
November 28th**

**Birchington  
Village Centre**

**Gladys Cooper  
and Birchington**

with

**Pat Orpwood**

and

**Jennie Burgess**

**Non-members £1**

**All Welcome**

## Gladys Cooper and Birchington

Gladys Cooper was one of many famous stars who visited Birchington in its heyday in the twenties.

There are still some in the village who remember her coming to stay here and even played with her and the children on the beach, whilst some of our younger members have never heard of her. Yet in her time she was one of the most famous women in England.

During her lifetime, she performed in over 100 plays, made nearly 40 films starting with silent movies and ending with *My Fair Lady* in 1964. She was one of the first woman stage managers when she was in charge of The Playhouse Theatre, London; she appeared on Broadway and filmed in Hollywood. She worked with all the stars from Ivor Novello and Gerald du Maurier to David Niven and Tommy Steele. Later, she undertook radio and television work including *Daktari*, *Emergency Ward 10* and *The Twilight Zone*.

She was also one of the most popular photographic models of the day and 400 different postcards of her were produced, many for use as Christmas or birthday cards. With her flawless good looks, she patented her own beauty cream and advertisement posters of her were everywhere.

She was still working and was on tour with *The Chalk Garden* when she died in 1971 at the age of 82.