

**THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION**

**W**ith the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Royal British Legion being celebrated this year, a member of the Association has been doing some research in our Museum Archives and elsewhere, in order to put on a display about it in Martin's Newsagent's window.

We all accept that the poppies will be sold around the end of October until the 11<sup>th</sup> November each year, but for the younger generations, they may not know why, so it was felt that this special anniversary was a good time for them to find out. The first Poppy Day was on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1921 and was inspired by a lady in the United States, Moina Michael, who had read John McCrea's moving poem "In Flanders' Fields". She decided to make some poppies to sell to her friends to raise funds for ex-servicemen after WW 1.

Major George Howson, a young British Infantry Officer, formed a Disabled Society for the servicemen and suggested that the men be encouraged to make the poppies and a factory was set up in Richmond in 1922. Over the decades, millions of pounds have been raised to help the men and women who have fought to defend our own freedom, as well as that of other nations. Many of these people died in the attempt, leaving behind young widows and orphans, who all needed to be nurtured and cared for. Those who were wounded could, initially, not earn a living. Remedial care, retraining and re-housing all cost money.

Moina Michael's first humble poppies have multiplied, just as the wild poppies in Flanders' fields do and now support a huge army of veterans from two World Wars and numerous other conflicts, including the current troubles in the Middle East.



*War Memorial in Birchington Square c.1920*

It would be difficult to find a family in Britain who have not benefited in some way from that humble poppy. Long may it continue to flourish. Make sure you have a good look at the display in Martin's window in the next couple of months.

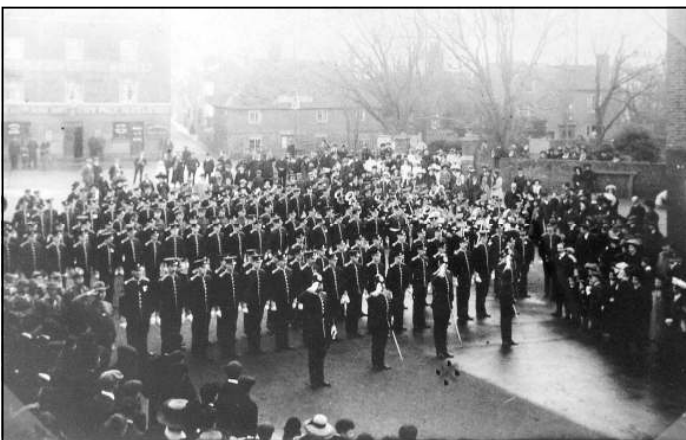
**A BHT CALENDAR for 2012**

**T**he Trust has put together a Heritage calendar of Birchington, using 13 pictures and photos of the village through the ages. Each picture has a short caption, saying where the building once stood, if it is no longer there and a rough idea of the date of the photo or drawing. Our older residents will recognise most of them immediately, but our new comers will be quite surprised when they realise where some of the buildings once stood.

All the pictures on the calendar are in colour and on a good quality gloss paper, which we cannot show to real effect in our newsletter, unfortunately. There will be a copy on show in the Museum from now on, for people to inspect. We have had some generous help in the printing costs from a number of sponsors, for which the Trust is very grateful.

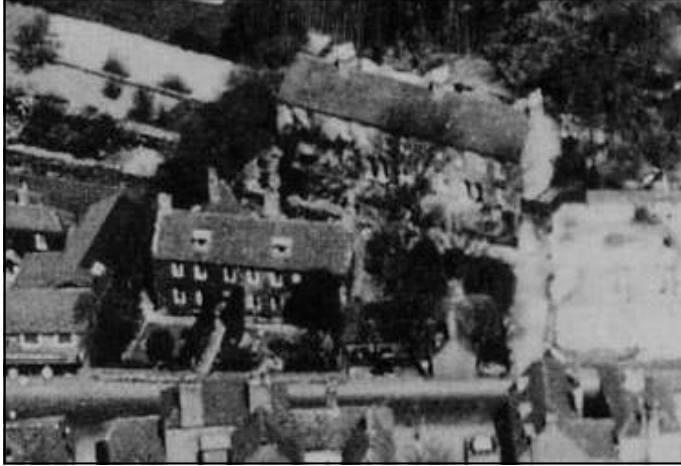
The calendars will be on sale fairly soon and will cost £4 each. As this is a new venture for us, we are only having 150 printed, so people will probably need to be fairly prompt in deciding to buy one or not. We will willingly take orders - with payment - once the newsletter is out. Cash or cheques (the latter payable to Birchington Heritage Trust) can be delivered to the Museum or dropped into 6 Alpha Road or 23 St Mildred's Avenue.

Please make sure you include your NAME, ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER with the order.



*Parade in Birchington Square c.1919 or 1920*

Ivy Cottages used to stand against the right end gable wall of The Smugglers. They can be seen in an aerial photo of 1927 and are shown on several maps, especially one from 1924, as well as being included in the Kelly's Directories for many years. Up until 1930 the big farmhouse was owned by the Neame family, who called their home 'Evergreen'.



*Aerial view of Ivy Cottages & Smugglers c.1927*

In the 1840 Tithe map survey, Ivy Cottages were owned by Edward Neame, while Evergreen was held by his father, James Neame. The family owned a large amount of land on both sides of the railway. By 1929 the Neame family had sold their farmland for housing development. In 1930, the family decided to sell the old farmhouse. The drainage for these two cottages was via a cesspool in the garden. Closing orders were made in respect of both cottages on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1921, but they were not enforced, owing to a chronic housing shortage. By 1930, Ivy Cottages were empty as the last occupant, Miss Brockman, had been found other accommodation. The occupant of the second cottage had left a several years before.



*Ivy Cottages by Smugglers c. 1880*



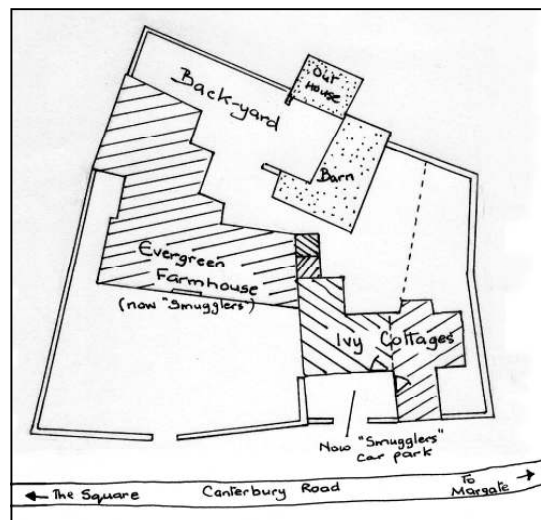
*The Smugglers & Ivy Cottage site now a car park*

The physical evidence that Ivy Cottages once stood on this site can be seen on that right hand gable wall of The Smugglers. Set in among the old bricks at ground floor level are some much older flints – and even the shape of the back room of Miss Brockman's home is clearly visible. Charlie Smart has kindly drawn us a picture of what the cottages would have looked like shortly before they were demolished.



*Ivy Cottages Sketch by Charlie Smart*

There was also a house in the village called 'Ivy House', which we'll hear something about in the next newsletter.



*Ivy Cottages + Smuggler's plan c. 1924*

Let Col Harold Taplin (affectionately known as 'Taps') started his business of wire-drawing in the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Albion Road in 1946, after difficult negotiations with Margate Borough Council. Born in 1891, he had served in the Air Force in both wars and used his engineering skills to fill a gap in the market for precision parts in manufacturing. His wire-drawing machinery was so accurate that the work was produced with an accuracy second to none in the British Isles. A man in the north of Scotland spoke to a Birchington resident holidaying there and once he discovered where she came from said "You have a firm that produced the most accurate extrusions in Britain". For those of a technical mindset, there is a fuller explanation of this process at the end of this article.



*Primitive Methodist Chapel c. 1967*

The business went from strength to strength and by 1950 he was able to build a second two-storey unit beside the chapel, thus trebling his work-space. Apart from his wire-drawing section, he also continued a lifelong passion for radio-controlled aeroplanes and boats. He invented a new form of carburettor, which he called the 'Taplin Twin', greatly enhancing the performance of the

models he made for racing purposes. By 1963 these were produced by his son Michael in the family's subsidiary business in Margate, trading under the name of Dinton Engineering. This business also made 'patch-boards' for transmitters and assembled the radio transmitters as well.

When Col Taplin died in 1969, Michael and his brother John took over both works, but unfortunately Michael developed Leukaemia and died in 1976. John found the pressure of coping with the two businesses more than he could manage and after a while he sold both businesses to 'Cupform' of Lewes, Sussex, who later moved the two sections to Pysons Road, Ramsgate, selling off the original sites.



*Birchington Engineering c. 1960*

Both the old and the new Albion Road buildings were eventually demolished by 1989 and the site lay dormant for a while. McCarthy & Stone acquired it and began building in 1999. They asked the local people for suggestions for a suitable name for the new block of apartments they were building. The most popular and appropriate name was 'Taplin Court' and the present residents are now in the happy position of being right in the hub of the village, in beautiful new premises.



*Taplin Family - 1947*

**WIRE-DRAWING**

In 'Wire-drawing', or extrusions, the wires are drawn (or pulled) through specially designed and individually cut dies, using powdered soap to lubricate the wires as they pass through the dies. The process had to be repeated several times, to gradually reduce the size of the wires, which were finally cut into 6, 8 and 10 foot lengths for sale. The accuracy of these drawn wires needed to be to within a tolerance of +/- a 2000<sup>th</sup> of an inch - in other words, a tenth of the thickness of a cigarette paper. By slicing across thin slices off these wires, the customers were able to make the tiny hinges for spectacles, small parts for cigarette lighters, cogs etc for clock parts, radio transmitters and other tiny pieces for assembly.

Firms like Plessey, Ronson, Dunhill, and G.E.C. were among the customers for the wire work, but the business also did plastic drawing for toy manufacturers like Rovex in Thanet and Line, a large London-based toy firm. They provided some of the toys needed to make the film "Father Christmas" starring Richard Attenborough and made some unusual extrusions for Wriggley's Chewing Gum. As a thank-you for the latter job, they received a huge box of chewing gum. They were also asked on one occasion to produce a batch of silver serviette rings, which they duly did.

Every time the factory was closed for holidays, the men cleared the floors of every moveable object and then flooded it with a caustic soda solution to get rid of the soap powder, which could become rather slippery over time. The men returned the next day clad in Wellingtons and armed with bass brooms to sweep out the soapy solution. The floor was then left to dry out over the rest of the holiday and when the men returned, they were greeted by the cleanest factory floor in Thanet!

## SOCIAL COMMITTEE REPORT

### BINGO

Those of you who attended the Bingo, I think would agree, that it was a fun evening. It was a pity that not many came along to enjoy the evening. We made £135 on the entrance and the raffle, thank you to all who came and made it a very pleasant event.

The B. H. T. thanks go once again to Howard Willicome who certainly kept the evening moving along.

### COFFEE MORNING

On the 5<sup>th</sup> July we had arranged a coffee morning at the Centre, sadly not many came along, but those that were there enjoyed a coffee and a chat along with a raffle. We started these as some members could not come out in the evenings, we also hold them downstairs in the bar lounge in the Centre.

The next coffee morning will be September 6<sup>th</sup> 10.30 am until 12.00, and just 50p for a coffee and biscuits and a chat seems good value, we look forward to seeing you on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September.

I now have a plea to all members, our Social Committee has never been large but for the past 16 months it has consisted of 4 people we are now down to 3. You will understand that unless we have some more volunteers come forward, we will not be able to carry on arranging events. This in turn will hit the trust hard as all monies raised go into trust funds.

We generally meet once a month for about an hour in the afternoon. I do hope that we shall have some members who would be willing to help, even if it was for a few months it would be a great help. Please give me a ring on 842633.

Thank you, Dot Raven.

## ROYAL ANTEDILUVIAN ORDER OF BUFFALOES

One of our members has kindly donated to the Museum a number of items connected with the above organisation. The members used to meet in the Queens Head from early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century until WW 2. The origins of the order are all very English, much to the surprise of the Trust's archivist. (With a name like that, it seemed that they must have originated in either Canada or the United States.)

Their motto is - 'Nemo Mortalium, Omnibus Horis Sapit' 'No man is at all hours wise'



*RAOB meeting c. 1926*

Their three aims are - 'Justice, Truth, Philanthropy'.

Unfortunately we don't have a photo of our own group but we have found one from another group, showing them in the fine regalia. The order is still in existence in the country, though sadly,

not in Birchington any longer.

They enjoyed some rousing songs in their pre-war days, one of their original ones being about the chasing of a buffalo - "sung with great gusto" one quote stated.



Birchington Heritage Trust  
Registered Charity No 1099250

**Paddy Earp's 'Trials & Tribulations  
of a WW1, WW2 Battlefield tour  
guide'**



**Thursday 29 September 2011  
7.30 pm  
The Centre, Alpha Road**

Non-members welcome

## **BHT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Tuesday 6th September 2011  
Coffee Morning  
50 pence Raffle  
10am to Noon.**

**Thursday 25th November 2011  
7 for 7.30pm  
General Meeting  
Do You Remember?  
Talk Lee Ault**

**Thursday 1st December 2011  
7 for 7.30pm  
David Ruddock and Friends  
Pre-Christmas Musical Evening  
Please watch BHT Noticeboard**