

## **'MAYOR'S DAY AT BIRCHINGTON' – 1896**

### **The Annual Carnival**

The casual visitor to the pleasant little seaside town of Birchington, on Monday evening, might well have been struck with surprise at the unusual sounds that assailed his ears, and the preparations that were in progress in all directions. Lanterns mysteriously flitted about in the rear of the buildings in the main streets. Hardly had one recovered his surprise at being suddenly confronted with a figure that was apparently a resurrection of mediaeval times, than he was startled by the noiseless approach of a Mephistophelian character.

The clank of chain armour came from men that dashed up on horseback, and in the background figures in light and airy costume, that belied the cold season, flitted about. He might well have wondered "what all the row was about," until he came across an announcement that the Birchington Carnival Society was holding its twenty fourth annual show, and that there were to be torchlight and coloured fire processions, with the ceremony of electing the "Mayor of Birchington" in the Square, "with more than usual pomp and splendour." This is one of the things that they go in for and do well at Birchington, and long before the time announced for the procession to start, the streets were thronged with visitors from Margate and Ramsgate, and neighbouring places, and there was a continual stream of people to the Bungalows, which had been fixed as the starting point.

An attempt was at first made to form up here, but the length of the procession and the difficulty, owing to the darkness and uneven condition of the road, of drawing up the larger vehicles, caused the idea of going by way of Albion road to be abandoned. The officers, therefore, marshalled their forces in Beach Avenue, and the procession passed along station Road, and made a circuit of the Square – contradictory though the term may be. Subsequently they moved along the Margate Road to Fernleigh Villa, and back to the Square, which was paraded three times.

The cavalcade was led by Councillor G. Cousins on his now familiar auto car, which was decorated, and conveyed a bicycle in its finished state, and the various component parts of a machine, both rough and finished, represented the various items in its manufacture at the Sea Breeze Cycle works, Birchington, followed by a large array of bicycles. It may be mentioned that Miss R. Stone took first prize for best make up, as the "Snow Maiden," Miss Osburne as the "Milkmaid," and Miss Flinders as "Japanese Maiden," and Master G. Hutchings as "Sweep," making vigorous use of his sweeping machine on his journey, all taking consolation prizes. Then came the lady and gentlemen equestrians – a good show – and causing the judges much cogitation in their awards, which finally resulted in the first prize being divided between Mrs. T. Pemble in Elizabethan costume, and a visitor from Ramsgate, too modest to give his name, accounted as a "Boer". Master J. Hoare on a pony, and Master Sidney Dawson on a donkey, secured consolation prizes.

The Birchington Band, in a car prettily decorated with flowers, played a spirited selection of music, under the conductorship of Bandmaster Wallis. The "ex-Mayor and Mayoress" (Mr. and Mrs. A. Wing) and the "Mayor and Mayoress-elect" (Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Pemble), were next conveyed in a state landau, followed by the "Recorder" (Councillor G. Pointer, J.P.) in a Mayoral coach, with armorial bearings, kindly lent by Alderman Rayden. The "Councillors" carriage conveyed "Councillors" D. Cooper, D. Golder, C. Pemble and H. F. Wilson, representing North, South, East and West Wards, with a spade, lamp, horse and wheel, emblematical of their various professions.

The Birchington Fire Brigade, fully equipped, under the command of Supt. J. B. Pemble, made an imposing show on their manual, decorated with wreaths of chrysanthemums, and were awarded a consolation prize. A pretty feature was a boat, fully rigged, manned by youngsters in the rigging, and firing distress rockets. The crew, under "Captain" J. A. Johncock, were Masters Joseph Wallis, F. R. Goodinge, A. and B. Pettman, N. White, J. Pemble, A. Hoare, R. Roope, and three year old Reginald Johncock. Ada

Pemble as "Grace Darling" followed in a boat in answer to the distress rockets for help. The first prize awarded was deservedly earned. A car containing the "Bufs" and "Kangaroos" of the Birchington R.A.O.B. Lodge in full regalia, with a realistic Buffalo was well designed, and reflected much credit on Primo Basset and his colleagues.

The Dark Town Fire Brigade from Ramsgate, arranged by Mr. Conconi, was very comical, the rescue of the dummy lady and the feeble squirt of the "engine" though directed on to the crowd by no means damped their enthusiasm, and the consolation prize awarded was popularly endorsed as was a similar honour to the Blacksmith mimic forge from Ramsgate. There was a large posse of clowns, policemen, etc. Over three hundred torches and a hundred hand lights were used. Mr. A Tucker as "Hussar" on horseback was a splendid marshall, and P.C. Pufferoro and P.C. Hooker were very successful in preserving order. At the final halt of the procession at the Square, the "Recorder" thanked the Ex-Mayor for carrying out his duties during the past year which were important from the increasing population and the extensive building operations to provide for their wants. He was sure they would be pleased to elect Mr. Arthur Pemble, Park Lane, as "Mayor" for the ensuing year. This was met with great applause and "then the band played."

The "Recorder" next nominated the four Councillors we have enumerated, who took part in the procession for the ensuing year, which was vociferously endorsed by the "Burgesses," and amid a deafening shower of squibs, crackers, and other forms of fireworks, the ceremony ended.

The prize givers were Councillor G. Cousins, Messrs. F. T. Adams, A. H. Pemble, P. B. Ackerman, Horace Morgan and H. S. Thomas. The committees were Messrs. Twyman (chairman), W. Watson (vice), J. Pritchard, A. Tucker, W. Turrell, T. Millgate, W. Castle, C. Clark, J. Pearce, G. Pointer, F. Knell, A. Cook, J. Knell (treasurer), and J. A. Johncock, hon. Secretary.