



# BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST

*Preserving the past for the future*

## Newsletter

Summer 2024

Issue 85

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

Welcome to the Summer 2024 edition of the Trust's Newsletter. See Noticeboard for headline news.

### **NOTICEBOARD**

#### ***Forthcoming Events:***

- 26 September 2024 - The Origins of Gin, Sloe Gin and Cocoa with Katharine Hook
- 28 November 2024 – Seasonal music with the Thanet Clarinet Quartet

#### **Heritage Open Days – Sunday 8 September 2024: 2pm-5pm**

Venue: Church House, Kent Gardens, Birchington. Free entry.

The Trust is once again pleased to participate in Heritage Open Days, celebrating England's Heritage. The theme this year is "Routes, Networks and Connections".

We will display a collection of maps from the Trust's archives, with Ordnance Survey maps dating back to 1877 and the feature 1840 Tithe Map. Our exhibition will include maps of Kent, showing how Birchington's transport links changed over the years, including development of the railway, the Thanet Way and Birchington's various road "improvement" schemes.

A number of our publications will be on sale including our excellent new 2025 calendar.

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### **Subscriptions**

Thanks to all who have renewed their membership, as subscriptions are an important part of the Trust's income. Renewals were due on 1 May. £10 for single; £15 for two adults at the same address. Payment can be by card or cash at the Museum or by bank transfer to Lloyds Bank (Sort Code 30-98-90, Account 15393060). *No further reminders will be issued and please remember that only paid-up members are entitled to receive Newsletters and free entry to talks and other events.* For membership enquiries please email Bob Hinge: [birchington.ht@gmail.com](mailto:birchington.ht@gmail.com)

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In this edition Alexandra Gilbert tells the little-known story of Charles Morrell Morrell, whilst John Robinson highlights the importance of an historic feature in Station Road. There's also a short piece about the museum re-display, our AGM and snippets from our Annual Review plus the latest in our Birchington Alphabet series.

I hope you enjoy the Newsletter and if you would like to contribute an article please get in touch.

Thanks for your continued support.

*Rod Giddins (Editor)*

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

## **Charles Morrell Morrell (1889-1949)**

by Alexandra Gilbert

In January 2022, while working in All Saints (Birchington) Churchyard, I got talking to Chris and Mary-Rose, a brother and sister that were tending the graves of their mother and father and that of their grandparents<sup>1</sup>. Each year they come from some way away to Birchington purely for this purpose. Chris mentioned that he hadn't known his father because he unexpectedly died shortly after he was born, but recently had been researching his family history and found out his father had had a full and influential life. 'I just kept finding all this incredibly interesting material about my father that no one had ever told me about and its turning into a book', he mentioned. As Chris outlined some of the amazing events that he had uncovered, my curiosity was definitely piqued and he kindly sent me a brief synopsis, an extract of which is below, and which after reading, I wanted to know more!

Fast forward to June 2024, and Chris once again got in contact. He had finished the book and a companion volume of his father's writings and was donating a set to Birchington Library. We arranged to meet again so that I could also purchase them.

*A Life Well Lived* and its companion volume *The Ready Pen of Charles Morrell Morrell* are detailed accounts of a two-times Olympic Rower and the Great Britain Rowing Team Manager at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics and the much documented Berlin Games in 1936 as well as an army officer who served in the Royal Flying Corps in WW1 and in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) during WW2. They include Morrell's time between the wars working for the British Chamber of Commerce for the Netherlands East Indies. The first volume is in Chris's voice and the second in that of his father.

*'Prior to the onset of the Great War, Charles was a member of the Artists' Rifles and then took a commission in the Royal Munster Fusiliers. In April 1915 he was seconded to the Royal Flying Corps as an observer. In June, whilst on a long range reconnaissance mission, he and his pilot crash-landed at Axel in neutral Holland. They were interned as prisoners of war. After a short period of internment the English officers were released and, on their word of honour not to attempt to escape, were allowed to live in the country. Charles chose to live in The Hague where he stayed until 1919. He worked in the commercial department of the British Legation and learned to speak Dutch, already being fluent in French.*

*In May 1917 whilst walking on the pier at The Hague's seaside resort, he rescued a young man from drowning. He was awarded a silver rose bowl by his colleagues at the Legation, whilst in gratitude for saving his son, Max Alandt, a well-known Dutch artist, drew a portrait of Charles (see right).*

*The internees were allowed a month's home leave on condition that they promised to return on the due date. Charles took advantage of this on two occasions in 1916 and 1917. After the war ended, he stayed on in The Hague for a short while, then worked at the British Embassy in Brussels before returning to London in 1920 where he was appointed General Secretary to the newly formed British Chamber of Commerce to the Netherlands East Indies. He lived and travelled extensively in Java promoting British industry and trade.*

*During the Second World War at the age of fifty he was appointed Lieutenant Commander in the RNVR. In May 1941, on the staff of Admiral Dickens in The Hague, he was one of the last evacuated ....*



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<sup>1</sup>Plots A76 and A79 [Kent Family History Society Monumental Inscriptions, 1980]



....when the Germans invaded. He worked for a few months in Naval Intelligence (Far East) before joining the Principal Naval Liaison Officer. In 1945 as the Germans were retreating, he was one of the first of the Flag Officer Holland's staff to re-enter Holland and helped that country recover from its wartime travails. After the war ended, he returned to his job with the Chamber of Commerce until his untimely death whilst on a business trip in Amsterdam on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1949. Shortly before his death Charles was made an Officer in the Order of Oranje Nassau by HM Queen Juliana in recognition of his work on behalf of the Netherlands during the war.'

Note: *A Life Well Lived – Charles Morrell Morrell (1889-1949)* [ISBN 978-1-912078-99-8] price £20+p&p, and its companion volume *The Ready Pen of Charles Morrell Morrell* [ISBN 978-1-916919-06-8] price £16+p&p. Both researched and compiled by C.C.J. Morrell MBE. Published by Aspect Design, Malvern. Copies available from C.C.J. Morrell, 6 Monks Rd, Windsor, SL4 4PE.

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### **Then & Now - Station Road**

by John Robinson

The shops in any High Street constantly change over the course of time. Some may remain for a generation or more, others may fold after a few months. The following two photographs taken from the same viewpoint, are separated by a span of approx. 90 years.

The corrugated iron canopy which today adorns the 'Blue Mondays' launderette, was erected and paid for in 1894 by George H. Pettman a builder. Permission to erect it was given by the newly formed Birchington Parish Council. In the 1920s it was operating as a greengrocers but under the name of Frederick W. Pettman, a son of George senior. We have a photo c1964 in our records, that shows it as R.G. Scott & Sons Ltd pork butchers. They were still there in the last Kelly's directory published in 1974.

In 2017 the then owner of Blue Mondays, John Wood, was awarded the 'Raven Award' by Birchington Heritage Trust for maintaining the Victorian canopy in a sympathetic and responsible manner.



Many of the shops in Station Road were built by George Pettman's building firm as well as most houses in Crescent Road. He also owned a shop in The Square that his wife ran as a greengrocers.

George had seven sons and four daughters. He died aged 85 in 1930. He had lived in Birchington for fifty-six years and was a much-respected businessman.



Although nine decades have elapsed between these two photos, and shops have changed ownership as well as the services offered, it is vital that features like the iron canopy are preserved, so that these links with the past are maintained.

As we say on the front page of every edition of the Newsletter '*Preserving the past for the future*'.

## **Museum re-displayed**



The Museum has had a make-over! The revised layout provides greater space for visitors to view the collection and for researchers using our extensive archives. There's more wall space too for temporary exhibitions – and an exciting new item may be in position by the time this Newsletter is published, so do pay us a visit soon.

## **Annual General Meeting 27 June 2024**

At the Trust's AGM the following Executive Committee members were re-elected: Neville Hudson (Chair), Colin Bridge, Rod Giddins (Secretary/Publicity), Bob Hinge (Membership/Website), Mike Kite (Treasurer) and Gillian Lodge (Volunteer Co-ordinator). After the formal business, Colin Bridge gave a super presentation about the generations of children who have grown up in Minnis Bay, using their own words from historic and more recent records.

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## **Snippets from the Annual Review 2023/24**

- Our 17 volunteers contributed around 1,000 hours to the Trust
- Membership at the end of the year was 260
- We ended the year with £23k in the bank plus a legacy gift of £10k on deposit
- We introduced a payment card reader to make payments easier for members/visitors
- There were three great talks and two quiz nights
- Participated in Heritage Open Days, plus a heritage event at the Powell-Cotton Museum and the first "Leisure Showcase"
- Four Newsletters and regular press releases were published
- A new sign replaced our old "A" board at Dog Acre
- We submitted a list of "Local Heritage Assets" to Thanet District Council and supported their review of the village Conservation Area by providing historic information and photographs
- A new visitor/member/volunteer "feedback" form was introduced
- Re-organised the museum layout (see above)
- Work started to prepare for digitising our collection records and archives

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## **Birchington Alphabet "M"**

The last entry for our regular feature on Birchington's "alphabet", in 2022, was Mount Lavinia Court. Next is one that we have not previously featured, namely, Monkton.

MONKTON, Manor of

It was during the Saxon period that Birchington, a part of the Manor of Monkton, became the property of Christ Church, Canterbury. In the year 961 A.D. Queen Ediva, a Saxon Queen, the widow of Edward the Elder, King of Wessex, gave the manor to the monks of Christ Church in Canterbury, the gift being a thank-offering from a pious queen for the recovery of her lands, from which she had been unjustly deprived. From that time the parish and manor received the name of Monkston – the Monks Land – and Birchington, being part of that manor, became part of the ecclesiastical parish of Monkton and the Vicar of Monkton was also Vicar of Birchington and Woodchurch. This continued until 1871, when Birchington became a separate ecclesiastical parish.

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Finally, special thanks to Neville Hudson for his talk in May on the history of the "Village Centre" and to Rod LeGear (Kent Archaeological Society) for his presentation on "Underground Thanet" in July – both excellent and well-attended.

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