



# NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2006

Charity No. 1099250

ISSUE 17

## ACORN INN

The earliest mention of the Acorn Inn is in 1768, when 'travellers' (soldiers) were billeted in Birchington, with several housed 'at the sign of the Acorn'. Our present Acorn was still only a very small cottage at this date, so, which of the other three inns was called 'The Acorn' at that time?

The Powell Arms was originally called the New Inn and only changed its name in honour of John Powell Powell when he became High Sheriff of Kent in 1823. The Queen's Head was converted into three dwellings by 1838-9, but might just possibly still have been trading as an inn.

The original name of the Pewter Pot is unknown. Why take the name of "The New Inn" as they did in 1823 when the Powell Arms gave it up, if they had been known for some time as "The Acorn"?

So we are still trying to find which of our inns was using that name from at least 1768. Any suggestions?



ACORN INN,  
Birchington-on-Sea.  
CHARLES E. SOLLEY,  
Proprietor.  
SHEPHERD, NEAME & CO.'s  
Favourite  
Ales and Stouts on  
Draught and in  
Bottle.  
WINES and SPIRITS . . .  
of the BEST QUALITY.

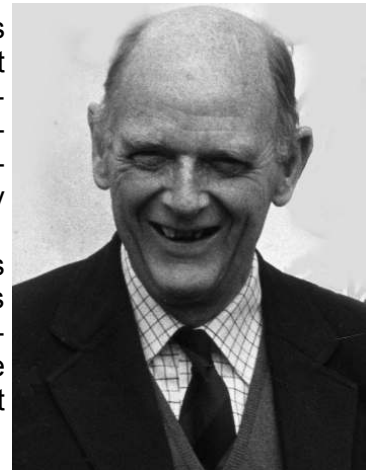
## Death of Christopher Powell-Cotton

It was with great sadness that the people of Birchington heard of the death of Christopher Powell-Cotton on the 12th April 2006 at the age of 88. He had joined the Buffs at the beginning of WW 2, then the King's African Rifles in 1940, with whom he was awarded the Military Cross.

After the war, he worked in the Civil service in Uganda until events at home caused him to return. From 1962 he served his community of Birchington and East Kent with great integrity and humility—and also with much good humour. He enjoyed the quirks of human nature, which frequently caused him to smile wryly.

His generosity in loaning his grounds to many good causes was deeply appreciated by all who benefited from it, especially the Village Centre and The Cancer Care Unit at Margate.

He will be sadly missed by us all.



### Small Change

Several members collect their small change which they kindly donate to the Museum. We recently received a bag containing £3.98, that had come from Alf Bedwell's back pocket! Thank you very much, Alf - and Iris - for suggesting it!

Birchington Heritage Trust

Quarterly Meeting

**"King Ethelbert School"**

by  
**George Teasdale**  
Retired Headmaster

**The Centre**  
**Thursday 28th September**  
**7.30**

**Contents: p. 1** Acorn Inn; Death of Mr Powell-Cotton; Small change  
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## “Pot-Shots at Doodlebugs” by Alf Bedwell

We arrived back from France after the Lancastria affair, from which we had to get cleaned up and receive new clothes. We were hanging about doing nothing, but after a few days we were on parade and loaded up into lorries, then taken to Credenhill, Hereford. We came in singing “Bless ‘em all”, but our new W.O didn’t like it.

We were ordered out of the lorries and into three ranks—then all you could hear was, “Hair cut!” “Hair cut!” and we were marched off to the barbers. I had to go back three times—three haircuts in one day! Credenhill was a training camp and it was **big**, with gun sites around the perimeter. The pits were armed with four Browning guns like the ones in Spitfires.

After several months we were loaded back into the lorries with the guns mounted in each lorry. We were told we were going to Kent to ‘sort out’ the V. 1 Rockets, or ‘Doodlebugs’. Before we left one of the lads had heard from home about the damage these were doing, including killing two of his family.

We were nearing our destination when one of the rockets flew over us. The convoy stopped and the lads in the last lorry had the gun out and set up ready to have a go, before an officer on a motorbike appeared. He stopped us, but promised as soon as we were operational, he’d give a barrel of beer to the first crew who downed one. We found out later the officer was ‘Tiger’ Lowe, a well-known cinder-track rider.

We were based at a holiday camp at Greatstone near New Romney. Some of the caravans had been reinforced to take the weight of the large Bofor guns. This was also the site where ‘Pluto’ (Pipe Line Under The Ocean) started. The large bungalows by the shore housed the pumps for the pipeline.

It was great watching our planes out in the Channel trying to get their wing tips under the V 1 fins, to make them nose dive into the sea. Our boys soon shot down a Doodlebug, but as they couldn’t be sure exactly which crew had hit it, the barrel was shared between all of us—so no one got too drunk that time!

### The Shrimp Man by Bernard La Roche

The Shrimp Man of Birchington was called Frederick Letley. Besides shrimps, his catch might include whelks, lobsters and winkles. He used to sell his catch from a stall outside the Powell Arms.

Because his trade was so intricately connected with the sea, the state of the tides governed much of his life. However, he was very strict about honouring Sunday as a ‘day of rest’. No matter what was state the tide, he would never set out with his boat or shrimp net until one minute after midnight on Monday morning.

In his earlier years he had been granted the ‘Freedom’ of the Medway fisheries and was a registered Dredgerman. He kept his boat at Epple Bay, where the photo was taken. He was 84 years old when he died in 1940.



### **C.U. Beach Mission**

The Beach Mission, originally called “The Sand Services” in the 1890s, was restarted soon after W.W. 2 and has now been running again for over 50 years.

This year the team of 60 students and helpers have registered over 500 youngsters in their first week. Last year there were about 530 altogether over the two weeks. The enthusiasm from both participants and team members is infectious and the whole venture goes from strength to strength. The aim is to introduce and enliven the youngsters’ faith in a living Lord, in a real and relevant way.

The major problem the organisers face each year is finding enough beds for the team. They are fed and cared for down at Minnis Bay, so the hosts only have to provide a bed and washing facilities—and all the team are well ‘house-trained’! Any offers for next year will be gladly welcomed—via Tessa Hinge, Bob Hinge’s wife. (Address on p.4)

# Birchington's Railway Station 1940-42

An excerpt from an article by Denis Chetwynd

The staff in 1940 comprised Station Master, 2 Clerks, 2 Signalmen, 2 Platform Porters and one Goods Porter. The collection and delivery service for both parcels and goods traffic was done by horse and cart, operated by Walker's Garage near the station. The villages had a delivery/collection once a week. During the 'phoney war' (mid-Feb to end of May 1940) many troops were stationed in Thanet. The large private houses and schools were commandeered to accommodate them. I became acquainted with every place in Hampshire as I made out the tickets for the Hampshire Regt. while they were billeted with us.

Our freight operations were very busy, as all of it was moved by rail with very few lorries on the roads—and even fewer when



petrol was so short. The freight train arrived each morning with 12 wagons shunted into the siding.

We dealt with all manner of general goods (food, clothing etc.) and specialist traffic such as bulk loads of seed potatoes from Scotland for local farmers, oil tankers and even livestock. Every item was accompanied by an invoice, which the clerks had to check—quite a task with the volume of goods we handled. In the evening the returning wagons would contain corn, sugar beet, potatoes, cauliflowers etc. from Thanet.

The evacuation of Dunkirk (May 1940) suddenly brought the war very close to us, as thousands of troops passed though Birchington Station on special trains. The hundreds of local children followed soon after, on their way to evacuation to the Staffordshire area.

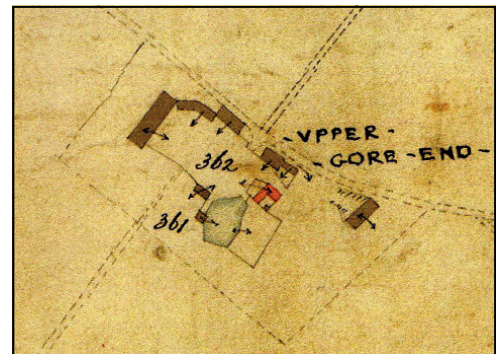
## The Police Box in the Square

The police used to have these boxes, which looked like large telephone boxes, but painted blue. They contained a phone directly linked to the nearest police station.

This one stood in the square beside the churchyard wall and was demolished in the early 1960s, when the new police station was built in Sandles Road near the Birchington Station. This has now become the entrance to the Masonic Lodge.

Dr Who fans will recognise it as "The Tardis" from which so many adventures began and ended.

This photo was taken in 1959 for a church calendar by Ben May.



## Upper Gore End's Duck Pond

For many hundreds of years there was a pond behind Upper Gore End Farm, Local people still remember going round the back to watch the ducks on it in their childhood. The 1840 map shows it was quite a size at that date. Because it was the natural collection point for water there, it would become very large after heavy rain.

One of the tenants built a wall around part of it to stop it overflowing too much at such times. Not many years ago, the son of one of the tenants had a swim in it after one of those downpours. It had to be admitted that it was not sparkling clean water - in fact, more like a thin brown soup colour - but the young enjoy a challenge.

The wall and the dip where it stood are still clearly visible, but totally dry these days.

# Newsboard : September 2006

## MEMBERSHIP

The number of paid up members at present stands at 201.

We would be grateful if those who have not yet renewed their subscription will send it as soon as possible to Bob Hinge at 23 St Mildred's Rd, Birchington CT7 9LD  
Tel: 842416.

We have had 7 new members in the last quarter.

## Fund Raising Events

### **BINGO & AMERICAN SUPPER**

Thursday 26th October  
The Centre 7.30pm  
Tickets £4.00 at the Museum or 842988

### **Christmas Concert - Live MOZART**

Thursday 7th December  
The Centre 7.30 for 8pm  
Tickets £5.50 at the Museum or 842988

We have had just over 400 visitors to the Trust's Museum in its first year!

## Some of our Latest Acquisitions

These include

Material from Queen Bertha's School - photos & text  
A hand-made porch lamp from the old forge opposite church  
Deeds from land at Brooksend - owned by John Friend.

## Website

Have you visited our website yet? As well as news and "What's on", you can read articles from past newsletters and see some of the collection of pictures of Birchington through the years.

Regular users will notice that there have been few images added recently—this is more a job for winter evenings, so there will be more there soon. Watch this space!

Let us know if there are any topics that you would like us to cover. Bob Hinge

Our web address is:  
[www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk](http://www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk)

We are sorry to announce the sudden death of **Alan Kay**, who once served on our committee, before going to live near his son in Sussex two years ago.

## Forbuoy's Window

Our present display of "Seaside Days" will be followed by one on Birchington's "Fire Brigade", mainly covering 1885-1939

Then in November, there will be a display on "The Guild of Players". This will be staged to commemorate their 70th Anniversary and will be mounted by the Guild from their own archives.

## Saturday Opening

We have begun opening the Trust's Museum on the first Saturday morning of the month, 9.30—12. We are hoping that we will be able to extend this, initially to 1st and 3rd Saturdays and then perhaps to every Saturday morning.

Thank you to those who already man the Museum. The job is very simple - there is a master Index, which helps to locate particular information. More helpers are always welcome.

## Quexpo Memories

Anyone with memories of Quexpo, or memorabilia that they can lend, please get in touch with Maureen Hudson (76 Quex View Rd 841900). There will be an exciting get-together at the Centre on Friday 29th September at 7.30. The Centre was originally funded by profits from the Quexpo events, only made possible by the contributions and help from a huge number of people.

## Station Road Survey

The Station Road survey conducted by Bob Hinge, with help from a good number of members, has proved most interesting. Bob is trying to piece together the names of the various shops and what they sold from 1974, when the Kelly's directories ceased.

Any further help will be welcome.