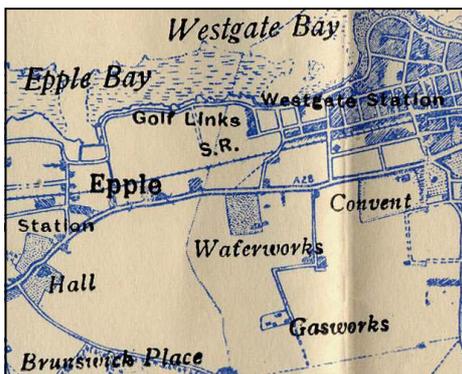




A BIRCHINGTON ENTREPRENEUR

Arthur Robinson Rayden was born in 1845 in London into a wealthy family. He was privately educated and by 1871 was a member of the London Stock Exchange. Although he was working in London, he was interested in the developing seaside towns on the south-east coast. He decided that Minnis Bay, at Birchington, was ripe for development and where he wanted to be.

The first mention I have found for him, in local newspapers, is an article in April 1878. It starts by stating that he had formerly owned the Westgate-on-Sea and Birchington Gas Works. The gas was generated at Westgate and piped to Birchington's small gasometer in Gas Alley, a site off Canterbury Road, opposite the Church. We do not know when Arthur became involved in this project, but it seems he no longer had an interest when the Birchington site fell into disrepair, was declared dangerous and the site sold off at auction in 1887.



Westgate Gasworks which supplied Birchington c.1920

The article went on to state - "we understand that Mr. Arthur R. Rayden has lately completed the purchase from Mr. Friend J.P. of Northdown, of the freehold land called Lower Gore End Farm, Minnis Bay (comprising in all nearly ninety acres) we believe for the purpose of opening up a new watering-place."

An advertisement was placed in national newspapers in June 1881 inviting applications for shares in Birchington Bay Freehold Land and Estate Company Ltd. It continued "The company has been formed to acquire and develop an estate at Birchington-on-Sea as a seaside resort. A large sum of money has already been expended on this estate, in building a sea wall and promenade, constructing roads, planting trees etc. and is now ripe for development."

The Rayden family were still living in London at this time, but shortly after 1881 Arthur moved his wife and three children to a house in Minnis Road. He became one of the Poor Law Guardians for the Isle of Thanet and President of the Birchington branch of the Conservative and Constitutional Association, which together with the Birchington Habitation of the Primrose League, he was mainly instrumental in forming. He was a JP and in 1889 he became the first Thanet Alderman on the upper bench at Maidstone.



Exhibition Buildings in The Dip c.1897

In 1885 Arthur combined business with local charity fundraising, by erecting a wooden Exhibition Building in The Dip. He chartered special trains from London, and provided transport from the station to bring people down to buy his building plots and view some of the amazing sights at the exhibition. The monies raised from the entrance fees was used to reduce the mortgage on The Institute, Birchington's first Village centre.

(continued on page 2)

Things weren't going as well in Arthur's business world as in his private life. In June 1890 another article in the newspapers regarding the new estate stated "I hope that although slow, it's progress may be sure, for it is well planned. Two terraces of an ornamental character give an inkling of the future of the site." These were what today we call the First Houses and St. Valerie. Each block contained four separate properties, built for the express purpose of allowing the owners, or occupiers, to let out rooms to visitors who came to "take the waters" at Minnis Bay. They had elegant balconies set to catch the afternoon sunshine and to watch the sunsets over Reculver and Minnis Bay.



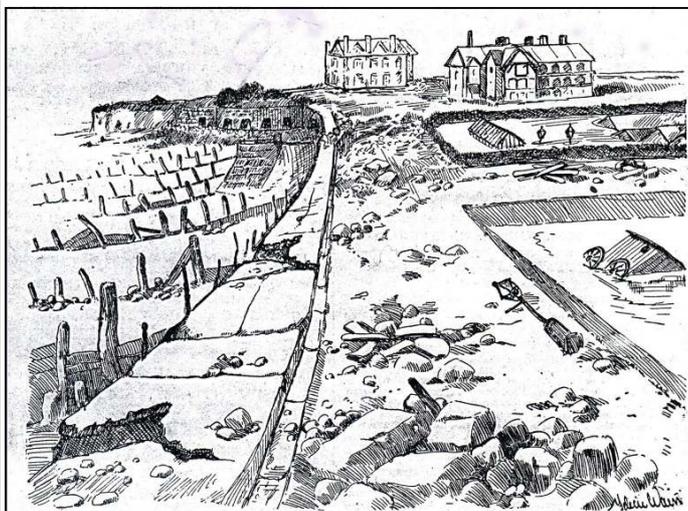
St Valerie Terrace c.1905

On the 29th February 1897 a violent storm hit Birchington. The sea wall and promenade at Minnis Bay was badly damaged. The Dip was flooded, with only the roof of the Exhibition Building being visible. The Isle of Thanet Gazette wrote that during the afternoon of the storm, the waves poured over the damaged sea wall into the valley (the Dip) without let or hindrance, changing a pretty spot into a temporary swamp. There were two large conservatories near the building and these were also flooded in eight to ten feet of water. Arthur Rayden had many valuable belongings stored in the buildings, as well as a number of family relics and it was feared that these were now valueless. The cost of all this destruction would fall entirely on Arthur. The newspaper stated that "the gentleman has spent a fortune, to say nothing of the most persevering efforts over a number of years in developing this estate and protecting the sea front. He has accomplished this in the face of many difficulties and discouragements and much sympathy is felt for him in the present disaster."



Destruction of Promenade Minnis Bay following 1897 storm

The article was accompanied by the paper's artists' impression of the scene. The artist was Felicia Wain, who was the sister of Lois Wain, the cat artist, who also worked for the Isle of Thanet Gazette.



BIRCHINGTON BAY FLOODED.—DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF THE STORM. From a Sketch by Miss FELICIA WAIN

Sketch by Felicia Wain of Destruction after the 1897 storm

By July 1900 it had all gone horribly wrong. In the London Bankruptcy Court Arthur Robinson Rayden and his partner William Addinall, described as stockbrokers, were declared defaulters on the Stock Exchange. Rayden was the senior partner. On 23rd May, Arthur had executed power of attorney in favour of his son and had not been heard of again since the following day. The liabilities amounted to £10,000 - £12,000, against assets of £430. The failures of the partnership were mainly attributed to losses in connection with the Birchington Bay Freehold Land Estate Company, in which Arthur was the principal shareholder. The debt would be the equivalent of approx. £1,500,000 today.



Storm Damage in Dip 1897

As the bankruptcy report stated Arthur Rayden had disappeared. I found the death of his wife Emma in March 1898 and she was buried at All Saints, Birchington. But where was Arthur? I then came across an application he made in 1895 for a passport, so widened my search. Arthur Robinson Rayden died on the 21st January 1906, in Chicago, in his 61st year. What a sad end to a venture that had started so well.

Janet Robinson

QUEEN BERTHA'S SCHOOL

We have been given 22 photos c1930 of Queen Bertha's School which came via a circuitous route from New South Wales, Australia. They were amongst documents bought by Michael Pitt-Payne of Aylesbury, who had once lived in the area so knew of the school. They are exterior and interior views and we have shared them with a past student who was unaware of some of them. The school was closed in 1959 and some of the items from the School Chapel were given to All Saint's Church, Birchington and the lions at the entrance door were rescued by William Cole of Monkton.

Queen Bertha's Avenue now stands on the site.



Senior Common Room c. 1930

WILLIAM WINDER

Judy Barclay (nee Winder) contacted us from Queensland, Australia, regarding her Great Grandfather William Winder, born 1844 in Dover and was interested in his connection with Birchington. William entered the Navy aged 14 years of age and served for 13 years, after which he was in the Naval Reserve. In 1872-1876 he joined 'The Challenger' Expedition which embarked on scientific observations in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.

In 1877 he joined the Coastguards at Maldon, Essex where he met and married his wife Annie and had six children. He transferred to Birchington as the Chief Boatman at Epple Bay living at 1 Coastguard Cottages and on retirement moved to Swiss Cottage in Coleman's Stairs.

William died in 1916 and his wife in 1910 and from our Parish Records we found that he and his wife Annie are both buried in All Saints Churchyard and have sent photos of the grave to Australia. Their son William George who died aged 5 is also buried in the Churchyard. In our archives we came across a photograph of William's daughter Ethel with her bicycle built by a local cycle manufacturer.



Grave of William and Annie Winder in All Saints Church Yard

LLOYDS BANK, THE SQUARE

Duncan Forster of Birchington is the new owner of the former Lloyds Bank in The Square and it will be the HQ of his company *Your World Financial Services*. We were invited to look round the building and take photographs before renovations began.

The building was purpose built as a branch for Cobb's Bank whose main office was in Margate, they went into banking as a way of dealing with the money which came through their brewing business. In 1884 it became Lloyds Bank, the bank being on the left side and Brooks's refreshment rooms and shop on the right. The cellar contained the bank's vaults and the upper floors would have been two separate dwellings with entrance doors at the front and side. Many original features remain within the building including fireplaces and cupboards.



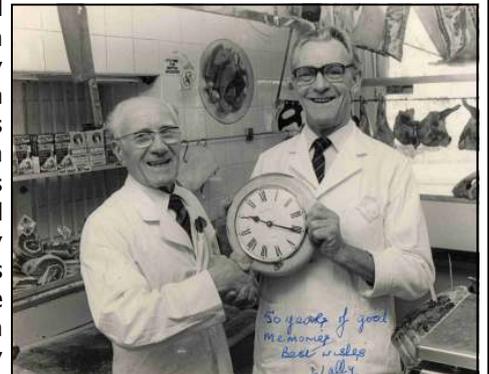
Lloyds Bank & Brooks's Tea Rooms

PWD BUTCHERS

Roger Palmer wanted to know what information we had on his family connection with PWD Butchers in The Square. We had some details, but he has provided us with a lot of background on his father.

Frank Palmer, Wally Wanstall and Arthur Dobson, after being demobbed in 1946, decided to open a butchers as they had all worked for Dewhurst Butchers before WW2. The first shop was in Garlinge, then Margate followed

by Birchington in The Square, they later opened a shop in Minnis Bay. The shop in The Square was sold around 1984. Wally Wanstall and his wife Kay were involved with many community projects including Quexpo.



Frank Palmer (left) Wally Wanstall (right)

CALLING ALL SLEUTHS

The Mystery Bungalow



We have been asked to find the location for three bungalows, two of which have turned out to be in Hereward Avenue.

The third one is just 'somewhere in Birchington'. It came up for sale in the 1930s, so is possibly in Minnis Bay, or maybe in the King Edward Rd, Quex View Rd or Park Avenue development, or where? The big problem with it is that the photo is almost certainly taken from the rear of the property, as the attached garage definitely shows the rear entrance to it.

Please forward any suggestions to Jennie Burgess

Noticeboard

BHT Dates For your Diary Talks/Events – 2020

- 27th February** **Phantamagoria**
(Audio Visual)
Jeff Wagner
- 26th March** **Quiz Night**
With Ann & Doug Holmes
- 30th April** **Beyond The Call**
John Drewry
- 4th June** **Race Night**
Howard Willicome
- 25th June** **AGM and 2 Members Talks**
- 30th July** **Dreamland**
Brian Faulkner
- 24th Sept.** **Thanet On Film**
John Robinson & Guests
- 29th October** **Two Members Talks**
A House History by
Colin Bridge
Richard Ayres,
a Birchington Hero by
Janet Robinson
- 26th November** **'Christmas Quiz Night'**
Ann & Doug Holmes

7.00 for 7.30pm all Thursdays at
The Centre, Alpha Road, Birchington.
The Bar will be available

PAST EVENTS

On 24 October we were taken back to the 1800s with a 'Magic Lantern Show' when entertainment was silent and the graphics were on slides. Jocelyn Marsh gave the commentary whilst David Francis was our projectionist. The projector was a double lens, Biunial 'The Superb' made by Riley Brothers of Bradford in a mahogany and brass casing. Originally the illumination was by candle or oil and then progressed to limelight.

The slides were hand painted on glass, in translucent colours on a black background and mounted within wooden frames. The show contained scenes from Dickens to 'Cinderella' and included a girl skipping by means of two overlapping slides which appeared to make the rope move.

PAST EVENTS

On 28 November **The Chalumeaux Quartet with Colin Bridge** presented a pre-Christmas evening based on designs from the top 10 Christmas Cards of 2018.

Each theme was linked with either music, a reading or a song for us all to join in. We started at the bottom with No. 10 which was 'Angels' with music 'Angels we have heard on High'. Surprisingly at No. 7 was the 'Nativity' and we sang a 'Children's Carol' the words being by George Main who was a Birchington resident. No. 4 was 'Robins' with a reading of 'Address to the Robin' and top of the list was 'Snow' where we sang 'In the Bleak Midwinter' with words by Christina Rossetti whose brother is buried in our Churchyard.

MAURICE HEWLETT (1925-2019)



Maurice Hewlett

Sadly Maurice passed away in August. He had been involved with many organisations within the Village from the Guild of Players to the Residents' Association and not least with the Birchington Heritage Trust of which he was a Member. For the Trust, he provided many photographs of events in Station Road and The Square and of the Annual Carnival which he shot on 35 mm film and had converted onto DVDs, which we now show within our Museum.

During WW2 he was in the RAF and afterwards served in India. Originally he lived in Surrey and worked in London. When his parents retired and moved to Birchington, he joined them in Albion Road and made the daily commute to London until his own retirement and there began his close association with the Village.

BHT have been informed that we have been remembered kindly by Maurice in his Will and are to receive a legacy for which we are most grateful.

A DONATION

We have received a generous donation from a regular visitor to Birchington who wishes to remain anonymous. This is to assist with the running of BHT, we appreciate greatly this kind gesture.