

BIRCHINGTON'S MAYPOLE

Birchington has erected a Maypole in the Square near to the churchyard gate for many years.

There is one shown on the map by Thomas Hill for the sale to John bridges of Church Hill Farm in 1688. At this period it stood on the triangular green in the centre of the 'square'.

There are several references to the Maypole in the churchwardens' accounts referring to expenses incurred for taking it down and setting it up again. This occurred when the Puritans complained about 'pagan practices' in communities. When Oliver Cromwell came to power in the 1640s, the villagers were ordered to take it down again – but there is no reference in the accounts about it at this time, as book-keeping was sporadic and unchecked. By the time Thomas Hill drew his map, Charles II was on the throne – and we know how much he enjoyed a bit of fun!

From the Churchwarden's Account Book -
1606 - for taking down the Maypole viii d
1636 - towards ye setting up of ye Maypole 6s 8d

The Maypole was used at May Day celebrations, Whitsuntide and Hock-tide. But the Maypole was not the only thing in the Square. The stocks and whipping post also stood near the churchyard gate. From the Accounts of the Deputy of Birchington (our Law-enforcement Officer) 1648-1654 we read -
"Paid to Robert Covell (one of the village blacksmiths) for staples for the stocks and whipping post 1s. 0d."
"Paid to old Coppin for whipping of three vagabonds 6d."

