

**A special event for the Trust at Church House, Kent Gardens, Sunday 10 September 2023**

Heritage Open Days are designed to raise awareness and help people to enjoy England’s heritage. This year the Open Days will be from 8-17 September.

Your Committee has decided that the Trust should be more actively involved this year so, in addition to our regular opening of the museum, we will host a special event themed around “Maps.” This will be at Church House between 2pm and 5pm, on Sunday 10 September, where we’ll be displaying a collection of original and reproduced maps from the Trust’s archives. With Ordnance Survey maps dating back to 1877, information on former surveying methods, lost buildings/sites of interest, and the rare large scale 1840 Tithe Map on display, this event will not want to be missed by people living in - or having connections with - the local area. Entry is free, and light refreshments will be available by donation throughout the event. More information will be published nearer the date and available on our Website and on Facebook.

Please make a note of the date now. Do come along and join us for this unique event.

*(I have seen the reproduction large scale 1840 Tithe Map and it is stunning – Ed)*

**Celebrating Thanet’s Heritage in September**

The Isle of Thanet and the surrounding towns and villages all have exciting local history and stories to share. Such heritage is brought to visitors through museums, attractions and heritage groups such as the Trust.

In September 2023, the Powell-Cotton Museum is hosting a heritage month which will be full of talks and tours focused on the heritage of Quex House and the Museum. As part of this month, organisations have been invited to showcase some of their fantastic collections and celebrate their own local history with the public. This will feature pop-up museum stalls and exhibits on Saturday 30 September at the Powell-Cotton Museum.

We will be taking part that day as it provides an opportunity for heritage attractions to inform everyone about up-and-coming events and projects as well as encouraging them to visit all of us. It is a wonderful opportunity to come together as local attractions and improve networking, so we are delighted to be part of this event.

*If you would like to help out at either of these events, please let me know  
Email: [birchingtonhtsec@gmail.com](mailto:birchingtonhtsec@gmail.com)*

Don’t miss our next regular talk on 28 September when Brian Faulkner, along with Tamara Rattigan, the Development Manager for The Dreamland Heritage Trust, will be guest speakers. They will show a short video. The talk will be based around John Henry Iles OBE, a brass band impresario and pioneering amusement park entrepreneur who built the listed Scenic Railway (see image right). He is buried in All Saint’s churchyard, Birchington.



**Our new 2024 calendars will be on sale from September. Please look out for these at the museum and at our events. Every purchase supports the Trust.**



**BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST**

*Preserving the past for the future*

**Newsletter**

Summer 2023

Issue 81

[www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk](http://www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk) & on Facebook Charity No. 1099250

**Forthcoming Events:**

- Sunday 10 September 2023 (2pm – 5pm) – Birchington Map Exhibition, Church House
- Thursday 28 September 2023 – Dreamland and John Henry Iles, The Centre, Alpha Road
- Saturday 30 September 2023 – Celebrating Heritage, Powell-Cotton Museum, Quex Park
- Thursday 26 October 2023 – “Birdwise”, The Centre, Alpha Road

**NOTICEBOARD**

**Annual General Meeting on 29 June 2023**

Committee members elected:

Neville Hudson (Chairman); Colin Bridge; Jennie Burgess; Mike Kite (Treasurer); Rod Giddins (Secretary and Publicity Officer); Alexandra Gilbert (Programme Secretary); Bob Hinge (Membership Secretary and Website Administrator); Gillian Lodge; Heather Letley; Luke Warburton (Vice Chairman).

A review of 2022/23 was presented at the AGM and is summarized on the next page.

The Chairman, Neville Hudson, presented *the Raven Award for Excellence in Conservation* to David Francis for restoration work at Elder Cottage, Minnis Road (see image right).



In this edition Pat Orpwood writes about the visit by Carol Jacobi, Joint Curator of the Rossetti Exhibition at Tate Britain, who was a guest speaker at Birchington’s Literature Festival. Luke Warburton previews special events planned for the 10<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September and I’ve included more information about the next talk to members on 28<sup>th</sup> September.

In the meantime our new Programme Secretary is asking whether you have an interesting hobby or life experience that you would like to share? Are you a confident and eloquent public speaker? We are always interested to hear from people who would like to give illustrated talks, on Birchington-related subjects, to our audience of members and visitors.

With kind regards and thanks for your continued support.

*Rod Giddins (Editor)*

Email: [birchingtonhtsec@gmail.com](mailto:birchingtonhtsec@gmail.com)

For membership and general enquiries please email [birchington.ht@gmail.com](mailto:birchington.ht@gmail.com)

## Annual Review 2022/23: Summary

### Executive Committee

The Committee met on 11 occasions since the 2022 AGM.

### Volunteers

Our volunteer members welcomed over 800 visitors to the museum during regular opening on Monday, Thursday and Saturday mornings and they also assisted at our talks and events.

It is estimated that volunteers, including Trustees, spent around 1,000 hours on Trust activities. Without them, the museum could not function and events would be curtailed. Huge thanks to you all!

### Membership

Membership stood at 250 on 30 April 2023. This was a good result, maintaining a positive level of interest in the work of the Trust. A new membership leaflet has also been produced.

### Collections and Displays

Our storage and display areas in the museum are limited so during the year a tall glass cabinet was acquired. This has enabled us to show some of our costumes and other artefacts safely. Thanks to Gillian Lodge and Luke Warburton who have worked on the different displays. Luke also designed and installed the new “wraps” on the windows fronting Alpha Road (*see image above*).

### Archives

Digitisation of the archives began a few years ago. Many articles, newspaper cuttings, features etc. have been digitised and Bob Hinge has done a great job loading them on to the website. This enables people to search in different ways and represents a big step forward for the Trust.

### Finances

We ended the year with a bank balance of circa. £22,500, including a legacy gift of £10,000. Rent is £4,000 per year and we have other expenses. We continue to strive to increase membership and income from sales and events, sufficient to meet our outgoings and generate a small surplus.

### Publications

Following a stock-take and review, we have decided to reduce the number of publications we sell, reprinting only the most popular when stocks become low. We will still be open to stocking new publications to sell.

### Events

There were 7 events during the year, usually quite well attended. Members can attend 4 events in the year as part of their membership whilst others are for fundraising where an admission charge applies. Help with running the events and ideas for future speakers always welcome.

### Publicity

News releases were regularly sent to the local media and we have featured in the Parish magazine. A new-style template was introduced for our event posters. The donation of an “A” board for placing on Dog Acre when the museum is open has provided an opportunity to promote future events.



## Joint Curator of the Rossetti Exhibition at London's Tate Britain visits Birchington

The Birchington Literary Festival organisers and Julia Szczpanski enjoyed a real coup in July by inviting Carol Jacobi, Joint Curator of The Rossetti Exhibition at London's Tate Britain, to give a talk. A large audience listened intently to her speak about the Rossetti family, particularly the women and the current exhibition. Some were inspired to pay it a visit.

The Trust was asked to provide someone to take Carol on a short tour of Birchington looking at the sites associated with Rossetti. I agreed to undertake this after her talk.

We began by crossing the railway bridge. The steps up which Rossetti would have climbed, as well as the station itself, are much the same as they were in his day. Rossetti had arrived by train for a short stay in February 1882, accompanied by his Nurse, Hall Caine (his companion) and Caine's sister, Lily. He remained here until his death at Easter 1882. It is reported that as they alighted from the train, he noticed the lettering LCDR (London, Chatham and Dover Railway) on the engine. He pointed these out to Lily, telling her that it was their train, as the letters stood for Lily Caine and Dante Rossetti.

Opposite the station would have been the path leading to Westcliff Bungalow (now sadly demolished). It belonged to John Seddon who had designed the new bungalow and loaned it to Rossetti, who told Lily it was a very strange-looking house. It stood on a large site, now occupied by a block of flats and some modern houses. In Rossetti's time there were virtually no buildings between the bungalow and the sea and they could look out to Reculver with a telescope in the garden.

We then walked down Rossetti Road to the house with the blue plaque for Rossetti, before making a short detour to the Tower Bungalows, the oldest existing bungalows in England. Seddon had been the architect, who worked with John Taylor on them. Carol did not know about them, but when we walked round them, was delighted and took quite a few photographs.

We hurried back to the Rossetti Memorial Garden to see the monument to Rossetti and talk about the former Rossetti Society and its founder, Henry Campbell, before Julia whisked us off in her car to the church. Walking up the path from the Kent Gardens side, we reflected on Christina Rossetti's poem, "*Birchington Churchyard*", which begins: "*A lowly hill which overlooks a flat/Half sea, half countryside*" again showing how undeveloped the village was then. We stopped briefly to look at the grave, with its cross designed by Ford Madox Brown, but were saddened by the state it is in. However, Carol had contacts with the Rossetti family and promised to get in touch with them.

Inside the Church, Dave Alker was waiting to greet us and lead us to the Rossetti window with its two panels, the left one a version of Rossetti's *Passover of the Holy Family* and the right hand one by Frederick Shields showing *Jesus healing the blind man outside the gates of Bethsaida*. After viewing the windows, I presented Carol with a folder I had produced on behalf of the Trust containing some of my photographs, but mainly copies and information from the Trust's extensive archives at the Museum. Carol was delighted and said she had learned so much about Rossetti's life in Birchington.

A very memorable visit which I was delighted to host for the Trust.

*Pat Orpwood*



L-R: Dave Alker, Carol Jacobi, Pat Orpwood, Julia Szczpanski

*Image courtesy of Alan Green*