



Preserving the Past for the Future

Newsletter

www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk

August 2007

Charity No. 1099250

ISSUE 21

Gift Aid – You can help the Trust

The Trust has now had agreement from HM Revenue & Customs that the annual subscriptions, as well as any donations made, are eligible to be treated as "Gift Aid".

This means that we can claim back the standard rate tax that you have paid on the money you give us; this is £1.40 on a £5 subscription. This may not seem a lot but, provided that all our eligible members sign up, it will add up to a worthwhile sum for the Trust.

A declaration Form is enclosed with your newsletter. Please, please fill it in and return. Note that the Taxman has a few rules – the form must be filled in by one taxpayer (but can cover a couple's subscriptions and any donations) and it must be handwritten – no attaching of address labels.

There are options to delete if you wish. If you are happy to leave the third (open) option undeleted it will make things easier for us, especially if you have already paid for this year.

If your 2007/8 subscription is still due, we have also enclosed another membership form. If this applies to you, please return both forms ASAP!

Dr. Bob Hinge - Membership Secretary

Social Secretary's Comments

At the AGM a question was asked about money raised from raffles that take place over the year. The money taken was included in the "function receipts" section of the accounts, but not shown separately. I have gone through my records and the raffles raised a total of £411. If any member wishes to know individual totals from specific events, please let me know. Thank you for supporting our raffles, as you can see, the money does mount up over the year.

The next event that will include a raffle is the "Sixties Nite", on Friday 21st September 2007. Please come along and enjoy the music and if possible dress up in the style of the time. The Social Committee and hopefully some of the Management Committee will be doing their best to look the part! There may even be a few pictures dotted around to show how they actually looked in the sixties!!!

Gillian Lodge – Secretary of Social Committee

Aviation in Kent

One "Man of Kent's" view

Talk by Mr Malcolm Finnis on the 24th May 2007

Malcolm gave us a very interesting insight into some of the events which had taken place in the world of aviation in the county of Kent right from his early experiences in St Margaret's when as a schoolboy he had seen a B17 Flying Fortress which had crash landed on its way home from a bombing raid over Germany up to the peak of civil operations at Manston. Malcolm himself had been involved with the growth of early post war aviation, having served in the design office of Folland Aircraft building the Folland Gnat, the aircraft which originally formed the early Red Arrows.



Piper Aztec - as seen and flown at Manston

He went on to describe the companies who provided the aeroplanes which carried many of the people benefiting from the rapid growth in Inclusive Tours in the post war period. He related many interesting stories which had occurred in the two major players Air Ferry and Invicta Airways describing how the industry had grown from early beginnings to a peak in the late seventies. The business was then being replaced by a rapid growth in freight carrying. Such business enterprise inevitably produced entrepreneurs' probably the greatest being Wing Commander Hugh Kennard an ex battle of Britain fighter ace who had had a distinguished war career. He led many important activities at Manston. Malcolm spent much time in describing the part W/C Kennard played in the story.

Malcolm has written a number of books on Aeroplanes and Aviation and is obviously a dedicated aviation person and his enthusiasm showed in his presentation which was greatly enjoyed by an appreciative audience.

JMR



2 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH of Our Lady and St Benedict



In the mid 1800s, the Catholics in Birchington travelled to other communities to worship while there were only a few members. As the population of the village increased and the numbers of Catholics grew after the arrival of the railway in 1863, they eventually began meeting in the Institute at the back of the Square. Under the guidance of Fr. Golding Bird in 1908, it was decided to convert a three-sided wagon shed in Minnis Road, at the side of the Malt Houses. Once the little church was complete, a presbytery was added at the front of it and with its own 'home', the little congregation grew in strength.

In 1959, with very willing help from the American airmen based at Manston, the church was rebuilt to a larger scale on the same site, while the new presbytery was moved over to the left and a hall added at the rear of the church. The inside of the church was later beautifully panelled and in 2002 a new altar was installed.

Latterly, under the steady hand of Canon Bill Clements, the little church, which began so humbly in a wagon shed, is now a strong force in the community.

RED CROSS in Birchington

Mrs Jarman (Madam Mum) was the Area Director of the Red Cross. Red Cross in Birchington was already functioning before 1967, based in the Methodist Hall. Jumble Sales, Coffee Mornings and Bazaars were held to help fund the purchasing of 4 Paddock Road. The older members of the group ran the "Nearly New" Boutique at 4 Paddock Road each Thursday morning. Many Bazaars and Coffee Mornings were organised to raise funds. There were First Aid Lectures, Nursing and Welfare Courses and the house was open to the public throughout the year. They ran a 24-hour Medical Loan Service, where the required items were delivered to the houses.

Eileen Bonsor was the Centre Manager, while other officers were Maisie Maple, Yvonne Braginton and Pam Hudson. The Instructors were Ted Gower, Head of Casualty at Margate A & E Department, while Jim Edwards was the practical instructor. Dr John Hayden from Birchington and Dr Taylor from Westgate were the examiners.

"Lest We Forget", an Ex-Servicemen's support group, used to bring down a group of ex-Servicemen and Chelsea Pensioners each summer. They were met by the Red Cross at Margate Station and taken to the

RED CROSS in Birchington (cont)

Sundeck for fish and chips. They then either stayed in Margate or had a coach trip into the surrounding countryside, returning to the Sundeck for tea. At the end of the day we waved goodbye to them at Margate Station for another year.

Other duties undertaken by the Red Cross Volunteers included Pantomime duty for the Enterprizes Drama Group and First Aid Duty for the Road Runners in their races. On Remembrance Sunday both Seniors and Juniors attended the Parade and the church service at the War Memorial and in All Saints Church. We also did nursing in people's own homes, including washing the patients.

At Carnival-time, we usually got together a float to advertise our presence in the community. In the summer months there was also beach duty at the Red Cross Hut, just below the slope near the Minnis Restaurant & Bar. From 1970 to 1986 we always attended the big Quexpo events to supervise any first aid requirements.



Junior Red Cross Members in the 1990's

The Junior Red Cross members were always trained via a series of courses in First Aid, Nursing and Welfare. We included visiting Retirement Homes, any elderly people known to us in their own homes for a chat and also the Sea Bathing Hospital patients. We also tried to include visits to children who were disabled and attended a party given for them.

Early in 2000 it was decided that the expense of keeping up 4, Paddock Road was more than the Thanet Committee felt was viable, so they decided to close down our Birchington headquarters, much to the sorrow of the local community. By then there had been a Red Cross group in Birchington for at least 40 years. Many members of the old brigade still keep actively involved in local events, for which people in the community are very grateful.

Based on information from Jane Hickman (née Hudson) - July 2007



Red Cross First Aid Hut on the Promenade at Minnis Bay

POLICING BIRCHINGTON IN THE THIRTIES

By Bernard Beadle

My father loved betting on the horses and the dogs, but preferred company on such trips. My mother ran a boarding house at Bridge House in Station Approach. One summer in the thirties we had two families staying with us. Dad and the other two men went off to Dumpton Races one evening, where they enjoyed the dogs and some modest imbibing between races. Consequently they were just a little bit merry on their return to Birchington - so much so that, instead of staying on the bus to the station, they alighted at the Square.

In those pre-war days all the cinemas in Thanet advertised their programmes on boards which stood outside various shops around the island - and Birchington had its fair share. The shopkeepers who agreed to display them received complimentary tickets to the films in return for this.

Shortly after leaving the Square, these three gentlemen stopped and looked at one of these boards and decided to carry it home. But reaching the next shop they deposited the first board and carried on with the new one. So it continued down the length of Station Road until they were about to enter the gate of Bridge House holding their last board.

Unbeknown to them, one of the village constables, in his puttees and wheeling his 'sit-up-and-beg' bicycle, had been following the trio at a distance. As they reached the gate he caught up with them. "May I ask, gentlemen, what you plan to do with that board?" said he. "We don't like the picture," said one. Then came an example of good policing. "I think, gentlemen, that you ought to put them all back, don't you?"

This they did, escorted by said constable. When all the boards were returned, he accompanied them back down Station Road to ensure they didn't get up to any more mischief. At our front door, they exchanged pleasantries. "Good night, Constable." "Good night, gentlemen."

Next morning my father went to the nearby sweet shop, C.R. Edmonds, and bought the largest box of chocolates on sale. I was then despatched to Prospect Road to give them to the constable's wife.

Ah, well, changed days, eh?



BANKS in Birchington 3



In the light of our recent ram-raids on banks in Station Road, one of our members felt it seemed an appropriate time to do a mini history of all Birchington's banks!

The first bank to open in Birchington was Cobb's, which built the premises in the Square in about 1898, now occupied by Lloyd's TSB. When it was first opened, only the left half was used by Cobb's, while the right half was occupied by Brooks Tea Rooms and shop. This had moved down from "Southdown House" at the entrance to the Methodist Chapel yard. Both the inside and outside of the building have altered over the 100+ years of its existence, but the old building is still very recognisable from this old 1908 photo.

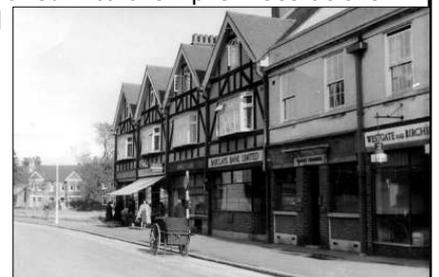
The Westminster Bank was the next to open in 1923. It occupied premises almost opposite its present position, where "Size Does Count" now trades. The newly constructed premises over the road were opened in 1931. The bank was merged with the National

Provincial Bank in the late 1950s or early 1960s, becoming the Natwest Bank we now know. It has had several upgrading of the internal premises, but the outside has remained virtually unchanged.

Barclay's Bank moved into their premises at the

far end of Station Road in the middle of 1937, as they first appear in Kelly's Directory in 1938, soon after these new shops were built. They, too, have had numerous up-grading of the interior and small alterations to the outside, mainly to add the cash machine that caused so much trouble recently!

The last bank to arrive was the Midland Bank, now taken over by HSBC, which first came to Birchington in 1964, shortly after Woolworths moved in next door. Besides the change of name, their premises have seen many changes and like all the other banks, now has a "Hole-in-the-wall", which causes so much temptation nowadays. For those new to Birchington, the Co-op now occupies Woolworth's premises.



Noticeboard

Quarterly Meeting

"Cut above the Rest"

The History of Cutlery

Slide Show and Talk
By
Jennie Burgess
+
Nibbles & Fun Quiz

**7.30pm - Thursday 27th Sept
2007**

At
Village Centre

New Opening Hours for Birchington Heritage Trust Museum

In response to requests by many visitors
in our museum we are now opening
every

Saturday 9.30am to Noon

and

Monday 9.30am to Noon

If you would like to spare couple of hours
occasionally as a volunteer on either day at the
museum your help would be appreciated

please contact

Shirley Gibbons - 843344
Jennie Burgess - 842988

Martin's Window Displays

The present display is about the Scripture Union or "Sand Services" as they were originally known. Having begun in 1885, they have gone on ever since, with the only breaks occurring during the two World Wars.

The next display will run for the month of September and will be staged by the Manston History Museum to commemorate the **65th anniversary of the Battle of Britain**. With so much of the battle having been fought across Thanet's skies, we are privileged to have a local group to share in our task of guarding our historic past.



"Sixties Nite"

Presented by the
BHT Social Committee

On
Friday 21st September 2007

Tickets £4.00

American Supper
Please Bring Finger Food

Come along
and
enjoy the music

If possible dress up
in the style of the time