



# Birchington Heritage Trust

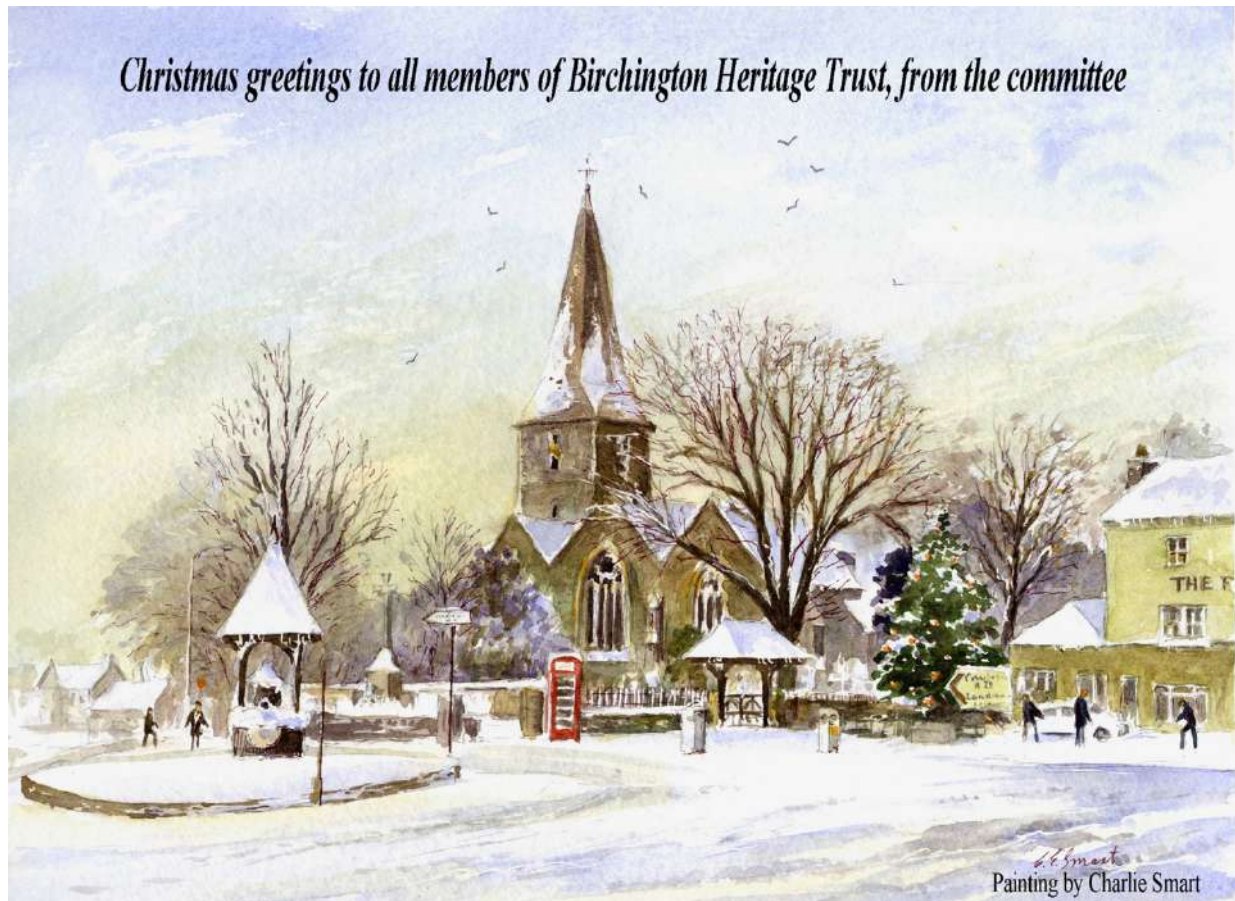
Reg. Charity No.1099250

## ***LOCKDOWN NEWS SHEET***

**December 2020**

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Among the museums archives, we do hold a collection of watercolour pictures that were painted by local artist Charlie Smart. Charlie was very generous to us, by giving his permission for his paintings to be used for making into cards to raise funds for the museum. The painting below is one example.



Charlie's watercolours featured in the Birchington Heritage Trust calendar a few years ago.

Janet Robinson has been busy finding Birchington items of Christmas's past to use in this edition of the 'Lockdown News Sheet'. She has found enough material to fill five pages, which are on the other PDF file. We hope you will find them an interesting read.

## BIRCHINGTON AT CHRISTMAS,

Janet Robinson



The earliest newspaper report of a Christmas event in the village I have found is dated 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1863, and was printed in The Kentish Chronicle.

It reads: - On Christmas Day, James Leammon, Esq, of Birchington House, entertained all the poor people of the Parish with roast beef, plum pudding, and ale, and afterwards tea; and when they left his house, every one of them had one pound of tea, and one pound of sugar. The party separated highly delighted with the afternoon's entertainment.

There are a couple of mistakes with this article, which must have been penned by a reporter unfamiliar with the area. I have been unable to find anyone in Birchington at this date with the name Leammon, and if Birchington House is in fact Birchington Hall, then the gentleman was actually James Laming.

Birchington Hall was on Margate Road, now Canterbury Road, and was the home for nearly two hundred years of the Friend family. It was sold to James Laming in 1852, which was when it changed its name from Birchington Place to Birchington Hall. In 1903 it became one of the Spurgeon's Children's Homes, and is now the Birch Hill Estate.

A regular event in Birchington on Boxing Day was a meet of the Thanet Harriers.

As early as 1760 in Thanet, hounds were used for hare-hunting. The Isle of Thanet Hunt was established in 1813, and in 1849 the hounds were kept in new kennels at Brooksend.



The first picture, dated c1909 shows the hunt meeting in Birchington Square, and it always attracted a large crowd of spectators to see the colourful scene.

The second picture shows the Thanet Harriers at Brooksend.

## CHRISTMAS AT THE BERESFORD HOTEL 1926

From a newspaper report, with illustrations from Birchington Heritage Trust collection.



THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES. The influx of over a hundred guests for the Christmas holidays gave to the Beresford Hotel, Birchington, all the signs of life common to the summer months, but there was in addition the festive spirit of Christmas.

Within a short space of time all joined together in celebrating the feast of goodwill and many friendships were renewed.

(Beresford Hotel c1924)

A full varied programme had been prepared for young and old, with Miss Amos (assistant to Miss Belle Harding) as entertainer, and special attention was given to the entertainment of the children, to whom Christmas always has a special delight.

The Beresford Hotel Orchestra played for all dances, beginning with a tea dance on Christmas Eve. The new ballroom, with its delightful scheme of decoration and wide windows giving on to the sea, and above all, the excellent floor, was used for the first time for Christmas celebrations, and played a very important part in adding to the enjoyment of the guests.



(Beresford Hotel ballroom 1930)

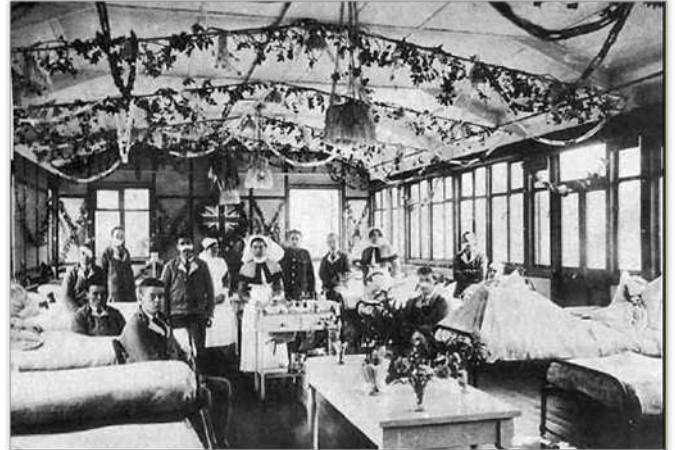
On the afternoon of Christmas Day, the children were entertained with games and dancing, many of the older guest joining in the fun. A carol quartet engaged by the management were given a hearty reception at dinner on Christmas Day and Sunday. Monday was a wonder-day for the children. In the midst of a juvenile party and dance, 'Father Christmas' appeared and distributed presents from a large and electrically illuminated tree, while for the adults a fancy-dress dance was held. This gave the guests opportunity for displaying many novel and handsome costumes, and prizes were awarded to the most handsome and original. A Charleston competition was the event of the evening, and was won by Miss Watkins and Mr. Brunton. Over two hundred were present on this occasion.



Throughout the week the programme of amusements has been continued, and has included a visit by a conjurer from Maskelyne and Devant's, a bridge tournament, numerous competitions, concerts, and dances.

All have agreed that Christmas at the Beresford has been for them one of the happiest of their lives.

During WW1 the Beresford Hotel was used as an auxiliary hospital for officers, having 30 convalescent beds. The second picture shows one of the wards decorated for Christmas 1917.



In WW2 Beaconsfield House, in Alpha Road, was used by Czechoslovakian Ministers, Diplomats, and soldiers, and became a second home for them. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1939 the following letter was printed in the Thanet Advertiser.

"It is for the first time that we are for the Christmas holidays, abroad, alone, severed from our families, the fate of whom we do not know. We are abroad, but not in a foreign country. England is no foreign country to us. It is our

second home, our new homeland. There is no other country in the whole world which gave the exiles more help than this country. England could not give us more than it did, it gave us another home.

We do realise that every English-man has his share in this work of humanity. We do perfectly well know that any Englishman helps us, the sons of a nation which is now under such violent oppression, and hopes that next Christmas will bring us to our families back again. It is impossible to state everything that every single Englishman did and is still undertaking either officially or in private to relieve our physical sufferings. This does only prove that there is one country and one nation in the world that did not lose sense for ethical and spiritual values of mankind – England and the English nation."

"I am quite unable" adds the writer "to thank presently to everyone of the great number of our English friends, and have therefore chosen this way to do so. Please accept my best thanks on behalf of all my co-citizens in this district for all that you have done for us this year. I cannot pay you in return for this love, than by love again, wishing the English nation in these hard times a soon victory. I am wishing to all our English friends a merry Christmas and a happier New Year of victory and peace."



This advertisement is for Barrows, where you could purchase a wide variety of Christmas gifts. It is dated 9<sup>th</sup> December 1969.

The shop was on the corner of Station Road and Crescent Road.



The local Adscene newspaper of week ending 8<sup>th</sup> December 1989 had a Birchington Christmas special article. It advertised that there would be late-night shopping on the 8<sup>th</sup> December, with a grand display of Christmas lights, which would be switched on by T.V. star Trevor Bannister, who was appearing at Theatre Royal Margate.

It stated "Quality service and value for money are the main objectives of Birchington men and women. They pride themselves on having a wide range of quality goods, stocked especially for Christmas. Traditional goods can be found side by side in probably the most compact and accessible shopping centre in Thanet.' The evening would include the famous Chamber of Commerce traditional display of illuminated Christmas trees, bell ringing, handbell ringing, choirs, Birchington Silver Band, Punch and Judy, Mobile Disco, and Father Christmas.

In 1995 a few of the neighbours in Ocean Close, Epple Bay, decided they would have a few more Christmas lights than normal, and all switch them on at the same time each evening. They were astonished to see people coming to see the lights, and decided to have a collection box and donate the money to charity. Over the next five years more neighbours joined in, and as well as the lights there was a life size nativity scene, and Father Christmas Grotto. In these five years this small close of 23 homes raised the tremendous sum of 99,500 pounds. This was donated to local charities – the Cancer Care Appeal at the QEQM hospital, Demelza House, and Kent Air Ambulance.



Over the years Birchington has held many events to celebrate Christmas. There have been fairs on Dog Acre, processions in Station Road, carol singing in The Square with Birchington silver band. All the local churches have held services and Christmas tree displays, and the lovely bells have rung out. 2019 saw the postbox toppers, which looked so colourful. 2020 has been a very difficult year for us all, and the village will not be able to celebrate as it would wish, but hopefully next year we will come back with bigger and better events.

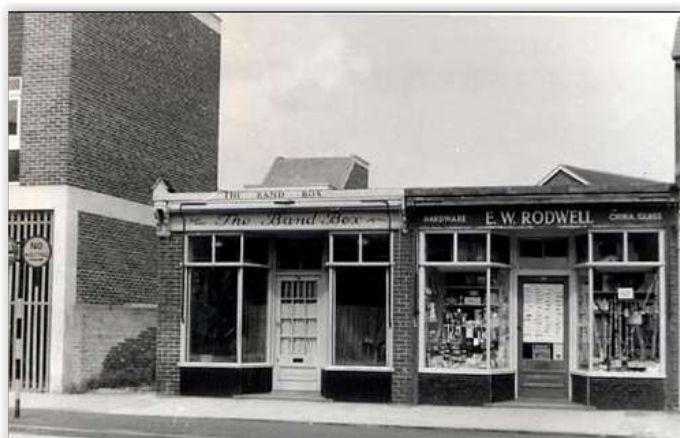
Just to bring back memories for longtime residents of Birchington, here are a few more of the local shops who advertised in the Thanet Times on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1969, with illustrations from our website.

BE SURE... BUY AND ORDER YOUR  
**CHRISTMAS FARE NOW!**  
 FROM **UYES** LARGE SELECTION AT  
 78, HIGH STREET, MARGATE  
licensed for wines, spirits, beer and cider  
 \* 121, NORTHDOWN ROAD, CLIFTONVILLE,  
 \* 83, CANTERBURY ROAD, WESTBROOK.  
 \* 53, STATION ROAD, WESTGATE,  
 \* and 74, STATION ROAD, BIRCHINGTON  
licensed for wines, spirits, beer and cider  
 ALL MODERN SELF-SERVICE  
 —————  
 SPECIAL LOW PRICES  
 FOR CHRISTMAS FOODS AND WINES  
 SEE DISPLAYS AT YOUR NEAREST STORE TODAY!



This picture is dated 1964. Two of the old houses were demolished to make way for this block of shops.

**BAND BOX**  
 79, STATION ROAD  
 BIRCHINGTON.  
 COATS, SUITS, DRESSES, KNITWEAR  
 MILLINERY, HOSIERY AND SCARVES  
 POPULAR MAKES, ALL PRICES.  
 COME AND SEE FOR YOURSELF



This 1964 pictures shows The Band Box and Rodwells. Since 1985 both shops are part of Band Box. A second story was added in 1993.

**N. F. & E. BEDINGFIELD  
 & SON**  
 P.O. STORES,  
 CANTERBURY RD., BIRCHINGTON  
 Tel. Thanet 41372  
 We would like to wish  
 all our customers a  
 Very Happy Christmas and  
 A Prosperous New Year

**GIFTS** that Men and Boys Really Like  
 SEE THE WONDERFUL SELECTION AT  
**R. G. TIBBLE & CO.** 75 STATION RD  
 BIRCHINGTON  
 JUST A FEW SUGGESTIONS THANET 41469  
 SOCKS BRACES TIES = GLOVES SCARVES HANDKS. = SHIRTS PYJAMAS KNITWEAR = UNDERWEAR CLOTHING HEADWEAR

**Frederick's**  
 Family Bakers and Confectioners  
 Christmas Cakes — Puddings — Mince Pies — Yule Logs  
 Petit Fours — Noted for Wedding and Birthday Cakes  
**15 STATION ROAD - BIRCHINGTON**  
 Telephone Thanet 41013

