

BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST

Preserving the Past for the Future



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 15

FEBRUARY, 2006

Trust Activities Banish Winter Blues

Once again The Trust has organized a number of events during the last quarter. In November over fifty people braved the elements to hear Pat Orpwood give an illustrated slide talk on Dante Gabriel Rossetti. This covered his painting career and friendships with the painters such as Holman Hunt and Millais, with the second half looking at his short stay in Birchington with his sister, Christina, prior to his death, along with a glimpse of those who attended his funeral. In December the Social Committee staged the Birchington in Winter event. Jennie Burgess gave a Powerpoint presentation of Birchington in Winter. The pictures, many of which were supplied by members, were shown in date order with plenty of opportunity for reflection. This was followed by a sumptuous American supper, supplied by the 40 to 50 people present. The Social Committee would like to extend a very warm thank you to all who helped to make it such an enjoyable and sociable evening. By the time you receive this, everything will have been arranged and we shall have held our annual Wine and Wisdom evening which is always popular and we shall then be looking forward to the next General Meeting in February. Plans are also underway for our spring programme and we are planning a walk in the Mill Row area in early May.

Birchington Heritage Plaque

The Trust were recently able to have a beautiful hand-made, wooden plaque depicting our Logo, installed in the Museum by Jack Cohen. The original idea to have a Logo came from Raven and the Tranter, a local was George near Folkestone completed by Eric Sittingbourne, who Village Sign in the negotiated our kindly released the money. The Trust has had a booklet made telling the story of the plaque and each of the people involved has been presented with a copy. One last, but vital kindness that made the final ceremony possible, was from Ben Richardson, who made a fixing in the wall to display the plaque.



 Birchington Heritage Trust
General Meeting

Grandma's shopping Basket

A Talk with "Visual Aids"

by

Felicity Stafford



Birchington Village Centre

7.30 Friday, February 10th

All Welcome

Non-members £1



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Next month: The Story of our Road Names



February Newsletter

Grandma's Shopping Basket

This month's talk looks like being a really fascinating one. Our speaker, Felicity Stafford, is a well-known local historian whose publications include her book *The Later Kentish Seaside*.

Her illustrated talk will look at where people shopped and what kinds of items they bought, with some actual examples. There will also be fun quiz with a small prize on offer, so do come along at 7.30 pm. on 10th February.

FUTURE EVENTS

Please keep an eye on the posters around the village for the next social event. Gillian Lodge tells us that tentative plans are afoot, but need to be finalised. If you have any suggestions for future events, do let a member of The Social Committee know. They are very much in evidence at all our activities. And don't forget, just let us know if you need a lift to any of the meetings.

Fund-raising Activities

The Bric a Brac Sale organized by The Social Committee on Saturday 29th October raised £120, although the turn-out was a little disappointing. A further £100 was raised at the Christmas Fair.

Thanks to all those who gave their time to help—the amount raised covers three weeks rental of The Museum.

Charlie Smart

Yet again we have to thank Charlie for his generosity to The Trust. He has kindly donated a number of prints of his local paintings, which are on sale at the Museum. So hurry and make your selections.

MEMBERSHIP

We shall shortly be announcing our 250th member. This will, of course, be celebrated in suitable style. Watch this space.

MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are still needed to help staff the museum, initially for Monday mornings 9.30 to 12.00, although we hope to open at other times once we are established.

FEBRUARY EDITORIAL

It has been good to see so many new faces helping with the Trust's activities over the last few months, particularly at the museum. From having only half a dozen or so visitors in its early days, the museum is now really popular on a Monday morning so, if you have not yet been, do come and pay us a visit, either for specific enquiries or just to browse. The Trust was again involved in village events, when it organized its stall at the Christmas Fair. It was a pity that the weather was not kinder and that it was not better supported, but it was an interesting venture for which we must thank Roger Latchford. I just hope they are going to re-seed the damaged grass and remove the last remnants littering the site before the arrival of spring when Dog Acre really looks its best.

The Changing Face of Print

by Bernard La Roche

Having done a six year apprenticeship in the Printing Industry as a Compositor, it is completely incomprehensible how in this present day, the mode has changed, leading to the demise and downfall of the industry that I once knew. When I first left school, I was told by my father that to succeed in life, you must have a trade to your name. I chose print, because at school, we were fortunate enough to have had a case of type in our arts and crafts department along with "hand fed platen printing machine, on which we printed our own school magazine.

Boys interested in printing, could be signed off from a games period and go to the teacher in the arts and craft class and learn about printing. We would set the type round the illustrations, according to a page plan drawn up by the teacher for that page, and then another boy would have the honour of making a 'lino cut' of the House Badge, for example, to complete it.

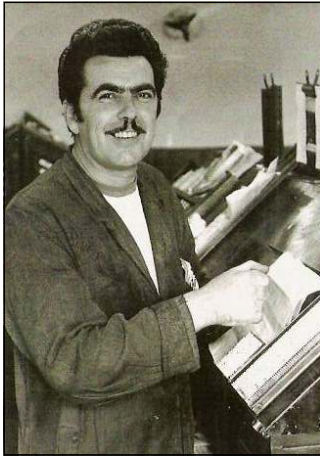
It was only natural enough, when leaving school, we had to make the decision as to what we wanted to do. The strange thing with me, print was my second choice. First of all I wanted to be a racing cyclist in France and ride in the Tour-de-France, but once again my father put his foot down and I settled for print.

After leaving school, I walked around Woolwich, where my parents owned a restaurant, knocking on the doors of local printers to see if I could get an apprenticeship as a compositor. After many rejections, I entered the office of Merritt & Hatchers who printed *The Kentish Mercury*, in Greenwich. They in turn sent me round the corner to a small printing firm (known in those days as a 'winkle bag' printers) in Deptford High Street. It was an education in itself. The 'Governor' told me he was looking for an apprentice compositor but it was going to be a difficult career, and a lot of studying would be required, It would take me about a year to learn the 'layout' of the case (upper and lower), but I explained that I already knew that. He doubted my word and promptly put me to the test. After giving me a small exercise, it was signed, sealed and settled, I got the job. He even asked me if I would like to stay for the rest of the day for which he would pay me 'cash in hand' and pay my bus fare back home. I was delighted.

My new 'governor' told me I would have to attend the Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts on a day release basis and with two night classes a week which they would pay for. If that would be acceptable to me and my parents, then the job was mine. After one year I fitted the rôle, and was told my indentures would be back-dated to the date I had started work. It was such an old fashioned firm, and at that time I did not realise, that all type sizes were based on 'Old English' measurements like Brevier, Long Primer, Pica, or Diamond.

In the September, the new term started and I was told I should sign on at The Camberwell School and on the first day at print school, like all the new intakes, we were given our first typesetting exercise, for which we had

to use our own imagination and find the type case, mine was 10pt Baskerville. After about one hour of searching for 10pt Baskerville, I could not find it and when I was approached by my tutor and asked why I was taking so long, I said, "I can't find the type face." "If you were working at your firm now, what type face would you have set it in then?" he asked. "Long Primer" I replied. He could not stop laughing. "That type face has not been used since about 1890. What's your 'governors' name, Caxton?"



A young Bernard working on *The Kentish Times*

When I went on to tell him of all the other type faces I used at work and how we printed Crown and Double-Crown Posters with wooden Type that had wood-worm in it, he asked me if I would be prepared to give a talk to all the school on how printers managed before the American Point System was introduced to the British Printing Industry at the beginning of the 20th Century.

After I finished my apprenticeship, I went from firm to firm, each with its own brand of print, such as bank notes, books and magazines, newspapers and general jobbing. I finally ended up in the newspaper industry, local newspapers, national newspapers and for a short while on *France-Soir*, a French evening newspaper. Then followed the *Financial Times* and *Daily Mail*, before I was offered a permanent position on the *London Evening News*. Whilst working there, I won a place at St Edmunds Hall, Oxford University to study print subjects such as 'Imprint Law'. This was very important in the printing industry, as the newspapers were often being

challenged on the publication of photos, text and the like. I hasten to say my knowledge of the Imprint Law is no longer with me.

With the new print technology coming in, I took a re-training course onto the 'Qwerty' keyboard and then, when *The Evening News* shut down, I went on to local newspapers, as printers from Fleet Street could not find jobs in print and were having to retrain into other industries. Printers were being kicked out of jobs left, right and centre. I finally opened my own print shop in Chatham, with its Head Office in Epple Bay Avenue. I had acquired an old Linotype machine and Ludlow Machine at scrap metal prices, but after about five years, the premises came up for re-development. That's when print came to an end for me.

After floating around the streets of Birchington for about 10 years, cutting lawns for a living, I was given an old cardboard box to take to the tip. Inside were old sepia post-cards of Birchington. How could I throw them away? Print still being in my blood, I decided to publish a book and name it – *Chronicles of Birchington*, using, I might add, new technology for its compilation. So now, perhaps, I might be able to put my life-long trade into fruition and see this book of mine on the bookshelves of Birchington.

This is a shortened version of Bernard's article. It can be read in full on our website at www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk

OBITUARIES

We have been saddened to learn of the recent deaths of three friends of The Trust:

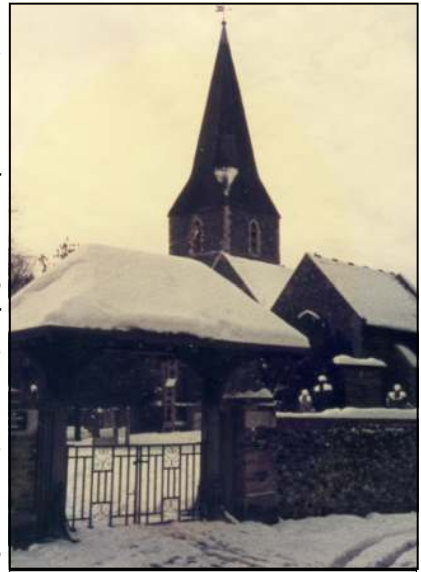
Jean Franklin of Cross Road died on the 4th January. She was one of our early members and attended almost all our meetings until her recent ill-health. Jean was the wife of local artist and Minnis Bay Yacht Club Commodore, Ossie Franklin.

Len Morris of Alpha Road died on 6th January. He worked for many years doing very valuable work on the photographic archives of The Powell Cotton Museum and was very helpful to The Trust with our photographic material.

Pat Million formerly of Queens Avenue, Minnis Bay, died on 11th December after a short illness. She was a member of the Trust Committee from 2003-4, before moving to Westbrook with her husband, Hector.

The Lych Gate

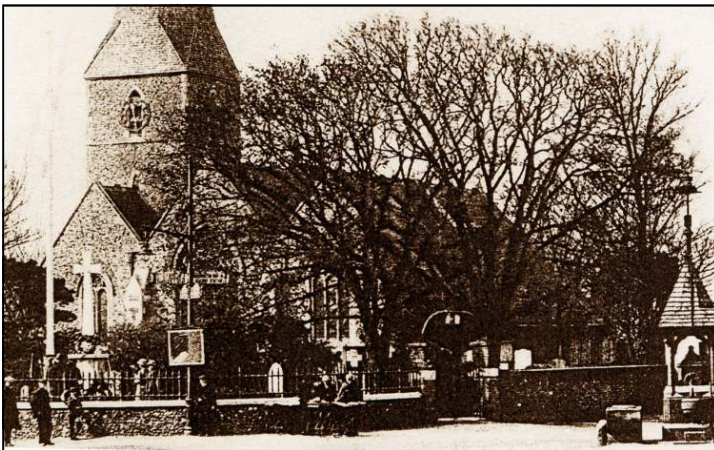
Nowadays, we naturally think of this feature in the Square as always belonging to the Church. However, when it was first installed, it was erected between the main school grounds at Woodford House and their playing fields. At that time the fields reached eastwards right across to Albion Road and northwards to Alpha Road. The gate was a memorial to the founder of the school, Henry Arthur Erlebach, who died in 1928 and was paid for by Old Boys from the School. Mr and Mrs Erlebach had gone through great tragedies during the First World War, losing three of their sons in the conflict. Two years prior to his death, he had overseen the purchase and setting up of a Trust to provide Birchington with a Recreation Ground which we still hold today in memory of his boys. His Old Boys still felt a great sense of loyalty to their founder and the Lych Gate provided a worthy focus to honour him and was dedicated in 1929.



The Church gate in the 1920s

When the school was sold and about to be demolished, the owners and Friends of the school were asked whether they would agree to their monument being moved to the gate of the Church in the Square. They were delighted at the suggestion, so towards the end of 1960 it was carefully moved from the back of the school to its present position. It was dedicated by the Bishop of Dover, the Rev. L. Meredith on Sunday 28th February 1961. It looks as if it has stood here all its

life and many people are unaware of its 'pedigree'. It was refurbished in 1996 after some wear and tear, and a little help from the local youth in the village.



The Lych Gate in 1985

In the dictionary, the word Lych or Lich is a 15th century word for a corpse or shrouded body, as coffins were not used in those early days. The gates were used as a resting point when a shrouded body, or later a coffin, was being brought into the churchyard. The gateway to the Church was where the mourners would await the arrival of the priest and the first words of the funeral service would have been said here —"I am the Resurrection and the Life..."

www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk

Did you know that BHT has a website? Have you tried it, but been disappointed to find that there was very little except news of long-past events and meetings, or dates from way back.

If you have looked recently, you will have noticed an improvement – the 'Forthcoming Events' on the News page are now in the future rather than the past!

It is unlikely, unless you have tried really hard, that you will have noticed that we have now also begun the mammoth task of putting some of the Trust's huge collection of local photographs onto the site. To see how this is progressing, click on the 'Image Gallery' link. This brings up a list of topics; the ones which are underlined are links, which will bring up a sheet of small pictures when clicked. Clicking on any of the little pictures on these pages will bring up a bigger version of that picture. You can now see old pictures of, for example, Epple Bay or Birchington Hall, and we intend that the list will increase over the year.

So give it a try or, if you have been disappointed in the past, another try.

Also let us know which of the topics you would like to see underlined next.