



# Newsletter

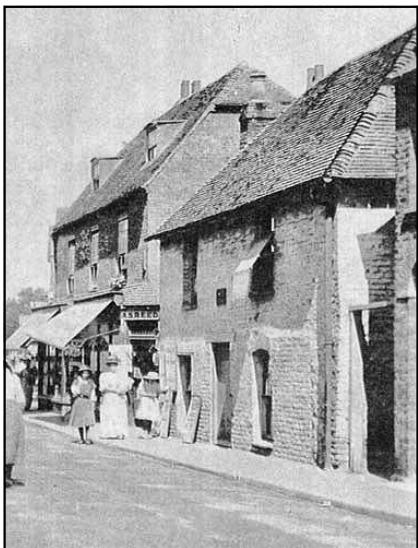
[www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk](http://www.birchingtonheritage.org.uk) & on facebook

November 2015

Charity No. 1099250

ISSUE 54

## NatWest Bank



Bath Cottages - Site where Bank was built c. 1902

With the closure of the NatWest Bank at the end of November it seemed an ideal time to research its history in Birchington.

The London County Westminster and Parr's Bank opened their branch in Birchington on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 1921. It opened at number 14 Station Road, opposite its present site, at first they rented the property but purchased it in 1927. The bank had its new premises built in 1931. It has had several upgrades internally but the outside remains virtually unchanged.

The present name of NatWest Bank came about through the merger of the London County Westminster Bank and the National Provincial Bank.

It will be interesting to see what becomes of this distinct building in the future.

Janet Robinson



NatWest Bank

## SPURGEON'S OLD SCHOLAR PAYS US A VISIT



JIM GREEN • DAVE PERRY, HAWKINS, EDWARDS, HYDE, ENGLAND, BOB  
(NO GLASSES)

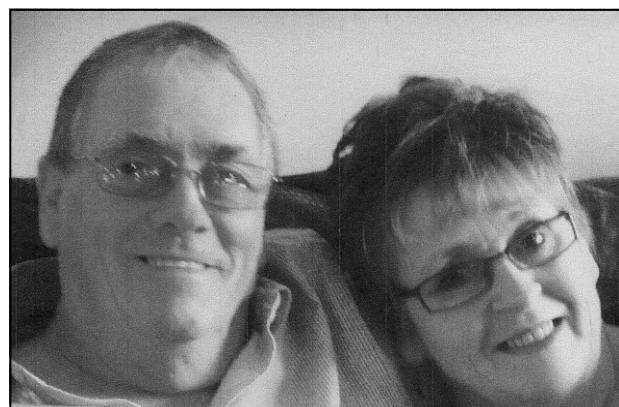
• • • JOHN THOMPSON •

A Spurgeon's Cricket Team 1950's

We recently had a visit from an old scholar from Spurgeon's, who, with his wife Mary, had come over from Leigh-on-Sea in Essex. Jim was at Spurgeon's from 1951 until 1959, moving from Reigate to Birchington when the new buildings were first opened.

He has sent us 7 photos of his activities from his time in Birchington and has kindly given us the names of many of the people in the sports teams, these details and photographs are now in the Museum. He was also in the Boys' Brigade Band and went to camp. We are hoping he will write a short account of his time here, for a later newsletter.

Jennie Burgess



Jim & Mary Green c. 2014

In this Issue: Page 1 - The NatWest Bank + Spurgeon's Old Boy Pays us a Visit

Page 2 - Hudson's Mill Area

Page 3 - Shocking Suicide of Publican at Birchington

Page 4 - The Railway comes to Birchington + Postscript + Noticeboard:- Future Events + Christmas Evening

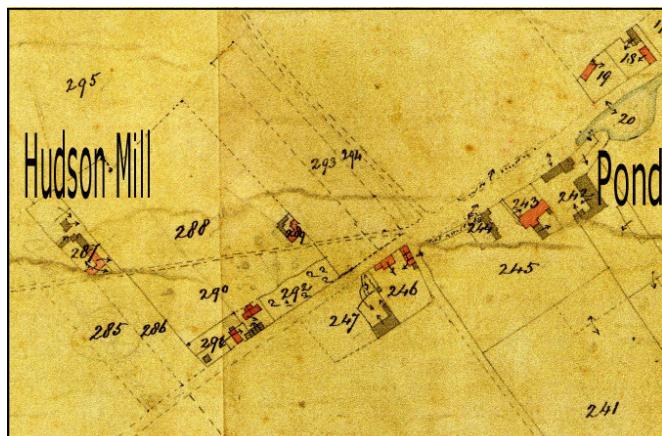
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*View of Hudson's Mill from Birchington Square c. 1880*

The Hudson Mill area lies at the south end of the village leading off the junction with Essex Gardens and Canterbury Road. The windmill eventually stood at the north end of Mill Row, but there is possibility that it once stood beside the Canterbury Road. In 1772 there was an article in the Kentish Gazette of Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August 1772 which stated:

"Yesterday the windmill near Birchington in the Isle of Thanet, which has been so long complained of as an annoyance to the road between Canterbury and Margate, was removed 60 yards backwards at the expense of the Hon. Charles James Fox, who is proprietor of the estate." The article continues, "The removal was completed in little more than one day, with the utmost ease, and by the assistance of two horses only. The weight was supposed to be upwards of forty tons, as neither the sweeps nor the millstones were taken down. The engineer was Mr Peake, a Carpenter at Manston, in the St. Lawrence parish." (Ramsgate).



*Portion of Tithe Map Showing Hudson's Mill and The Pond*

There was another windmill that also stood beside "the road between Canterbury and Margate" – Griggs' Mill on the SE edge of Quex estate, which stood beside the winter road to Canterbury. Charles Fox was the owner of the Quex estate at this time.

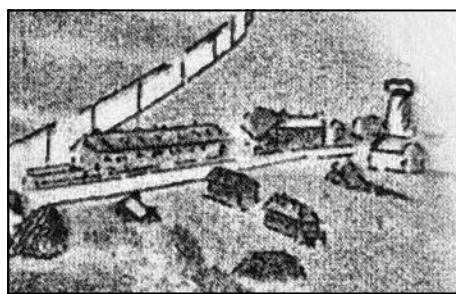
The fact that Hudson's Mill was definitely about 60 yards back from the A28 also a 'road between Canterbury and Margate' in its final days gives it a distinct possibility that this is the 1772 one mentioned in the article. It is clearly marked on the 1840 tithe map and James Hudson from Ash (next to Sandwich), is listed as the owner and occupier of the mill and mill house at that time.

The mill was accessed from the Canterbury Road by its own lane which ran straight from the top of Brooksend Hill across to the mill, for delivering grain and taking away the sacks of flour.

James Hudson handed over the running of his mill to his eldest son Charles in about 1880, though he continued to take part in its running until his death in 1889. By this date, Charles had realised that the future of the trade was in electricity rather than wind power, so in 1891 he put the Birchington mill on the market and bought the large modern mill at Ramsgate, which he ran for many years very successfully. The buyer for Birchington's Mill was James Fright, the owner of the New Inn at Birchington Square, who was unaware of the way the source of power was moving. He had seen it as an investment initially but he then spent several years trying to sell off sections of machinery from the mill by advertising in "The Miller" month after month, but with very little result.

By 1900 the sweeps were no longer in situ as it stood at the end of its feeder road, awaiting its final fate. The only photo of the mill was taken by accident in 1880 and shows the sweeps over the top of Street Farm Cottages on the corner of Kent Gardens and Canterbury Road.

The other property that stood at the northern end of Mill Row, from those early days, is what is now called "The Red House". It was built of bright red bricks, as against the yellow/brown ones of the later properties up there.



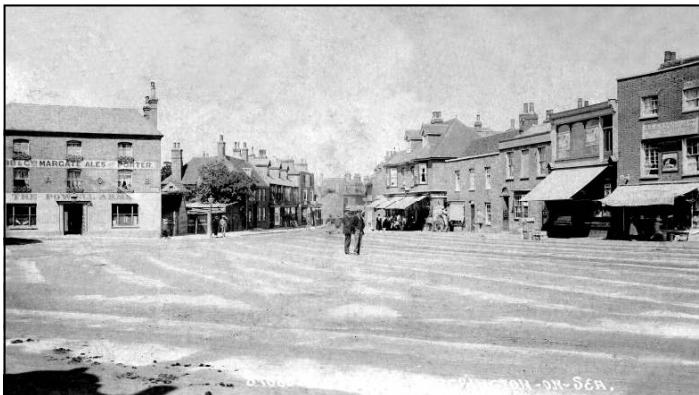
### *Hudson's Mill relocated to Mill Lane c. 1903-4*

From the 1850s onwards the long terrace of dwellings began to be erected in Mill Row, mainly in groups of four houses going up during each building phase, until the end ones nearest Mill Lane. The houses were all very small, possibly built by James Hudson in the earliest stages, as accommodation for his workers. The families were fairly large, so they were usually well-filled! There were external toilets at the bottom of the gardens and wells accessed by pumps shared between groups of the houses. There were no bathrooms or running water until shortly after 1890, when George Butterworth went round testing Birchington's well water and condemning it as unsafe for drinking. This forced the residents to sign up with the Westgate & Birchington Waterworks Co. for a water supply.

*Continued on page 3, second column*

## POWELL ARMS - 1894

From Keble's Gazette:  
Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> December 1894 Volume 25. No.1296



*The Powell Arms & Birchington Square c. 1889*

"The village of Birchington was shocked by a very distressing incident at Christmas, when it transpired that Mr Thomas Swan, Landlord of the Powell Arms, had committed suicide. From what can be gathered, Mr Swan, who is about fifty years of age, and who came from the King's Head Inn, Sarre some 18 months ago to carry on the business of the late Mr. Millgate at the Powell Arms, opened the front door of the house at 12.30, and saying "Good-bye" to some of his customers, left the house by the back door.

A few minutes afterwards, a noise of splashing was heard, and an alarm being raised, a number of persons proceeded to the back yard. It was seen that the stone slab of a deep disused well, which had been converted into a cesspool, had been removed. Mr William Pemble, an employee of the Broadstairs Water Company, was one of the first to arrive on the scene, and he at once volunteered to go down the well in search of the man, who, it was evident, had disappeared through the aperture. The air of the well or cesspool was dangerously foul, but within a few minutes a life-line belonging to the Fire Brigade was provided, and Mr Pemble was lowered down the well, which proved to be over sixty feet to the level of the filthy stagnant water – and this was about 16 feet from the actual solid bottom.

After groping about in the dark for some time he discovered something, which proved on inspection to be Mr Swan's hat. As there was no hope of reaching the body, Mr Pemble was pulled up. A windlass was then speedily secured, and Mr Pemble, with a light and a grappling iron again descended the well. After a short time he drew the body up to the surface of the water, made it fast to the rope, and he and the deceased man were hauled up.

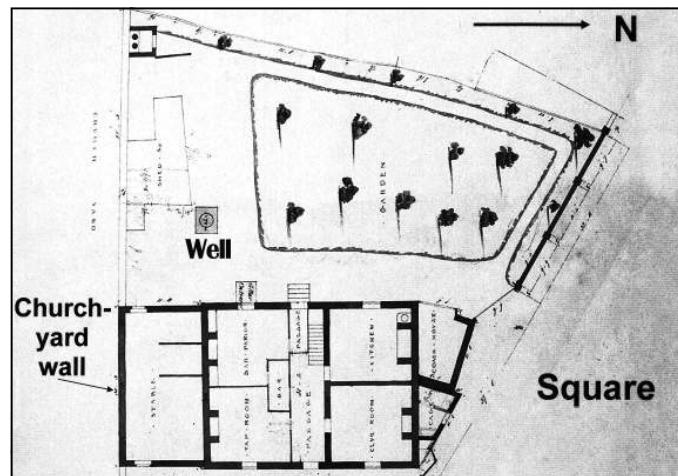
The deceased was in a dreadful condition, and his face was much discoloured. Dr. H. Worthington was in attendance, but it was seen at once that life was quite extinct. The doctor administered a stimulant to Mr W. Pemble, who was then able to assist in washing the body of the deceased.

The stone slab which covered the well appears to have been recently broken by a heavy weight being passed over it and as only half the slab had been removed, the aperture through which the deceased passed was less than two feet square.

*Continued on next column*

A few feet below was a cross beam, and upon this being examined, it was found that the deceased had rested upon this beam before his precipitation to the bottom of the well. It must be admitted that the prompt and brave conduct of Mr Pemble is beyond all praise; and although it was not in his power to save the man from suffocation, he certainly did all that humanity could conceive, running imminent danger of being himself suffocated by the foul air. Mr Swan was an extremely quiet, inoffensive man; although he has been in Birchington but a short time, he was respected and esteemed by his neighbours and friends.

As far as can be gleaned, he gave no sign of insanity or weakness of intellect, and beyond saying "Good-bye" to some men in the bar, does not appear to have given any indication that he contemplated suicide. Probably, however, some further light may be thrown upon the sad affair at the inquest, which is fixed to take place this (Friday) afternoon, after the hour of our going to press."



*Plan of Powell Arms including the well*

## Hudson Mill continued from page 2...

In the early 1950s, South Eastern Electricity Board offered to supply the Mill Row residents with electricity, but as they were all renting their homes from one or two different landlords, most of them were not keen to "risk" this gamble (as they saw it). By then they already had gas laid on for their heating and lighting and could not see the advantage in changing over.

In the mid 1950s and early 1960s, several of the properties came up for auction and some tenants were able to buy their houses. Quite a number were also bought as holiday homes by then. Very slowly, bathrooms were added out at the backs of the houses, which usually incorporated an inside toilet. There were very few cars in the mill area at this date, but now the additional cars tend to be housed in the back yards where ever possible, as the two lanes are so narrow.

*Jennie Burgess*

## BHT Christmas Evening With The Chalumeaux Quartet

To avoid disappointment, purchase your tickets early from the Museum and experience an enjoyable musical evening, on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

For details see page 4.

## THE RAILWAY COMES TO BIRCHINGTON

By Alfred Walker

The Railway to Birchington was opened in October 1863.

The Railway was an extension of the London Chatham and Dover railway from Faversham and Herne Bay. At first it was only a branch line – the main line ran from Faversham to Dover. The services provided were for second class railway services. The line from Chatham to Faversham was opened 1<sup>st</sup> January 1858 and this too was only a single line at first.

The line was then extended to Whitstable by 1860 and reached Herne Bay a few weeks later. The extension to Margate was opened in September 1863 but public services did not begin until October 1863. Keble's Gazette had the time tables of the London Chatham & Dover Railway printed each week.

In March 1870 there were 4 "up" trains a day on week days.

The first train left Birchington at 7.38 a.m. and went via Chatham to Ludgate Hill arriving at 10.10 a.m. and at Victoria at 10.18 a.m. There were 7 "down" trains each week day. The first reached Birchington at 10.05 a.m. and at Margate at 10.15 a.m.

On Sundays there were 4 trains each way. The 3<sup>rd</sup> class fare on a cheap fast train from Margate to London, return was 7s. In 1867 the fare from Margate to Birchington 3<sup>rd</sup> class was 3d.

Before the present brick bridge over the railway near the station, there was a level crossing and then, for a short while, a wooden bridge. There was a second level crossing from the end of Albion Road over to Cross Road.

Westgate station was opened in 1871.



Level Crossing From Albion Road to Cross Road, by the Thicket

## Birchington Postscript

### Penny Pinching in Extremis - Street Lighting 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1884 Keble's Gazette page 8

Under the heading of "Street Lighting" the local residents of Birchington asked their Parish Council if they could please prevent the lamp-lighter from lighting the gas lamps in the Square and Station Road on moonlit nights, as this was a waste of money. They asked that this advice be taken to "save expense".

It just goes to show KCC that there is nothing new under the sun – or should that be moon?

Janet Robinson

## Noticeboard

### BHT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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

A Talk by Dr. Frank Andrews  
Richborough Port

#### Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015

Social: A Musical Evening With  
Chalumeaux Clarinet Quartet

#### Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016

A Talk by Pam & Mark Bathurst  
"The Medway Queen"

#### Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2016

A Talk by Tony Child,  
Thanet District Council on the  
"Thanet Coastal Project"

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



Birchington Heritage Trust  
Charity No. 1099250

Present a Light Hearted

### Christmas Evening

*Carols, Music & Stories*



Featuring

**Chalumeaux Quartet**

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 7.30 pm

at the Village Centre Alpha Road



**£6 includes Tea/Coffee & Mince Pie**

The Bar Will Be Open  
Tickets now available in the Museum