

BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST

Preserving the Past for the Future



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 12

May, 2005

TRUST TO OPEN MUSEUM

The Trust committee, after lengthy discussions, has decided to use room 4 at the Birchington Centre as the venue for our first museum.

Having considered a number of possibilities for a possible museum site, it was finally decided at the last committee meeting to accept the offer from The Centre to use their large committee room. The Trust will be hiring it from 1st May this year for an initial period of one year, with the option for a second, should the museum be successful there.

We have had to take into account the high rentals required for shops in Birchington and the fact that on top of the rental, we should be responsible for payment for all the services, whereas at The Centre, we shall only be responsible for our telephone and contents insurance.

The room is large enough to take our ever-growing collection of pictures, articles, books and artefacts, as well as all the BHT paraphernalia, currently taking over our spare bedrooms. In addition, there will be research facilities and wall space for a changing exhibition. The major drawback is that it is on the first floor, but we will make arrangements to cater for those who would find using the stairs difficult.

We are now looking for help to man the museum and any offers of office furniture, such as filing cabinets and any computer and scanning software. To find out more, come to the AGM on Friday 20th May at the Village Centre, where you can have a fun time and renew your membership, still only £5.

BHT QUARTERLY DIARY

Apart from negotiations regarding the Museum and its setting up, this is the busiest time of year for The Trust.

Apart from producing and distributing this newsletter, we start our activities on April 22nd with our Spring Walk. This time we are starting at the library, walking down Alpha Road as far as Albion Road and then continuing as far as The Square.

We hope to be able to squeeze in another exhibition in the window of Forbuoys and we are working on a display on local windmills to fit in with Jennie's talk at the AGM on 20th May.

We always try to make the AGM interesting and informative and plans are well in hand with the formal and informal sections.

Jennie and Pat are working very hard sorting through hundreds of pictures, research and books in preparation for our major exhibition on the theme of Birchington and the Victorians, which opens for a fortnight on May 31st. We are setting up on May 28th and will be cutting, pasting and sticking the week before in the Museum. So do come and help for a while, if you are able.

Jumble Sale

Our jumble sale on March 19th raised £175 for Trust funds. Many thanks to all those who provided some superb items and to the social committee who worked from 7.30 a.m. setting up until 3p.m. when they finally cleared the hall. We were also grateful to the Scouts for the use of their hall. A pity we did not have too many buyers. They missed some great bargains.

BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

PLUS

A SHORT TALK on LOCAL WINDMILLS

by Jennie Burgess

Photograph Quiz with Prize

FINGER BUFFET

Bar open

7.30, FRIDAY 20TH MAY

BIRCHINGTON
VILLAGE CENTRE

All Welcome



Secretary: Mrs Dal Orpwood

Telephone: 01843 847843

STOP PRESS

Plea from Jennie: would the person with the 1930s (?) fire photographs, please get in touch.



In this Issue: The Museum and Forthcoming and Recent Events - page 1; Newsboard - page 2; Recent Activities - page 3; Fragments from an Autograph Book (Part 2) - page 4



MAY HERITAGE NOTICEBOARD

TRANSPORT TO MEETINGS

Remember, if you find it difficult to get to any meetings or events and would like a lift there and back, please contact Pat Orpwood on 847843 a couple of days before the meeting, if possible.

VICTORIAN BIRCHINGTON

Our next exhibition in May/June has been approved and will be on the theme of the Victorian era, with special reference to Birchington. If you have any books, ephemera, pictures, costumes, or other objects which you would be willing to lend us for the exhibition, please would you get in touch with either Jennie or Pat.

Forbuoys' Window Display

As the refurbishment of Forbuoys has not yet started, we hope to be putting up a display on The Mills of Birchington and other Kentish windmills in the near future to coincide with Jennie's short talk at the AGM. Hopefully, you will have seen it before this newsletter reaches you.

Carnival

We are taking part in the carnival again this year, following up on our Victorian theme. However, we still need help with any costumes and possible transport. Let us know if you would like to take part too. Contact Pat on 847843

Publicity

I was stopped the other day by a Birchington resident, asking if we were having any talks. This was the week after Jennie's excellent presentation on The Lost Buildings of Birchington. We now print and distribute 35 A4 posters as well as some A3. We advertise in The Gazette, K.O.S. and Kent Messenger Extra. Has anyone any more suggestions?

NEW MEMBERS

We have added quite a few new members recently and now have 217 fully paid-up members. A special welcome to our new members who have joined this quarter:

**Miss D. Thornewell Mr and Mrs Brazier Mr T. Webb
Mr and Mrs Pegg Mrs B. Cleminson Charles Wood
Evelyn Tanner David Barton Mr and Mrs Emmorey
Mr and Mrs Holmes W.H.L. Pitts Tessa Mueller
Rosemary Brightling Mr and Mrs Phillips
Mr and Mrs Lockyer Mr and Mrs Treves**

Congratulations to **Barbara Phillips**, our **200th** member!

BHT JUMBLE SALE

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Letters

Unfortunately, there was no response to our letters in the last newsletter. Jennie has still not had her Fire material returned and nobody commented on the views of our member regarding development in Birchington. We have, therefore, no letters to print—but do let us know what you think—it's very lonely here and we would love to hear from you.

Dates for your Diary

**Friday, April 22nd— Easter Walk
Friday, May 20th — Annual General Meeting
May 31st to June 10th — Annual Exhibition
Saturday, August 27th— Birchington Carnival
Friday, September 30th—Quex at War
Further events to be arranged**

COURT MOUNT

Committee member, George Teasdale has brought to our attention that plans have been submitted to develop the house at Court Mount into flats—they are currently offices, the building having previously been a restaurant. The developers claim that there is little of historic interest left, but this is being investigated. Neighbours are worried about being overlooked.

Chamber of Commerce Gift to the Trust

At our February committee meeting Roger Walford, President of Birchington Chamber of Commerce, accompanied by Past-President, Iris Bedwell, presented a cheque for £558.50 to the Birchington Heritage Trust.

This was as a result of the winding up of the Chamber of Commerce which had been in existence, Roger Walford explained to committee members, for over 80 years. In the past many well-known local shopkeepers such as Messers Maxted, Barrows and Thurgood as well as himself and Iris had been presidents, with figures such as the local Bank Manager also playing an active part. "But," Roger continued, "times have changed. We no longer have local bank managers and many of the modern shopkeepers are no longer interested in joining the association." He said that it was a very sad day for him, as he had been a member for thirty years.

The constitution of the Chamber stated that in the event of it folding, any money remaining should be divided between local charities, registered with The Charity Commission. Thus, the Birchington Heritage Trust, which has charity status, was very grateful to



Roger Walford and Iris Bedwell presenting the cheque to Neville Hudson, Chairman of The Trust

receive this unexpected donation, although we were sorry to see the demise of The Chamber. It has been put towards the Museum Fund and it will help us to buy the necessary equipment to set up the museum.

The Lost Buildings of Birchington

The talk at our last quarterly meeting on February 25th, given by Jennie Burgess, was very well-attended with over a hundred in the audience, including a number of visitors who subsequently joined The Trust. The talk covered many, though not all, of the buildings and sites that have disappeared in the village in the last hundred years.

Jennie had arranged the slides in a "then and Now" sequence, so that we were able to see not only what



Camel Court c. 1900

we have lost, but also what has replaced them. The murmurs of delighted recognition as each new image appeared, indicated that there were many in the audience who remembered the "old" village. For the newcomers, it provided a mini history of the way Birchington has developed over the last century.

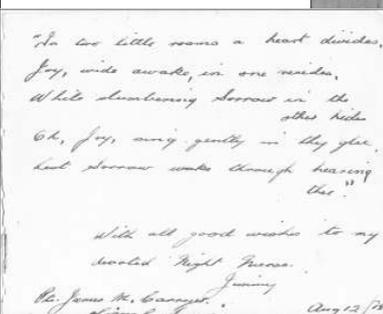
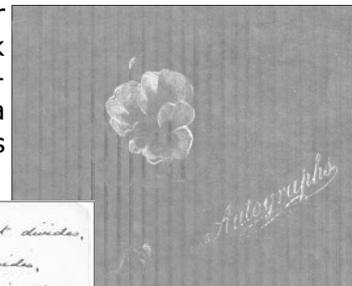
The exhibition of Lost Buildings in Forbuoys continues for the next fortnight, as it has been so popular. If you have not already seen it, hurry along whilst you still have the chance.



The Wayside café on the corner of Station Road, 1921 with the parrot on the gate post

Edith Mockford's Autograph Book

On the right is the cover of the autograph book which is a pale pinky-brown colour with a pansy on it and has pink pages inside.



One of the entries to Nurse Mockford from the Canadian, Private Cannock. See over for our recent finds.

Fragments from an Autograph Book Part 2

In the last newsletter, we wrote about an autograph book acquired by Trust member, Ian Jackson, belonging originally to an Edith Mockford and found in a house in Westgate. It had been suggested that she had been matron at Quex house when it had been turned into a hospital for servicemen in the First World War, with the support of Major Powell-Cotton. Since then we have done a little research.

Many of the entries are from soldiers and date from this period. We checked with Hazel Basford, the well-known authority on the VAD Hospital at Quex and, although she did not know Edith's connection with the place, assured us she was not the Matron or one of the nurses as there are lists of these people and there is no mention of an Edith Mockford.

However, one of the entries from a Canadian soldier refers to Edith as "my devoted night nurse" and so it would appear that she did, in fact, do some nursing at Quex. Ian had produced a list of soldiers and others who had signed in the book and Hazel was able to identify some of these from her own records. The Private Glynn, who wrote the poem about War Weapons week, had been 19 when he arrived at Quex on 27th April, 1918, suffering from Trench Foot. He came from Northumbria, had been in the army for 14 months, including 2 months at the front, and stayed at Quex for a month.

Sergeant Hawthorne was one of a number of Canadians and came from Medicine Hat, Alberta. He was 37, had been in the army for 30 months, with 17 months at the front. He had an arm wound. He signed the book in January, 1919. Another entry was Gunner Henwood of the 10th Tank battalion who was 25 and of his five years service, over 2 years had been at the front. He had leg wounds. Seventeen servicemen in all had written in the autograph book, and although some were recuperating from wounds, other were suffering from flu, which was endemic in the trenches towards the end of the war.

As for Edith herself, she was fairly easy to track down. At the reference library at Margate, we checked the Kelly's directories for the period. In 1901, there were two Mockford families, Joseph's including Edith, living at number 1 and James at number 2 Gasworks Road. By 1909 Joseph had moved to 1, Waterworks Road, but in the list of commercial businesses this is given as the Golden Laundry, the business address of Jemima Mockford, Edith's mother, and it was from here

that she ran her laundry whilst her husband was a florist. James was still living at 2 Gasworks Road, but his son Albert, who signed the autograph book, was at number 1 Gasworks Road.

By 1924, Edith Mockford had moved to Belmont Road, Westgate and Albert was living at 100, Linksfield Road. However, a visit to the house, which is still there and a look at the maps reveal that Gasworks Road and Waterworks Road were combined in the 1920s to form Linksfield Road and he never moved until both he and Edith disappear from the records in 1961. Interestingly, two more Mockfords, Alec Arthur and Cecil Guy lived at addresses in Westgate in 1939, but did not return after the war.

From the 1901 census, more details emerge. In 1901 Edith's father, Joseph, was 53 and working as a market gardener, whilst her mother, Jemima, is a laundress as is Edith, aged 25 and her sister Mollie, 19. Mavis, the third daughter, was still a schoolgirl and Joseph's mother completed the household.

Albert was 14 in 1901 and worked as cook stall clerk, but his sister, Muriel was a laundress. Their father, James was a Foreman at the nearby gasworks and their son, Henry, was a gas-fitter.

In 1918, when the soldiers were writing in her book, Edith would have been 42 and was not married. She was not on the permanent staff at Quex, but obviously worked as a night nurse and it might also be probable that she was involved in the providing the laundry service for the hospital. Unfortunately the records for these transactions no longer exist and so we can only surmise.



A possible photograph of Edith Mockford which was found in the album

QUEX AT WAR

Hazel Basford, who provided the information about the soldiers in our article on the back page, has kindly agreed to give an illustrated talk on the VAD hospital at Quex at our General Meeting on 30th September. She is an excellent speaker, so we hope you will all come along.