

# BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST

Preserving the Past for the Future



## NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 11

February, 2005

**BHT Chairman, Neville Hudson, and members of the committee had an interesting meeting with Roger Gale before Christmas. We outlined the current status of The Trust and explained our plans for the future. Roger was most interested and put forward a number of useful suggestions about premises and funding which the committee are currently following up. It now seems likely that our annual exhibition at the end of May will go ahead, despite library re-organisation, but please look out for confirmation of this.**

The November talk on Fire Marks proved to be most interesting. Many of us had not realised how brightly coloured the marks were originally and we were particularly impressed by the actual examples Mike Davis had brought with him.

His talk covered the story of fire marks which began soon after the Great Fire of London and were a visible sign that the property was insured. However, he assured us that if the fire fighters who arrived did not see their own fire mark, they did NOT leave the house to burn down, but fought the fire and sent the bill to the relevant insurance company. It was rather a wet evening for the talk and we were somewhat disappointed that we had fewer present than usual.

The audience for the Christmas readings was also a little sparse. We had planned to hold the event in the centre, but it was booked and we were fortunate to be offered the use of the church. We raised £58 of which £30 was given to Christian Aid (in lieu of hire charges) whilst the raffle raised a further £22 for BHT.

The Wine and Wisdom was a great success, raising over £500 and 5 new members took us to over 200. More next issue.



BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST



### GENERAL MEETING

7.30, Friday February 25th

Birchington Village Centre

### Lost Buildings of Birchington

An illustrated talk given by

**Jennie Burgess**

All Welcome

Non-members £1



Secretary: Mrs Pat Orpwood

Telephone: 01843 847843

### Forbuoys Exhibition

Our latest exhibition has provoked plenty of comment and requests for copies of pictures. We decided to fix the pictures to large boards so that we could take them down at a moment's notice and they have been very successful. Jennie will be giving a talk to accompany the exhibition in February.



In this Issue: The Future and Recent Events - page 1; Newsboard - page 2; Members' Letters and Cox's of Birchington - page 3; Fragments from an Autograph Book - page 4





# Letters to the Editor

We have previously asked for members' views, but have so far have had nothing in writing. We are therefore very pleased to have received a letter containing views frequently expressed to us verbally. Whilst our constitution does not allow us to be politically involved in matters of planning consent, we nevertheless feel we have a responsibility to publish the views of our members. We welcome any responses.

## Preserving the Past for the Future?

I feel particularly disturbed at the sight of prospective domestic developments in Birchington. It seems pointless, indeed a hollow joke, for us to talk of "preserving the Past for the Future" - which I and many other residents support, while all around this unique village new building is appearing. Not the refurbishing of buildings in style, but selling to developers at a large profit, to smash down decent houses and bungalows to be rebuilt in an un-matching modern style often for holiday and rented properties, lived in commercially by strangers.

The face of Birchington will be lost forever. I think the sight of a whole block on Minnis Road, part of the Dip aspect, is appalling. I can't go to council meetings, but would if I could. I know they get government grants for development, but can't this downward slide of "outline planning consent" be arrested?

Many folks around here are extremely concerned although they cannot write about them. We seem to need a few "Preservation Orders" slapping on before the main aspects of our village are lost.

Hopefully BHT and other organisations can muster enough muscle to preserve what we love.

(Name withheld from publication at writer's request.)

## Cox's of Birchington



Christmas saw the loss of another Birchington landmark with the closure of our fish shop, owing to competition from the supermarkets. We all wish BHT members Leon and Karen Cox all success and happiness in the future.

## A Plea for Help from Jennie Burgess

One of my visitors has accidentally picked up all the Trust's material connected with Firemen. They were possibly lying waiting to be filed at the time and when the visitor picked up their own items, I guess they gathered up the Fire ones by mistake.

Could anyone who has gathered copies of items from our collection around Christmas time check their own material and if the Fire items turn up, just pop them through my door. I don't want to embarrass anyone - I know how awful I would feel.

If, having found the items, they feel they would like to start their own collection, then they could just copy what they discover and pop the material back to me. It has taken nearly 20 years to collect them and one item is irreplaceable, because it was given to me by my predecessor, the late Mr. A. T. Walker.

Jennie Burgess  
6 Alpha Road.



The fish shop in the early 1930s

The shop has been trading as a fish shop since very shortly after it was first built about 1900-1905. It was run by W. & J. Rogers from at least 1910 and is listed in Kelly's Directory of 1911-12 as a fishmongers. Sadly, it is very likely that the shop's use will now be altered for the first time in 100 years.



The fish shop in the early 1950s

# Fragments from an Autograph Book

BHT member, Ian Jackson, has sent us two entries from an autograph book which is believed to have been owned by Edith Mockford and contains entries from servicemen written during the First World War. In this edition we publish a short poem written by one of the soldiers in May, 1918, commemorating War Weapons Week and to accompany it, we have a copy of a photograph taken at the actual event and some details about the enormous amount of money which Birchington raised—far more even than that suggested by Private Glynn. In the next edition we shall publish the second extract, along with background material on the V.A.D.S. at Quex. Any further information on Edith Mockford would be most welcome.

## War Weapons Week

I went out as far as Birchington Square,  
What did I see but an aeroplane there,  
Ladies were coming and going galore,  
Such a scene I've never seen before.

Poor ladies, rich ladies and all the big guns  
Opened their purses to squash the Hun.  
Words to praise them can hardly be found,  
For their money was given pound by pound

It made my heart glad, bless me it did,  
To see ladies raise three thousand quid,  
To everyone there it must be plain  
The ladies purchased a Birchington plane.

Pte. L. Glynn  
7th K.S.L.I.  
23. 5. 1918

## WAR WEAPONS WEEK

On Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1918, an aeroplane and a Red Cross motor arrived in The Square, the latter fitted up as an office with two lady clerks in attendance. Mrs Powell-Cotton opened the proceedings with a speech.

Thursday was called 'Ladies' Day', Friday was 'Men's Day' and Saturday was 'Children's Day'. The object was to obtain the sum of **£5,000** for the purpose of providing two aeroplanes, but this sum was more than realised in the first two days.

On Thursday before 4 pm **£2,500** was taken.

On Friday morning the amount was **£7,215**.

On Saturday morning **£7,558** was taken.

By the evening of Saturday the handsome sum was **£10,023**.

This was later raised to **£13,600**.



Thursday, 23rd May 1918: Birchington Square  
Collecting for the War Weapons Week

## In Today's Money

In 2002, **£13,600** was equivalent to **£540,000**

Their original target, for a community of about 2000, was **£5,000** equivalent to **£198,500** in present day terms.

In **1918** terms, they were being asked for about **£2.50** from every man, woman and child, when a week's wages for a whole family was often about **£1- £1.50**.

In the end, the then population of about 2,000, actually gave an average of about **£6.80** each. In present day terms their eventual gift was worth: **£270 for every man, woman and child!**

(These figures are based on those issued to Jennie Burgess by the Bank of England in 2002. Their estimate is based on £1 in 1918 = £39.70 in 2002)