



Newsletter

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ART DECO & BIRCHINGTON

Art Deco is a style originating in France in the 1920s influencing decorative arts and architecture which spread throughout Europe and to the USA. It was functional with the geometrical design of buildings, furniture, jewellery and everyday items. Within Birchington we have examples of this progressive building trend which enhances the history of our Village.

'Twentieth Century'

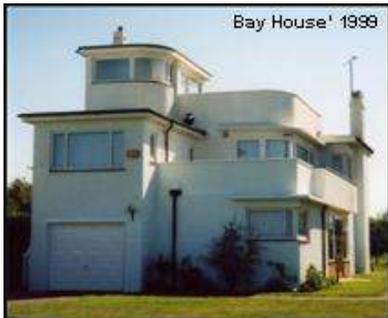


'Twentieth Century' 2019

in Minnis Road on the corner of St Mildred's Road is an excellent example of Art Deco. It was built in 1935 by Charles

Hawkes and was his family home and the estate office of Charles Hawkes' Building Company. The office entrance was on the corner, where the dining room window is now located. The name was changed to 'The White House' in the 1960s by the then owner, but the present owners have reverted back to the original name of 'Twentieth Century'.

The restoration has been completed inside and out and preserves the originality of the house. Internally bold colour schemes prevail with fittings and furniture being of the period which adds to the ambience.



'Bay House' 1939

'Bay House'

in Cliff Road (formerly named 'Guesend') dates from 1934. This house encompasses all the clear and curved lines which is Art Deco architecture at its best.

'Telde'

in Hereward Avenue dates from the 1930s, the wall being original and the 'sunburst' front door is a typical design of the Art Deco era.



'The Nore'

and adjoining it 'Logan's Rock', were built by Charles Hawkes in the early 1930s, the entrance to 'The Nore'



being in Minnis Road and 'Logan's Rock' in Arthur Road. These are now apartments and the photograph shown is without the later addition of a glass penthouse which alters the original Art Deco concept of the houses.

'Fort Grenham'

in Cliff Road next to Bay House, built in the mid 1930s, is now unfortunately in a sad state of repair. Given the architectural importance of this house we should aim to preserve this unique Art Deco building.



Janet Denyer

After my talk on the history of Epple Bay in March, I was approached by Les Birch, who kindly shared his memories of being a schoolboy in the area in WW2. Les was evacuated with other local school children for a while during the war, but soon returned to Birchington. The area, then and shortly after the war, was an exciting place for a young boy.



Epple Road

Les and his family were living in one of the row of old cottages in Epple Road, when one day, with an air battle going on overhead, a stray bullet went through the window of an attic bedroom, flew across the room and cut the cord of a picture hanging on the wall, sending it crashing to the floor.

East End Farm, at the junction of Epple Road and Canterbury Road, was used as a base for a small platoon of soldiers who guarded Epple Bay. Trenches were dug in the grounds of the farm, which later became a favourite playground for the local boys. There was an old car in the garage which they enjoyed pretending to drive and tried to play an old bugle which had been left on one of the seats.



East End Farm

Les remembers that at Epple Bay a concrete barrier was put across the slipway, as a deterrent for any possible invaders. At the top of the slope was a tank filled with oil and petrol. A pipe ran from this, down alongside the barrier and out towards the sea. If there was any attempt of an enemy landing the petrol would be released and the sea would be set on fire. There was also barbed wire along the sands and zig zag trenches on the cliff tops.

On the golf course was an old army tank, which was used by the soldiers as target practice. The soldiers would be in the allotment area firing in the direction of the sea, so that the residents of York Terrace were safe from the bullets. Towards the end of the war this tank was an exciting place to play for the local children.

Epple Road has changed a lot since the end of the war. Starting at the Canterbury Road end of the road and walking down towards the sea, Les remembers that the right-hand side was open fields, which made a good short cut through to King Ethelbert School. Next to the fields were the allotments, which backed on to York Terrace, (bungalows now fill this area). At the entrance to the terrace, in the middle of the road, was a post dating from the time it was a private road.

On the opposite side of the road, on the corner of Alpha Road, was a shop run by Mr. and Mrs Carson, who were Les's aunt and uncle. He has provided us with this lovely photograph, dated 1927.



Alpha Stores

Carrying on down the road from the shop was Orchard House, actually in Alpha Road, but with a high wall all round and down to the railway bridge. As the name suggests there was an orchard in the grounds of the house and the boys would climb the wall to try and reach the fruit, but they never climbed over as the family had two bull terriers who were often loose in the garden.



Epple Wall

At this time there were very few houses in Epple Bay Avenue, one on the east side, and two on the west, which was another private road with a post at the entrance which was known locally as 'the kissing gate'. Before you got to Colemans Stairs there was a rough gully down to the sea, which was known as Powell Cotton Gap. Les remembers fights on the beach between local farmers and gardeners, all wanting to collect seaweed for their land.

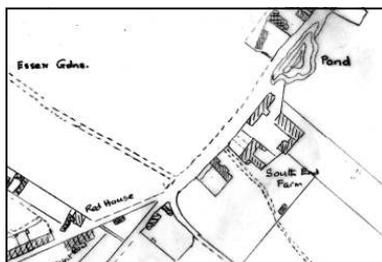
The local boys would go "pangering" for large crabs in the bay and "sapping" for eels at Westgate, as well as scrumping, to which the local bobby would turn a blind eye.

It was an exciting time to be a boy in Birchington, and we thank Les for sharing his memories with us.



Court Mount c.1963

The history of this site begins in the 1400s, when it was one of the many farms in and around the village of Birchington. At the rear of the present house there is an ancient wing with a medieval fire-place, giving just a hint of its true antiquity. At that date it was simply known as South End Farm. In All Saints Church there is a grave stone on the floor of the centre aisle which reads, "Here lieth the body of Thomas Kirby, of Southend." He died on the 1st March 1651 in his 78th year and by his wife Joane had 6 children of whom 2 were 'yet surviving'. When I commented on his 'distant' abode to Alfred Walker in the 1960s, he told me where Birchington's "Southend" was!



South End Farm Map c.1875

This map is dated 1875, with Canterbury Road (known then as Church Hill), running from top right to bottom left of the map. By 1925, the need for more houses in the village was acute and the owners decided to convert the farmhouse into tearooms and a country club. During the late 18th or early 19th century the front section of the property was re-built and only the rear wing of the old farmhouse was retained.



Fireplace in Court Mount



Advertisement for Court Mount Caravan Park

The owners wisely kept a fairly large area of garden around the property when they sold off the main farmland. This was very soon utilised as one of the first caravan parks in Thanet, for holiday makers, seen in this 1947 photo. Gradually the caravans were changed into static ones and now lived in as affordable homes for many people, with a few used as second holiday homes.



Court Mount and Caravan Park 1950s

The grounds have been beautifully laid out with trees and attractive flowerbeds set around a large lake created in the centre of the site. At one time peacocks were introduced, but they proved a hazard to the Canterbury Road traffic, as no-one was able to teach the birds their Highway Code! So the lovely birds had to go. There are still quite a few other interesting birds that enjoy the pond, along with the residents in the Park and their visitors.



Court Mount's Pond and Resident Birds

Jennie Burgess

BHT Dates For your Diary

Events for 2019

- 26 September Talk 'Schoolgirl's War (WW2)'
Mary Smith
- 24 October Talk 'Magic Lantern Show'
Dr Jocelyn Marsh
- 28 November Musical Evening with
Colin Bridge

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

Birchington's Alphabet

KENNELS - On the corner of Epple Road and Canterbury Road there used to be the Bletchingley Kennels, run by J. Riley. These kennels bred and specialised in the care of Afghan Hounds. The kennel maids were often seen taking as many as 7 or 8 dogs out at once, walking them along the cliff tops or the promenade and beaches below.

KENT HOUSE - This house used to stand on the site of what is now Walnut Tree Close, in Canterbury Road. It was a large double fronted house next to the Methodist Sunday School Room. It was built in the early nineteenth century and was a grade II listed building. By 1971 it was in a derelict condition, but instead of restoration it was demolished. The new close, containing five houses was built around a central courtyard complete with the old walnut tree.

KING ETHELBERT SCHOOL - The school opened in May 1938 and was called King Ethelbert Mixed Central School. The first headmaster was Mr. J.C.Cork, affectionally known as 'Bung' by the pupils. The building now used as the Medical Centre was originally the canteen. It was the first co-educational school in the area, with rooms for domestic science, woodwork and metal work, a gymnasium with showers, art room, library, clinic and canteen with modern kitchen. In June 1940 the pupils were evacuated to the Midlands. The school reopened in 1943 for just one hours teaching either in the morning or afternoon, the hours gradually increasing as staff returned.

PAST TALKS & EVENTS

Annual General Meeting - 30 May 2019

The meeting was well supported with 48 Members signing in. The Chairman thanked the Executive Committee and all the volunteers for the smooth running of the Trust. He also thanked the Membership without whose continued support the Trust would not exist.

Membership for the year totalled 249. The Statement of Accounts was presented which showed a reduction in our income over expenditure due to Gift Aid having not been received from HMRC, this will be included in next year's financial account. Our overall balance held at year end, however, continues to remain healthy. The Audited Accounts were duly accepted by the Membership.

The Election of Officers for the forthcoming year with John Robinson as Chairman, was ratified by the Membership. The annual Raven Award Certificate was presented to Kat Webb & Spencer Stedman, the new owners of 'Twentieth Century', the Art Deco house in Minnis Road, for its sympathetic and comprehensive restoration inside and out.

Following the AGM we had two interesting talks by Members of the Trust, namely:

'Birchington Junior Drama Club' by Pat Orpwood and her involvement in productions in the 1950s under the guidance of Lorna & David Burley.

'It started with a Horse' by John Robinson gave us the history of horse drawn transport in the 1800s through to early motor powered vehicles in the Village.

27th June we had two presentations relating to Birchington.

Jennie Burgess gave a talk on the **'Blue Sky'**, a drifter which sunk suddenly in the Thames Estuary in June 1922 with the loss of all 15 crew. One body, that of William Leech, was washed up on the beach near Epple Bay and how the whole incident had an impact on the local community.

Neville Hudson showed us photographs of **'Quexpo'** which ran from 1970 to 1986 and financed the building and land for The Village Centre. It was staged each August Bank holiday at Quex and attracted up to 10,000 people each day with such attractions as traction engines, aerial, motorcycle and other displays.

25th July we staged a **'Cockney Night'** with Nigel Archer & Chris Porteous with a mixture of comedy and music. We sold 90 tickets and the whole evening was a great success on the hottest day of the year. A buffet was available and we finished with a singalong of all the golden oldies. We should like to thank all those who attended for making this one our best ever events.

Janet Denyer