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Charity No. 1099250

ISSUE 50

## DOG ACRE

By Alfred Walker



*Dog Acre (at the left of the photograph)*

Originally, with other land in Birchington, it belonged to the Church. "Dog Acre" was a strip of land along the south side of Alpha Road with a small frontage to Station Road. It was near "Butt Acre" where the men of the village practised shooting with bows and arrows, usually on Sunday afternoons after attending Church. We are not certain where "Butt Acre" was but it was probably between "Dog Acre" and the village.

It was called "Dog Acre" because the village official known as the "Dog Whipper" had this approximately one acre of Church land for his use, for which he paid no rent – it was one of his "perks".

### Dogs Went To Church

In days long prior to a dog tax, dogs abounded in great numbers – even more so than now – and almost every cottager possessed one to aid in fetching the cow or sheep from the common land. These dogs were often in the habit of attending Church with their masters and sat under their masters' seats.

To regulate the behaviour of the dogs and to remove the unseemly from the Church or Churchyard most parishes possessed a modestly paid official known as the "Dog Whipper".

It was his job to remove the offenders usually by means of wooden tongs which he used for gripping the offending dogs by the neck and carrying them out of the Church.

Later on, in Birchington, it became the Dog Whipper's job not only to keep order among the dogs but also to keep order among the boys in church, in the Churchyard and sitting on the Churchyard wall.

The earliest reference I can find to Dog Acre and to the 'Dog Whipper' is in the Birchington Churchwardens' Account Book for the year 1622 – the reign of James 1 – when "Old Hayward" was the Dog Whipper and received eight shillings per year for this duty and was allowed the acre of Church land rent free.

### The Whipper's 8 shillings

In 1623 we read, "To old Hayward for whipping ye dogges out of ye Church one whole yeare 8s-0d." Old Hayward was followed by "Old Posier" who was paid the same rate. Many such entries appear in the Accounts year after year. These Churchwardens' Accounts are the oldest in Thanet and date from 1531 – the time of Henry VIII. In 1687 we read "John Taylor, Dog Whipper, for his office hath one accer of the said (Church) land".

In 1694 we read, "One accer now lett out to Thomas Penny, Dog Whipper, Abutting to the butt accer".

Later on, the Dog Whipper walked around the Churchyard twice every Sunday during service to 'keep good order' and was paid by the Churchwardens 6d each Sunday.



*Dog Acre and Library, 1971*

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## THE BIRCHINGTON INSTITUTE TRUST

By Alfred Walker – c. 1968



*The Birchington  
Institute Entrance c. 1890*

This Charity originated nearly 100 years ago, in 1879. The then Vicar of Birchington, the Rev. J. P. Alcock, (who was the first Vicar of Birchington, as until 1871 Birchington was part of the ecclesiastical parish of Monkton), Major Morrison Bell, and a few other prominent gentlemen of Birchington agreed that the village needed a community centre. As a result the Rev. Alcock, Major Morrison Bell, and a Mr. C. Moore (who was the People's Churchwarden)

borrowed the sum of £500 on mortgage from a Mr. R. White, and purchased the property which became known as the Institute, to be a village centre, the first community centre in Birchington.

This Institute was situated in the Square behind what is now Colin Beckley's Sweetmarket. The sweet shop originally was the Caretaker's house but later became the Church Verger's house. Access to the Institute was from the Square by a narrow passageway by the side of the Caretaker's house.

The Institute consisted of a hall with a stage and a gallery, an upstairs room and outhouses. It became the centre for public meetings, concerts, lectures, entertainments, social gatherings etc. It had a Reading Room where newspapers and periodicals could be seen, and a Library. In time it became licensed for stage plays. Technical Classes were held there, and the Knott Lodge of Oddfellows formed in 1881, and the Good Intent Benefit Society held their meetings there. Meetings of the Parish Council were also held there.

The Institute appeared to have a struggling existence. The Trustees, the Rev Alcock, Major Morrison Bell and Mr. C. Moore had hoped that the centre would pay its way and in due time pay off the mortgage. It is of interest to note that the Caretaker paid 2 shillings per week rent for his house.

Early in the 1900s the Trustees offered the property to the Parish Council on condition that the Council would take over the mortgage, then £250, but there appear to have been obstacles in the way and there was also difficulty whether a Parish Council could hold property under a Charitable Trust. Further, the Council was unable to raise the loan.

In 1907 the Rev Serres, Vicar, and Mr. Honeyball, Churchwarden were appointed Trustees by the Charity Commissioners. It is interesting to note that in the 1890s the Infants' School was held at the Institute – before Mrs. Gray of Birchington Hall, which later became "Spurgeons Orphanages", bought the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Albion Road and let it to the National School Managers of Park Lane School for a pepper-corn rent of one shilling per year for use as an Infants' School.

A wood carving class was held at the Institute and some of the oak wood carving now in Birchington Church was done by that class. In the early 1900s the girls and boys from Park Lane School had cookery and woodwork classes there. It became the meeting place of the Birchington Cricket Club and of the village band.

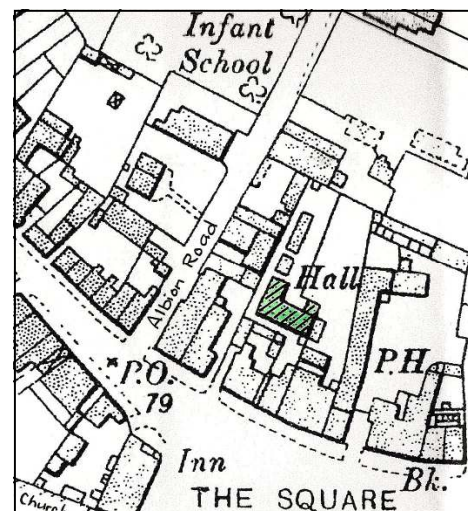
During the Second World War it was used by the W.V.S. for meals. In the 1920s there was much correspondence between the then Trustees and the Parish Council regarding the Institute. Eventually, early in the 1950s, the Charity Commissioners sold the property, paid off the remaining mortgage, and invested the balance, and established a Scheme to regulate what became known as the Birchington Institute Charity or Fund. The Scheme was sealed by the Commissioners on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1952.

The first Trustees appointed by the Commissioners under this Scheme were:-

Frederick Wm. Mellanby, J.P.,  
William R. Curtis of Station Road,  
(these two were appointed for life)  
Kathleen E. Phillips, J.P.,  
of Shakespeare Road.  
Hannah B. Powell-Cotton of Quex  
Denys H. E. Jeston of Grenham House.

(These last three were appointed for four years, but could be re-appointed.)

The Trustees must be persons residing in Birchington and were appointed from time to time by the Thanet District Council.



*Birchington Institute c. 1898— Described as "Hall" on map*

The income of the Charity was obtained from, as stated in the Schedule to the Scheme, £452 of 4% Consolidated Stock standing in the name of the Official Trustee of Charitable Funds.

According to the Scheme, the income was to be applied as follows, after certain payments, the Trustees "shall apply the income of the Charity for any charitable purposes for the benefit of the inhabitants of Birchington not provided out of rates, taxes or public funds". In the latter years the income was about £18 per year derived from £397.49 4% Consolidated Stock.

The last Trustees were:-

- Mr. D. E. Jeston, Hon. Secretary
- Miss K. E. Phillips
- Mr. Esdaile
- Mr. C. Barrows
- Mrs. M. Maple.

The Charity was closed in c. 2007, when the residue of the funds were granted to the Crispe Charity, who invested it and it now funds youngsters leaving school, youth groups and helps provide grants for 10 widows of Birchington and Acol.

**Birchington Institute.**

**LECTURE-ENTERTAINMENT**

**Thursday, May 31st, 1888.**

*Chairman—Rev. J. P. ALCOCK, Rector of Crayford.*

Mr. J. H. STORR, of Westgate-on-Sea, has kindly undertaken to light the room with the

**ELECTRIC LIGHT.**

*A Selection of Vocal and Instrumental Music will be given and some remarkable Curiosities exhibited.*

The Handbell Ringers of Birchington will give a performance, conducted by Mr. T. B. REED.

LECTURE—

**"ANNALS OF BIRCHINGTON"**

By **Mr. J. P. BARRETT,**  
MEMBER OF THE KENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

\*PROGRAMME.\*

Pianoforte Solo	"March"— <i>Brassley</i>	Miss LYON
	Lecture, Part 1—ANCIENT BIRCHINGTON.	
Song	"The Hardy Norseman"	Major BELL
	Lecture, Part 2—THE CHURCH AND ITS HISTORY.	
Song with Chorus	"Children's Voices"	Miss GRAY
	Lecture, Part 3—QUEX AND ITS OWNERS.	
Handbell Ringers	"The Bells of Birchington"	
	Lecture, Part 4—THE PARISH BOOKS.	
Song	"The Arab's Farewell"	Mr. A. E. RAYDEN
	Lecture, Part 5—BIRCHINGTON AT THE REFORMATION.	
Song	"Sing on Sweet Angelus"	Miss EDWARDS
	Lecture, Part 6—AT THE COMMONWEALTH AND RESTORATION.	
Song	"The valiant courage of Kentish men"	Major BELL
	Lecture, Part 7—BIRCHINGTON IN TROUBLE.	
Song	"The Roll Call"— <i>Pinsuti</i>	Mr. PEACH
	Lecture, Part 8—ITS REJOICINGS	
Handbell Ringers	"Course of Cinques"	
	Lecture, Part 9—BIRCHINGTON UNDER THE GEORGES.	
Song	"I have house and land in Kent"	Major BELL

**GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.**

**DOORS OPEN AT 7.30; TO COMMENCE AT 8 P.M.**

*Proceeds to be divided between the Institute and a Fund for providing a New Parish Chest.*

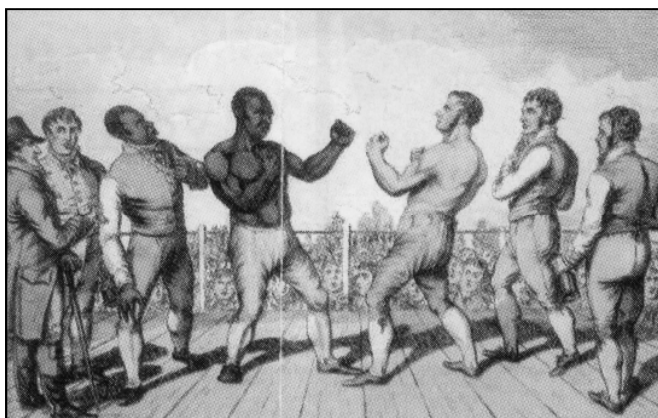
Reserved and Numbered Seats, 1s. Second Seats, 6d. Back Seats, 3d.  
Tickets may be had of the Caretaker at the Institute.

Printed at "Keltie's Gazette" Office, Margate.

*Birchington Institute's Events Programme for 31st May 1888*

Stuart Horner

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century bare knuckle prize fighting was a very popular but illegal past time and it would seem that Birchington was a convenient venue for such contests, as it was far enough away from the authorities, yet easily reached from London. A newspaper report of August 31<sup>st</sup> 1810 informs readers of a particularly note-worthy bout between Tom Molyneaux and Tom Tough, also known as Tom Blake, to take place at Epple Bay.



*Champion Boxer, Tom Molyneaux sparing in the ring with Tom Blake*

Tom Molyneaux was the black American champion who had just arrived in Liverpool, having worked his passage as a deck hand. His owner had reportedly won \$100,000 by betting on Molyneaux's fights and as a result granted him his freedom and gave him a gift of \$500.

At Epple Bay in 1810 the gathered crowd was so large, that it became difficult to form a ring for the fight to take place. Eventually order was imposed and at precisely midday the contest began. The weather was recorded as boiling hot which quickly exhausted the fighters.

After 8 rounds Molyneaux knocked out Blake and was declared the winner. Molyneaux's umpire was Lord George Sackville and Captain Prideaux acted for Tom Blake. The Referee was Mr Friend of Birchington.



*Tom Molyneaux*

## Volunteer Stewards for BHT Museum

If any one would like to be included on the Heritage Museum Stewards' rota list, please contact Maureen Davis on 843028.

### Keep up-to-date by E-mail

If you would you like to receive up-dates on the BHT events via email then please get in touch with Janet and John Robinson, on:-

**robinsons@the2jays.f2s.com**

### Subscription Reminder

If you haven't already renewed your membership it is now time to do so. It is £7.50 for single person, £12.50 for a couple at the same address.

In return you receive quarterly newsletters and talks, also access to our museum.

## BHT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014

**Magic and Wine**

**World of Magic by Allan Wright**

**£5 per person (See poster in opposite column)**

### Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014

**Talk by Ron Stillwell & Marcus Russell on  
Defence of Thanet &  
Manston Spitfire and Hurricane Museums**

### Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014

**A Musical Evening with David Ruddock  
See notice boards for further details**

### Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015

**Quex and the link with Australia  
A Talk by Susan Johnson**

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

## Library Display

By now most of you will, hopefully, have seen our World War 1 display in the library. Instead of being in the foyer, it had to be placed in the Burley Gallery, due to a reading event the Library were running in the School Holidays. Apparently more things are planned for the foyer and so our displays will be continuing in the Burley Gallery for some time to come. Please don't forget that the stand has two sides and can be viewed from outside in the Library garden.

Do mind out for the shallow step down onto the path in front of the window!

## Wanted:- A Treasurer

The BHT require a treasurer. We would like to hear from any of our members who have bookkeeping or accounting skills, to contact the museum or our Chairman, Gerry Davis on 843028, for further details.

Our accounts are based on an uncomplicated debit and credit entry system, appropriate for a small charity. Anyone applying will be given a warm reception by the committee.

## Newly Acquired 4 Paintings, three by David Burley

We are now proud custodians of four paintings, three by David Burley, which will soon be on display in our Museum.

A gifting event was held at the Birchington Library on Wednesday afternoon the 22nd October 2014, where the KCC representatives:- Mike Hill, Gill Bromley, Sarah Bottle and Councillor Roger Latchford met our Chairman, Gerry Davis and Jennie Burgess for the signing ceremony for our safe keeping of the paintings.

The other works by David Burley used to be seen widely, advertising British holiday resorts, Whitbread Brewery Inn signs, advertising for Cunard's Queen Mary. His works were also displayed in the Royal Academy and in the Royal Institute of Watercolour Painters.

David Burley was one of the initiators of the building fund for the Birchington Village Centre, to be found behind the library. Both he and his wife, a talented musician, were involved with the Guild of Players, Art Groups and Margate Theatre.



Birchington Heritage Trust  
Charity No. 1099250

**Thursday 30 October 2014  
7.30 pm**

## MAGIC & WINE!



**'World of Magic'  
Allan Wright**

*Wine/Nibbles & Magic  
at your table*

The Centre, Alpha Road

**Tickets £5 includes Wine**  
*(bring extra nibbles if you wish)*