



Preserving the Past for the Future

## Newsletter

www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk & on facebook

May 2018

Charity No. 1099250

ISSUE 64

### Dot Raven

It is with great sorrow that we have to record the sudden death of Dot Raven on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2018. Dot was one of the founder-members of the Birchington Heritage Trust. From its very beginnings, through her husband Derek's idea for creating the Trust and its Museum, she has supported us and played a pivotal role in its development. Even when she was no longer able to play an active role in our events, she encouraged us, especially in fund raising with the 'horse racing' evenings. In appreciation of all Dot's valued contributions to BHT she was elected as President of Trust.

Dot was very proud of what a few dedicated people have been able to achieve in the Heritage Trust



*Dot Raven as Chairman  
12<sup>th</sup> September 2005*

Her Daughter Kay, has reflected that when her parents moved to Birchington in 1969, Dot and her late husband Derek, quickly became involved in a number of Village organisations.

At Quexpo, they helped to man the gates. Quexpo was a three day event held in the grounds of Quex Park on August bank holiday weekends to raise funds towards the building of the Birchington Village Centre, now known as The Centre in Alpha Road. It attracted thousands of people.

The Quexpo events were successful due to the freely given efforts of very many well meaning volunteers, exhibitors in the side stalls, the Craft Tent, the traction engines and stationary engines, vintage cars and motorbikes, Red Devils Parachute displays, sheep dog displays to mention but a few of the many attractions; all accompanied by the music from Mortimer Organs and local bands.

Later on, Both Dot and Derek became Trustees of the Centre in 1979. Kay has followed on with the family community spirit tradition by also being a Trustee of The Centre.

Derek became Chairman of the Birchington Primary School PTA whilst Dot also served on the committee until 1982.



*Dot Raven with  
her Daughter, Kay  
During a 1920s dance in 2004*

Dot and Derek were involved with the Birchington Twinning Association with Birchington and La Chapelle-d'Armentières in 1989. The aims were to promote cultural and sporting links with the two communities. They were also instrumental with the formation of the Birchington Week in the mid 1990's

The Birchington carnivals, held between the late 1980's to mid-1990's, was another event which Dot and Derek helped to organise. Kay recalls that her birthday's would have to be celebrated at another time if they coincided with the Miss Birchington Selection Dance.

After suggesting the idea of a Historical Trust for Birchington to Jennie, which became BHT, it sparked an interest in Dot's and Derek's minds to research their own family history. They gained much pleasure learning about their past generations which involved many visits to Kew, numerous graveyards and villages throughout Kent. They also joined the Kent Family History Society.

Not only have they helped to preserve the past history of Birchington for the future, they between them did a fantastic job of leaving well researched, detailed information of past generations for their own family to treasure.

We shall all miss Dot's ready smile and encouragement. Our thoughts and sympathy are warmly extended to her daughter Kay and grandson Matthew.

*Peter Bateman*

**In this Issue:** *Page 1 - Dot Raven*

*Page 2 - Journey into Space by Janet Robinson*

*Page 3 - Wild Air formally known as Florimal Court by Janet Robinson*

*Page 4 - Noticeboard:- Future Events + Summary of BHT Talks and Events + Birchington's Alphabet*

**Q.** What is the connection between Birchington and the old radio series 'Journey Into Space'?

**A.** Guy Kingsley Poynter.

The earliest mention of the Poynter/Pointer family I have found in Birchington is a baptism in 1721, but earlier records show them in Thanet from at least 1585. By 1881 our corner of Kent had the largest concentration of the name anywhere in England. The accounts for tenants of Church lands of the Parish Church of Birchington in 1745 shows a William Pointer renting a small area of 3 rods, and also paying a small amount as acknowledgement for his house. In 1894 George and Thomas Pointer were both elected to serve on Birchington's first Parish Council, and George, a leading member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, was elected again in 1899.



*Pointer's Shop c. 1900*

The fountain in The Square was opened in 1909, but we would have had one earlier, in 1900, if it hadn't been for George Pointer and fellow councillor Mr. Pemble. When the idea of a fountain, to be placed in the centre of the Square, first came up for discussion, at a meeting of the Parish Council, George stated that 'There never has been any erection in the middle of the Square in his time, or in his father's time, and he did not intend that there should be one in anybody else's time if he could prevent it'. He declared that if the fountain was erected they would always have to have a policeman there to regulate the traffic, and it would no longer be possible for waggonettes to drive up and turn safely in the middle.

The arguing went on for several months, before the gentleman offering to fund the fountain withdrew his offer. When a different fountain was finely installed, George Pointer was proved right, it was in the way! It was later moved nearer to the Church wall, by the Powell Arms, and then again to the south side of the Square, where it still stands today.

Another George Pointer was an undertaker in the village, other members of the family were plumbers, carpenters and agricultural labourers.

In 1874, a Thomas Pointer married Frances Pemble, whose father had a grocers' shop and post office in Park Lane. Thomas took over the business, and by 1897 it had moved to the Square, where it was advertised as the 'Stationery Store, Post and Telegraph Office'. He was to serve as postmaster for 48 years. This picture, c1900, shows the shop, with the two smaller white blinds, on the corner of the Square and Albion Road.

Thomas and Frances had a son, Percy, who left Birchington in 1902, and emigrated to America. It was there that his son, Guy Kingsley Pointer, was born in 1915 in Great Neck, New York.



*Members of the cast in "Journey into Space."  
Alfie Bass, Andrew Faulds and Don Sharp,  
Guy Poynter (on far right)*

Guy became an actor, and changed the spelling of his name to Poynter. He came to England to work, appearing in several films, stage plays and on radio.

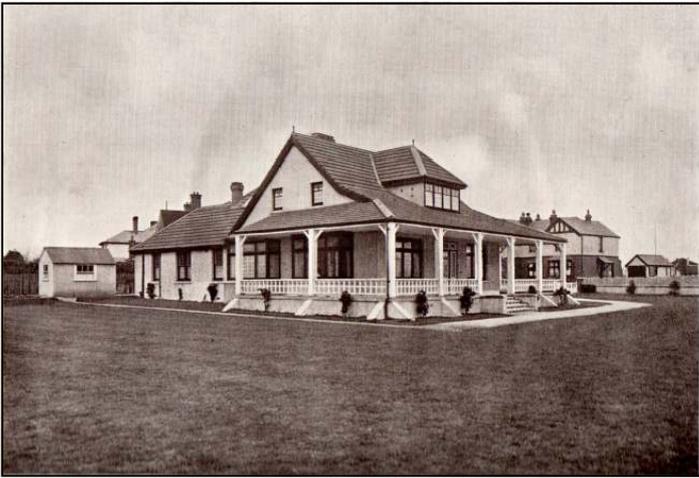
He is best known for playing the soft-spoken American medical officer, Doc. Mathews, in the radio series 'Journey into Space'. The series started on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1953, with eighteen episodes. Three more series followed.

He died on the 6<sup>th</sup> September 1983 in London, and is buried at Putney Vale Cemetery and Crematorium, Wimbledon.



**BHT**  
**Needs**  
**Your**  
**Subscriptions**  
**Now**  
**For**  
**2018-2019**

**(£7.50 per person £12.50 for two)**



*Florimel Court*

**I**n our newsletter of August 2017 was an article on the Beresford Gap fountain. Its donor was Alfred Scott, who lived nearby at the property Wild Air, which is now the site of the apartment block of the same name. We had few photographs of the house, and very little information on it, but did know that it had formerly been called Florimel Court.

At a recent postcard and collectors fair in Margate I purchased a collection of seventeen Birchington property auction sales brochures. One of them was for Florimel Court, to be sold by auction at Harrods on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1925. It contains four lovely pictures of the house, with full descriptions.

It is described as occupying a delightful situation overlooking the sea, substantially built of brick and rough cast, with tiled roof, of modern construction, having a very pleasing elevation. Entry was through a triple aspect spacious tiled veranda, which led to an oak panelled lounge, with two tiled fireplace recesses with oak mantels, parquet flooring and display shelf surround. Also, on the ground floor was a large hall, dining room, the principal bedroom with a square bay window and washbasin (with h & c), a second bedroom, a bathroom, and the maid's bedroom - also with a wash basin. On the upper floor were two more double bedrooms, two singles, and a large box room with heated linen cupboard and w.c.

The domestic offices on the ground floor consisted of a kitchen with fitted dresser and store cupboards, a 'Potterton' gas boiler, scullery, larder, w.c., and tradesmen's entrance.

There was half an acre of pleasure grounds, attractively laid out, comprising tennis and other pleasure lawns, flower beds and borders, good selection of shrubs, and a small kitchen garden. Water and gas were laid on, and electricity was shortly to be available.

Florimel Court was being sold on behalf of Melbourne Inman, who had only lived in the house for a few years. He was a World Billiards Champion in 1908, 1909, 1912, 1913, 1914 and 1919.



*Florimel Court Lounge*

He used to travel the country playing exhibition matches and the local newspapers of the early 1920s give reports of him appearing at local clubs in Thanet including Birchington. There is a report of a match he played in February 1925 at the Birchington United Services Club.

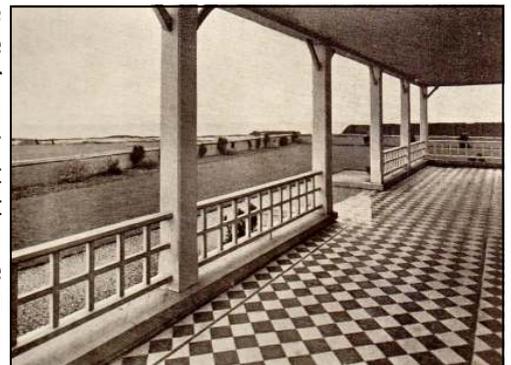
While playing these matches he raised funds for a charity he had established, the Melbourne Inman Workshop Fund. This was established in London to provide training and work for disabled soldiers and sailors. Unfortunately, in 1921, the charities secretary was dismissed for appropriating £1,000 of the funds, (over £42,000 today) and the venture was closed soon afterwards.



*Melbourne Inman*

Florimel Court was sold in 1925 when Inman was declared bankrupt after several disastrous business ventures in Billiard Clubs. He continued with his exhibition matches in Thanet until at least 1947, when he would have been 69 years old. The purchaser of the property was Alfred Scott, who changed its name to Wild Air.

I have not been able to discover how much the property sold for at auction, but it sounds a lovely house and would have enjoyed wonderful views from its veranda.



*Florimel Court Veranda*

*Janet Robinson*

# Noticeboard

## BHT Dates For your Diary

### Events for 2018

- 31<sup>st</sup> May AGM + Short Talks  
'Pugilism in Birchington' - Colin Winstone  
'Washed Up Birchington' - Luke Warburton  
'Post Boxes' - Chris Wyer
- 28<sup>th</sup> June Talk on 'Earlier Village Centres'  
by Jennie Burgess  
Talk on 'The Present Village Centre'  
by Neville Hudson
- 26<sup>th</sup> July Horse Racing
- 27<sup>th</sup> Sept Talk on 'Doodlebugs & Rockets'  
by Bob Ogley
- 25<sup>th</sup> Oct 'Quiz Night'  
with Ann & Doug Holmes
- 29<sup>th</sup> Nov Talk on 'Bover on the Hover'  
by Brian Laverick Smith

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

## BHT Talks and Activities

We had a most successful evening on 22 March with an attendance of almost 90 people to hear two very interesting talks.

The first by David Adams of BS&G gave us the technical background to the **Sea Front Shelters**. Initially it was thought they could all be refurbished, but it became apparent from the start they needed to be completely rebuilt which has escalated costs. To see the first of the shelters coming to life has been amazing and we are indebted to the dedication of the volunteers in the Group without whom this would not have happened.

The second talk by Janet/John Robinson took us for '**A Stroll Down Alpha Road**' with an in depth account of the various large houses, who occupied them and their subsequent use. Amongst them were '**Geoffrey Court**' which was built on the site of '**The Anchorage**', owned by Captain Ashton who started the first Birchington Fire Brigade. '**The Village Centre and Library**' were built in the grounds of '**Beaconsfield**' which during WW2 housed Czech politicians and soldiers. It acted as their only 'Consulate' in the UK and flew the Czech flag. '**Highfield House**' was at one time '**Gainsborough House School**' which was attended by American children from the Manston Airbase. Even our own Newsletter Editor, Peter Bateman was a pupil and we saw a photo of him in school uniform.

We also have to thank Ann & Doug Holmes for their expertise in producing yet another very successful and interesting **Quiz Night** on 26 April.

Janet Denyer

## Birchington's Alphabet

**GAS LIGHTING** - An entry in Keble's Gazette on 11th October 1884 sounds very relevant in view of today's cost-cutting schemes by the local council. "Under the heading 'Street Lighting' the local residents of Birchington asked their Parish Council if they could please prevent the lamp-lighter from lighting the gas lamps in the Square and Station Road on moonlit nights, as this was a waste of money. They asked that this advice be taken to save expense".

**GAY COTTAGE** - This was a large house and garden at Minnis Bay near today's children's play area. During the second World War the house was used as a mini-headquarters by the military and the cellar was reinforced with concrete. It was built in the 1920s and knocked down in the 1950s to make way for the Bay View Flats.

**GORDON HOMES** - The Gordon Homes were founded to commemorate the death of General Gordon. They were for homeless and destitute boys who were given vocational training to provide them with a future. The main branch in Kent was in Dover and the Birchington one opened in approximately 1889 as a seaside home to provide recuperation for those who fell ill. The area where the boys were housed was known as Gordon Fields and became Gordon Square. They lived in houses 10-14 on one side of the newly built square, until the builder wanted to sell the properties, and the home closed in about 1899.

**GORE END** - Gore end is now known as Minnis Bay. The derivation of the name 'Gore' is a projecting triangular piece of land. The Gore-end or Minnis headland used to stretch much further seaward than at present, so would have fitted the description. It was a non corporate Limb of the Cinque Port of Dover from the time of Edward 1 (1272-1307), and had a port where ships sheltered and a small community of houses and farms.

**GRENHAM BAY** - The name Grenham does not appear in the bay until the late 1800s, as until that date the 'bay' was still a fairly flat piece of coastline. As the sea eroded the cliffs and the bay was slowly formed it was eventually given the name Grenham Bay. Where the name came from is, at the moment, unknown.

**GRENHAM ROAD** - For many years the road we now call Grenham Road was just a footpath, running between the cornfields, which joined Lyell Road with Sea View Road. The path received a tar covering sometime in the late 1930s or early 40s and became known locally as 'The Tar Path'. It was not until the mid 1950s that it became a proper road and it was decided to give it the name Grenham Road.

Janet Robinson