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RAILWAY from MINNIS BAY to MANSTON AIRFIELD

A single track railway line once ran from Minnis Bay across the fields to Manston Airfield. It was constructed early in 1916, during the First World War, for the purpose of carrying supplies, goods, and aeroplane parts to the airfield by rail. The airfield was then a Royal Naval Air Service Station which had been transferred from St. Mildred's Bay, Westgate.



Manston Engine c.1920

The line was nearly 3 miles long, laid on cinders and of a new American pattern, now known as flat-bottomed, and instead of being bolted to the sleepers was "dogged" or clipped.

This railway line joined the main North Kent line on the "up" side near the site of the old Birchington "A" signal box which was demolished in 1929, and very near where the footpath over the fields from Essex Gardens crosses the main line at Horsa Road. From here, the track went across the fields to the Canterbury Road which it crossed about 80 yards west of King Edward Road. It then continued across the fields to the Acol Road which it crossed just below the short fir-tree lined private road leading to Quex Park. It then proceeded over the field crossing the B2049 road, and then on to near Sparrow Castle Water Pumping Station. From here it ran parallel to the Manston Road, crossing the road leading to Cheeseman's Farm to the airfield. It terminated near Pouces where there was a long platform and a siding alongside a hangar and workshops. Where the line crossed the roads there were gates across the tracks which were opened and closed by the guard.

At the Minnis Bay end there was a long siding into which the carriages were shunted from the main line until ready to be taken to Manston. Usually a small tank steam engine was used on this line but occasionally main line steam engines were employed. The line had no signals and all the points were hand worked.

On occasions Service Personnel were issued railway tickets at Manston and travelled by the train from Manston to Birchington where the coaches were attached to the main line trains.

The line was demolished and taken up in about 1928. Its route can still be seen in places where it crosses the fields – the corn does not grow quite so well on the line of the track. At Manston rails could be seen in the coal yard, as well as the old unloading platform until the 1970s.

I am told that boys from Acol going to school in Park Lane at this time used to put pennies on the line where it crossed the Acol Road for the train to run over, and they were known to jump on to the train for a short ride until chased off.

The track of this railway is marked on the One Inch Ordnance Survey Map, sheet 117, dated 1920.

Sources for some of this information are Mr. Clayfield of Cross Road, and Mr. B Oddy who both worked at Manston at this time, and lastly Mr. Gammon of St. James Terrace who worked the signal Birchington "A" box at Minnis Bay.

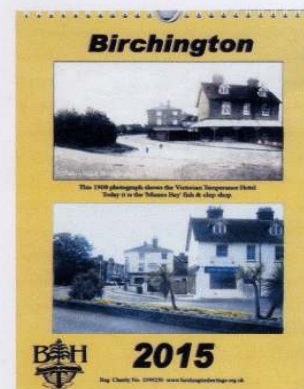
by Alfred T. Walker

Birchington Heritage Trust

The Trusts 2015 Calendar is now on sale
In the museum at 'The Centre' in Alpha Road

£5

Makes an excellent Christmas gift



Opening hours Monday – Thursday – Saturday 9.30am – 12.30pm

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KING WILLIAM III AND QUEX

by Alfred Walker (1966)

King William III chose Margate 1691 as the port from which to sail on his numerous visits to Holland, and as it was frequently necessary to wait for favourable winds before sailing he became well known at Birchington, for at such times he took up residence at Quex Mansion – then the property of the heirs of Thomas Crispe Esq., but in the occupation of John Ball Esq. In a letter dated 1691 it is stated that the King was at Quex while waiting for a favourable wind – staying at Sergeant Wiats house in Birchington. This is reported in a letter written by a secretary to the Duke of Shrewsbury.

The room in which the King slept was shown to visitors in 1787, the guards encamped in the adjoining enclosure.

In the Churchwardens' Account Books are entries of expenditure on 'Ringing the Bells' when the King was at Quex:-

"1691 Oct the 20 th paid the ringers when the King landed at Margate	7s 6d
"1695 Spent when the King landed at Margate	7s 6d
"1696 Paid the widow Newby for beer for the ringers when the King was here	4s 10d
"1697 May 28 th spent on the Ringers when the King came to Quex	4s 6d

The beautiful State Chair is preserved at Quex. It was used by His Majesty when at Quex – it was also used by King George IV at Ramsgate on the occasions of his embarkation to and return from Hanover in 1821.



The State Chair

VERMIN and its DESTRUCTION in the VILLE of BIRCHINGTON

by Alfred Walker (1967)

It is very difficult today to think of the Churchwardens having the responsibility of keeping down vermin in the parish, but from 1533 in the time of King Henry VIII until about 1835, this was one of their duties. There are numerous entries in their Account Books recording money paid out for the destruction of vermin. From these entries we not only learn of the amounts of money paid out, but also of the kind of vermin destroyed, some of which are no longer seen in this area, and others very rarely. Some of what was considered vermin years ago are no longer considered as such, in fact some are now preserved and protected.

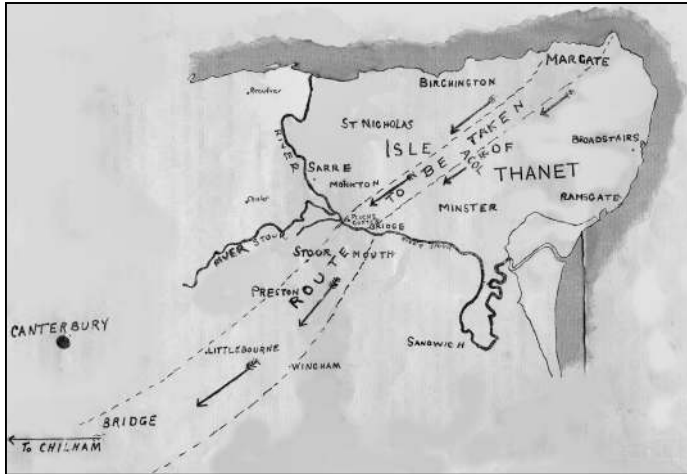
In 1533 an Act was passed ordering that the Churchwardens were to provide the parish with a net for the destruction of "rooks, crows, and choughs" and that two pence was to be paid for every twelve old crows, rooks or choughs (red-legged crow).

In the time of Queen Elizabeth, the Act was renewed and the Wardens were to assess holders of land or title for the destruction of "Noyfull Fowles and Vermin" and to furnish a fund for paying a penny for every three heads of old "Crowes, Chowes, Pyes (magpies), or Rooks", and a penny for every six young owls, and a penny for every six unbroken eggs. The heads of the animals and eggs of the birds were to be shown to the Wardens and then cut asunder or otherwise destroyed. The Act was renewed in 1572 and in 1597/8. In Birchington and Acol the Churchwardens discharged this duty and quite large sums were paid out for the destruction of the vermin.

The first mention by the Churchwardens of a payment for the killing of vermin is in 1673 – the time of King Charles II, when sixpence was paid for the killing of a "poullcatt". Over the years a number of "pouldcatts" (or poulcatts, poulcates, powelcats, poulcats), were accounted for, as well as many dozens of sparrows. In one year a total of £15 2s 4½d was paid out for 1,700 dozen old and young sparrow heads and it was the duty of the Churchwardens to count these heads no matter how distasteful the task. Although in some years a prodigious number of sparrows were destroyed this did not appear to decrease the supply the next year. Hedgehogs were considered vermin and a large number were destroyed and paid for. In some years Birchington appears to have been over run with rats. In 1773 the large number of 4137 rats were killed and 1/2d per head was paid out costing £8 12s 4½d. The large number is not really surprising when it is considered that at this time Birchington and Acol had no drainage or piped water and all garbage, rubbish etc, was thrown out of the house into the roadway or on to a heap in the garden where rats flourished. No wonder Birchington and Acol occasionally suffered from plague and epidemics.

Rooks and "whezells" were also caught and destroyed, as were "baggers" (badgers) and "puttises" (stoat). Sparrow hawks, kites & snakes were killed and paid for in the parish. Some of these are no longer seen in the parish or even in Thanet. There is no mention in the Accounts for killing of foxes, probably because these were hunted by the gentry and so the killing of foxes by ordinary people was forbidden. The Hunt often met in Birchington Square and the Boxing Day Meet in the Square was an event which attracted a large following from all over Thanet and East Kent and was photographed in 1903 and 1905.

EVACUATION LEAFLET 1915



Sketch Plan for Evacuation Map of Isle of Thanet 1915

On the 1st of January 1915 the Borough of Margate, mindful about the potential, although unlikely, risk of enemy attack in the area and in collaboration with the Lord Lieutenants of the South and East Coast Counties, published an advisory evacuation leaflet which was circulated to local residents.

The leaflet stressed that the notice should not cause alarm but was issued as a precautionary measure. It explained the reasons that Margate and the Isle of Thanet would be safe from invasion or bombardment since the island was protected by sandbanks; that the approaches by sea were narrow so easily observable; there was a mine field extending across the English Channel between Ostend and Deal, across to the Tongue Lightship (moored off Margate) then back to Holland; also the Isle of Thanet was in close proximity to the Naval bases at Dover, Harwich and Sheerness; that the island is unlikely to be a target of hostile operations as the Island can be commanded from both sides by sea.

“However in the unlikely event of an attack occurring the civil population are informed :-

Owing to the peculiar position of Thanet and its approaches by sea the Council hope to receive some warning through either the Coastguard or the Military of an impending attack. In that case the inhabitants will be warned by a series of two maroons, fired at a half-dozen points in the Borough.

The council wish to point out that the inhabitants are not obliged to leave the town unless they receive orders from the military authorities to do so. For those who remain in the town the safest places are cellars and basements and persons in the streets should at once seek shelter.

For those who decide, when the alarm is given to leave, the following directions are given:-

- a) The exit from the town must be by road (the railway not being available) they must make their way to the back of the town and thence towards the road that runs from Monkton over Plucks Gutter Bridge. A sketch plan is attached showing the general direction.
- b) The main roads from Canterbury to Margate and Ramsgate and also the road from Sandwich to Ramsgate and Margate will be reserved for the military and must not be used by civilians. If troops are met upon any roads civilians must take to the fields and leave the roads clear until the troops have passed.
- c) Persons who leave the town should do so as rapidly as possible and take with them two days food supply and be warmly clad.

In no case must there be any attempt at resistance on the part of civilians either with firearms or otherwise. Such an attempt could do no good in itself and would only bring disaster on the inhabitants and the town. Any person possessing fire or other arms on receipt of this circular take them to the police station.

I am, Your obedient servant,
WM. Booth Reeve, Mayor”

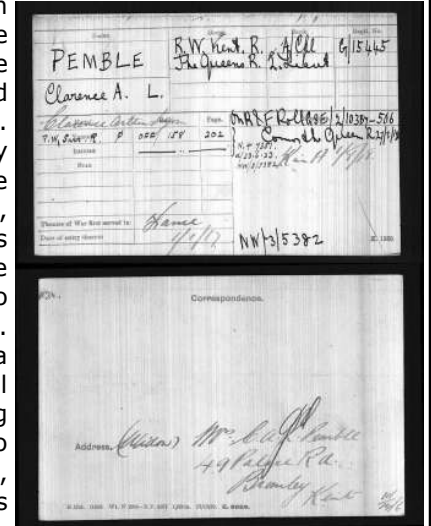
CLARENCE PEMBLE

The young brother of Ashton Pemble
From Mr. Laming’s Birchington Letter
for August 1918

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On the same day the very sad news of Lieut. C. Pemble’s death, while on service in France, was communicated. All will deeply sympathise with the wife and parents in this calamity. They have experienced one of the hardest blows the war can give, and the country has lost an efficient officer, but generations to come will recall with pride how he was ready to lay down his life at the call of duty.

“Clarrie”, for thus he was popularly and affectionately known in the town, will be greatly missed. He was highly esteemed by all who knew him. His worth in the Army was proved by the rapidity with which, without any previous military training, he rose from private to commissioned rank. Truly his record was a worthy one, and all will, while deploring the loss of one who promised so well, affirm that he has done well.



[Clarrie Pemble died 1st August 1918 aged 28. He was a 2nd Lieut. in the Queens West Surrey Regt. His name is on Bay 2 of the Arras Memorial; he has no known grave. Unfortunately, we do not have a photo of him.]
Article in Thanet Gazette Aug. 1918—C. Laming



Ashton, Louisa & Herbert Pemble,

BHT Subscriptions

If you haven't done so already, it is now time to renew your membership subscription for the year ahead. It is £7.50 per person and £12.50 a couple. You get 4 Newsletters, quarterly talks, social events and access to the museum three mornings a week.

Our website www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk is also worth a visit .

The editor apologises for the misprint in the May Newsletter for the couples subscription... Sorry if it caused any inconvenience.

If you would like to receive updates by e-mail about BHT events, please e-mail Janet or John Robinson so they can include you on their mailing list on:- robinsons@the2jays.f2s

BHT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 25th September 2014

Quarterly Meeting and Talk
By James Brazier
"Doing Their Bit in WW1"

Saturday 11th October 2014

The Model Railway Exhibition
BHT will have another display
on the stage
See notice boards for details

Thursday 30th October 2014

A Musical Evening
By David Ruddock

Thursday 20th November 2014

Quarterly Meeting and Talk
To be arranged

Quarterly meetings 7.00 for 7.30pm at
The Centre, Birchington.
The Bar will be available

?? WEDDING PHOTO PUZZLE ??



The 2 bridesmaids are the Baker twins, Annie on the left and Kathleen the right. The venue is almost certainly Mill Row, the date is the early 1920s.

But who are the bride, the husband, the other 2 men, the 3 ladies and the young lad?

BHT Annual General Meeting 12 June 2014

It was pleasing to see over 50 Members attended the BHT AGM and the Chairman thanked the Executive Committee for the smooth running of the Trust. The Chairman also thanked the Membership for their continued support.

The Membership stood at 269 and the Gift Aid on subscriptions has generated an extra 25% which has been back-dated 5 years.

The Statement of Accounts was referred to and it was gratifying to note that they were in a healthy state. This is due to your continued generosity in attendance at the various events and participating in our raffles. The Audited Accounts were therefore Proposed and Seconded.

The Election of Officers for the forthcoming year was Proposed and Seconded by the Membership.

Following on from the AGM there was a talk entitled 'The Generosity of Birchington' by Neville Hudson. Neville Hudson, a member of the BHT Committee since the beginning, gave a very interesting illustrated talk on what an extraordinarily generous community Birchington has been and still is over the years.

The Crispe Charity was founded in 1708 and still exists today supporting young people. In WW1 Arthur Erlebach lost 3 sons and created the Memorial Recreation Ground in their memory, his gift to the people of Birchington. During 1914, in 'War Weapon Week' about 2000 Birchington residents raised £13,000 to purchase 2 aeroplanes costing £5000 (equivalent to £700,000 today).

Birchington-on-Sea • Kent
QUEXPO '86
SATURDAY, 23rd AUGUST
GATES OPEN 10.30 AM Special 1st Prize, Adults 20 Senior Citizens & Children 10
MAJORETTE CHAMPIONSHIP
"Quexpo" Invitation Tug of War * Baby Show * Dog Show
SUNDAY & MONDAY
24th & 25th AUGUST
GATES OPEN 10.30 AM
STEAM ENGINE RALLY • VINTAGE & VETERAN CARS
Lorries & Motor Cycles * Quebec Band Queens Regiment
Royal Artillery Motor Cycle Display Team
Trud Buzzer Parachute Display Team * Adams Lumberjacks
Van Buren's Magic Show * Clavin Paddywack, His Comedy Car
and Superheroes * Historic Upton and His Showings
* **KENNY BALL & HIS JAZZMEN** *
* **Members of the Royal Circus** 12pm-12.30pm
All Three Days
Unique Festival of English Rural Life
Children's Theatre, Punch & Judy Show and a Clown
(2pm-2.30pm) Side Shows, Fairground Organs, Exhibits
AMPHILE FREE PARKING * BETTER AND OVERDAY TICKETS AVAILABLE
A.A. SIGNPOSTED * Tables: Adults £2 Senior Citizens and Children £1.20
Sponsorships and Contributions

BIRCHINGTON WAR WEAPONS WEEK
AIM: The Purchase of
TWO AEROPLANES cost £5,000
THURSDAY, FRIDAY and SATURDAY, May 23, 24 & 25.
From 11 am to 5 pm Thursday & Friday (Closed on Saturday)
Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm at Pipers Ground, Jokers Road
MEETING IN SQUARE 7 TO 9 PM.
Excellent Speakers... Very Unusual Attractions.
BUY BONDS & WAR CERTIFICATES
WEDNESDAY 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 1914

Quex, and in particular Christopher Powell Cotton, was an exceptional benefactor to Birchington. He facilitated Quexpo from 1970 to 1986, at which event up to 30,000 people would attend over the August Bank Holiday weekend. It was the revenue from these events that generated the funds to build The Village Centre in Birchington.

Many local and national organisations were also mentioned, all of whom raise considerable amounts of money for so many good causes. The overriding thread of the presentation was that Birchington is a very caring village. *Janet Denyer*