



Newsletter

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DRAMA AT SEA

Reported in the 'Herne Bay Press', June 1933
Edited by Michael Lodge - Sept. 2013



David Carey - drowned at sea - 1933

The body of a man brought ashore at Herne Bay on the 11th June 1933 was identified by his son, Michael, as that of David Carey of Minnis Bay, Birchington.

The tragic ending to an afternoon's sailing unfolded in the Canterbury Coroner's Court. Michael Carey said that he last saw his father alive at 2pm on Saturday 27th May, when his father told him he was going for a sail with his friend Ted Tumber in Ted's boat 'Leslie'.

David Carey had retired from the Navy 13 years previously and then served for three years with the Coast Guards at Minnis Bay. When this Service was closed in 1923, he was employed by Atlantic Transport Line aboard the 'Minnewaska', retiring shortly before Christmas 1932.



Minnis Coast Guards Cottages - c. 1920

Edward (Ted) Tumber, aged 23, had owned 'Leslie', a 14 foot centre-board, half-deck sailing boat for two years. He had been sailing since he was 15 years old and was well-experienced.

David Carey took the tiller as they left Minnis Bay and Ted Tumber took over later. All was well as they headed for the Hook Sands Beacon. When 120 yards east of the Beacon, they gybed the boat to run towards the Beacon. Suddenly a broken sea came up behind them and the boat slewed round to windward and capsized.

Both men climbed onto the side of the boat and to lighten it, Ted threw the outboard motor overboard. "We just sat on the side of the boat and talked about whether anyone would pick us up." Ted Tumber told the Court.

They saw the Margate steamer bound for Southend, but were not seen by the crew. David Carey became unconscious soon after this and Ted Tumber laid him across the side of the boat.

A second steamer, the 'Medway Queen', came into view so Ted stood up on the side of the boat to wave, but was swept into the sea. By the time he climbed back onto the 'Leslie', David Carey had been swept away. The 'Medway Queen' picked up Ted Tumber and took him to its destination, Southend. The next day Ted's boat 'Leslie' was washed up on the beach at Reculver.

David Carey's body was washed ashore at Herne Bay two weeks later. It was identified through his watch and compass by his son Michael.

A verdict of 'Misadventure' was returned.



Carey's Watch + Compass - 1933

David was buried in All Saints Churchyard, with the following inscription:-

**"In loving memory of my dear husband
David Carey, died 27 May 1933, aged 53"**

Archivist's note:- Some time ago David Carey's grandson, Michael Knott, sent me a copy of the newspaper report concerning this tragedy. I had difficulty editing it, so asked Mike Lodge if he would try - which he did, with excellent results. There is much more information in the Museum, concerning David's early life and the rest of his family, if you would like to come and find out further information.

JIM THE DOG WARNED OF ZEPPELINS APPROACHING



Jim the dog

During the First World War, one of the Coastguards in Birchington owned a dog which became adept at alerting his master when a Zeppelin was approaching. With his more acute hearing, his warning came well before any of the crewmen at the Coastguards had detected the zeppelin's approach. The WW1 archives hold a photo of Jim, a copy of which was sent to the BHT. We were asked by the BBC if we could identify where the photo had been taken. Jim is standing on the cliffs at what would appear to be the Epple Coast Guard Station. As part of the WW1 recollections, the BBC is planning to do a feature on Jim and his service to his country at that dangerous time.



Epple Bay showing Point Cottages c.1924

SHRIMPER FREDERICK JOSEPH LETLEY

This is Frederick Joseph Letley who was a Birchington mariner - as stated on his marriage certificate. The photo was taken at Epple Bay in about 1908.

He was born about 1856, probably in the Rochester area of the Medway. He died in Birchington in 1940.

In his early days in the village he lived in a thatched cottage which stood on the corner of Station Road and Crescent Road - where Barrows' shop was later built in 1925-6 (now in 2013 the site of the middle newsagents). The cottage stood in a hollow and there were steps down to the cottage.

The basement of the present shop was where the cottage once stood. This may have been a drawing of Letley's home, drawn in 1893 and included in J P Barrett's book about Birchington.

He lived by fishing and shrimping and had a 15 foot rowing boat, which he kept at Minnis Bay. He often walked to Margate where he kept his boreley fishing boat.

It is interesting to note that he never set out in his boat on a Sunday. He would get the boat and nets ready on a Saturday evening. Come Sunday, even if the tide was right, he would wait until 1 minute past midnight before setting out.

At one time he had a whelk and cockle stall by the Powell Arms in Birchington Square which stood in front of the churchyard wall. He made his own nets.

Later in his life he lived at Epple cottages, Epple Road and kept his rowing boat in Epple Bay. He was a great pipe smoker.

He received the Freedom of the River Medway at Rochester.



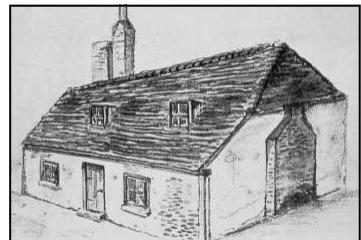
A Birchington Shrimper

HOMELAND

Fredrick Letley at Epple Bay



Epple Bay Showing Coast Guard Cottages and a ragged coast line



Sketch of the Thatched Cottage at the corner of Station Rd. and Crescent Rd.

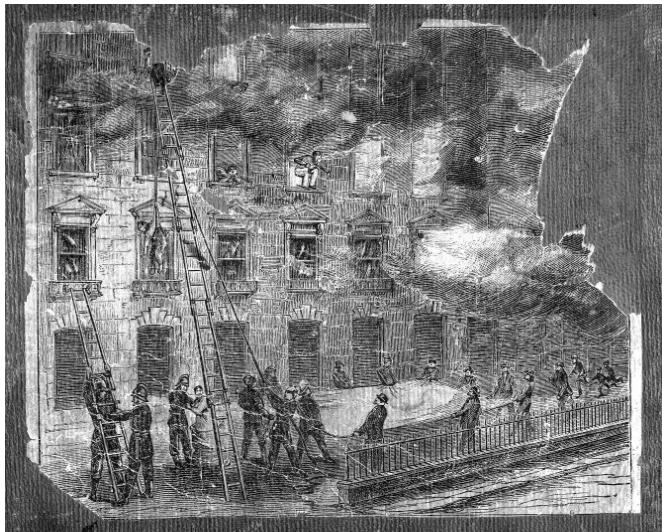
FIREMAN'S BOOK from BIRCHINGTON

These notes date from 1967

This book came from Mrs Hill (nee Knott) aged 75 who lived at 4 Hazelgrove, BLETCHLEY, Bucks. Mrs Hill was married at All Saints Birchington and was also born in the village, and baptised and confirmed in this church. She left the village 42 years ago. Her brother, father and husband are all buried in the churchyard. Her father was in Birchington's Fire Brigade and her mother washed the surplices for the choir boys and men.

Her father, John Knott, had stuck the items in this book from 1882, when he was employed at Rossetti Bungalow as gardener and handyman. He lived there shortly after the death of Dante Rossetti, when the property's name was changed from Westcliff to Rossetti Bungalow, in honour of the great painter-poet.

As a volunteer fireman, he was fascinated by the business of fighting fires and he collected items from the local and national press about fire-fighting around the world.



Front Cover of Fireman's Book

The book also contains items concerning his daily work – his hours and jobs undertaken. He died quite young in 1910, when Mrs Hill was still only in her mid teens. Having inherited the book via her mother, she eventually decided it really ought to come back to where it had been begun, so she posted it to Alfred Walker as her donation to All Saints archives. It remained in Alfred's home and was passed on to his daughter and then his granddaughter, Bridget, who has now donated it back to the village's archives. So, thanks to Bridget, it has come 'home' at last.

Mrs Hill sent the book back to Alfred Walker in about 1967, with a letter giving the above details. The letter is no longer with the book, as it was when last seen at Alfred's daughter's home in 2004 but the above notes were scribbled on the envelope which was fortunately left in the book. The other information has been added by the present archivist, Jennie Burgess, in 2013.

Gerry Abrahams Talk

"The Berlin Airlift"

27th September 2013

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Birchington Heritage Trust were delighted that Gerry Abrahams, a Birchington resident, agreed to give a talk on the Berlin Airlift in which he played a crucial part. During WW2 Gerry was an RAF pilot flying Lancasters for Bomber Command and by the end had completed 31 missions.



Gerry Abrahams

In 1948 Gerry was part of the Berlin Airlift and for nine months flew supplies from the British Sector into Berlin. The facts and figures that Gerry gave us were absolutely astounding and few of us realised the extent to which operations had taken place.

At the end of the war Russia took control of the Eastern half of Germany and the Western half was divided between the USA, France and Great Britain. However, the capital Berlin was in the Eastern half, but divided between the Russians and the Allies. The Russians blocked road, canal and railway access into the city, determined to isolate the Allies' half of Berlin, which was occupied by over one million starving Berliners.

Transport aircraft flew day and night at two minute intervals in all weathers, taking in essential supplies of coal, heating oil, medicines and, more importantly, food. In one year the Allies had flown 200,000 missions taking in up to 4,700 tons daily. The British flew Lancasters, Yorks and Hastings aircraft and were restricted to designated flying corridors. The airlift was so successful the blockade was lifted by the Russians in 1949.

In the 1960's Gerry continued to have a successful career in civil aviation as a pilot for Invicta Airways based at Manston, flying non-scheduled passenger and charter flights to Europe and within the UK. He then ran Station Road Garage, Birchington which was well known to many of our audience. Even today, at the age of 90, Gerry continues his busy schedule as a host at the Spitfire & Hurricane Museum, Manston.

The large attendance at the meeting reflected our interest and great regard that we all have for Gerry.

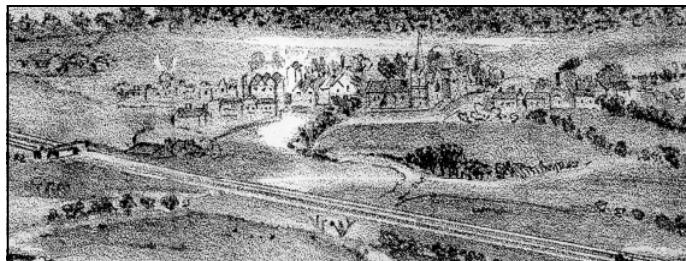
Janet Denyer

P.S. We are hoping to have a transcript of Gerry's talk available in the Museum, soon. When it is available, we will put a note on our screen in the Library foyer.

BIRCHINGTON and the RAILWAY

By Jennie Burgess, BHT Archivist

Until the arrival of the railway in Birchington in October 1863, the village was a small rural settlement. The main occupations of the working men were connected with farming and its related crafts (for example, blacksmiths, wheelwrights and leather workers). Their world was bounded by how far they could walk in a day or could afford to pay for a wagon ride along roads that were rutted and muddy in winter and bumpy dust-tracks in summer. The Church was ministered to by a Curate who was responsible to the Vicar of Monkton, although the population of the Birchington had been much larger than its mother parish since medieval times.



Old Birchington and station c. 1885

The line between Faversham and Margate was finally completed on October 5th 1863. Now, for the first time in the villagers' lives, their world suddenly expanded beyond their local horizon. This picture was drawn in about 1885, and shows the bridge at the station (on the left) and also the one over Minnis Road beside Upper Gore End Farm.



Birchington Station - c.1901

For the first time, people from outside the village discovered what a delightful place this was to visit and also to live in. From a population of about 1000 in 1861 it rose to 1113 in 1871, and the new Curate of 1872, the Rev. J. Alcock, successfully petitioned the Dean and Chapter at Canterbury to make Birchington and Acol a separate Parish. The photo (above) shows the Station Master in his top hat checking proceedings, as the London train arrives in about 1901. In 1878 Birchington Station was renamed 'Birchington-on-Sea', in line with its neighbour, Westgate-on-Sea.

BHT 2014 Calendar

There are still a few 2014 Calendars left.
To avoid disappointment contact the Museum to buy your copy.

Noticeboard

AN UNKNOWN LADY Mystery Solved

With help from one of our observant readers (Pat Cole) we have been able to trace the unknown lady in our last issue. Her name is Enid Collins and, like Iris Bedwell, in whose shop the photo was taken, enjoyed speaking her native Welsh. The two ladies used to chat in Welsh together on occasions, recalling the old days in their native land. Enid now has a coloured version of that photo, as a memory of those days.



*Enid Collins
The Unknown Lady*

Quiz Winners

The winners at our Quiz were Luke & Faye, congratulations. Many thanks are also due to Chris Wyer and Heather Letley for compiling and organizing it.

BHT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 31st October 2013

Race Night: See noticeboards for details

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Friday 22nd November 2013

Talk: Fact, Fiction & Trivia about WW1 & WW2. By Paddy Earp

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Thursday 12th December 2013

A musical Evening with David Ruddock and Friends

Admission by programme £6.50

Programmes available from Jennie Burgess 842988 or visit the Museum

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All events are 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm start
Held at The Birchington Village Centre

Non-members Welcome
Drinks available from Bar



The Trustees of the Birchington Heritage Trust wish all our Members and Readership a Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2014