

Birchington Heritage Trust



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 4

May, 2003

May marks the end of our first full year with membership now standing at 108, including some who have already paid for next year too! Much has been achieved during that time including our three general meetings, three newsletters and fund-raising activities. We inaugurated our Heritage award and made the first presentation; involved ourselves in local planning matters, begun our research projects and collection of Birchington artefacts. We look forward now to our second successful year and for your continued and valued

ACTIVITIES THIS QUARTER

The March General Meeting was once again well-attended and Nick Dermott, Conservation architect to Thanet Council provided us with plenty to think about. He dealt with Birchington's listed buildings including The Smugglers and the Tower Bungalows and had some excellent computer generated slides to accompany his talk, but unfortunately the system seemed to have a mind of its own and we were all amused as it sped through some of the slides whilst remaining fixed on others. He talked about listed status and the number of important Birchington buildings, some in the process of being listed, that we have lost. A lively question and answer session followed in which many wondered if TDC realised the great importance we attach to the ethos of the village and our environment.

The Quiz Night on March 21st was a great success with 98 tickets sold. Members of the winning team were each awarded a Smarties Easter egg. The raffle raised £111 and the whole evening contributed nearly £400 to BHT funds. We hope to organise a similar event later in the year. There is plenty on offer over the next few weeks so look out for posters and advertisements in this edition.

BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST

Annual General Meeting

7.30, Friday 30th May

The Village Centre

Finger buffet

Picture Quiz

All Welcome

WHERE WAS I?



Look on Page 4 to see the answer and what I looked like in June, 1953.



Other Events in May

Sunday May 11th
Walking Treasure Hunt
10am Village Centre
Any time from 10am-4pm
Groups, families, individuals
Question sheets £1 each
Prizes £10 and £5

Saturday May 24
A Night at the Races
7.45, The Centre
£2.50 per person



In this Issue: Newsboard - page 2, Alan Kay's Birchington Pond and Coronation Week - page 3, Birchington in June, 1953 - page 4



MAY HERITAGE NOTICEBOARD

MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

For the last time, we are delivering newsletters to all those who expressed an interest in membership but have not yet joined. Membership fees for the year 2003-2004 remain at £5 per person. Cheques should be made payable to **The Birchington Heritage Trust** and paid at the AGM or direct to our Membership Secretary:
Colin Gordine at 36, Grenham Road, CT7 9JG.

PRESS COVERAGE

The accounts of last month's meeting were unfortunately, lost in the post between Birchington Square and Margate, but The Gazette inserted theirs belatedly in their Organisations section. Kent on Sunday have also been written to and we hope for plenty of coverage for Coronation Week.

TRANSPORT TO MEETINGS

Remember, if you find it difficult to get to General Meetings and would like a lift there and back, please contact Pat Orpwood on 847843 before the meeting and she will try

BIRCHINGTON RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Our thanks go to BRA for their continued support. Of course, they are much older than us, having been established in 1956 and for the minute sum of £1 a person or £1.50 per household you can be a member of this excellent organisation which offers social outings, coffee mornings and a magazine as well as working for all Birchington residents.

NEW MEMBERS

We now have 108 fully paid -up members. A special welcome to new members this quarter:

Mrs E Elven	Alan Jezzard
Mrs A. Epps	Michael Everell
Mrs G. Green	Brian Marshall
Mr and Mrs P Cane	
Mr and Mrs I. Williams	

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

All members for 2003-2004 will receive membership cards on payment of their subscriptions. Colin will be collecting these at the Annual General Meeting and there is a membership form

PHOTOGRAPHS

Can the person who kindly lent Jennie Burgess some photographs before the last General Meeting, please ring her on 842988 as she has lost your name and address. She believes the photos are to be returned, but may be for her to

BHT LOGO OFFER

Don't forget you can have the BHT logo printed onto your own polo shirt for just £1.50. For details contact: Ted Tranter at "Orsino" 41 Epple Bay Road. It would be fun to wear them for Coronation Week.

The Village Pond

by Alan Kay

A century ago the dictionary definition of a village described: " a community where the majority of inhabitants worked on the land, a meeting point of roads with a parish church, several inns and a village pond". Today, of course, the first no longer applies and our village pond disappeared some seventy years ago.

The pond, shown in the illustration at the turn of the century, was at the lowest point of Church Hill (now the Canterbury Road). Pond Cottage was just above the pond on the right, and possibly the first pond, Mill Pond, was part of the South End Farm nearby.

Church Hill or Church Street, leading from the Square to Mill Row, was just a bridle path for centuries until the present solid road surface was built. The pond was marked on the 1688 manuscript map of Birchington.

In 1622 parishioners were allowed to make a Highway Rate and unemployed men were employed in carrying large stones from the fields filling in the holes. In the early nineteenth century, Men from the local Workhouse were paid 2/- a day, with women and children paid 1/- a load for picking up stones from the fields and the beach.

Being in a hollow, the pond occasionally flooded over the road at times of heavy rainfall, and in February 1929 it was reported that "thick ice on the Birchington Pond gave unaccustomed skating for the children."

During hot summers the pond would dry out and in August, 1921 there was mud in it over four feet deep when "for the first time in 28 years the K.C.C. was having the Birchington Pond cleared out".



Birchington Pond in the nineteenth century

Plans to widen the road between the pond and Park Lane first appeared in 1926 when a London coach driver was fined for speeding along the narrow part of the road at the Mill Pond. The building of the Thanet Way a few years later meant that traffic to London no longer had to go through Canterbury. This meant that holiday coach traffic from London to Margate increased to such an extent that the Canterbury Road had to be widened to its present width.

The condition of the pond featured continually in the early years of the 20th century. Often Parish meetings referred to the filthy and unsanitary condition of the pond and the County Council was asked to "drain the pond as this appeared to be the only solution." The pond finally ceased to exist in the road widening scheme of 1933.

Postscript: Jennie Burgess tells me that at one time there were 9 small ponds in Birchington including one in Station Road!

This article was written in response to our request for future topics featured in the last edition. If there are any topics you would like Alan to cover in future editions, please contact us. The Secretary, 77, Alpha Road, Birchington, CT7 9ED. Phone 847843

CORONATION WEEK DIARY OF EVENTS

Sunday 1st June	Minnis Bay	Fifties Fair and Vehicles Display
Monday to Friday	Burley Gallery	Coronation and Fifties Exhibition
Tuesday 3rd June	Village Centre	Talk on Birchington in the Fifties with Alan Kay and Jennie Burgess
Thursday 5th June / Friday 6th June	Village Centre	Guild of Players Show



CORONATION WEEK SPECIAL



With thanks to all those who contributed

Birchington

June

1953

"All the pupils at All Saints School were given special commemorative mugs which were handed out at a party on the Friday. My sister and I had already been bought our tiny models of the Queen's carriage with its eight pairs of white horses one of whose legs had already been snapped off."

"The Carnival was started from Essex Gardens and we all lined up ready to be judged. I was dressed as Britannia and was wearing a dress made of red, white and blue crepe paper which my Dad had made me. Unfortunately, as we stood there in the pouring rain, the paper became completely soggy and the red and blue dye ran in streaks down my legs."

"We all bought our various souvenirs of the event. Mum had a new round biscuit tin with a picture of the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh on it and later on my sister and I were bought a pop-up book with coloured pictures of the Coronation."



The front of Taplin's Engineering Works in Albion Road decorated for the Coronation in 1953. The designer was local artist, Ossie

"When we woke up on the day of the Coronation, we heard on the wireless the wonderful news that Edmond Hilary and Sherpa Tensing had conquered Mount Everest. Everyone was really excited that we had heard it on that special day."

"Races were organised for the children at Minnis Bay. The first race I entered was the 100 yards and I won a beautiful chunky blue biro with a jewelled crown on its barrel. Then it was the egg and spoon race and I came first again and won another pen. But what I really wanted was the second prize - a silver coronation medal. So I entered again for the sack race, but I could only manage third place and was given a blue plastic puzzle. So I never got my silver medal."

"Very few people owned a television in those days, but my sister and I were very lucky. Mr and Mrs Brett at the top of our road had invested in one just for the Coronation and they invited us to watch theirs. The small wooden cabinet stood in the corner on a table and we children sat down on the floor engrossed in the tiny black and white pictures that flickered across the screen, with the wet crowds, the great parade of horse-drawn carriages and then the tiny figure of the Queen."

"BITTER DAY FOR BIRCHINGTON"

The Gazette headline in its June 5th, 1953 edition reflected the really awful weather Birchington suffered on Coronation Day. We are told "Bitter weather whipped sea spray over the promenade driving parents and children into the tea and competition tents for shelter." However, in The Square hundreds watched the carnival procession led by the Silver Band who played all afternoon at the Bay. The children's races were run with fewer children than expected and empty deckchairs lined the course. Fireworks, a bonfire party and "alfresco dancing" were all cancelled. But 500 children under ten were given a Coronation Tea at the school and in the evening there was communal singing in The Square. So all in all we did not do too badly.