

BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST

Preserving the Past for the Future



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 9

September, 2004

BRILLIANT! WONDERFUL! TERRIFIC! FASCINATING!

These were just some of the words used by the many visitors to our June exhibition, *Birchington by the Sea*. Over 500 people wrote their comments on the visitors' view sheets and we were told, unofficially, that it was the most successful public exhibition ever presented in the Burley Gallery.



Part of the June exhibition
Birchington by the Sea

In *Birchington by the Sea*, we tried to incorporate a variety of themes from the geology and natural history of the area to the historical development of the village in the nineteenth century with some of its personalities.

We were grateful to all those who loaned us photographs and also those who took time to give us their reminiscences which we hope to publish at a later date. Our list of celebrity visitors to Birchington grows ever longer!

Many people commented on the beautiful work produced by the children of Birchington Primary School and we should like to thank the Headteacher, Lesley Gallagher, for her continued support.

We were only finally given permission to stage the exhibition a few weeks before its opening and so it took a great deal of effort to have it all ready in time. We have made a provisional booking for June next year and Kent Arts and Libraries have promised to let us know definitely by Christmas.



The display produced by
Birchington Primary School

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GENERAL MEETING
Following our exhibition, *Birchington by the Sea*

Tony Child
from Thanet Coast Project
gives an illustrated talk
Birchington's Coastal Heritage
7.30, Friday September 24th
The Birchington Centre



All Welcome Non-members £1

Registered charity No. 209920 Secretary: Pat Orpwood - Telephone: 01843 549561



Jennie Burgess, John Hart and Pat Orpwood at the exhibition opening



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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.

NEW MEMBERS

After many enquiries at our exhibition and other events, a number of members have joined us. We now have 170 fully paid-up members. A special welcome to new members this quarter:

Mr and Mrs Denyer Major R.A. Elson
Mr B. Beadle Mr M Gilbert Mrs Kay Horton
Mr and Mrs Clement Mrs Ann Rowe
Mr J.B. Stevens Mrs S.J. Garland
Mrs K. Cowell Mrs W. Moody Mrs B. Steele
Mrs J. Fitt Muriel Harker Mr and Mrs P. White
Rebecca Moody Mr R. Gibbs Joan Williams
Mr. B. Bennett Mr and Mrs J. Lockyer
Mr and Mrs R. Pearce Joyce Chandler
Mr and Mrs G. Wiles Mr and Mrs A. Smart
Mr P. Twyman Mr and Mrs J. Mills
Mr and Mrs J. Mayes Annette Eaton
Miss S. Watson Mrs M. Wright Mrs C. Turner

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 Davis

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

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

We still have a couple of vacancies on the committee if any members are interested.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Colin Gordine has tendered his resignation as Membership Secretary. Until a new Membership secretary takes over the post, all enquiries concerning membership should be directed to: The Secretary, 77 Alpha Road, Birchington, CT7 9ED. Our thanks to Colin for the efficient way he has organised the membership lists and welcomed new members to the Trust.

FORBUOYS

Our latest display with the theme of Birchington Station Road in the large window of Forbuoys may well be our last. Forbuoys have applied for planning permission to redevelop the shop and the window will go. We are all extremely grateful to Forbuoys and Mo for allowing us still to use it.

DANGEROUS COASTLINE



We have now sold over 700 copies of Derek Hart's book, **Dangerous Coastline**, which is still on sale at £7.95 with all profits from the sale of the book going to the Birchington Heritage Trust. Copies can be obtained from Forbuoys, The Library, Oma's, any BHT event and Jennie Burgess, 6, Alpha Road, Birchington, CT7 9EQ.

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.

Membership 2003-4

A few members have not yet renewed this year. We are delivering one last newsletter with a reminder in it as we hope you will join us again. Please, either send your renewal to The Secretary or see us at the next meeting.

Recent activities and events organised by The Trust



Heritage Award

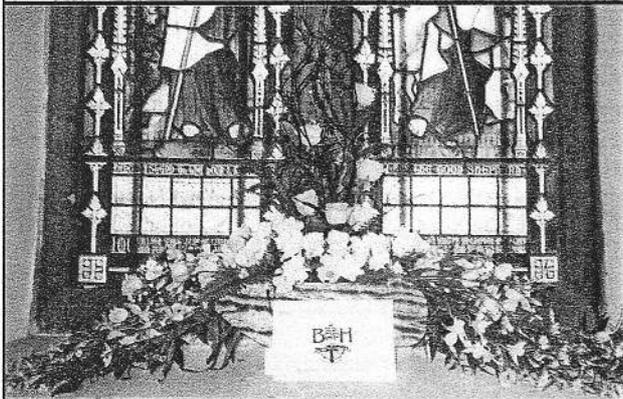
Dot Raven presented The 2004 Derek Raven Heritage Award to Merv and Wendy Davey and family for their restoration of 89, Alpha Road. The house is first mentioned in Kelly's directory in 1901, when it was occupied by Walter Neame. It is a large Victorian villa and was originally called Richborough Lodge until it was given its number in 1947.

Birchington Carnival

Five intrepid committee members, Jennie Burgess, Gillian Lodge, Gerry Davis, John Hart and Pat Orpwood, all wearing t-shirts with the BHT logo, represented The Trust at the recent Birchington carnival. 200 leaflets were handed out for The Trust and collection boxes filled for the Carnival Association.

All Saints Festival of Flowers

Birchington Heritage Trust was represented by a white realisation of our logo. Maureen Hudson designed and produced the Trust's beautiful contribution to the wonderful displays in All Saints Church for the festival.



Fifty people attended the Barn Dance in June and had a most enjoyable evening under the watchful eye of Jane Dryden, who was the caller. Everybody brought a contribution to the American buffet which provided an excellent spread.

'Twixt Two Taverns

Forty intrepid walkers braved the weather to take a short trip around Birchington from The Powell Arms, down Station Road, along Paddock, Westfield and Prospect Roads to the Sea View where some of the group enjoyed a welcome drink. It was an interesting and informative evening and the rain held off!

Have you been paying attention?

Answers to the quiz from the AGM

1. In which month was the 1953 flood? **January/February**
2. In which year were the first two bungalows built? **1870**
3. Who designed the Bungalow Estate? **John Pollard Seddon**
4. What was the name of the railway company which served Birchington? **London, Dover and Chatham Railway**
5. What does the wooden hull on our logo signify? **Our links with the sea and past association with the Cinque Ports**
6. What is the farmhouse of Neames Farm today? **Smugglers Restaurant**
7. When did Birchington Pond cease to exist? **1933**
8. Which engineering company had a Coronation display? **Taplin's Engineering Works**
9. Which Birchington artist designed it? **Ossie Franklin**
10. What stands on the site now? **Taplin Court Flats**
11. Who lived in "Gwynant"? **Miss Kathleen Phillips**
12. Who led the Coronation carnival procession? **The Birchington Silver Band**
13. What was the name of the farm by the pond? (Where Court Mount is today) **South End Farm**
14. Who were the first proprietors of the Minnis Bay Stores? **George and Emily Wiltshire**
15. Who is the great grandson of the first owner? **Colin Gordine**
16. Who purchased Quex Park in 1779? **John Powell**
17. To which king was he Paymaster General? **George III**
18. What new form of bidding in bridge derives from a local club? **Acol**
19. What is Coleman's Lane on the 1872 map now called? **Albion Road**
20. What was the name of the grocer's opposite the site of the old pond in Canterbury Road? **Morris's.**

BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST

PRESENTS

A JAZZ CONCERT

FEATURING

The Dave Corsby Quartet

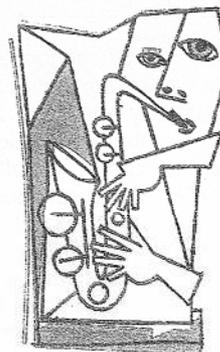
Birchington Village Centre

Friday, October 29th

7.30 for 8p.m.

Bar open

TICKETS
£6.50



From Bandbox and the Committee

Or telephone: The Secretary – Pat Orpwood: 01843 847843

Minnis Bay Shipwrecks

By Michael Lodge

By popular request, we reprint here one of the articles which formed part of our June exhibition.

Although there have probably been many shipwrecks in Minnis Bay over the ages, the wrecks of two of these ships can still be seen today. On the main beach to the east of the bay and in line with Canute Road are the remains of the Hero which was wrecked in 1895, whilst to the west of the Bay near Plum Pudding Island the Valkyr met her doom in 1919.

The Hero was an American built ship and on November 24th 1877, she was on her way from North Shields to the Mediterranean with a cargo of coal and coke. There had been a moderate SSE wind blowing that afternoon and at about 5pm the wind backed easterly and then ENE increasing in strength and with heavy torrents of rain. At 7.30 the Hero was known to be in trouble as signals of distress were seen from the Roads and the lifeboat was readied for launching. By now the wind was gaining in strength with the flood tide, reaching hurricane strength with heavy rain and sleet squalls.

It was impractical to launch the lifeboat from Margate in the gale and so horses were called for and the lifeboat pulled about two miles eastwards and launched at about 9.30 near the Longnose. The Hero was still drifting and firing flares and distress rockets. The lifeboat, Quiver, reached her at about 11pm and succeeded in taking off the crew of 15 hands. However, the lifeboat had fouled the Hero's anchor cable and had to be cut free and then distress flares were seen from another vessel, the Louisa. Two lifeboatmen were put aboard to help her to a place of safety and finally the lifeboat landed the crew of the Hero at Whitstable, as it was impossible to return to Margate.

The second clasp of the National Lifeboat Institution was awarded to William Grant, the Coxswain of the Lifeboat. It is not known what happened to the crew once they were landed, but the Hero remains at Minnis Bay.



The remains of the Hero, Minnis Bay, 2004

The Valkyr was a Swedish three-masted schooner built in Sweden in 1901 and registered in Gothenburg. She was originally called the Valkyrien. On Saturday afternoon 26th April 1919, she was on her way from Setubal in Portugal to her home port with a cargo of sardines, cork and salt fish. Off Deal she had taken on a pilot who had taken her into the Thames Estuary, presumably to shelter from the gathering storm. The Valkyr was taken up through the Edinburgh Channel and moored close to the Edinburgh lightship, owing to a strong headwind. Later, on the 27th, the pilot moved the ship down the Black Deep and moored by the Sunk Light Vessel. By 6pm that Sunday evening a SE gale was blowing.

At midnight the wind suddenly veered NE causing the Valkyr's two anchor chains to part. The ship was now at the mercy of the gale and the Valkyr struck the Sunk Sand and about an hour later drove over it into deep water, only to find her rudder gone. The vessel drifted all night and crossed several sand banks bumping heavily. On Monday she lost her foremast and afterwards struck the Margate Sands where she was sighted the next morning.



Wreck of the Valkyr, 1919—photo by Bernard Rayner

The Margate Lifeboat with Coxswain Stephen Clayson which had already been out that night to rescue 9 crew from the Dunvegan of Boston, was launched at 8am. After much difficulty, they succeeded in rescuing the Captain, the 7 crew and the pilot who were all landed at Margate Pier. The shipwrecked men were well cared for by the local agent of the Shipwrecked Mariners Society. Captain Wessburg went to the Gazette offices to thank all who had helped and later he arranged for the lifeboatmen to receive medals.

During the night of Monday 28th April, the Valkyr drove across the Margate Sands and drove ashore dismasted and bow up at Minnis Bay where it was totally wrecked. Its cargo was salvaged, although many locals helped themselves to supplies of coal and tinned sardines. The Valkyr was driven ashore close to the wreck of the Hero, but on subsequent high tides, she was driven westwards to her final resting place.



Men from Margate sent to help with the salvage