



# Newsletter

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

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## BERESFORD HOTEL

*Beresford Hotel and Gardens c. 1924*

A number of nearby properties had also been incorporated into the original hotel so that when it reopened in 1946 it was the largest hotel complex on the western side of Thanet. In 1951 dinner dances were held with Len Goodwin and the Beresford Quartet. The hotel was advertised as having a "private sea promenade". Guests included the Beatles when they played at Margate's "Winter Gardens" in 1962.

By the mid-60s hotel bookings were greatly reduced and with the withdrawal of the AA and RAC 5 star rating declined even more. With the advent of cheaper air flights and guaranteed sunshine people were choosing to travel abroad and it was decided to close the hotel.

During demolition the following year the hotel burned down. It eventually sold in 1971 for £75,000. The six-acre cliff top site was developed into a fifty-unit housing estate now called Moray Avenue and St Magnus Close.

*Heather Letley*

The Beresford Hotel was originally part of the Tower Bungalows, comprising "Haun" and "Thor", two separate bungalows designed by John Seddon in 1878 and occupied by local philanthropist William Morison Bell and his family. On his death in 1900 it came under the ownership of Lord Decies (William Marcus de la Poer Horsley-Beresford JP, DL) who renamed it "Beresford Lodge", staying there intermittently for the next five years and spending a considerable amount of money improving the property. This included building his wife, a member of the Cat Club and owner of the best Chinchilla cat in the country, a wonderful cattery to accommodate her pets. In 1908 he set in motion the flotation of a company to acquire Beresford Lodge together with five acres of adjoining land, in order to turn it into a hotel. The idea was originally to call it "The Cliff Palace Hotel". He intended to extend the premises from an initial 40 bedrooms up to 100. After his death in July 1910 his younger brother inherited the title and continued with the plans. Unfortunately the First World War intervened and the building was requisitioned to provide recuperation facilities for the war wounded.

It took a little while after the war to get the "Beresford Hotel" up and running. Opened officially in 1920 it became a first class establishment used by many of the famous from the world of stage and screen. It was during this period that John Betjeman visited the hotel. The "Beresford" held its five star position until the Second World War when it was once again requisitioned for military purposes.

## BAY HOTEL

*Bay Hotel c.1931*

The Bay Hotel was built in 1905, perched high up on the cliff top at Minnis Bay. The square tower, with steep mansard roof was as unmissable as a lighthouse. Uncle Tom's Cabin (or Cavern) stood to the right of the main hotel and was reached by going down steps into a basement. It was a hive of activity with the troops based in Birchington from 1940-1945 and continued to be a favourite haunt of the younger generation after the war. Unfortunately in 1964 the whole site was sold and the hotel and tennis court demolished to make way for high rise flats. Ringsloe Court was eventually built on the site in the 1980s.

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Page 2 - John Powell Powell's Signature + "Who Do You Think You Are?" - Max Bellamy

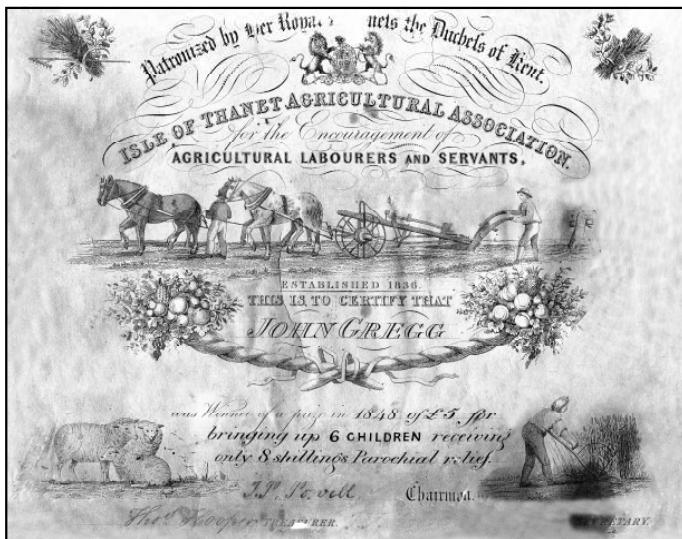
Page 3 - Map Puzzle - Help + New Booklet on Spurgeon's Homes + BHT Display in Library Window

Page 4 - Quexpo DVD + An Unknown Lady? + BHT Dates for your Diary

## JOHN POWELL-POWELL'S SIGNATURE

Earlier this year the Trust was given a certificate that had been signed by John Powell Powell, the builder of the present Quex Park House. The donor of the item was Suzannah Foad from Margate, who bid for it at an auction last year. The certificate states that £5 was awarded to John Gregg, of Birchington in 1845, for "bringing up 6 children, receiving only 8 shillings Parochial Relief". This was at a period when the Overseers to the Poor and the Churchwardens were struggling to provide subsidised flour to the poor of the village, during a time of very poor harvests and extremely low wages for agricultural workers.

We have now put scans of the certificate into our archives, but the original certificate, which is very fragile, has been donated to Quex House and its archives, as the certificate was almost certainly signed by John Powell-Powell at his library desk in Quex Park.



Scan of donated certificate awarded to John Gregg  
Signed by John Powell-Powell

Jennie Burgess

## The Bay Hotel

continued from page one



Uncle Tom's Cabin part of Bay Hotel

Heather Letley

## "WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?"

MAX BELLAMY - NZ - a Crispe family member

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2013

I had a phone call from a member of the Library staff one morning, asking if I could help a visitor from New Zealand who was trying to trace his family connections in Birchington. It turned out he was a descendant of the Crispe family from Quex Park and had come to Birchington for the day on the off-chance of making some connections. We ended up with me taking him to Quex Park where he made himself known to the staff and was introduced to Susan Johnson, the present member of the Powell-Cotton family now resident at Quex.

I had left Max up at the Park and returned home, asking him to ring me when he needed to be brought back, as he wanted to see his family memorials in Quex Chapel in All Saints Church before he left the area. When he rang, he told me that Susan was bringing him back to the village as she, too, wanted to look at the chapel – which, incidentally, her family now own. When they arrived at the church, we spent a most enjoyable time finding various members of both their families. It struck me afterwards, what a wonderful series of serendipitous events that day had held – and in which I had been privileged to share. If Max had gone straight to the churchyard to try and find the memorials on his own, he would have found nothing. But by going to the Librarian, who fortunately knew me and my phone number - - - - etc. etc. I said to Max as I took him down to the station, "I'm so glad you bothered to ask for help." His reply was, "My mother said, - If you don't ask, you won't get, so ASK, son." This is just one of the reasons that I love this job as Archivist so much! You never know what is coming next.

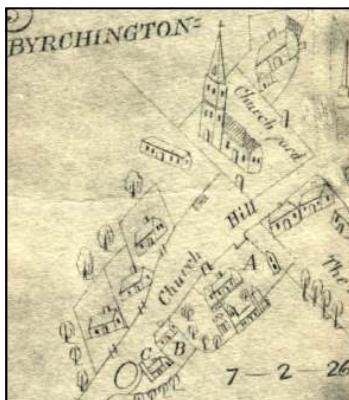


The Crispe memorial in Quex Chapel, All Saints Church  
One monument with six busts is unique in Britain

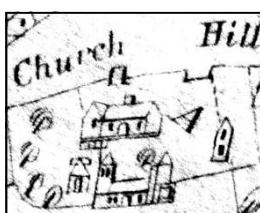
Jennie Burgess

## MAP PUZZLE – HELP!!!

The Birchington Heritage Trust holds a copy of a 1688 map of Birchington, which hides some secrets that the archivist would like to unravel. If anyone can help, it would be a great relief to solve this puzzle that has been nagging at us all for several years.



Church Hill - "Byrchington"  
1688 map



Close-up of Church Hill Farm

farmhouse, there are four trees, with another small building by the last one. We wondered if this was a dovecot – a common feature in buildings at this date. If not, what else might it be?

To the right of this small building is a strange structure that looks a bit like a gatehouse – but it is on the wrong side of the site. As far as we know, the road through the village has always been in its present position – the Church has been the fixed point in the village since about 1100. Has anyone an idea of what it might have been used for?



Mystery building to left of farm



Mystery building to right of farm

The fourth part of the puzzle is the odd little 'tower' in the lower right hand corner of the farmhouse plot. It reminds us of the towers at Fire Stations used for fire & rescue drills! So once again, have you any suggestions – or positive knowledge that can unlock the last part of our puzzle?



Dove Cote at Isfield



Gatehouse at Isfield

The above photos in this article are of Isfield in Sussex, taken in 1980.

Jennie Burgess

## NEW BOOKLET ON SPURGEON'S 3

A new booklet has been written about Spurgeon's Homes in Birchington by our new Secretary, Janet Denyer. It began as an article for the Newsletter, but she became so engrossed in what she was discovering in our archives that it has grown into a fascinating spiral bound booklet. There has been some input from the staff at Spurgeon's headquarters at Rushden, who were most helpful and have since bought a number of copies to pass on to Spurgeons' Old Scholars.

The booklet has a good number of photos, some completely new to our archives, and costs just £3.00. It is available in the Trust's Museum (open Mon. Thurs. and Sat. 9.30 - 12.30). There is to be a display entitled "**SPURGEON'S in BIRCHINGTON**" mounted on our new screen in the Library entrance lobby.



Spurgeon's site, with Park Road across the left lower corner - c. 1964

## DISPLAY IN LIBRARY WINDOW

As most of our readers know, we have been unable to use McColl's (Martins) side window for our displays since January this year, but have been actively searching for a new site. Through the generosity and kindness of the Birchington Library in Alpha Road, we have now been granted permission to mount displays on a purpose-built screen in the Library foyer. It will almost certainly be in place by the time you are reading this letter.

For our first venture, the front of the screen facing the middle window, we shall have a display about Spurgeon's in Birchington, while the reverse of the screen, facing into the foyer, will be about the history of Libraries in Birchington.



BHT Spurgeon's & Birch Hill  
Display in Alpha Rd Library window



An Entrance Gate to  
Spurgeon's Home

**O**ut of the blue, came the offer to view a DVD; it had been transferred from a film of Quexpo 1983 and Quexpo 1984. If you were around in those days, you will know what it was all about, but for those who were not, this is the story.

The original Church House was a typical Church Hall. The Church was unable to fund it any longer and were offered a free and smaller replacement for church use only. Everybody used it from Scouts, Guides, Drama Groups and other Guilds and it was the centre of the village for all indoor activities. The Church decided to demolish it and build a smaller one in its place for use solely for church purposes. At a stroke therefore, all the village associations were homeless as there were no other halls with its facilities.

The question of another such building in the village had often been mooted in the past, but the question of finance was always the stumbling block. But now, with the loss of our main hall, a replacement became urgent. All groups in the village held fund raising events but, with all the will in the world, the total amounts that they could raise would be peanuts compared with the vast figure that would be required to build something new from scratch.

Birchington was extremely fortunate in having a group of people, known as "The Squares" (because they either worked or lived around The Square) who had the foresight, imagination, ability and the necessary contacts to be able to assemble enough volunteers from local associations to organise a three-day fete over the August Bank Holiday. It was held in Quex Park by kind permission of Mr. Christopher Powell-Cotton and was called "Quexpo". The first one was in 1970 and they were held each August for some 17 years the last in 1986. There would be Baby shows, Dog shows, Vintage Cars, Steam Traction Engines and Steamrollers, Majorettes, Marching bands and Motor cycle display teams as well as speciality acrobatic events and a Craft tent. Outside the arena would be Drink and Refreshment tents, trade stalls and sideshows run by local groups. The money raised each year, and it was a large sum, was banked until there was enough to start building and to maintain our excellent Village Centre, which has now been standing for forty years.

The BHT Trust now has a copy of the Quexpo DVD, available for hire, should you be interested.

Maurice Hewett

## Noticeboard

### ?? AN UNKNOWN LADY ??

**C**an any reader identify the lady on the right in this photo taken in Iris Bedwell's shop, 'Oma's Delight' in 2001, on the morning it was opened? She was always beautifully dressed and had a ready smile. If you know who it is can you either ring Jennie at 842988 or call into the Museum with the answer. We cannot ask Iris as she can no longer see well enough and none of the other people in the photo can help either.



*The Unknown Lady*



*'Oma's Delight' opening in 2001*

## BHT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2013**  
Talk: Gerry Abrahams: Bomber Command

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**Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013**  
Race Night: See noticeboards for details

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

Talk: Fact, Fiction & Trivia about WW1 & WW2. By Paddy Earp

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**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

A musical Evening with David Ruddock and Friends

Admission by programme £6.50

Programmes available from Jennie Burgess 842988 or visit 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  
Drinks available from Bar