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THE CURATE and THE QUEEN TALK BY JENNIE BURGESS

During a well attended meeting on Friday 24th October 2008 the audience was captivated by Jennie Burgess, our BHT Archivist, when she gave a talk about a Curate Royston Cole and the Dowager Queen Sophia of Greece, who both resided in Birchington during 1928. Jennie explained that her research began in 2007, after being unable to answer an inquiry by a local resident who had read the book "Born to Rule" by Julia Gelardi where the curate was mentioned many times.

Always keen to resolve a mystery, Jennie embarked on an intriguing detective trail, which eventually involved accessing letters deposited in Cambridge University Library. Jennie revealed the story about the circumstances behind the curate meeting the queen who had been staying in Birchington to visit her daughter, Princess Katherine, who was a pupil at a boarding school in Broadstairs. After the queen left Birchington she and the curate continued to correspond by letter for four years, until her death in 1932. The curate retained all the correspondence between himself and the queen, following his death, his elder son donated the letters to the university. Jennie illustrated the talk by reading from many of the fascinating letters.

The evening was a thoroughly enjoyable event, organised by our Social Committee as a fund raising event and helped to raise over £200 which will be a valuable contribution towards our fund raising efforts.

Many thanks are due to Jennie's continuing hard work in uncovering yet another piece of Birchington's interesting history.

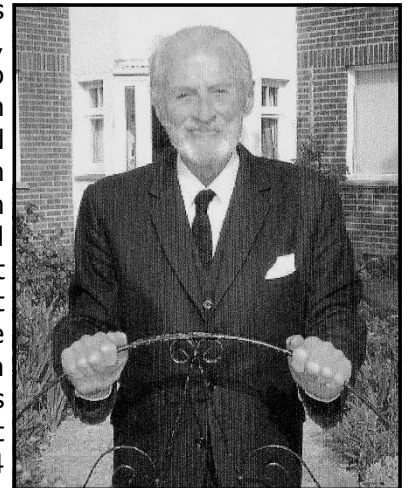
PARTY GIFT

Thanks to the generosity of Ian Williams and his friends at a birthday celebration, Birchington Heritage Trust was given donations amounting to £1,020 in July. All those who went to the party had a wonderful evening, but the size of the cheque was a real surprise. The other beneficiary at the celebration was Dave Lee's Children's Holiday Trust which was given a similar donation. What wonderful friends Ian has and we would all like to express our very grateful thanks to each and every one of them.

BRUCE MARSHALL

When Bruce Marshall died earlier this year at the age of 94, he brought to a close a long connection with Birchington and King Ethelbert School. He first came here in April 1938 to join our newly opened Secondary School and was evacuated to Staffordshire with the staff and pupils in 1940. Not long after his arrival there, he was called up into the RAF and served throughout the Second World War doing more than his allotted number of sorties. He was then sent to Rhodesia to teach flying at a training camp for the rest of the duration of the war.

As soon as he was demobbed, he returned to Phyllis, his wife, in Birchington and lived in 32 Station Approach to begin with. He returned to his old job at King Ethelbert School where he continued to teach English and games until his retirement in 1974. By 1954 he had moved to



"Beggars Roost", the unusual house on the corner of Kent and Surrey Gardens. Here they brought up their three sons Ian, Peter & Alan. Bruce and Phyllis were to remain here for the rest of their lives.

In their free time - and especially after retiring - travel was the great passion for both of them and they travelled as far as the Khyber Pass in their Volkswagen caravanette. After Phyllis died he went to Australia, Antarctica and Namibia (his favourite haunt) among numerous other destinations. He rode his trusty bicycle around village until just a few months ago. Bruce will be sadly missed among his friends.

Bruce Marshall circa 1990



ARCHERY and the BUTTS in BIRCHINGTON

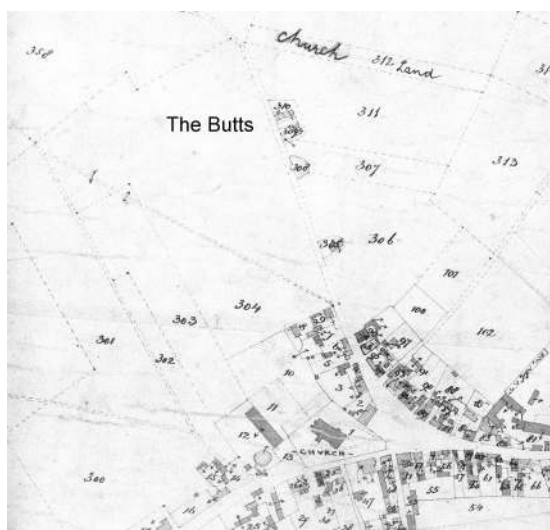


As far back as the 13th century every community was expected to set aside a piece of land for archery practice. The targets were known as the 'butts' so, by association, the whole field would be known as "The Butts". The 'butts' in Birchington was the piece of land bounded by Westfield and Station Roads, and Eastfield and Prospect Roads. It was under the care of the Church, as this was the ultimate keeper of much that was needed for public use.

Archery was going out of fashion as a weapon of war by the time Queen Elizabeth I came to the throne. However, she still ordered all males between the ages of 7 and 60 to possess bows and arrows and not only know how to use them, but to practise regularly at the butts. Each boy between 7 and 17 must have one bow and two arrows, while all other men must have a bow and 4 arrows.

In Finsbury Fields in London there were 200 archery targets or "butts", while at Mile End there was another equally well equipped set of butts. Even a place as small as Birchington, which it was at that time, there was still a practice ground owned by the church and known as "The Butts". It was included in a survey of church lands in 1526, and appears again much later in the Churchwardens' Accounts. Unfortunately we have no record of when it was sold into private hands.

Small arms were also in use by this period, but only those of some wealth would have been able to afford to own such weapons. Since every person was expected to provide their own weapons, bows and arrows were fairly easily acquired by even the poorest peasant.



The Butts - All Saints Church is central bottom of map

Next year we hope to have a speaker who will give us much more information on this fascinating subject.

THE SEA VIEW HOTEL

When the hotel was built in 1865, it was called the "Railway Hotel & Tavern". It was built very shortly after the opening of the final section of the London to Ramsgate railway in 1863. At this date there were no other houses in the street except two or three old, almost derelict cottages nearer the Square.

By 1884 the Hotel had been renamed "The Sea View Hotel", which today seems rather odd. However, at that date Minnis Road had only the first two of the large 'observatory' houses and the little terrace below them. The next building was down the hill at Upper Gore End Farm. So the sea was clearly seen from all the bedroom windows.

In the early census returns, Station Road was simply called 'The Street', but had become known as Station Road by 1881. The first part of the building on the corner of Prospect and Station Road was a three storey one, but soon after, the two storey section was added. The whole building still retains much of its air of Victorian gentility, especially in the coloured glass windows. The rooms upstairs are well proportioned with pleasant high ceilings. There were once five doors onto Station Road, as well the one in Prospect Road.

During March 2002, the Shepherd Neame Brewery, who owns the Sea View, awarded the Hotel 'The Most Improved Pub of the Year', in one of their annual awards. This event was recorded in the Isle of Thanet Gazette of 22nd March 2002. At that time, Mrs Denise Stewart and her son Andrew Tonkiss were its landlords. They had only taken over the previous year and had worked very hard to get the hotel upgraded. Although there is only a small garden at the rear of the hotel, the building stands directly opposite Dog Acre, a permanent open, green space at the west end of Station Road. This means that the inside of the bars always has a light and airy feel to them. Each of the landlords has worked hard to improve the place and the present ones are no exceptions.

In the garden there stands a huge pair of ribs forming an arch. They were taken from a whale that beached itself at Minnis Bay in 1919. The landlord of the time, Walter James Baker, was down at the Bay when the carcass was being dismembered for disposal and asked for the ribs, to act as a feature in his garden at the Sea View. Mr Baker's granddaughter visited the hotel in 1999 and remarked about the incident to one of the staff. She was delighted to see that the ribs were still there. In Birchington's archives there are quite a number of records of whales being washed up along our three bays dating back over the centuries. One is even included in the 1688 map of Birchington. In the 1909 Appendix to J.P. Barrett's book 'The Ville of Birchington', (1893) he includes the account of a whale beaching itself just west of Birchington in August 1898. This one was eventually buried on the Minnis behind the beach.



The Sea View Hotel - c 1920's



Map showing Upper Gore End C. 1679

The house and barn at Upper Gore End, which stand in Minnis Road on the left just before the railway bridge, both have an interesting history. In 1642 the farm was given to St John's College Cambridge by Henry Robinson, an old scholar of the college. He planned that the money generated by the rent from the farm would fund young scholars in the future. Robinson had a number of other holdings in the Birchington and St Nicholas-at-Wade parishes when he died. The map that was drawn up at the time of his gift shows a house very similar to the present one of just two storeys, but in the deeds held at the college, one of the tenants was ordered to repair and improve the house. Whether this is when the additional storey was added we do not know. There was also a pond near the farmhouse, which is remembered as being quite deep after heavy rain, because it lay in a natural hollow.

Because of its distance from the main part of the village the house was used to accommodate a number of the men who worked for the tenant farmer over the years. These appear in the Tithe map apportionments as well as the various census returns. The only piece of land that has been sold off during all these centuries is the small section on which the new Surgery now stands, abutting Gordon Square.

At the western end of the farmyard stands the old barn, which is now a listed building. The north end of it is dated in the listing schedule as 16th century, with the south end dated 17th century. It would appear that at some date during the 1600s the south end was wrecked during a storm. The 'new' timbers can be clearly identified when standing inside the barn. The brick walls which support the roof are a later addition still and were fitted under the existing timber frame, section by section. The size and grandeur of the internal space give the impression of being like small church. At one time there were at least nine large barns in and around Birchington village. One of them was taken down and re-erected in Barnet, North London in the 1920s and was still standing in the 1980s.

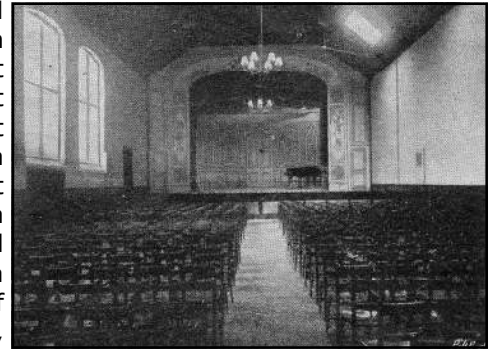


Upper Gore End Farm House



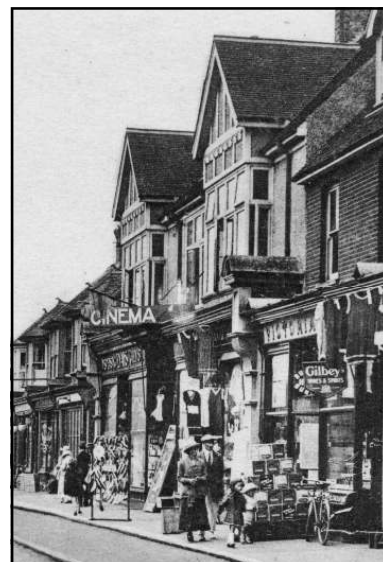
The Cornerstone Church has become a part of the life of Birchington during the 21st century. Their leader, David Tidy, has gathered together a band of very able helpers and has converted the old building in Station Road between Video Scene and Peter Newman's Shoe Shop.

The building has a chequered history, beginning life as the village's second "Village Centre", opened by Mrs Susan Gray of Birchington Hall in 1902. It was initially funded



by Birchington parishioners, but after the First World War, it was running at a loss. By 1921 it was used as a cinema and went under a number of different names, including The Select Cinema, The Picture House, The Ritz and the Regal. In the 1960s, it became a Bingo & Social Club and eventually ended its commercial period as the Pink Panther Club.

Since the Cornerstone Church took over the club they have worked miracles on the building and they cater for a lively group of supporters who add a different dimension to this corner of Birchington.



The Select Cinema c. 1925



Birchington Heritage Trust

Thursday 27 November 2008
7.30 pm

'All the Rage'

Clothes and attitudes of the 1920's and
 1930's presented by **Lee Ault**,
 illustrated with the original clothes

The Centre, Alpha Road

Non-members welcome £1 donation

BIRCHINGTON HAS TALENT

Bernard La Roche is organizing a wonderful
'Birchington has Talent' Show
at
King Ethelbert School
on
28th November 2008.

For information phone: 01843 847986
or
e-mail: bernard.laroche@btinternet.com

Tickets:-
£5.00—Adults
50p—Children

Available from Macy's Newsagents
or
at the door on the night

Profits from this event will be kindly
donated to The Birchington Heritage Trust

BIRCHINGTON HERITAGE **TRUST.**

DAVID RUDDOCK & FRIENDS
PRESENT
"MUSIC & SONGS FROM STAGE
& SCREEN"

THURSDAY DECEMBER 11TH
THE CENTRE, BIRCHINGTON

7pm for 7.30pm

TICKETS £5.50 AVAILABLE FROM
JENNIE BURGESS 842988 OR MUSEUM
ROOM 4, THE CENTRE, MONDAYS &
SATURDAYS 9.30am to 12pm

Bar open



Raffle

Charity No:-1099250

Find us on the internet

For those of our readers who have access to the internet, I would like to recommend that you direct a few moments of your browsing time to our web site at:-

www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk.

You will find many interesting articles, pictures and also copies of our previous Newsletters. These have all been painstakingly placed onto our web site by one of our Trustees, Dr. Bob Hinge. He must have spent many hours to produce such polished results.

Seasons Greetings

The Birchington Heritage Trust Committee wish all our readership a Merry Christmas and healthy and a prosperous new year.

We look forward to seeing you when visiting our Museum or during any of our events which will be held in the coming Year. Better still bring along a friend as well which will help spread the word about all our hard work.