WE HAVE MOVED!

left to right:
Roger Latchford, who provided funds for
the new bookcases & furniture,
Mike Hill, KCC Cabinet member for Community Services,
and
Neville Hudson , in his role of Parish Council Chairman.
(11th Oct 2016)

We are now in our new premises at the Burley Gallery, Birchington Library. A little tweaking and new labelling remains to be done but everything is in place and looking good.

The museum will be manned on Monday's and Thursday's from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm. On Saturday's from 10.00 am till 1.00 pm. At other times our room will be open during library opening hours, to allow visitors to see our picture gallery and display cabinets, but all files will be in locked cabinets, and unavailable for research.

A big thank-you to all volunteers who came to help with the move, with a special mention to Janet Denyer, Gillian Lodge and Neville Hudson, who have worked very hard, and had the vision to see the initial idea through to fruition.

John Robinson (Vice-Chairman)

THE NAME - GORE
Alfred T. Walker

Gore-end, now known as Minnis Bay, is at the seaward end of the road leading to the coast at the 'Minnis' or common.

From the Oxford Dictionary:-
"Gore" a gore is a wedge shaped piece of cloth adjusting the width of a garment. Also a triangular piece of land.

It is Old English from gara – a triangular piece of land. Perhaps it is derived directly from the Saxon word "Gara" meaning a projecting point of land which in turn comes from "gar" meaning a spear.

As a place name it appears frequently in Kent. There is:-
Gore Court at Tunstall
Gorestrete in Monkton parish
Gore Manor in Upchurch.

Although the present appearance of Minnis Bay or Gore-end seems so unlike a triangular piece of land, yet in earlier times that interpretation would have been quite appropriate. The oldest maps all show a triangular projection of land which helped form the little Haven into which ships could find shelter and wait before venturing out into the teeth of a storm in the Thames Estuary.

The Gore End or Minnis headland stretched much further seaward than at present, so that "the end of a projecting point of land" would well have described the area.
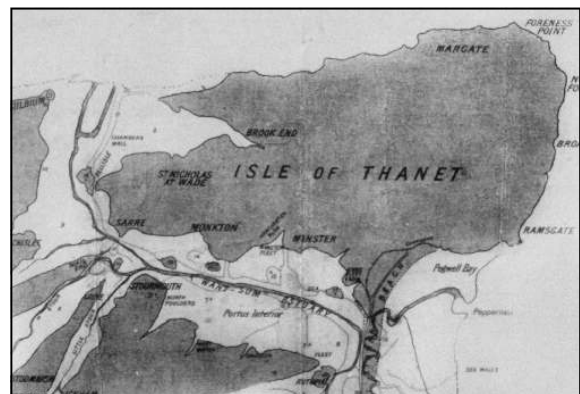
Isle of Thanet in Roman Times

THE LAY OF THE BROTHERS OF BIRCHINGTON
('Lay' – as in 'ballad')

The lay of the twin Brothers of Birchington appears in the Rev. R. H. Barham's "The Ingoldsby Legend".

The Rev Barham was born at Canterbury in 1788. He became curate at Ashford, then at Westwell nearby, and later of Warehorne near Romney Marsh where smugglers abounded. He became a Canon of St. Paul's and wrote numerous articles, mainly of them in a lighter vein.

He published his collection of legends, poems and stories including "The Jackdaw of Rheims", very early in Queen Victoria's reign. The collection includes many of local interest including "The Smuggler's Leap", the story in the form of a poem of Smuggler Bill, the ghostly rider, and the Excise Man meeting their death at the top of Minster Hill. Also the story called "Adventures at Margate", a legend of Jarvis Jetty, and our own special one called the "Lay of the Brothers of Birchington".

Barham knew of the legend of the twin towers of Reculver and how they were, so the legend says, built by twin sisters, so why not have twin brothers of Birchington. This story Barham must surely have invented himself – I have not come across it anywhere else.

All Saints Birchington c.1355

In this poem he introduces an old story connected with the ancient seat of Quex, going back as far as the first Plantagenet Kings of England, the time of Thomas Becket in the later 1100's.

The Lord of the Manor of Birchington in those days, so says Barham, was Sir Robert de Birchington, and he had a brother Richard, who was a monk. The two men were so alike were that it was difficult for anyone to know them apart. But the temperament of the two men and their mode of living were entirely different - one led the most virtuous existence, the other spent his days and nights in debauchery.

Reculver - 1800

Now to the story as told by Barham in the 90 verses of the poem.

The Devil suddenly decided that Sir Robert had had quite sufficient pleasure on earth and it was time he should be taken into the lower regions. But even his Satanic Majesty was deceived in the identity of the two brothers and his satellites one night captured the monk and took him off to hell.

Astonished to find his favourite monk lying stone dead in his cell, St. Thomas a Becket visited the place and while he stood looking at the corpse the Devil appeared. "Surely I have not made a mistake?" said he, with a gracious bow. "The gentleman for whose death I am responsible is surely Sir Robert de Birchington." "No, replied the Archbishop. "This is his brother, the most saintly prior in Kent."

"I am extremely sorry." Said the Devil. "I will correct the mistake at once with your Grace's assistance. If you will restore life to your monk I will take his brother in return."

So that night the Devil visited the manor house of Sir Robert. There was his victim in a room, but suddenly he disappeared and, in utter astonishment, the frustrated Devil left the house. But St. Thomas a Becket, having restored life to the monk, thought he would also do a good turn to the brother, and just after the departure of the Devil went to the manor house. Entering the room, he was astounded when a soot-covered human form came down the chimney and prostrated himself before his Grace. The sequel is a happy one. From henceforth Sir Robert became as saintly as his brother, sold all his land and entered the priesthood and for years afterwards, the Twin Brothers of Birchington became famous for the good that they did amongst the poor of Thanet.

Written up by Alfred T. Walker

Painting of an imagined Birchington village sign in c. 1900

The origin and meaning of the name Birchington is referred to by nearly all historians of Kent. In most old documents relating to this place, such as the churchwardens' Account Books, dating from 1531, the Poor Books, dating from about 1607, and documents relating to Birchington as a Non-Corporate Limb of the Cinque Port of Dover, Birchington is referred to as "The Ville of Birchington."

The word "Ville" or "Vil" or "Vill" is an old Anglo-Saxon French word meaning a Village or Parish. It is a territorial unit or division under the feudal system consisting of a number of houses or buildings with their adjacent lands. It really corresponds to Parish. The word Birchington is almost certainly Saxon in origin. The authority on the Place Names of Kent is J. K. Wallenberg of Uppsala University, Sweden, who published in 1934 his book "The Place Names of Kent". According to his book the earliest known document with the name is the Assize Rolls for Kent of 1240, when the name appears as "de Birchilton."

In the Assize Rolls of 1254 it appears as "de Bruchinton", "de Berchinton", and "Bircheton". In the Patent Rolls of the reign of Henry III, 1264, it appears as "Bercelton". In the Feet of Fines of Kent of 1274 it is "Byrchelton".

From these Wallenberg suggests that the name is Old English.

"Bierce" is Old English for birch (trees)

"Hyl" is a slight hill or rising ground

Tun" is Old English and meant a village which grew up round a farm or manor. So the name means the village on the rising ground in the birch trees. Birchington is on slightly rising ground and we still have Church Hill.

It must be remembered that in early times, Thanet was much more wooded than now and in the immediate neighbourhood are Woodchurch, (the Church of St. Nicholas at Wode), Acol or Acholte, the oak wood, Westwood, Northwood, and Southwood. Hasted, in his "*History of Kent,*" says that "anciently there was much more woodland in Thanet and several villes still preserve the memory of these woods".

Philpott who published his "Villara Cantianum" in 1670 considers the name was originally Bircheton, the enclosure where the birch trees grow. The Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names by E. Kwall says of Birchington, "Bircheton", Tun among the Birches. The change from Birchilton, to Burchenton, where the birch trees grow, can be accounted for by the Saxon manner of forming the plural by adding en, as in oxen, brethren, children, housen, and the further change to' Birchington' would be a case of alteration in the spelling as people became more literate.

The following are some of the many different ways the name is spelt in the Churchwardens' Account Books, Poor Books and other documents in our archives.

Birchyngton, Byrchyngton, Byrchyntone, Bychenton, Byrchinton, Birchinyetonne, Birchingetonn, Bircheingetonn, Burchenyetonn, Burcheton, Burchenton, Birchenton etc.

In early days there was no standard spelling so whoever kept the Churchwardens' Books etc, and it was usually the Minister or his Clerk, spelt the name as he said it or thought it should be spelt.

Acol

Acol is also referred to as a Vill. According to Wallenberg the name first appears in the Assize Rolls of 1270 as "de Acholt", also in 1304 Assize Rolls as "de Acholte", and in the Feet of Fines of 1343 as Acholte.

It is Old English made up of the following -
Ac – oak, and holt – wood.

When St. Mildred's Church of Acol was first dedicated in 1876, it was given the name of St Giles – the 'lost church' of Sarre, but after some fairly firm lobbying by the parishioners, the Bishop of Dover later came to rededicate it to St Mildred. In his sermon he referred to the name of Acol as being "in the oak wood".

Noticeboard

BHT Dates For your Diary

Thursday 1ˢᵗ December 2016
Colin Bridge &
The Chalumeaux Quartet
A Musical Christmas Evening

Thursday, 23ʳᵈ February 2017
Talk by the Kent, Surrey & Sussex
Air Ambulance

Thursday, 23ʳᵈ March 2017
Event - To be arranged

Thursday, 25ᵗʰ May 2017
Talk by Peter Ewart -
'Some Mother's Son'

Thursday, 15ᵗʰ June 2017
AGM

Thursday, 27ᵗʰ July 2017
Event - To be arranged

Thursday, 21ˢᵗ September 2017
Talk by Susan Johnson
'Ladies of Quex'

Thursday, 26ᵗʰ October 2017
Event - To be arranged

Thursday 23ʳᵈ November 2017
Talk by Imogen Corrigan -
'The Goose is Getting Fat'

Quarterly meetings 7.00 for 7.30pm at
The Centre, Birchington.
The Bar will be available

BIRCHINGTON IN THE NEWS

All these old newspaper articles were printed in The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald.

A singular occurrence took place here on Tuesday night. A portion of the garden of Mr. T.A. Neame is it appears over a lime kiln, which was arched over. Owing to the recent heavy rains the arch gave way and on Wednesday morning a pit twenty feet wide and about twenty deep was discovered. A stable at the end of the garden seemed about to fall in, and in getting out, one of the horses went over into the pit, but was fortunately not much hurt.

14ᵗʰ December 1872

Ball - A fashionable ball, attended by eighty ladies and gentlemen, including the elite of the Island, was given in the National Schoolroom on Wednesday night.

2ⁿᵈ May 1868

"John Strange Winter" the popular lady novelist has taken up her residence at Montague House, Birchington Bay, where she spent the summer of 1893.

25ᵗʰ May 1895.

John Strange Winter was the pen-name of Henrietta Eliza Vaughan Stannard (nee Palmer) 1856 - 1911. She began writing at a time when publishers were reluctant to print anything by a woman author, hence the male name she used for her novels. In 1881 she began writing the military tales for which she became best known. In all she published around 100 novels and ten books of short stories, as well as articles for magazines. She was the first president of the Society of Women Journalists, and a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. It was the ill health of her husband which brought the family to Birchington for several months at a time. There is another newspaper announcement for her four months later: -

Mrs Arthur Stannard (John Strange Winter) the well-known novelist, who has been staying for the last six months at Birchington-on-Sea, Kent, gave birth to a daughter on Sunday last. Both mother and child are doing well.

22ⁿᵈ September 1895

Henrietta Eliza Vaughan Stannard (nee Palmer) 1856 -1911
(Pen Name - John Strange Winter)

Janet Robinson