

# BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST

Preserving the Past for the Future



## NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 16

MAY, 2006

### TRUST CELEBRATES 250TH MEMBER



#### GRANNY'S WONDERFUL BASKET

Felicity Stafford (pictured above) gave a fascinating talk at our February meeting, looking at the various goods that were available earlier this century. There were murmurs of recognition as each new item was revealed and taken from the basket to have its origins explained. Many products, such as Hovis, which was first marketed in 1886 and was one of the first brands to advertise, date back to the nineteenth century. Margarine was patented in France in 1869 with Stork Margarine dating from 1920 and Branston Pickle from 1922. Renditions of "We are the Ovaltineys" were to be heard when Ovaltine, dating from 1913, was produced. It was the official drink of the 1932 Olympics and accompanied Hillary up Everest. We reminisced about the way groceries such as tea, biscuits and salt were sold as loose goods right up until the fifties and thoroughly enjoyed sharing Felicity's wealth of knowledge of all these goods which are still on sale today.

Janet Robinson, our 250th member was presented with a bottle of wine by Trust Chairman, Neville Hudson and Gillian Lodge organised the raffle.

#### HOSPITALITY IN BIRCHINGTON THEN AND NOW

We had an interesting talk and buffet on Thursday 20th March at The Centre, organised by the Social Committee. To complement the current display in Forbuoy's window, Jennie Burgess gave a talk on all the eating places in Birchington, past and present. In 2006, there are 31 venues where food can be consumed on the premises or bought in take-away form—which must make Birchington one of the most hospitable communities in Thanet. Sadly, there were also another six places no longer with us. The plentiful buffet that followed the talk rounded off a most pleasant evening.



Birchington Heritage Trust

#### UP THE MILL

A Short Guided Walk

In the Mill Row and Mill Lane Area



Wednesday May 10th at 6.30

Meet—Corner of Mill Row and Essex Gardens

£2.50 including booklet



Birchington Heritage Trust

#### Annual General Meeting

Friday, May 26th at 7.30

The Centre  
Alpha Road, Birchington

Light Refreshments included

PLUS

A Small Quiz

Also Help Needed

Can you name the occupants of the shops in Station Road since 1974 for a



In this Issue: News and Events - page 1; Newsboard and Editorial - page 2;  
The Games Children Played - page 3; Birchington Road Names - page 4



# May Newsboard

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Subscriptions for 2006-7 are due in May and can be handed in at the AGM on Friday May 26th. The subscription remains at £5 and cheques should be made payable to Birchington Heritage Trust.

If you are unable to come to the meeting, your cheque and the renewal form need to be sent to Bob Hinge, 23 St. Mildred's Avenue, Birchington, Kent, CT7 9LD

## NEW MEMBERS

There are currently 254 members

We should like to welcome the following members who have recently joined us:

Mr B. Horsley    Frank and Hilary Siccone  
Janet and John Robinson    Barry Ogles  
Daphne Rowley    Joan Gardiner

## Fund-Raising Activities

During the summer, the Social Committee will be having stalls at any local events in the village. So if anyone hears of any local events where stalls can be rented, please inform The Secretary, Mrs Julie Hudson at 7 Cliffe Avenue, Margate, CT9 5DU (Telephone 291959) or Jennie Burgess on 842988

## MILL ROW/MILL LANE WALK

We hope to see some of you on our next walk on Wednesday, May 10th at 6.30, led by Pat Orpwood. We shall meet on the corner of Mill Row and Essex Gardens and suggest you park either in Essex Gardens or Park Avenue. It is a fairly short walk up and down Mill Row and Mill Lane and not at all strenuous. The cost is £2.50 to include the illustrated booklet and you pay on the evening.

## Skipping

## Rhymes

"Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Jews" is one of the rhymes mentioned in our article on page three. Its full version is:

Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Jews  
Sold his wife for a pair of shoes  
When the shoes began to wear  
Nebuchadnezzar began to swear.  
When the swear began to stop,  
Nebuchadnezzar bought a shop.  
When the shop began to sell,  
Nebuchadnezzar bought a bell  
When the bell began to ring,  
Nebuchadnezzar began to sing  
Doh ray me fah soh lah te doh.

Or do you know a different version? Do let us know. Or if you can remember any other skipping rhymes, chants or games. We will publish a collection in the next edition.

## MUSEUM NEWS

Over 300 people have now visited The Museum. Volunteers are still needed to help staff the museum, initially for Monday mornings 9.30 to 12.00, although we hope to open on Saturday mornings once a month in the near future. Thanks to local people, we now have a large number of building plans from the 1930s, mostly of Minnis Bay, in the Museum. Do come and look to see if you can find your property amongst them.

## MAY EDITORIAL

This is my sixteenth and last newsletter. I have enjoyed working on them for the last four years, but I feel now is the time to move on. I hope you have enjoyed reading the different articles and information in the newsletter. We have certainly moved on since the first one which I produced. I wish the new sub-committee of The Trust every success in the production of future copies and look forward to reading at least the next sixteen copies, by which time I hope we may even have our very own museum.

# The Games Children Played

by Pat Orpwood

For children growing up in the fifties in Birchington, playing outside was an important part of life. There were far fewer cars, more open space and few of the current worries about the harm which might befall a child let out into the street or fields to play. There were, of course, safeguards: children were called in before dark, usually parents knew where they were and often they would be with a group of other and older children.

In Mill Row there were plenty of opportunities for play. The space between number 15 and the Red House was an ideal area for group games; there was path leading to the bill boards on the Canterbury Road as well as the overgrown waste land opposite the Mill Row terrace. If we became bored with these local attractions, there was always the tar path from the end of Mill Row down to Brooksend or the path across the fields to Minnis Bay.

There were about 20 youngsters who lived in the Mill Row and Mill Lane in the fifties with ages ranging from seven or eight to eighteen. Obviously the older ones usually had better things to do than play with us younger ones, but they could sometimes be prevailed upon to supervise or lead us on longer expeditions such as looking for tadpoles or sticklebacks down at Brooksend.

Probably our favourite game was one we called *Pompom*. It was a cross between British Bulldog and *Hide and Seek* and involved chasing and hiding and taking prisoners, with the winner being the first one to bang on the large hoarding next to Ismaelia Cottages without being spotted. The noise from the bang was extremely loud and reverberated all round so that everyone knew at once that the game was over. *He* was our preferred title for chasing games, played largely on the rough ground—nobody would dream of using the allotments. The child who was “he” would catch us all with the last one becoming the next “he”. Sometimes we would cheat and claim exhaustion so we that would not be caught and this involved crossing our fingers and calling out “Fainites!”

Another choice was *Poor Jinnie is a’ Creeping* where one person stood at the bottom of the steep flight of steps which led down to the cellars of Red House from Mill Lane, whilst the rest tried to creep down the steps whilst his or her back was turned. If you were caught moving, you returned to the top whilst the winner was the one who managed to creep right down without being caught.

Among other favourites played in the area between 15 and Red House were *Oranges and Lemons* where two made an arch for others to pass under until the rhyme reached:

“Here comes a candle to light you to bed

And here comes a chopper to chop off your head”

when the arms would come down to trap the last person. Sometimes we would make a large circle for games like *Poor Mary is a’ Weeping*, where a “boyfriend” was chosen to join Mary in the middle of the circle and become the next Mary, or *The Farmer Wants a Wife* where first a wife, then a child, a dog and a bone joined the farmer in the middle before ending, “We all pat the bone”. Another variation was *In and Out the Window* with the person whose turn it was, weaving in and out of the raised arms round the circle.

Most of these games involved both the girls and boys, but skipping was largely the preserve of the girls. This took two forms, a group activity where we used a long rope and took it in turns to hold the ends, or skipping singly with our own ropes. The long rope was a length of sash cord provided by my father and eight or ten of us could skip in it at any one time. Most games involved skipping in and out of the rope with accompanying rhymes such as: “I like coffee, I like tea/ I like . . . to skip with me” at which point your name was called and you jumped in or you did so when your birth month was called out: “Apples, pears, peaches, plums. Tell me when your birthday comes.”. Another variation involved counting, often with the rope being turned much faster with rhymes like “Salt, mustard, vinegar, cider/How many legs has a great big spider?” and then you counted until the last person gave up. Another rhyme was “Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Jews” which ended with the eight notes of the musical scale and this was also used for individual skipping, where you tried to do the bumps eight times in a row. You could skip with your arms crossed, on one leg or backwards to add variety.



Oranges and lemons in the fifties

Ball games were also important and ranged from a kick around with the boys to cricket against the wall of number 15. But we always had to be very careful of the windows of Flint Cottages. *Piggy in the Middle* was much safer, as was seeing how

many times you could bounce the ball or playing two-ball against the wall in a variety of ways to the accompaniment of “England Ireland, Scotland, Wales” at which word you had to let the ball bounce. We threw the ball with one hand, under our legs or backwards, from very close or far away in a whole sequence of styles.

Many games were seasonal or were the current fashion and we played them all in turn. Autumn saw us with our pickled conkers on old shoe laces, whilst Spring was the time for marbles. We had hoops and yoyos, 1/9 for the red and yellow metal ones or 3/3 for the superior blue or yellow ones, both available in Barrows. There were fivestones and jacks, each with their own series of skills and hopscotch pitches chalked onto the ground. At other times the girls would be absorbed in cats’ cradles using pieces of wool, or knitting either with needles or a Knitty Nancy using nails tapped into a cotton reel and producing a long thin tube.

We did cartwheels, handstands against the wall and tried to walk on our hands, although only Carol was any good at that and we argued and fought and fell out and made friends again. But we were never bored and when our mums called us in, as it grew dark, we were always reluctant to go. Older children left for National Service and marriage to be replaced by younger ones. But then in the mid fifties came electricity and television and cars and suddenly playing in the Row was no longer safe nor desirable.

# The Story of Birchington's Road Names

When the first four censuses were taken in 1841–1871 only one road name appeared, “THE STREET”. This referred to both what we now know as Canterbury and to Station Roads. Many of the residents simply were given their names and details, without even saying they were in The Street. With such a small population (about 6-800 in total) everyone knew where everyone else lived.

It was not until after the advent of the railway in 1863 and the sudden increase in population that homes needed to be clearly designated and street names began to appear.

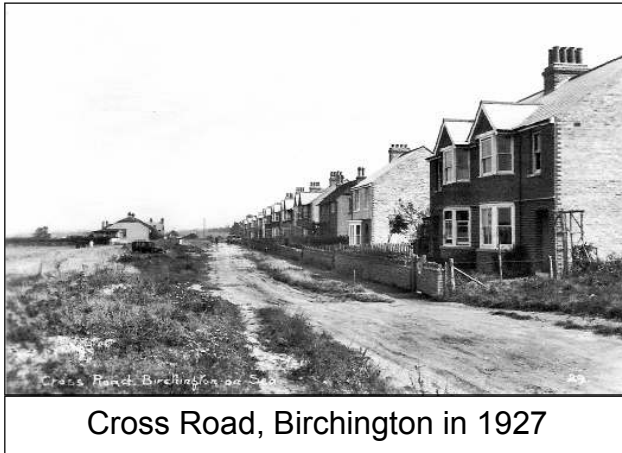
Even in the earliest Kelly's Directory of 1883-4, many people are only listed under the name of their house, without a road being mentioned. We find Station Road mentioned, but we also find “High Street”, which appears to be the section from the top end of Station Road to the eastern side of the Square. There is no mention of the Square

itself at this time. Church Street was the stretch of road from the Church to Essex Gardens and kept its name until 1937. By 1938 this became part of Canterbury Road.

Prospect Road at that time had a lovely ‘prospect’ across the fields towards the Minnis (an old 15th century name for Common), while Gas Row, (now just an alley leading off Canterbury Road opposite the Church) had a gasometer in it, for this new-found source of heat and light.

Park Lane was originally known as Park Road, because it was the main road to Quex Park. Brunswick Terrace, the row of 15 houses, was listed under a separate heading not connected with Park Lane at all. Minnis Road had only one building listed, that of the Malt House Cottage. Mill Row and the area round the old Hudson Mill had been in use for several hundred years by this time.

When it came to building new roads, the first completely new one to appear in the mid-1880s was Alpha Road, hence its name. There were a large number of tracks and footpaths which gradually became classed as roads, when more properties were built along them. Many of the new roads in Minnis Bay were given names with Saxon and Norman connections. The ‘Garden Estate’ was given County names by Alderman Farrar, who



Cross Road, Birchington in 1927

owned and developed the land originally. He had the whole estate planned out in 1933, including the land on the west side of Essex Gardens. It was only WW2 that prevented that part of the venture going ahead.

The name of Epple is of ancient origin, with various spelling coming down over the centuries, including Aple, Apolde, Hemmings and Epald. The roads around Shakespeare Road obviously all have literary or artistic connections and the original name for Spencer was spelt ‘Spenser’,

as in Edmund Spenser of ‘The Fairie Queene’. Daryngton Avenue was named after a local Architect who worked in the City.

We also have quite a collection of roads honouring local people like Phillips, Mellanby, Broadley, Stringer, Holton, Barrows, Cornford, Farrar, Linington, Laming and Gallwey. Each of these names has its own story to tell. Others were named after people

connected with the builders, like Sherwood and Nottingham Roads. These builders came from that area and named all their estates in Thanet after their home territory. Two of the old schools in the village are commemorated in Queen Bertha's Avenue and Woodford Court. Sadly, the builders did not see fit to do the same when Hunting Gate was developed on Grenham House School and grounds.

The roads on the Birch Hill Estate were almost all named after people or features with a connection with the Spurgeon's Homes, which stood on this site from 1922 to 1978. Yew Tree Gardens was built in the grounds of Yew Tree House, a beautiful property with extensive gardens, orchards and woodland around it. One road with an odd spelling to its name—Wilbrough—gained its name from the first two families who had houses built there, the Wilsons and the Broughtons.

There will be many names that have not been included in this article. If anyone has a particular road name they want researched, please let the Trust know, and we will do our best to find the answer or call in at the Trust Museum any Monday morning from 9.30 to 12.