



Birchington Heritage Trust

Reg. Charity No.1099250

LOCKDOWN NEWS SHEET

MAY 2021

THE MAYPOLE

An entry for a Maypole can be seen on a map by Thomas Hill for the sale of Church Hill Farm in 1688. It stood on a triangular green in the centre of the ‘square’. There are several references to the Maypole in the churchwardens accounts, for the expenses of taking it down, and then setting it up again. It was considered a ‘pagan practice’ by the Puritans, and when Oliver Cromwell came to power he ordered the villagers to take it down. By the time Thomas Hill drew his map, Charles II was on the throne, and we know he enjoyed a bit of fun!

Esther Eastland was a leader of a local Brownie Pack, and she introduced crowning a girl to be ‘Queen of the May’ in the 1950s. This led to the reintroduction of dancing round the Maypole in Birchington.



Photo is from 1975

To keep the structure stable, several bodies were needed to add weight to the centre of the structure. This may be a problem today regarding health and safety issues.

Note: Back then, the Post Office was at the corner of Albion Road.



Photo is from the 1970s

If you know the name of the ‘May Queen’ anyone else in these photos please let us know.

Note: The information given on this page is from Alfred T. Walker’s book ‘The Ville of Birchington’ and Jennie Burgess’s book ‘Birchington Kaleidoscope 2’.

ACOL

I think I can include a short article on Acol in Birchington History as the two villages have been closely connected for many hundreds of years.

I only discovered recently that the village started in a different position. It was situated at the area later known as Sparrow Castle, at the junction of Shottendane Road and Manston Road.

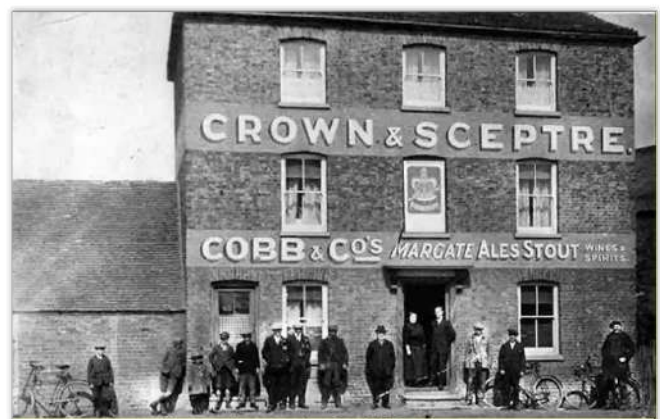
In the late 1500s, and into the early 1600s, Birchington and Acol had at least five outbreaks of the plague. In 1637 the hamlet of Acol suffered many deaths, and to stop any further spread the buildings were all burnt down, and the survivors moved to the present site.



The first name for the village, when it stood on its old site, was 'Millbrough', and on this old map of 1799, you can see the present-day position, and at the old site, a depiction of a post mill which used to stand there. Road layouts have changed slightly over the years.

When the village moved to its new position it was renamed 'Ville in the Oaks', 'Ville of Woods', and 'At-Holti', which is an old Norse word for grove of oaks. This was corrupted into 'Acholt', 'Accoll', 'Acol' as on the map, 'Acole' and now Acol.

The premises which became the Crown and Sceptre began life as two farm buildings, in about 1660. By at least 1770 one of the properties was being used as a beer house. It was the arrival of the age of coaching that shaped the Crown and Sceptre.



Opposite the inn there used to be a large pond, dissected by a wooden bridge, known as 'Acol Pier'. Here the coachmen could water their horses, while their passengers enjoyed refreshment at the inn.

At one time the hostelry was nicknamed the 'Clown and Specter' after the proprietor and his wife. They are said to have haunted the premises for many years, and could be heard bickering and rowing throughout the day. When they did make an appearance, he was tall and thin, and she was short and dumpy.

Another, later landlord, delighted in snipping off customers ties to the knot, and pinning them to the bar wall. A popular attraction in the 1960s was Reg Cook, the landlords, pet parrot, which he had taught to do various tricks to entertain the customers. There is a short clip of this on YouTube, just search for Pub Parrot (1963).

The Crown and Sceptre closed in 2012, the main building being converted, and new houses built in the old garden and carpark.



When a new property was built at the junction of Margate Hill and The Street, next to the pond, the villagers were curious to know what it was going to be. They were told it was to be a surprise and that was the name given to the building, 'Surprise House', as in this picture.

St. Mildred's Church was built in 1876, in Plumstone Lane, in a dip which was possibly a flint or chalk quarry. It was originally a dual-purpose building, as it was also used as a school. The school only lasted from 1876-1886, as parents preferred to send their children to Birchington or Minster, where the facilities were better. A Methodist Chapel was built in 1866, and used until 1966.



The last building you see on the right-hand side as you drive from Acol towards Minster, is Cleve Court, a part Tudor, part Elizabethan, part Georgian house. One of its past residents was Baroness Orczy, who rented the house from 1908 – 1911. She is best remembered as the author of 'The Scarlett Pimpernel'. The house is said to have several ghosts, including the Grey Lady.

As you drive past you can see a fine example of an ice house in the garden, but I have been unable to find a picture of it.



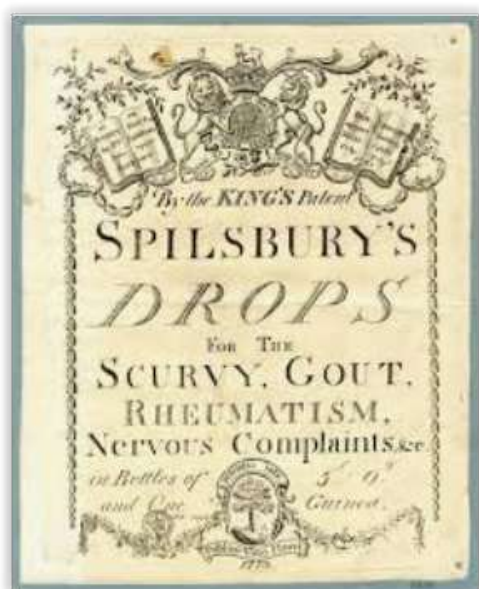
BIRCHINGTON PARISH RECORDS.

Extracts from the parish records for All Saints, Birchington, were included in 'A History of The Ville of Birchington' written by J.P. Barrett in 1893. It is interesting to follow the exploits of some of the less law-abiding inhabitants of the village, and to see how the poor were assisted.

My mother's family were mainly in Margate for many generations, but there were a few Birchington connections. Her maiden name was Pritchard, and I have only been able to trace that line back to the early 1800s, but there were earlier ones in Birchington, so were they related? This was the reason this particular gentleman caught my eye.

Edward Pritchard (sometimes written as Pritches in the early records) was baptised in Birchington on the 15th April 1770. The first entry for him in Barrett's book is in 1797.

The overseers had hired a house for the benefit of the poor "hired of Mr. Clan the house by the pond as one goes to the Seed Mill at 6 pounds per year" --- "The east part to Edward Pritchard, he to pay the Parish per year 15 shillings – received but one shilling."



A year later on the 3rd December 1798 – "At a meeting thought it good to give to Edward Pritchard (he being afflicted with the scurvy) 1,2, or 3 bottles of Spilsbury's drops."

These drops were advertised as '*Anti-scorbutic drops, which has proved an efficacious remedy for eradicating the most scorbutic disorders.*

Let's hope they worked!

On the 13th March 1811, at Herne, Edward Pritches married Elizabeth Ewell. Three months later the couple were called to a meeting.

"1811 June ye 10th. At a meeting at ye New Inn at Birchington Edward Pritchard and his wife came there and was ask concerning what passed between ye parish officers of Hearn and himself concerning marrying a woman one of their parishioners. When he frankly said the Overseer, Mr. Lowd agreed with him ye said Edward Pritchard that if he would marry ye woman by name Elizth Yowel, they would give him four pounds, two pounds before marriage and two pounds immediately after marriage. Before marriage Mr. Lowd gave two pounds into their hands. After they were married Mr. Thomas Ashley ye new Overseer gave them two ponds more, making in the whole four pounds according to agreement.

The following are ye words pass between Mr. Lowd and Pritchard. Mr. Lowd ask him what he intended to do. Pritchard told him he would not marry ye woman unless they gave him something. Mr. Lowd ask what he must have. Pritchard said four pound. Mr. Lowd agreed to give him four

pound, two pound before marriage and two after, as above mentioned. In witness to above they have set their hands on ye day and date as above.”

Edward and Elizabeth made their marks, in the presence of James Neame and James Hatfield.

I discovered that Elizabeth Ewell had given birth to an illegitimate son in 1808, at Herne. Was Edward the father, who refused to marry her unless paid, or were the overseers at Herne just looking for someone to marry her so they were not liable for the care of her and the child. Four pounds was a fair some of money for a working man in 1811,

Edward Pritchard died at Birchington in 1819, and I believe it was his widow who died in 1820.

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The following are a few of the offences which were presented at the Archdeacon’s Court. I wish to point put that none of the people involved are members of my family !!

1639 January 16th. Francis Fox sidesman of the Parish of Birchington presented-

Susan Seamer, for fearful swearing and curious and shameful and ordinary filthie and impure speeches and obscene songs and immodest behavior such as we shame to relate.

Anne Harte for her swearing and blasphemy and filthy scolding and impure speeches.

1639 January 30th.

Henry Austin for working on innocent’s day last, in carrying in of a stack of barley.

Sir Henry Crispe for not paying his sess for the repair of Reculver Church.

Thomas Squire, servant to George Marlow, for his usual workings on holidays and shaving of his Master on Sundays. Squire gave evidence that he only fed his master’s cattle on holidays and denied shaving his Master on Sundays, and his case was dismissed.

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Below are two pictures of All Saints Church.

The first is dated 1815 and is a view from the North East. The second is dated 1800s and shows the old box pews.

