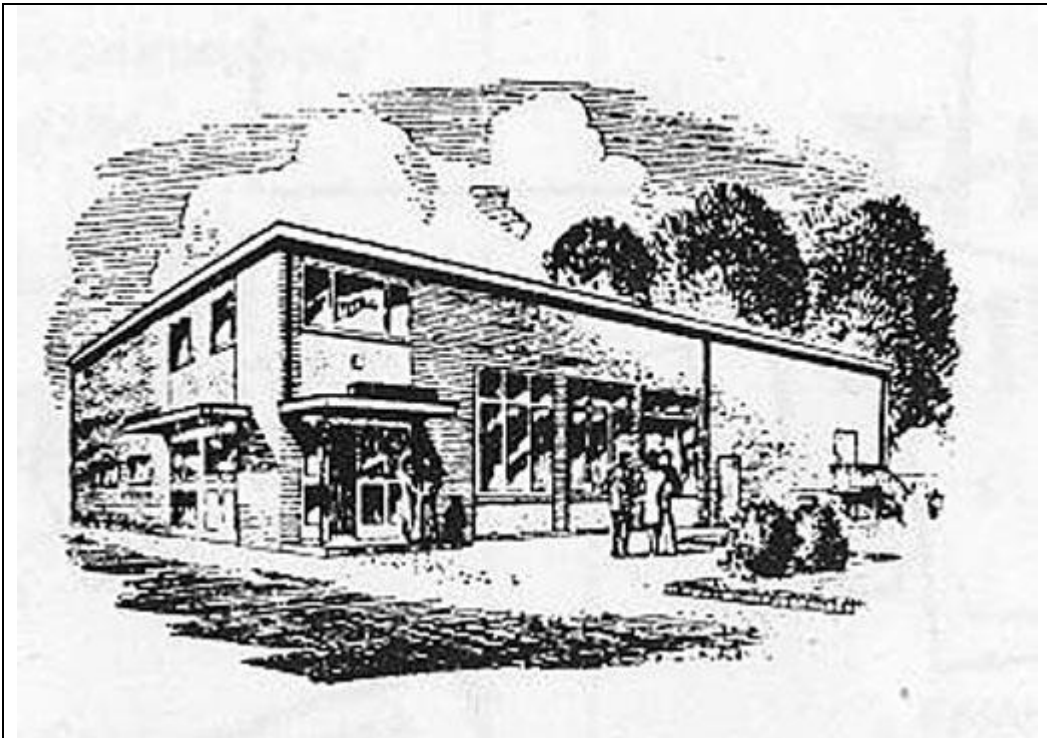


The VILLAGE CENTRE



[From the Quexpo Programme of 1974]

“We would like to introduce you to the **Birchington Village Centre**, which was opened in **May 1974** to fill a long felt need for a focal point in the village, where the many local Associations and Societies could meet, and which would provide a venue for social events for both community and private gatherings. Rooms of varying sizes, a spacious Main Hall, a comfortable lounge bar and a large and well-equipped kitchen area have all, in turn, proved valuable in achieving the original objective, that of drawing together residents and visitors, in a pleasant and friendly atmosphere. In the wide variety of activities that take place, there is something to interest everyone. Our Warden will be pleased to help you and tell you what is going on and he will also arrange bookings if required.

There are rooms suitable for all occasions. Small meetings can be accommodated in Rooms 2 and 3; large gatherings usually choose Rooms 3 and 4. One of these has kitchen facilities and can be used en suite for self-catering events such as Wine and Cheese parties and Buffet Parties. The Main Hall, with its well-dressed stage and excellent lighting, is used for concerts, plays and various other shows. The body of the Hall is ideal for Wedding Receptions, Birthday and Engagement Parties.

The Organisation and Management of the Centre operate on an entirely voluntary basis. We are always pleased to welcome anyone who has the time or talent to give. If you have just moved into the area, we would like you to feel immediately that you are welcome and ‘one of us’. If you are already a

resident who has not yet joined us, we hope you will do so and bring your friends along.

Our August Bank Holiday event – Quexpo – is probably the biggest three-day attraction in the South East ... the idea of this mammoth family entertainment was born of the need to raise money to fund the building and equipping of the Centre. The first Quexpo was presented in 1970 and was, from the outset, a resounding success. Held in the beautiful grounds of Quex Park, by kind permission of our President, C. Powell-Cotton Esq., it is thus staged in the perfect rural landscape of tree-fringed meadows. The incredible amount of hard work, planning and imagination that goes into this great Week-End, rests upon the shoulders of a comparatively small band of volunteers from whose efforts a very considerable sum of money is raised every year and devoted to the improvement and maintenance of the Centre.

Various Clubs and Associations meet regularly at the Centre. Amateur theatrical groups produce plays and are considered by many to be up to professional standards. Courses are organised and run by the Kent County Council Education Committee, in conjunction with the Village Centre and cover a wide and attractive range of subjects.

It is not possible to detail everything about the Centre in this short introduction. It is, however, true to say that most of what happens in Birchington happens at the Centre, which is as it should be and why it is there – to be the heart of the village IN the heart of the village.”

* * * * *

2003: The Village Centre has continued to thrive over the years and since 1986 has been running entirely under its own funding, once Quexpo ceased to run (the last one was in 1985). It has had a number of major improvements during this period, including a doubling of the size of both the kitchen and the bar areas. New curtains and lighting fitments have improved the stage and Main Hall and the garden along the entrance drive has been re-planted and new lighting added for nighttime events. It is still run mainly with volunteers, but with a small salary being paid to the Manager, the cleaning staff and the bar manager. Financing such an enterprise is a mammoth task and requires some very fine balancing of ‘needs’ and ‘wishes’ when it comes to the budgeting and spending. Those who sit on the committees and help thrash out the various problems that such an undertaking throws up all deserve a medal!