



Newsletter

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MAJOR MORRISON BELL



Morrison Bell Group Photograph

Major William Morrison Bell is remembered in Birchington by the Morrison Bell houses in Albion Road. He was a Major in the 3rd Kings Own Hussars. He was a great benefactor to the village. He bought "Haun & Thor" in 1878, which later became The Beresford Hotel in Spencer Road.

He donated most of the money for the Church Clock in 1887, erected to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee.

It was through his perseverance that the Institute was established in the Square, along with much help and support from the Vicar, Rev J Alcock. The building was already there – possibly an old farm building, which was converted for use as our first "Village Centre".

Major Bell died on 6th April 1900. His brother offered a fountain in the Square as a Memorial to him, but the suggestion caused such controversy that he withdrew his offer. Morrison Bell House in Albion Road was erected in his memory instead and was used as a convalescent home for delicate boys from London. It was owned by a London Church.

During World War 1 it was used for wounded soldiers. It was again vacated in the Second World War, but this time it was used as accommodation for the troops. It was seriously damaged by bombs on the night of 6th August 1941 when the south end of the house was demolished. Fortunately there were no casualties.

After the war it was repaired and converted into flats. Later the house was demolished and the site developed for Piper's white Georgian style houses.

There is a memorial tablet in the Church on the North wall to Major Morrison Bell, erected by the parishioners.

The memorial tablet says:-

"An esteemed resident of Birchington

This tablet is erected by his fellow parishioners"



Memorial Tablet of W. Morrison Bell

PS In the late 1990s, I had a letter from a William Morrison-Bell asking if we had any information about his 'Great-Uncle William Morrison Bell'. Having put together all the pieces we had about this fascinating man, I asked if he had any family photos of him, as we would dearly like to know what he looked like. He sent us some photos of his great-uncle and his brother and family and some wonderful photos of what "Haun & Thor" looked like while he was living there (from 1878 until 1900). Copies are now in the Museum.

Jennie Burgess



Haun & Thor c. 1887

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"A collection of notes"

The Birchington C. of E. School in Park Lane, originally known as the National School, was founded in 1845 and opened in 1848. It was known as the National School because when it was built a grant towards the building was made by the National Society for the Promotion of Religious Education in accordance with the Principles of the Church of England.

Since 1863 a log book has been kept at the school, which is a record of the daily life of the school. In the log books the head teachers entered an account of any important school happening, event, visit etc. The entries are most interesting and throw a great deal of light on village life at the time.



Birchington C of E School, formally The National School c. 1900

The first extant log book opens:-

1863 March 9th - Elizabeth Murphy admitted.

Pupil teacher ill.

The average attendance at this time was about 61.

March 10. Holiday – it was the marriage of the Prince of Wales.

This was later King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra.

March 25 - Boys absent to work – planting potatoes.

There are many entries of absences - children going out to work in the fields.

Also entries noting poor attendance owing to the very wet weather.

June 24 - Attendance increasing on account of School feast.

The feast was the following day on the 25th.

There are a number of entries about punishments.

July 6 - Two boys whipped for throwing ink about.

September 1863 - A new head teacher was appointed.

Here is his first entry:-

"William Lockyer Banks Certificated Teacher, 2nd Class, 3rd Divs, late Master of Boughton Monchelsea National School took up duties, as Head.

40 children present.

The children appear to be intelligent and docile, to a certain extent, but wayward and passionate. They require gentle but very firm treatment if I mistake not."

It seems as if truanting was frequent.

"September 1863 - Charles Hatcher played truant several times."

"September 17 - Hatcher made his appearance this morning – promised to give him a penny at the end of next week if he would be present every day."

Note this next entry - children are still the same today!

September 21 1863 - "Children are inveterate chatters and busybodies."

October 8. "Wm George Snell has gone to join the Revenue Cutter at Ramsgate."

This was the boat that tried to prevent smuggling.

October 20 1863 - "The Free School at Acol was closed yesterday."

Does this refer to the school attached to the Crispe Charity? I can find little or no information about this school. It was not the one that was run in St Mildred's new little Church, as this was not built until 1876 and ran until 1886.

The next entry in the Log Book is interesting as it refers to the Coast Guard Station at Plum Pudding Island, now no longer in existence.

November 9 1863 - "Elizabeth Edward, Freeman Everall, Henry & William England, and Adeline, Ellen & William Corney who all live at St. Nicholas Station of the Coast Guard left for the winter, the way being dangerous – indeed William Corney, who came to bring me notice, was blown over the cliff today on his way here. Fortunately he was but little hurt."

There were other dame schools in the area, as this next entry shows.

Nov 10 1863 - "Sarah Huckstep has gone to the "Parlour School" – run by Miss Sidders

The furnishings of Birchington's CE School were far from adequate, as this and other entries show.

1863 Nov 18 - "The Vicar (Rev Whish) came in this afternoon and promised me a new set of desks. The old desks to be converted into cupboards."

It seems as if some children were expected to help with the work at the school.

Nov 26 - "Arthur Adams, whose turn it was to help light the fire this morning, suspended from school as his parents objected to his doing that duty. Mrs Adams came to apologise in the afternoon and the boy was allowed to attend again."



Birchington Infant School Class 1 - c.1910



Birchington Infant School Class II - c.1910

1863 Dec 8 - "Received a note from Mrs. Ginman, grandmother and guardian of Charles Coffin, stating that she refused to pay for a slate he had carelessly broken. Suspended him from attendance at school till payment shall be made.

Dec 9 - (the next day) "Charles Coffin brought payment for the slate."

1864 Jan 5 - This entry shows the difficulties of working without proper desks.

"The children cannot write in copy books as the new desks have not yet arrived and the old ones were converted into cupboards during the holidays."

Jan 7 - "The new desks arrived today."

Jan 8 - (Trouble with new desks.)

"Ambrose Adams commenced to trace on the new desks with his slate pencil notwithstanding a caution given. Flogged him and cautioned the rest of the school again."

[Ambrose Adams was the second son of Ann and Josiah Adams of Crispe Farm. We have his mother's sampler worked while she was at school in Birchington.]

It appears that Park Lane School was very cold at times and children were absent because of the freezing conditions.

Jan 25 - "Charles Mills withdrawn from school by his parents rather than he should take his turn in sweeping the school and lighting the school fire."

Early in Feb it was extremely cold - as this entry shows.

Feb 10 - "Bitterly cold. The children's minds seem frozen, as well as their bodies, poor things."

Because of continued absence several names were crossed off - there was no compulsory attendance. In the spring a number of children were absent from school to work on the land.

March 21 - "Several of the elder boys are engaged at Quex picking stones."

March 24 - "The school room is to be whitewashed, coloured etc to make it more fit for the celebration of Divine Service therein during the restoration of the church."

(The parish church was closed until the following February for 'restoration'.) There is an entry about this.

***Italicised text are comments made
by Alfred Walker***

***Italicised text in Square brackets By Jennie
Burgess***

In the Birchington Heritage Trust museum I came across an interesting old book. It consisted of bound copies of "The Family Herald - a domestic magazine of useful information and amusement." They dated from July to December 1867, and each weekly magazine contained, poetry, short stories, family matters, scientific articles, riddles, fashion tips, statistics etc.

Those of greatest interest to me were the articles titled "To Correspondents". These were a cross between letters from the readers and an agony aunt column. For some unknown reason this particular letter of December 7th caught my eye. The writer used a pseudonym, and I quote "Anti-Morphine tells us that she has a husband "who, although very well in his way" (high praise this) will persist in sleeping all the evening. Strong tea, strong coffee, "blowing him up" and making his life otherwise uncomfortable, have no effect upon this insensate creature, who, lost to the charms of his wife's appearance and deaf to the dulcet tones of her voice, sleeps quietly and tranquilly in his chair. Why? He is not fat, and he does not over-eat. He can not do it to look cherubic, then; for whoever saw a lean cherub? Anti-Morphine says it is "a habit - a nasty, unsocial habit, contracted when he was a bachelor, which he can't or won't get out of'.

Here is the agony aunts advice. Could not the disconsolate wife hire a number of organ-grinders (ten we will say) to arrive simultaneously before the door, and commence playing ten different tunes'? Should this fail to arouse the sleeping beauty (which we doubt) procure a footman out of a station to knock a succession of double knocks at your street-door till the somnolent miscreant is roused in fury. Should even this fail to have a lasting effect, choose the quiet evening as the most favourable time for having your drawing-room thoroughly cleaned. Let Molly into the secret; call her in with her pails and brushes and brooms and dusters; and when all are safely inside, with sleepy-head by the fire, have the carpet swept without tea leaves, and afterwards, should he be "nid nid noddin", dodge him from chair to chair, to have each thoroughly dusted and afterwards polished. Should all these methods fail, will Anti-Morphine let us know and we will endeavour to invent other modes of torture!

Has anyone any idea where I can find organ-grinders and out of work footmen? There don't seem to be any listed in yellow pages and I gave the maid the night off!.

Janet Robinson

BHT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 31st March 2016

“Race Night”

With Bring & Share Supper

Thursday 26th May 2016

A Talk by Tony Child,

Thanet District Council

“Thanet Coastal Project”

Thursday 16th June 2016

AGM & Talk by Neville Hudson

“Birchington Street Names”

Thursday 28th July 2016

“Summer Variety” Evening

Thursday 22nd September 2016

A Talk by

Jennie Burgess & Terry Wilson

“Grave Matters”

Thursday 27th October 2016

Ann & Doug Holmes present

A Wine & Wisdom Evening

Thursday 24th November 2016

A talk by John Robinson

“1970’s Revisited”

Thursday 1st December 2016

Colin Bridge &

The Chalumeaux Quartet

A Musical Christmas Evening

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



Weather Vane on All Saints Church

Recent BHT Events

On 29th October 2015 Pat Orpwood and John Hart gave a very in-depth talk and slide presentation on the WW1 Gallipoli conflict. It was especially poignant because John's father was on active service there serving in the Royal Navy. Many of the unique facts related were taken from his father's Service Record diaries.

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On 26th November 2015 Dr. Frank Andrews gave a talk on the building of Richborough Port at the start of and during WW1. Incredibly over 19,000 Service personnel were engaged and living on the Richborough site which also involved the manufacture of heavy equipment.

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On 3rd December we started the Festive Season with an entertaining musical evening presented by Colin Bridge with stories and carols. The musical accompaniment was from the Chalumeaux Quartet with saxophones and clarinets. The refreshments were a treat and we all enjoyed the evening.

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All these events were very well attended and we thank our Membership for their support.

Janet Denyer

Birchington Postscript

ALBION ROAD - The origin of the street name Albion Road is not known for sure, but the most likely theory is as follows. The 1688 Birchington map shows the road labelled as 'way to the sea'. When the first Ordnance Survey map appeared it was now called 'Coleman's Road.' In 1895 Thomas Pointer, who owned the Post Office in The Square, built a new house on the corner of the square and Coleman's Road and named it Albion House, and it is thought the road was then renamed.

ALMS HOUSES - The Alms houses were built in 1805 in Gas Alley, opposite All Saints Church. Each unit was a single room with a window and a door onto a communal garden. The floors were of packed earth, and an earth closet stood at each end of the row. The houses were condemned in 1925, but the last lady did not leave until 1934, after which they were demolished.

ALPHA ROAD - The first house in the road, 'Beaconsfield', (next to the library) was built in about 1880 all the first houses being built on the north side of the road. The opposite side was not developed until 1926.

Janet Robinson