



# Newsletter

[www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk](http://www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk)

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## HUGHENDEN LAUNDRY

Hughenden Laundry stood in Paddock Road on the left as you walk up from Station Road. The building is still there and looks like a big brick-built garage. It was advertised in a large brochure about Birchington which was printed for 1903-4 and spoke of the work being done by "experienced laundresses" and also advertised that it had "spacious drying grounds". The manageress was Mrs E Briscoe. She lived with her husband Frederick at 2 Hughenden Place, which is the short terrace of houses at the end of Westfield Road. It meant that her rear garden backed straight onto her "drying grounds" - and probably formed part of the area - giving her just a few yards walk to her job each morning.



### Hughenden Laundry, BIRCHINGTON.

All work done by hand by experienced Laundresses.

Free Collection and Delivery in Birchington, St. Nicholas, Acol, and Westgate. . . . .

Spacious Drying Ground.

Mrs. E. BRISCOE,  
Manageress.

In 1930 the laundry traded under the name of "Snowdrift Hand Laundry". In 1929 it was owned and run by Mrs Cook and Mrs Gambrill, but by 1930 Mrs A. M. Gambrill was in sole charge. She lived with her husband Marshall Gambrill in Alma Cottages, at the far end of the drying grounds. This little terrace stands behind the shops in Station Road, but has a rear access into Paddock Road. In this photo you are looking along the front of Alma Cottages, down towards Paddock Road and the old laundry.

As was said earlier in this article, the building is still standing in Paddock Road but it is now used by a local resident for storage and a workshop for working on his car. It has an additional building at the rear of it, but this is not attached to the old laundry. The original "drying grounds" are to the right of the building and have now become the gardens of the short Hughenden terrace.

It is interesting to note that there is still a laundry in Paddock Road in 2012, but it is now at the corner of Station Road - and is called "Blue Monday".



Alma Cottages

## QUEEN VICTORIA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE, 1887

There has been much discussion about how Birchington should celebrate this year's Diamond Jubilee, but an article written by Alfred Walker in 1968 records that the Birchington church spire (the only ancient church tower in Thanet) was reshedged, a clock was placed in the tower, the bells rehung and a new treble bell installed to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee.

A local man, John Bristow, a builder and contractor of Birchington Square, carried out the work. The cost of the reshedging was £200 and of this amount, Mrs Gray of Birchington Hall (now Birch Hill Park) gave £100. Major Morrison Bell gave £110.15s for the church clock. Eighty-one years later when the spire required reshedging again at a cost of £1,500 a board was found up there recording the names of those who had worked on the restoration, finishing with the words "all put new shingling on this church 1 July 1887. Whoever pulls this board off will see who new shingled this church last. I don't suppose any of us will be there to help shingle it again. Jubilee Year July 1887."

Interestingly, amongst the residents of Birchington in 1968 it was recorded that Ashton Pemble of Sussex Gardens could remember, as a very small boy, the scaffolding around the spire.

## UNITED SERVICES CLUB PUZZLE c. 1930

This photo of a gathering outside the United Services Club has set us a puzzle. It was initially thought to be a group waiting to go on a Club outing, but the suggestion was then made that it might be connected with an Armistice Day parade, especially as they have their banner with them.

Does anyone have any information as to what the event was connected with - and a more accurate date for the photo? Also, does anyone recognise any of the people in the photo? If you can help with any of these queries, please contact us at either the Museum in the Village Centre or via Jennie on 01843 842988 or by letter to 6, Alpha Road, Birchington, CT7 9EQ



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Prince Filippo was one of the few Italian aristocrats to make a stand against Mussolini - their palazzo in Rome city centre was the only building not to fly the Italian flag on Fascist holidays. Enraged Blackshirts stormed the palace, confronting Princess Mary in her apron, her hands covered in flour from making scones. When they asked where the Prince was, she replied, "I dunno where the Prince is!" in the Italian equivalent of a Cockney accent. Mistaking her for the cook, they smashed up the property, hung out their own flag and left.

The Prince meanwhile tried to warn King Victor Emmanuel III that if he stood firm against Mussolini he would have the country's support. The King refused to see him so the Prince wrote him a letter instead, which the King sent to Mussolini.

When Italy entered the war in 1940, the Prince was interned in a series of concentration camps, only to be released months later through ill health. Not knowing whom they could trust, the family were wary of friendships. Their grandson Prince Jonathan has discovered there is a whole file on his family in the police records in Rome. When he looked at it in 2000 he discovered informants' letters spying on his grandparents and speculating on their political position.

When the Germans invaded Italy in 1943 the family went into hiding. One terrifying night the Gestapo arrived at the 150 room apartment palace searching for them but the family were able to escape. The Prince, disguised as a priest, lay low with friends in the Trastevere district of Rome. With the Vatican's Irish Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty, he worked for the Resistance, smuggling escaped PoWs out of Italy. Years later their exploits were made into a film "The Scarlet and the Black" with Gregory Peck as the Monsignor. "Not a very convincing account" shrugs Prince Jonathan "but the Prince in the film was meant to be my grandfather". Though his wartime experiences had ruined Prince Filippo's health, he was made Mayor of Rome after the war.

Princess Orietta met a young sub-lieutenant Frank Pogson, while she was working as a volunteer in a forces' canteen in the port of Ancona. They corresponded for 14 years before marrying in 1958, after the Prince's death. Frank took the name Doria Pamphilj, which would have died out otherwise and the couple were happily married for 40 years. Sadly they were unable to have children so they adopted Jonathan in 1963, shortly followed by Mary, who now has the imposing title of Princess Gesine Margaret Orietta Mary Floridi.

Orietta's husband Frank died in 1998 and she died of cancer two years later at the age of 78. Just a month before she died, she received the OBE from the Queen on her state visit to Italy in 2000.

Princess Gesine and Prince Jonathan shared equally in their mother's inheritance. She now lives with her husband Massimiliano and their two young daughters in Genoa, running the family's estate there.

## Wantsum Channel

Its origins and spellings With thanks to Janet Robinson

The origins of the name '**Wantsum**' go back into the 'mists of time'.

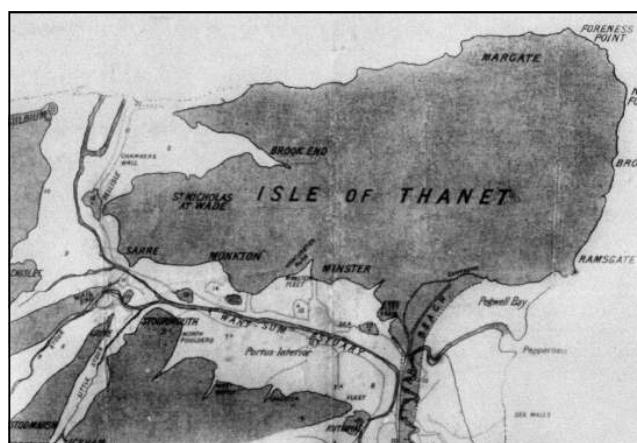
Its meaning is derived from two words meaning '**winding river**'.

In its earliest form, mentioned in **730 AD**, it was written as - **uantsumu**. Remember that the letter U was pronounced as 'oo' and became known later as 'double oo', or as we now say - 'double u' which = **w**, so it isn't as far from its later version as it looks at first sight.

In **890 AD** it was written as - **wantsume** - the extra 'e' is still found on many of our Saxon words - like give, have, done, gone, etc - all indicating that you were to stress the last consonant in the word. This devise is found in much of Chaucer's writing and helps to make the rhythm of his poetry read properly.

By **944 AD** it appears on a charter as - **'wantsum'** - exactly as we now choose to write it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but in between those two dates there have been a number of variations.

The route of the Wantsum is still fairly winding, but since it is now more of a dyke than a river, there are some fairly straight sections ever so often, where man has intervened with nature.



A map drawn in the late 19<sup>th</sup> C.  
showing what the area would have looked like  
at the time of the Roman invasion of 43 AD



Villa Doria Pamphilj giardini, Rome

# Woodford House School "You will go far"

by Kevin Walker

## Part 2

3

In the year above me was a rather pretty girl by the name of Angela Dolamore – her father, I think, was manager of the Beresford Hotel. I very quickly fell in love with her and her long red flaming hair. I would like to say it was love at first sight but with several admirers already, it was some time before she even acknowledged my presence.



Mr Hodges, former Headmaster

On certain days Mr. Bickerstaff used to give us the National Geographic to read. How I was fascinated by these far flung places in Africa and wide parts of what was still the British Empire. I credit this magazine and its issue by the school, as being a fundamental reason why I chose the career and lifestyle I did.

After a few months I was told I was to go into the sixth form with Mrs. Bickerstaff. Whilst this was a step in the right direction, I was the only boy in the class. Whilst I was now in the same room as Angela Dolamore, I must confess to being a little uneasy as in those days real boys would just not admit to such a situation of being the only boy.



Woodford House front entrance - c. 1913

Mrs. Bickerstaff was a keen mathematician and pushed me to a very high standard in this subject. I credit her with stretching my limits even more in science and maths and making me acceptable in English.

Unlike in London, there was no football, rugby or cricket during my stay at Woodford House only rounders, which was a pity, given the size of the playing field behind the school. However we did practice regularly for the school sports day where I was able to demonstrate my past expertise at sprinting. At the school sports day I followed years of notable Old Woodfordians by being awarded the coveted Victor Ludorum Cup which had winner engravings starting from the thirties.

One morning Mr. Bickerstaff summoned me to his class to advise me the time was right to sit a scholarship to Dane Court Grammar School. I sat the examination the next day and at the assembly the following day, the headmaster announced I had passed the examinations and would shortly be leaving the school. I was made captain for the remaining few weeks of school.

Woodford House garden.

This painting also shows the school bell which could be heard around the village



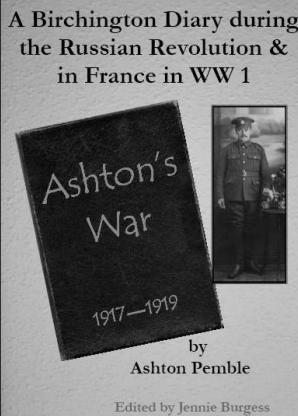
I also remember the school playground with its covered area and the tall imposing old dormitory buildings on two sides. I remember the walk to the field through the greenhouse and potting shed areas. The lines of string beans and rows of flowers and fruit trees. I remember the school bell with its long rope starting in the assembly hall. I remember the old large photograph of Mr. Hodges hanging majestically in the hall. I remember Mrs. Hodges whom I met at the school sports day. Above all I remember fun and learning life skills at this wonderful school.

The day I left the school, I went to see Mr. Bickerstaff for the final time. "Kevin I THINK YOU WILL GO FAR and I wish you all the very best in life. Don't look back"

---- I did go far and spent nearly forty years working overseas as a chartered engineer on civil projects, many of which were in countries I had originally encountered in magazines at Woodford House. I never saw Mr. or Mrs. Bickerstaff again and I looked back only once and it is now at what was the most amazing school and period of my life. Long may it last in our memories.

# Noticeboard

## Russian Diary by Ashton Pemble



The diary is being printed at this moment and will be available very soon. We are only having 50 printed to start with and they will be spiral bound with acetate covers front and back. The cost will be about £10 each – certainly not more than that. If you want a copy it would be wise to book your diary as soon as possible. At the moment only a few people have made definite requests.

Contact Jennie direct (Tel 842988) or go into the Museum (Mon, Thurs, or Sat 9.30-12.30).

## CALENDARS for 2013 from BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST

The Trust is planning to produce a calendar again for next year. Having sold out of the 150 copies so quickly last year, we will have 200-250 printed this time. We are hoping that they will be on sale by the end of August or early September at the latest.

We would be very grateful for offers of sponsorship for the photos; we ask for a minimum of £10 and the sponsor can have their name inserted alongside one of the pictures, as we did last year. If you pay by cheque, please make these payable to 'Birchington Heritage Trust' and send them either to Jennie Burgess at 6 Alpha Road Birchington, CT7 9EQ or drop them into the Museum at Room 4 in the Village Centre.

There will be a new set of 13 images from our archives. If anyone has a particular photo they would like us to include, please let us know as soon as possible, either via the Museum or direct to Jennie at 01843 842988.

## Social Committee Report

### March 27<sup>th</sup>

Was an enjoyable evening with a talk by Vernon Mee on "A Victorian Gentleman's Daywear"

He really brought the subject to life with many pieces of clothing and accessories to look at and handle, a big thank you to Vernon.

### April 26<sup>th</sup>

Jennie Burgess kindly gave a talk, with pictures, on John and Margaret Crispe. A talk full of local information bringing them to life.

Jennies interest in Margaret Crispe came originally from a brass rubbing, from the Crispe Chapel of All Saints Church which she then turned into an embroidery panel of the rubbing.

Thank you Jennie. I know all who attended enjoyed the evening.

£45 was made on the raffle.

As we draw near to the AGM May 24<sup>th</sup>, I would like to thank you all for your support during the past year.

**Look out for the posters for June 21<sup>st</sup> "BINGO"**

Dot Raven

## Subs For Next Year

The Birchington Heritage Trust has been open for nearly ten years. During this time the prices of most goods and services have increased, e.g. food, heating, travel, petrol, insurance even the post, with the exception of our membership subscription which has remained at just five pounds a year.

Overall we need about £11 a day to keep in business. Our fundraising has been mainly provided by Jennie who has been hard at work publishing her books and giving talks, also, so too have our unsung heroes of the social committee and other helpers. Fortunately we have also received a few welcome donations from well-wishers. All monies go towards our rent, insurances, stationery, printing materials, photocopying and files in which to store our growing accumulation of historical material.

Regrettably, there will be a need to raise our subscription to a more realistic level. In return we are hoping to retain our current level of service to our membership and the community, by opening three mornings a week, Monday, Thursday and Saturday also publishing our four newsletters a year.

## BHT-SPEAKERS FOR 2012

### Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> May

Annual General Meeting

### Famous Thanet Folk

by

John Robinson

### Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September

3rd talk in series on smuggling

### 'The Preventive Service' (Royal Navy)

by

John Graham

### Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> November

an illustrated history

### Bricks & Brickwork

by

Richard Filmer

All talks are 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm start

Held at The Birchington Village Centre

Non-members Welcome

We look forward to seeing you