



### BURIED TREASURE

On the evening of 26<sup>th</sup> June 2009 over 50 members came to the Centre to hear from Jennie Burgess about the secrets of buried treasure that we have here in Birchington church yard.

As with all of Jennie's talks we enjoyed history, humour and pictures.

Everyone left knowing the next time they walk through the churchyard there is much more than memorials, a whole wealth of local treasure.

The Social Committee wish to thank Jennie for her interesting talk, the event made a welcome profit of £140 for the trust.

### LAW AND ORDER

Law and Order was the subject covered in this spring's display in Martins Newsagent's Shop window this spring.

The display covered records dating back to 1499 up to the present time. Sketches of the "Cage", an overnight cell before offenders were transferred to Dover Assizes, which was situated on the corner of The Powell Arms where the red telephone boxes now stand. There was a sketch of the Stocks which stood against the Churchyard wall. We saw a photograph of the Dr Who style police box in the Square and the Police Station now the Masonic Lodge by the railway station. Some photographs of the past and present police force were exhibited, including PCs Jack Day, Herbie Flowers, Horace Fieldhouse along with officers, who we see today, patrolling our streets.



*Police Box  
in  
Birchington Square  
c. 1959*

Deep snow in winter was normal, although somehow, everything then, kept moving!

Ed.

### THOMPSON'S YARD



*Thompson's Yard*

In the last few weeks, stewards of the Heritage Trust Museum and its many visitors have been watching with great interest all that has been happening in Thompson's Yard, formally the Operative Builders yard (OBD), next door to the Village Centre. From a group of derelict workshops round the perimeter of the yard, to a small mountain of hard-core took only a matter of about three weeks, with the men sometimes working in freezing conditions during December and early January. The whole operation was fascinating to watch and the skill demonstrated by the huge JCB driver held us mesmerised!



The plot is to eventually hold seven bungalows, but more negotiations are needed to cope with delivering the pre-fabricated sections to the site. It is quite definitely a case of, "Watch this space." We will keep you posted.

## COLEMAN & COLEMAN'S STAIRS

The land on either side of Coleman's Stairs Road and Gap belonged to John Coleman of Birchington during the later 1500s and early 1600s. In 1619, the Plague was running rife through the village and John became ill. Realising how serious the illness might become, he asked to write his will, of which we now hold a copy, thanks to Alfred Walker's hard work. In it John mentions "all his lands, messuages and tenements" in Birchington "and elsewhere". Among this land were the pieces referred to above.

He designated his wife Margaret as his sole executor and left his material possessions to her, but all the lands etc were to go to his young and only son, John, who was still a small boy. He was to inherit them in stages, with annual payments from the land and property in the meantime. Unfortunately young John had died not long before his father signed the will, but it would appear that no-one dared tell him this. Margaret quickly married a neighbour, who had lost his own wife not long before. Their marriage took place less than a month after her husband's death.

John Coleman may have been the person who ordered the stairs to be cut in the cliffs, or he may have simply been the owner of the land around them and his name became permanently associated with them. When the cutting was first made, there were five steps at the end where the opening met the shore. There is one post card showing this, dated about 1919, prior to the steep, narrow slope being constructed at the end of the gap.



*Coleman's Stairs Gap C. - 1919*

## LILY DELISSA JOSEPH (née SOLOMON)

Lily Delissa Joseph was a portrait painter who also painted landscapes and interior scenes. She was an art critic of some standing at a time when this was a male dominated profession. She was born on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 1863 in Bermondsey, London and was the daughter of Joseph Solomon. She had an older brother, Solomon J Solomon who was also a noted portraitist, who specialized in painting Royalty and the aristocracy. Solomon came to Birchington to stay and eventually bought "White Cliffe", one of the Tower Bungalows in Spenser Road (as it was then spelt). White Cliffe is the third bungalow from the west of the small enclave of Tower Bungalows. He decided to have a studio built into the chalk cliffs at the end of his garden, because of the wonderful northern light he could obtain here, which was so highly valued by artists. His brother-in-law, Delissa Joseph designed it for him and although in a very dilapidated condition, it is still standing in 2009.



*"Self Portrait  
with Candles"*

*Lily Delissa Joseph  
c. 1927*

In her young days, Lily studied art at the South Kensington School of Art and the Royal College of Art, then Ridley Hall. She later exhibited at the Royal Academy, the RBA (Royal Society of British Artists) and the NEAC (New English Art Club), as well as at the Paris Salon. When she married the architect Delissa Joseph in 1887, she joined together two very artistic Jewish families. In 1910 they came to live at "North Sea Lodge" in Darwin Road, Birchington, which her husband had designed and had built. For some unknown reason, she took her husband's first name as her middle name and called herself Lily Delissa Joseph.

Apart from her deep interest in her art, she was also deeply committed to women's suffrage and ended up in Holloway Gaol in 1912, so was unable to attend an exhibition of her work. She was also a woman of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and not only owned but also learnt to drive her own car. When she was past fifty she learnt to fly as well.

Death of Mr B. V. C. RANSOME J.P. 1863 - 1940  
Former County Cricketer

Isle of Thanet Gazette 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1940

Less than two years after the death of his wife, Mr Bernard Vincent Charles Ransome M.A. J.P., of Sea Tower, Spencer Road Birchington, died in Kent & Canterbury Hospital on Thursday last week, at the age of seventy-seven years.

He was the co-founder with Mr H E E Jeston J.P. of Grenham House School thirty years ago. The son of a clergyman, Mr Ransome was born in Australia, where his father was acting as Chaplain to the first Bishop of Brisbane. His father, who was the sole survivor of a shipwreck off Ireland when he was four years old, returned to England, to a Dorset incumbency, when his son was less than two years old. Later he became Rector of Compton Bassett, Wiltshire and it was while the family lived there that Mr Bernard Ransome became a County Cricketer. He played for Wiltshire on a number of occasions, being an excellent bat. He was an all-round sportsman, being a fine shot and a good boxer.

Mr Ransome was educated at Wadham College, Oxford, where he obtained his M.A. degree. After leaving Oxford he became assistant master at two well-known schools - first at Temple Grove, East Sheen and later at St Neot's, Hampshire.

It was about 1900 when he came to Birchington and started The Bay School at Minnis Bay with about six boys. In 1904 he was joined by Mr H E E Jeston J.P. in partnership while he was at Minnis Bay and in 1910 they founded the Grenham House School. It prospered so that one time there were as many as seventy boys at the school. He retired in 1930.

It was in 1908 that he married Miss Helen Ethel Spencer, only child of Colonel T E Spencer, who, at the age of 93, still resides at Sea Tower. Mrs Ransome, who took a keen interest in many local organisations, died in May 1938.

Mr Ransome, who was a Justice of the Peace for the Cinque Ports sitting at Margate, was a keen churchman and although he was often pressed to take some office in the church at All Saints, he declined to do so. He was also an active member of the Conservative Party and was for some considerable period President of the local Association.

He took a lively interest in the affairs of Birchington. For a number of years he served on the Parish Council and also on the Isle of Thanet Rural District Council and Board of Guardians (of the Thanet Union Work House). Even after he retired, he continued his interest in education being a member of the local Higher Education Committee.

Mr Ransome leaves one son, Mr W A S (Tony) Ransome who is at present working in London.

### **The Funeral**

The funeral took place at All Saints Church on Monday. The Vicar, the Rev. N M Granville Sharp officiated, assisted by The Rev. P. Birkett (Curate). During the service the hymns "Now the labourer's work is o'er" and "Peace perfect peace" were sung. The family mourners were Mr Tony Ransome (son), Colonel T E Spencer (father-in-law), Miss Ransome (sister) and Mr F. Ransome (brother).

Among those at the church were Mr H E E. Jeston J.P. and Mrs Jeston, Major P H G Powell-Cotton, Mrs Powell-Cotton, Mr Powell-Cotton. Councillor S W Pearce J.P. (representing the Cinque Ports Magistrates), Mr C C Maughan (Magistrates' Clerk), Councillor R W Curtis, Mr & Mrs H T Symons, Miss K Phillips, Mrs Carr, Mrs Forrest, Miss Morris, Miss Colson Phillips, Mr A W Miller, the Rev A E Bloore, Mr A P Tate, Mr F. V. Barrow, Mr R. Thurgood, Mrs N M Granville Sharp and Mr W H Taylor.

Major E L Hunter was unable to attend owing to illness and a number of relatives and other friends were prevented from attending by the weather. There were no flowers by request.

### **Magistrates' Tribute**

Prior to the business at the Cinque Ports Police Court, Margate on Monday, Mr W Booth Reeve, chairman of the Magistrates, referred to the passing of Mr Ransome.

"He was a member of this Bench for some eighteen years," he said, "and was highly respected and esteemed by us all. He was one of those whom I would term an old-style English gentleman, and as such, we miss him very much."

On behalf of his colleagues, Mr Booth Reeve expressed deep sympathy with the members of Mr Ransome's family.



*Grenham - Drawing - 1910*

# Noticeboard

## Jennie's New Book

Our Birchington Heritage Trust archivist, Jennie Burgess, is well on the way to completing a book on Birchington to be called "**Birchington Kaleidoscope**". It will contain ten of the topics on which she gives talks, or subjects from some of her displays in Martin's Newsagent's window in Crescent Road. She has chosen the subjects at random from over fifty possibilities, so there will be more to come.

The topics in her first book cover All Saints Church, Farms & Barns, Quex Park, Windmills, Birchington Hall, the Railway & the Seaside, Birchington's Fire Brigade, Medieval & Tudor Birchington and Law & Order in the village. The book will have about 150 pages containing roughly half text and half pictures in black and white, while the cover will be soft laminated in full colour.

A second volume is already well forward in the planning stage. The publishing date for Volume One is planned for October 2009 and the book will cost £10. You are invited to reserve your copy in advance, either from the Birchington Heritage Trust Museum or direct from Jennie Burgess at 6, Alpha Road, Birchington, CT7 9EQ. For those unable to collect the book Postage & Package will be £2.00 and cheques should be made payable to 'Birchington Heritage Trust'.

**Please come along to see us  
and support this event on  
Saturday 19th September 10 am to 4 pm**

*"The Centre" - Birchington  
Open Day 19<sup>th</sup> September 10-4pm*

Come and join us at the Centre and discover all the activities that go on under one roof. Many of the clubs and societies will have stalls on the day and many will be entertaining us with glimpse of what they get up to.



*Refreshments Available*



*Silver Band*



*Dance & Drama*



*Horticulture*



*Twinning*



*Active Retirement*



*Wine Circle*



*Chess Club*



*Martial Arts*



*Keep Fit*

*Other Groups Include:*

*Residents Association, Heritage Trust, RNLI, Family History, Neighbourhood Watch, Blood Donors.*

## BHT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Thursday 24th September 2009**

**Quarterly Meeting and Talk  
Contraband Corner by  
John Graham**

**Friday 16th October 2009**

**Race Night  
Bring & Share Supper  
£2.00 per Ticket  
cost of each bet 20p  
First Race 7.30 pm  
BAR OPEN**

**Thursday 3rd December 2009**

**David Ruddock and Friends  
Christmas Concert**

## A Map Puzzle

When looking at a detailed scan of the Birchington Map of 1688, three strange buildings have been noticed on the south side of what was once **Church Hill Farm** - later known as **Walnut Tree Cottages**. They have been looked at by two historic buildings experts, but neither could identify them. Can any of our members shed any light on their purpose? The building beside the letter 'A' was Church Hill Farmhouse (demolished in 1968-9). Below this is a building with two towers - which might have been a gate-house, if it had been built on the other side of the farmhouse. What could that have been?

Then there is the two storied one just right of the letter 'A', which looks like the kind of tower fire brigades use to practice their skills on. Again, what might that have been used for?

The third one is the small building to the left of the "gate-house", with sort of wings at the top of its pointed roof - the nearest that could be suggested was a dovecote - any other ideas?

