

# BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST

Preserving the Past for the Future



## NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 8

May, 2004

With this issue we mark two full years of The Birchingtton Heritage Trust. During that time we have had eight quarterly meetings and newsletters, organized quizzes, dances, walks and exhibitions as well as seeing the publication of our first book. With the granting of charitable status earlier this year, we are now ready to move on again and the next stage is to develop our museum plan and look for premises to hold our growing collection. We hope you will all support us as we look towards the Trust's future development.

### Dangerous Coastline

The March talk was devoted to Derek Hart's book "Dangerous Coastline" and was attended by a record number of 150 members and guests, including Derek's widow, members of his family and friends.

Jennie described life in wartime Thanet and, after the interval, talked about the book itself, with accompanying slides.

We have now sold over 400 copies of the book, which is still available at £7.95.



Jennie Burgess giving the March talk on "Dangerous Coastline"

### Annual Exhibition

We shall be presenting our new major exhibition at the Burley Gallery in the first two weeks of June. We have just heard that our provisional booking has been confirmed. We are now collecting maps, photographs and any memorabilia to do with the coast and seaside at Birchingtton.

Please, if you have any photographs of Minnis Bay or any of the other parts of the coastline, with or without people, which you would either lend us or allow us to scan, would you contact either Jennie (842988) or Pat (847843).

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PRESENTS

### A BARN DANCE

WITH JANE DRYDEN

FRIDAY, June 25th, 7.30 for 8p.m.

Birchingtton Village Centre

American Supper

Please bring finger buffet

Dress optional - prizes for best dressed

Bar open

### TICKETS £5



Secretary - Pat Orpwood: 01843 847843 Reg. Charity No. 1088250

### Membership and AGM


Inside this edition you will find a form inviting you to renew your membership which remains at £5 per person - a real bargain!

We have filled in your membership number on the form and, if you have not already returned your DPA form, inserted another, which we hope you will complete.

There is also a nomination form for the committee and officers. We are still in need of more committee members and hope you will join us.

All forms may be returned at the AGM.

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Preserving the Past for the Future

### Annual General Meeting

PLUS

### QUEXPO SLIDE SHOW

### PRIZE QUIZ

AND

### FINGER BUFFET

7.30, FRIDAY 21ST MAY, 2004

### BIRCHINGTON VILLAGE CENTRE

Secretary: Mrs Pat Orpwood: Telephone 01843 847843 Registered Charity No. 1099250



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# SEPTEMBER HERITAGE NOTICEBOARD

## TRANSPORT TO MEETINGS

Remember, if you find it difficult to get to any meetings or events and would like a lift there and back, please contact Pat Orpwood on 847843 a couple of days before the meeting, if possible.

## MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

## NEW MEMBERS

We now have 162 fully paid-up members. A special welcome to new members this quarter:

**Gordon Wallis**                      **Mr and Mrs Jackson**  
**Brenda Kirby**                     **John Hutchinson**  
**Pauline Graterol**                **David Stone**  
**C.E. Smart**                         **Mrs M. Woodford**  
**Mr and Mrs Shreeve**       **Mrs Pam Lees**  
**Mrs Christine Wilkinson**

## MEMBERS' SUGGESTIONS

If you have any ideas about future speakers, social events, outings, or any other activities you would like the Trust to consider, please contact: The Secretary on 847843, speak to any committee member or fill in one of our new suggestion sheets, available at our meetings.

## FORBUOYS

We are hoping to put up a new display with the theme of Birchington Square in the side window of Forbuoys. We are all extremely grateful to Mo at Forbuoys for allowing us still to use her side window and to sell copies of our book.

## Raffle Prizes

Gillian Lodge, who organises our excellent raffles in aid of Trust funds, asks if anyone has any unwanted gifts or items which they would be prepared to donate as future raffle prizes. Please contact Gillian at any meeting if you can help.

## THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The following members were elected to the executive committee at the AGM:

### Officers:

Chairman: Neville Hudson  
Vice-Chairman: John Harrison  
Secretary: Pat Orpwood  
Treasurer: Tom Tindle  
Membership Secretary: TBA  
Social Secretary: Gillian Lodge (co-opted)

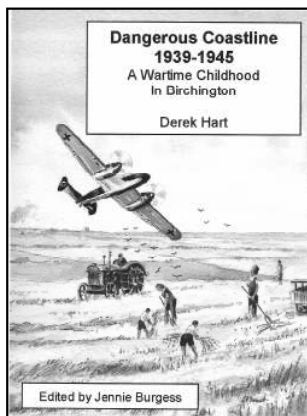
### Committee Members:

Jennie Burgess   John Dodd   Dot Raven  
Bernard La Roche   George Teasdale  
Gerry Davies

Plus there is a co-opted Social Committee consisting of:

Gillian Lodge                      Mary Tranter  
Margaret Garrad                 Peter Draper  
Dot Raven                             John Hart

## DANGEROUS COASTLINE



Derek Hart's book, **Dangerous Coastline**, is still on sale at £7.95 with all profits from the sale of the book going to the Birchington Heritage Trust. The book is in A4 format and contains numerous pictures and detailed maps. The book may be bought from Birchington and Margate libraries, the middle Forbuoys and Oma's or direct from:

Jennie Burgess, 6, Alpha Road, Birchington, CT7 9EQ.

# Memories of Quex

by Alf Bedwell

Alf Bedwell, one of our best-known local residents, has spent most of his life in and around Birchington. He was brought up in Acol and when he left school at fourteen, he was found work in a nursery in Acol. The following year he began working in the Quex nursery for Major Powell-Cotton. In future editions we shall be publishing some of Alf's many fascinating memories.

Mr Graham, the manager of the Quex nursery, had orders to get ready for the 1934 carnival and we were told we all had to do something. On the day of the carnival we had to report to the mansion so that we could be dressed up and have our photographs taken outside the front door.

One of the photographs taken that day shows a very strange machine called a velocipede which looked something like a large four-wheeled cycle.



The Sawyer's velocipede outside Quex house in 1934

It was probably a Sawyer's velocipede, made by William Sawyer of Dover. He was a carpenter, but in 1838-39 he set up a business in Chapel Street, selling a wide variety of these machines. Prices were from £15 to £40 and included special models for ladies and children, one version taking up to six people.

Later that year, Mr Graham said I should learn to drive as there was a small Morris van available. Of course, once I got going and was doing well, I was told to try the Lanchester so that I could serve as a part-time chauffeur to help Ted Milstead, who was the head chauffeur and drove the estate lorry. The day came when I put on my uniform and was ready to drive the Lanchester. Then I thought I really was somebody. I was ordered to take the car to the front door where the butler would give me my instructions. He told me I was to go to Ramsgate and shut the door. So I drove off only to discover that I should have waited for Major Powell-Cotton to take him to the court in Ramsgate.

When Major Powell Cotton and his wife returned from one of their trips, both Ted Milstead and I were sent to Southampton to collect all the animals



Villagers in fancy dress, with Alf blacked up in the middle, prepare for the 1934 carnival. Mrs Castle is wearing the sombrero, but can you name any of the others?

and his equipment. In Southampton was the Queen Mary which had just made her maiden voyage and we watched all the well-to-do people leaving the ship. It was wonderful, as at that time, I had never been farther than Maidstone.

One day when Ted was on holiday, I had to go to London to collect the animals from the taxidermist. This I did and on the way home I had to call at a nursery outside Maidstone to collect plants. There was a great big wild boar on the back of the lorry, covered with a sheet. I pulled into the nursery and out came a keen member of staff who climbed up the side of the lorry and lifted the tarpaulin. Of course, the first thing he saw was the head of the boar with these huge horns. He was so shocked, he lost his grip and crashed down on the ground.



The estate lorry with another newly-stuffed arrival

# Dog Acre – well almost

by Jennie Burgess

Dog Acre was originally a strip of land now occupied by the western half of Alpha Road, with a small frontage butting onto Station Road. It belonged to the Church of All Saints and had been given to the Church by a local donor, probably in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was certainly a well-established piece of Church land by 1622.

During the Medieval and Tudor periods almost every householder owned a dog and there would always be a few stray ones around the villages and towns. If there was any trouble with the dogs fighting each other or attacking people, the local 'Dog Whipper' would be called to grab the offending animal around its neck with a large pair of wooden tongs, not unlike those that were used to lift washing from the boiler. Some communities still own their old wooden tongs.

The Dog Whipper was paid, sometimes in cash, sometimes in kind and in Birchington's case, by the use of about an acre of land (or by a combination of these) He could cultivate this land, or use it for grazing an animal or even let it out to earn himself hard cash. The Dog Whipper first appears in the Church accounts in 1622:

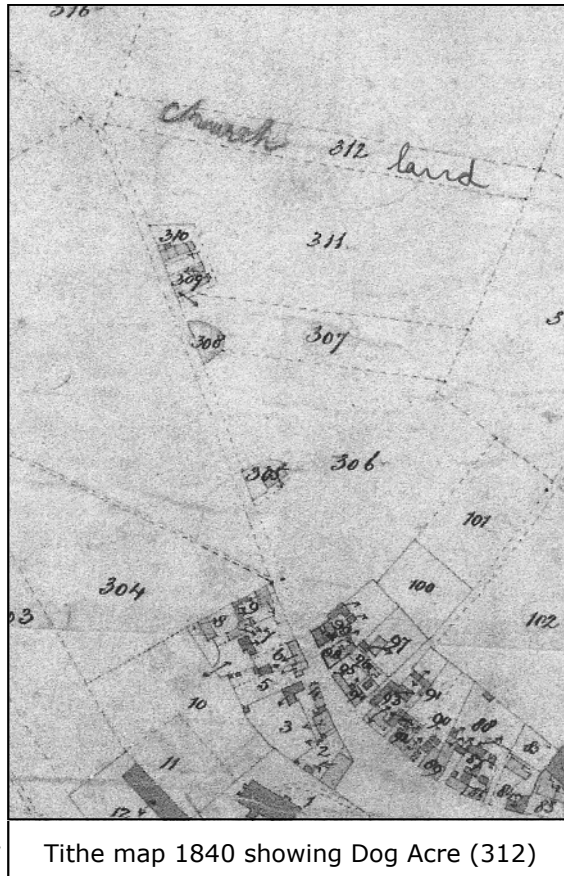
- 1622 'Old Hayward' was the Dog Whipper – plus 8s.
- 1628 'Old Posier' took over the job until 1643 – still with the additional 8s.
- 1685 'John Taylor – Dog Whipper – 1 accer of land.'
- 1687 'John Taylor – Dog Whipper, for his said office have 1 accer of the said land.'
- 1694 'On accer now lett out Thomas Penney Dogg Whipper. Abutting to the Butt Acer.'

(The Butts were where men of the village practised archery every week in Medieval and early Tudor times)

In 1811, at the Easter Vestry, it was agreed that 'James Knott walk round the Church twice every Sunday during service to keep good order and to be paid by the Churchwardens 6d every Sunday.' This continued until

1828, when Dog Acre was granted to the Parish Clerk in lieu of payment.

In the 1840 Tithe Map, Dog Acre is listed as containing 3 rods 31 perches (i.e. only 9 perches short of an acre) The land is listed on the 1872 Ordnance Survey map as 'Dog Acre', plot 54. In about 1880, it was decided to build the first new road in Birchington, running parallel with the south side of the railway line. The Church was asked to sell the main part of this piece, leaving just the triangle near the station in Church hands. "Beaconsfield" was, and for some time remained, the only house in the road, which ran from Station Road corner to the top of Albion Road, then known as Wilson's Road or Coleman Stairs Road. There is a photo of this last triangle of land with fencing and gates on it, indicating that it was being used for grazing land at this date.



Tithe map 1840 showing Dog Acre (312)

In 1921 the Parish Council asked for the church to sell its last remaining corner, which it eventually did, once the Charity Commissioners had agreed, for

£390. The proceeds were invested in War Stock, clearly documented in the Church accounts.

In June 1975 Birchington Residents' Association won a fight to stop Thanet Planning Committee from granting permission for the building of a new Post Office on the site. It is said to have been purchased for £74,000 (see above paragraph!) as an open space. A petition containing 1,200 signatures was presented and the decision to reject the planning request was unanimous. In November and December of the same year a footpath was laid across Dog Acre. Birchington's Chamber of Commerce and Thanet Council shared the cost between them. Its latest newsworthy event is the addition of a new lamp, installed, but not yet functioning!

## STOP PRESS

**The Birchington Heritage Award for 2004 will be presented at The AGM on May 21st. This year's recipients of the award are Wendy and Merv Davey for their tasteful restoration carried out at 89, Alpha Road, Birchington – a lovely old late Victorian house. More details and a picture will appear in the next edition.**