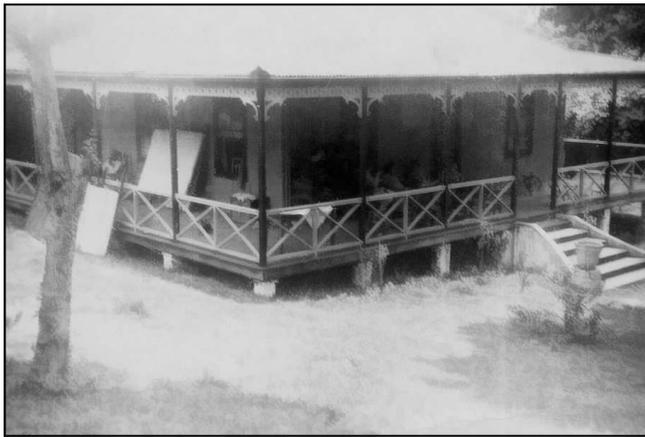


**Getting inside 'Inside Out'**

by Jennie Burgess

Towards the end of September, I had a call from a James Fitzgerald, a researcher from 'Inside Out', the local interest programme on BBC 1, which is shown periodically at 7.30pm. James explained he had looked on our website and found two articles on our Bungalows in Birchington written by Alan Kay – could I give him Dr Kay's contact details? When I explained that Alan had died several years ago, he asked if the Heritage Trust could help him. I offered to send him some information from our archives, which I did - and he next asked if I'd be willing to be interviewed.



*Tonnesen's Bungalow in S.Africa  
with veranda all round*

Having recently worked with a retired BBC producer for a programme about our churchyard (see note at the end of this piece about that item) I agreed. The interview was recorded on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October in our Museum. There were four in the BBC team – the producer, Graham Wheeler, the presenter, Natalie Graham, the cameraman Kieran Coyle and the researcher, James Fitzgerald. The interview lasted a little while - it felt like 30-40 minutes, but it's difficult to gauge without having looked at my watch. Some of it then had to be re-shot from a different angle, as there was only one camera in use.

The team had filmed elsewhere in the village before they came to the Museum, visiting the Tower Bungalows, where they'd spoken to Glen Pugh, of Glen Patrick the Estate Agent. After the interview they went round the Garden Estate collecting more material. It would be interesting to see how the whole programme was assembled at the end.

The final result was shown on Monday the 8<sup>th</sup> October. The slots at the start and finish of the programme were about the elderly. Our slot was fairly short – and if you blinked or sneezed during my interview, you'd have missed my 'pearls of wisdom' entirely! But the whole experience was fascinating. It was encouraging to realise that much of the information which Natalie included was probably gleaned from parts of that interview – so it wasn't wasted! James very kindly sent us a DVD of the programme to be used as we wish.

**Churchyard Film**

This is still being edited – it is much longer than the 'Inside Out' snippet – about 45 – 50 minutes. It may or may not get shown on TV, but we will be given a copy of it, which we can show at one of our meetings at a later date. The producer, James Murray, has called his programme "DOWN TO EARTH". Our version (in PowerPoint form) is called "BURIED TREASURE". If "Down to Earth" gets as far as being shown on the BBC, we will try and make sure you all hear about it in time.

**On Visiting Our Website**

It is rewarding to read that our website has been of use to a BBC researcher which resulted in our archivist, Jennie, being interviewed on BBC television. How long before there will be queues of autograph hunters waiting to collect Jennie's autograph, preferably in one of her books?

For Bob, who has devoted so many hours of his time posting the material on to our website, it makes his efforts worthwhile.

A visit to our Website will reveal many informative entries about our village, which are frequently being updated.

## 2 Black Death Halted Building of New South West Tower For All Saints Church

In the year 1343, a Contract was drawn up for a new south aisle in Birchington church to be built. One of the Churchwardens signed it, along with the builder from Herne. At some early stage in the decision making, they had also decided to build a new south-west tower to replace the oddly sited SE tower (which we still have). And so the work was begun – in about 1344-5



*Stonemason working on a socket*

About two years later, a stonemason began work on preparing for the ringing chamber of the tower. He chiselled out a socket in the pillar at the far end of the South Aisle, in preparation to hold the first beam. This was to provide one of the supports for the ringing chamber floor. The contract stated that the new large south aisle planned for All Saints Church was to

be like the North aisle at St Nicholas-at-Wade. Although the contract made no mention of the new tower, the evidence of that extra large pillar and pilaster at the west end of the church clearly shows this was intended. We can also see the beginnings of the springers on the south side of the great pillar, which stop suddenly after just over a foot.

The change of plan was almost certainly due to the arrival of the Black Death in 1348-9, when the whole project ground to a halt through lack of labour and money. When the project was finally restarted in about 1355, the churchwardens had decided to reduce the scheme drastically, adding just two half-aisles under one large roof and abandoning the planned tower altogether. So our 14<sup>th</sup> century workman's neatly chiselled hole was left unused – and forgotten.

The beam was to be a sturdy one, as the socket measures 4½ inches wide by 5¾ inches high. The socket is 12 inches deep and stands at 9 feet 6 inches above the floor of the church. The stonemason put a lot of effort into making that hole, but he may not have learnt that it was never to be used, as he probably died, along with almost half the villagers of Birchington, during the Black Death epidemic that rampaged through Britain between 1348 and 1350.

The notes about this unusual feature in the church have only come to light recently, since Alfred Walker's granddaughter, Bridget Jones, kindly sent a collection of her grandfather's files about All Saints to us - for which we send her hearty thanks. As our Churchwarden and Parish Archivist, Alfred Walker was an avid collector of information on All Saints Church, which has stood at the hub of our village since about 1100.



*Broom handle indicates hole position*

We also have to thank Geoff Pegg and Steve Mayes for the photos in this article and Geoff's wife Edwina, for indicating the position of the hole in the wall with the broom handle!



*Beam hole in South West Aisle*

In 1947 Beaconsfield, the large house at the bottom of Alpha Road, was sold and divided into three properties. Number 1 (nearest the library) was bought by David and Lorna Burley and they moved down from London in 1948. They had been very involved with the theatre in London and soon joined the Guild of Players. The Guild was very successful after the war, but they perceived that there were plenty of keen youngsters, but very few parts for them to play. Thus came the idea of the Junior Drama Club catering for 14-18 year olds and originally linked to The Guild. Its inaugural productions were in 1952 and that year they won the first of many awards at The Kent Drama Festival with "Sunday Costs Five Pesos".



*Knapman, David & Lorna Burley with cup. 1962*

The plays were produced by David and Lorna and were usually one act ones. In a typical year, there would be two performances, each consisting of three one-act plays, of which they had a vast collection. Many were historical plays by T.B. Morris, although there were frequent productions of Josephine Niggli's Mexican dramas. Three were entered each year for the Kent Drama Festival, which they frequently won. Niggli's Red Velvet Goat was successful in 1953 with Shirley Miles (Cross) and Hugh Cornish in leading rôles and again in 1961 with Peter Dobson and Patricia Ditch. For all these productions, David produced the most wonderful scenery from his workshop in the Nissen hut behind the old Church House, where the plays were performed. Lorna would play the piano at the performances, sometimes accompanied by David on drums.

David and Lorna were quite strict in their training of the young thespians. There was no acknowledging friends in the audience or popping out to meet them in the interval and there were no "airs and graces", as David called them, allowed. The youngsters were taught theatrecraft and how to do things properly, whether it be voice production, make-up or stage positioning. The philosophy was that even though the cast was amateur and young, people had paid to see the productions and they should be as near perfect as possible. They were helped in this with a loyal band of helpers including Rebe Gallsworthy, who specialised in hair and make-up, Mildred Knapman who was responsible for costume and many more backstage.



*Kent Dram Youth Cup - 1960*

For much of its life, the group held its Friday meetings at Gainsborough House School in Alpha Road (now Highfield Nursing Home) and this was an ideal venue with plenty of room for rehearsals and other activities such as table tennis. When it was sold, the club moved to a hotel in Westgate, owned by the parents of Janet and Wendy Hughes and then finally to Birchington Primary School. However, it was never quite so successful after this move in the early sixties and by the mid sixties, the club had ceased to exist. Now its members are spread throughout the world. Some took up acting professionally, some went on to teach drama, others had unrelated careers, but most of them look back appreciatively at their time with BJDC.

Teenagers in the sixties had a whole new range of interests and, as the older members left to go on to university or pursue their careers, they were not so easily replaced. Some felt the name "Junior" was a problem and so in 1962, it was re-branded as Birchington Youth Drama Group, but this did not bring in new members. In fact, many did not like the word "Youth" at all.



*Red Velvet Goat - 1961*



The public house now called Carbeez was built in the 1600s. It was dated by the Brewers as 1646, though is more likely 1680-90. This date becomes apparent when we notice the Dutch gables at each end of the main roof. There were at least five such houses round the Square at the time. Its earliest name as an ale house and staging inn is unknown. Whatever it was, the owners decided to change it to The New Inn, after the first New Inn became the Powell Arms in 1823, to honour John Powell Powell when he became High Sheriff of Kent. Our second New Inn kept this name until in October 1961, when it became 'The Pewter Pot'. Since 2000 it has had several changes, but the outer façade is very similar to our earliest view of it in 1900.

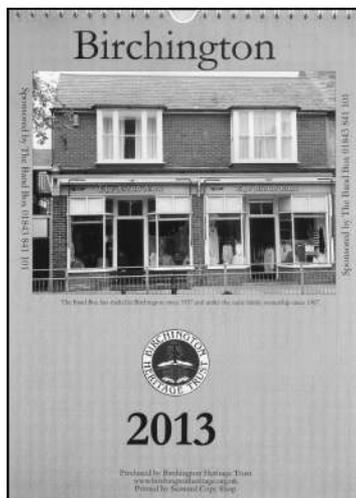


*The New Inn - c.1900*

### An ideal Christmas gift suggestion for your Family or Friends

Our 2013 Calendar is now on sale  
at the Museum for £5.00

It is filled with a selection of  
nostalgic images of Birchington



## Noticeboard

### Your Help is Needed

If any one would like to be included on the Heritage Museum Stewards' rota list, please contact Maureen Davis on 843028.

There is a Master Index which makes finding items very easy.

Our Museum can be found in Room 4, upstairs, in the Birchington Village Centre, behind the library.

We are open  
Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

9.30 am to 12.30pm

Just in case anybody has not visited the museum there are many articles which are of interest to everyone

We look forward to seeing you there soon.

### **BHT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013**

**An illustrated history  
Bricks & Brickwork**

**By Richard Filmer**

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**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

**A musical Evening with  
David Ruddock and Friends**

David Ruddock (piano)

Heather Grant (soprano)

Christine Chappell (flute)

John Chappell (clarinet & saxophone)

Admission by programme £6.50

Programmes available from

Jennie Burgess 842988 or the Museum

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All talks are 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm start

Held at The Birchington Village Centre

Non-members Welcome