



Newsletter

November 2006

Charity No. 1099250

ISSUE 18

King Ethelbert School Talk

At the Quarterly Meeting retired Head of King Ethelbert Mr George Teasdale gave a fascinating talk on the history of the school. He spoke of its opening in May 1938 and introduced us to Mr Bruce Marshall who was a member of that early staff and Les Birch a pupil at that time. He gave a clear picture of the way the school has hugely improved its standards over the last 58 years.



The Baptist Church

The first Baptist Church in Birchington was in the building now used by Mullany's Roofing in Canterbury Road. This was erected in about 1852-4 and remained in use for about 40 years.

The members then used the Institute at the back of The Square for about 25 years, while they raised funds to build a more permanent chapel. In the early 1920s concerted efforts were made, directed from a tent on land owned by Mr Barrows, as the picture below shows.

In 1925 the foundation stone was laid on the chapel which now stands in Crescent Road. It has weathered many storms during these last 80 years and provided good fellowship and care throughout that time.



[This is the first of a series on Places of Worship in Birchington. If anyone wants to add to the information, please ring 842988]

Railway Bridge Works



We have recently watched the strengthening of the south side of our station railway bridge. Back

in 1904, local residents pleaded with the Railway and Kent Highways to widen the bridge. There has never been an accident there - just a few frayed tempers - so patience and courtesy will still be needed.

Future Events

Next quarterly Meeting
Stamps of Kent
Friday 24th November

Mozart Concert
Thursday 7th December
For details see Notice board page 4

St Mary's Demolition

During the demolition of St Mary's Home in Beach Avenue, the Trust asked Churchill Developments if the date plaques could be given to the Trust, as they marked a significant building in the village's and also in national history. For some while it was the only place in England dedicated to the control of Diabetes. The firm have not only given us the plaques but the demolition lads have delivered the three items into the safe keeping of one of our members.



2 How Many People in Birchington?

By Bob Hinge

The Parish Council say the population of Birchington is 'about 14,000'. The August Parish Magazine says the population of the Parish is 'over 21,500'. The Ecclesiastical Parish is different from the Civil Parish, but this seems a big difference. I decided to try to find out more. The obvious first step to find any information about Birchington is to ask Jennie. She said that TDC had told her that it was 'approaching 20,000'.

I next tried online. Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia, which is a quick but not necessarily accurate site, said "According to the 2001 census the registration district of this name had a population of 9,827, although the town itself boasts 14,000 people". The Thanet Council website had no population information, but the 2003 council election figures showed the Electoral Roll figures - Birchington North (sea side of the railway) had 3,191 voters, and Birchington South 5,159, a total of 8,350 - of course this only includes adults who are eligible to vote.

Kent County Council on their website have a document where they estimate the 2004 population of the county divided up into wards, and into parishes (where parish or town councils exist). Their estimate was 10,000 for Birchington as a whole, made up of 3800 in the North Ward and 6200 in the South.

I wanted to check the census figure from Wikipedia - there has been no major building in Birchington since 2001 so this should still be fairly accurate. My initial attempts to find this online were unsuccessful, so I went into Margate Library and asked if they had the census figures. They didn't, but a librarian looked it up on the web for me, using the National Statistics website. He worked away for a while (as he was at a counter it was hard to look over his shoulder) and eventually told me the total was 19,654, made up as:

Birchington North	3,668
Birchington South	6,159
Birchington East	6,213
Birchington West	3,614

I found this figure surprising but then noticed that the North + South figures totalled 9,827 (as Wikipedia), and East + West also totalled 9,827.



Population in Birchington 1909

Looking at the website myself, more leisurely, I found that the entire Birchington Civil Parish area totalled 9,827 - the other figures were two different ways of dividing it up. So the correct figure then was 9,827. There is always some underestimate in census figures, but only a few percent.

I rang a Birchington Parish Councillor to ask where the 14,000 figure came from; she said it must have come from Thanet Council, and gave me a contact name. I was passed from person to person, and eventually to Kate Wilson, who is a researcher in the Development department and said to be their expert. She told me the population was 9,827 in 2001, and they estimate a bit over 10,000 now.

The Ecclesiastical Parish differs from the Civil Parish mainly by including Acol (Population 308 in 2001 census) and also Woodchurch and the Two Chimneys caravan site (no separate census figures, but perhaps 100 people). The border with Westgate is also different, part of Queen Bertha Avenue is outside the Ecclesiastical Parish, but some of the Westgate Seaside houses near the Golf Course are included. At the very most this would give an extra hundred to the Ecclesiastical Parish. Thus the best estimates seem to be just over 10000 for the Civil Parish, and just over 10,500 for the Ecclesiastical Parish.

Where did the other figures come from? Did somebody at the council misinterpret the census figures in the same way as the librarian? I would very much like to hear from anyone who has any facts which throw light on them, or show why my estimate is wrong.

Memories of Red House

A Birchington Childhood by Pat Orpwood

A house on the current site of Red House in Mill Row is shown on maps in the 1780s, and it could be even older, although it has been substantially altered over the years.

At the time of the 1840 tithe map, it was owned by John Pete and rented out to a Thomas Hogben or Hogbin who was a farm labourer and lived there with his wife and five children. By 1851, it was lived in by Henry Goodburn, who is first listed in the census as the Miller's Man, but by 1861 had become a market gardener. The land belonging to Red House was listed at that time as being two acres stretching right down Essex Gardens. Henry stayed until after the 1871 census with his wife and growing family who by 1871 were beginning to leave home. Thomas Goodburn came next and he was a blacksmith and dairyman, employing one man. He was there until the 1890s when Herbert Dennis continued with the dairy. After that it was a greengrocer's and a private house.

My grandparents moved there in 1938 and at that stage it had no bathroom or inside toilet. There was a large range in the parlour where water was boiled and which needed constant blacking. Three steep steps led down to the kitchen from where the smell of my grandmother's rock cakes came from the old-fashioned gas cooker. The rent was 14/- a week, but soon after they had settled in, they were evacuated and the house was used as a billet for soldiers.

When I first visited, immediately after the war, much of the house's earlier history was still in evidence. The garden was much larger than it is today although not two acres, but it had apple and cherry trees, gooseberry and currant bushes and a large vegetable garden, now covered by Neuville, numbers 16 and 17 Mill Row and the first house in Essex Gardens.

Wartime practicalities had also led to a large chicken run, with the chickens lodged in the stable and a terrifying cockerel stalking outside. A large shed and wire runs where rabbits were kept. Other reminders of the war included the various armaments lying around and my parents were horrified to discover that my new rounders' bat was in fact a rusty incendiary bomb!

To the right of the house a wide path, known to us as The Drive passed through the garden until it reached a large flint and brick outhouse. This was the way to the old smithy which still retained its forge and a huge circular



Red House, Mill Row with its original roof

tank which was filled with water. The white-washed walls were covered with horseshoes of various sizes and there was an enormous collection of old farm tools along with various old-fashioned bicycles—a wonderful place to play on a rainy day.

The best part of the house, though was the cellars. These had been used as the dairy and at the left side of the house was a steep flight of stairs leading down to double doors and into the first cellar where details of grain supplies could still be seen. The outside steps were blocked off by my grandfather, but you could still reach the two cool rooms from the stairs in the hall. The two rooms were separated by an open wood panel and seemed absolutely enormous to me. Lying around were various bits of unwanted furniture and paintings including a reproduction of Queen Alexandra, all gradually being affected by the damp and sporting a light covering of mould.

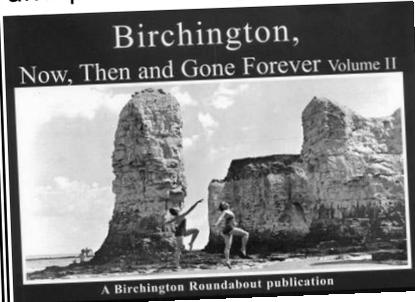
My grandparents bought the house for £400 in the 1950s and after that a bathroom was built above the scullery which was eventually given a new floor and turned into a utility room with the parlour becoming a kitchen/breakfast room. When my grandmother died my parents lived there until the death of my father when it was sold and the new owner had the Kentish pegs on the roof removed along with its original chimneys.



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Stuart Horner's new book

The second volume of this fascinating book "Now Then and Gone Forever" has been printed and is on sale in Birchington Village and elsewhere. It shows comparative past and present images of Birchington along with



a refreshing commentary. There is something of interest for both Locals and Newcomers to the area. Well done Stuart.

A donation of one pound will be given by the author to the Birchington Heritage Trust for every book sold, in appreciation of the assistance and source material which helped with the production of the book.

Waterloo Tower at Quex

The two hundred year old Waterloo Tower has recently disappeared beneath scaffolding and blue tarpaulin while undergoing repair and repainting. The Waterloo Tower, which along with All Saints Church spire, greets travellers approaching Birchington. John Powell Esq. built the tower in 1818, seventy years before the Eiffel Tower, to satisfy his interest in bell ringing. The brick tower houses a peal of twelve bells cast by T. Mears of White Chapel London



Two Welcome Donations

Money in memory of Alf Bedwell—£510

Grant from the Parish Council—£500

Bingo Night Raised £100 with only 30 people attending the event. Much fun and enjoyment was had by those who attended

Gillian Lodge's gift card party raised £17 for The Trust, many thanks to Gillian.

The same exhibitor at Gillian's party will be displaying and selling Christmas cards during Bob Hinge's "The Stamps of Kent" talk on November 24th. If profitable, the exhibitor will give a donation to the Trust.

Paid-up Members

Birchington Heritage Trust now has 238 members

Seven new members have joined BHT since our last newsletter

A warm welcome to our new members.

We hope you enjoy attending our regular meetings, visiting our museum and other events.

BHT BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE TRUST
Preserving the Past for the Future

The Stamps of Kent



People, places & events of
our county on postage stamps

An illustrated talk by Bob Hinge

Friday, November 24th
7.30 at The Centre

Registered Charity No 1099250

Mozart Concert

By

David Ruddock and
Friends

at

The Centre

Thursday 7th December

at 7.30pm

Tickets £5.50
including

Light Refreshments
Bar open

