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THE BERESFORD GAP FOUNTAIN THE MYSTERY IS SOLVED



Beresford Gap Fountain

For many years the museum has been trying to discover how long there has been a stone drinking fountain on the green at Beresford Gap, and who donated it. At last the mystery has been solved.

The family history research site 'Find My Past' has a newspaper section which is always being added to. This is where we found our information, when some new copies of old Thanet newspapers were published:-

THANET ADVERTISER 20TH July 1934.

TO QUENCH BIRCHINGTON'S THIRST.

"Intimation that Mr. A.H. Scott was going to present the parish with a drinking fountain to be erected in the area of Beresford Gap, or some other suitable spot, was given by the chairman (Councillor A. Hodges) at the monthly meeting in the Parochial Committee on Wednesday.

The chairman stated that Mr. Scott had offered to provide a fountain up to the cost of £50. Several types had been shown to Mr. Scott, who had chosen a fountain that would cost £43, apart from the cost of laying down water and providing a concrete base. It had been suggested that a figure of a small child should be placed on the top of the pedestal.

The offer was gratefully accepted by the committee, subject to the approval of the Isle of Thanet Rural District Council, and a sub-committee was appointed to meet Mr. Scott and go into details."

THANET ADVERTISER 24TH AUGUST 1934.

THE FOUNTAIN SITE.

"The Isle of Thanet Rural District Council are to seek powers from the Minister of Health under the Public Health Act 1925, in connection with the installation, on the Beresford Green, Birchington, of a fountain presented by Mr. A.H. Scott."

THANET ADVERTISER 14TH JUNE 1935.
GIFT OF FOUNTAIN ACCEPTED.

"Alderman A.H. Scott has promised to defray the cost of the provision of a drinking fountain to be constructed near Beresford Gap, Birchington, at an estimated cost of £50. On Tuesday, the thanks of Margate Town Council were extended to the Alderman for his generous offer."

So, who was Alderman A.H. Scott, and why was the fountain placed at Beresford Gap? A search of the internet and local street directories gave us the answer. Alfred Henry Scott 24th June 1868 – 17th July 1939, was a British Liberal politician. He was born in Ardwick, Manchester, and entered business as a merchant. He was elected to Manchester City Council in 1897. At the general election in 1906 he stood at Ashton under Lyne, and was elected as the towns Liberal Member of Parliament, a seat he held until December 1910. Alfred moved to London and in 1913 became a Progressive Party alderman on the London County Council.

He retired to Birchington, and was very involved in local life, becoming an Alderman, a Justice of the Peace, and president of the Birchington Chamber of Commerce. In the museum is a lovely picture of him taking part in the 1933 village carnival, riding a horse while dressed as Lady Godiva, complete with long hair and a pink body stocking!

While Alfred Scott and his family were in Birchington they lived at Wild Air on the cliff top at Beresford Gap. This was an imposing property built in the late 1920s. Initially it was known as Floramel Court, and was occupied by champion billiard player Melbourne Inman. It was Alfred who renamed it. The house stayed in the Scott family until Arthur's wife died in 1952. It was sold to a development company in 1989, and was demolished, but it would be 1998 before the three-story block of apartments was built on the site, and given the name of Wild Air.

The public fountain, which had been sited on the green at Beresford Gap in view of the house, was built of stone in an octagonal shape. It has two hollows at the base from which dogs could drink and two entries for pipe work on the rim. A panel on the south side of the structure reads 'For public use. Please respect it.' Alfred Henry Scott and his house have gone, but the fountain is still there, but sadly no longer working, so do have a look at it the next time you are in the area.

Janet Robinson

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At the time of the 1841 census Birchington had 167 houses, and a population of 874. This was fairly evenly divided, with 423 males and 451 females. Between 1840 and 1850 the parish records listed 61 marriages, 420 baptisms, and 202 funerals.

The majority of the working-class men were employed on the local farms. In 1849 their wage would on average be 12/- per week, from which they paid a rent on their cottage of approximately £5 per annum.



Chapel Yard & House where Thomas Pointer was born

Thomas Pointer was born at no.2 Chapel Yard, Birchington in 1837. Many years later he wrote a history of his life, including these memories of the village in the 1840s.

"There were two grocer's shops, two butcher's shops, three bakers, two carpenter's shops and two blacksmiths forges, a tailor's shop and a drapers, and three bootmakers, and one or two sweet shops. There was no chemist or doctor living in the village. The nearest doctor lived in Minster, three miles off, or Margate, which is four miles. There was only one post in the day. The postman that brought the letters came from Margate, reaching Birchington at eight in the morning, leave the letters at the post office and then go to Saint Nicholas, do the same there, and then go on to Sarre, and remain there until the evening and then return to Birchington, reaching there at half past six, and pick up any letters to go to Margate.

The old village fair used to be held on Whit Monday and Tuesday, when stalls for the sale of nuts and oranges and gingerbread, and other sorts of cakes and sweets, used to be erected in front of the church wall. Also, coconut shies and other sports would take place. Dancing in the public houses would go on nearly all night, but these things have all passed away, and a very good thing too for there was sure to be a row before it was over, and very often a fight."

The railway didn't reach Birchington until 1863, but local men became involved in laying the tracks for our local lines, sometimes with a sad outcome. This newspaper report is from 1846.

"On Thursday, a train of loaded ballast waggons started from Canterbury down the line to Minster, being propelled at the rear by a locomotive. In the foremost waggon were twelve or fourteen excavators, who were going to relieve those who had been working during the night.

Continued on next column

The morning was foggy, and the driver being unable to see much in advance, the train ran beyond the spot where it ought to have stopped, the rails only being laid a few yards further on: the first wagon, containing the excavators, went over the end of the line, and was precipitated down an embankment. The poor fellows were thrown out, and two or three of the waggons, filled with ballast, fell upon them. One of the men was killed on the spot, and two others grievously hurt. The engine driver, on hearing the crash, reversed the engine, by which means the remaining portion of the train was saved from running off the rails. The deceased, whose name was Hollans was a native of Birchington, and has left a widow and eight children."

In August 1844 Birchington was advertising for an assistant curate, of orthodox principles, stipend £100 per annum.

PAST TALKS & EVENTS

Talk by Peter Ewart

'Some Mother's Son' - 25 May 2017

A poignant story and brilliantly told, about a photo album found in a Canterbury bookshop which Peter and his wife researched to find out the family's history. From baby photos, family groups and finally to a young soldier in army uniform. They traced their name, where they lived in London and the soldier's regiment (London Scottish). The search took several years, the outcome ending sadly with the discovery that Gordon Davey had been killed in WW1 and is buried in Grevillers Cemetery, France.

Annual General Meeting - 15 June 2017

It was gratifying to see 43 Members signed in at the AGM and the Chairman thanked the Executive Committee and all the helpers for the smooth running of the Trust. He also thanked the Membership for their continued support.

Membership for the year totalled 246. The Statement of Accounts was presented which showed a surplus in income over expenditure and the Audited Accounts were duly accepted by the Membership. The Membership also approved the Election of Officers for the forthcoming year. John Robinson was elected as our new Chairman in place of Gerry Davis, who was thanked for his service over the last 5 years.

The annual Raven Award was made to John Wood of Blue Mondays for retaining and maintaining one of the last iron canopies in the Village.

Following on from the AGM, we had three very interesting 'mini' talks from:

Luke Warburton (given by Mike Kite) on 'The Dip', Minnis Bay which in the 1880s had an Exhibition Centre together with a Greenhouse and later Tea Gardens.

Jennie Burgess spoke on being the BHT and Church Archivist, investigating names on memorials in All Saints Church to family Coats of Arms with the College of Arms.

Janet Robinson (given by John) gave the background to a postcard sent by a WW1 soldier. It showed the then Catholic Church in Minnis Road which had originally been the wagon shed for the Malt Houses.

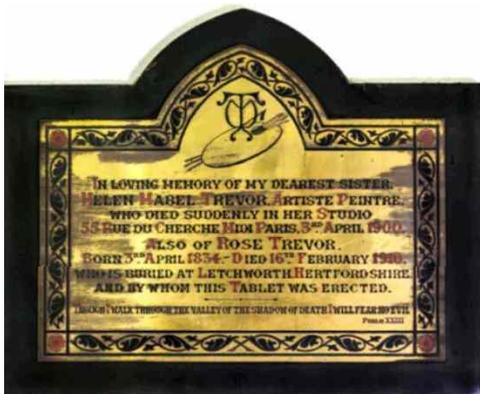
Janet Denyer

We had a query from an employee of the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin, trying to locate the burial site of Helen Trevor, one of the artists whose works are in their collection. Although the artist was Irish by birth, her studio was in Paris, which was where the artist died in 1900 at the age of 58. In her will, she asked to be buried in her mother's grave in All Saints Churchyard in Birchington.



Helen Trevor Self Portrate

We were able to locate Mrs Trevor's grave (of 1877) on the north side of the churchyard – this was the easiest part of the search. The next question was – In her sister Rose's will she asked for a stained glass window to be installed in Helen's memory, but failing that, a plaque. By 1910 when Rose died, all the small windows in our church already contained slightly earlier Victorian memorials. The only two plain glass windows left were the large ones in Quex and St Margaret's Chapels. Quex was not available, as the lady had no family connections – and the Trevor funds did not run to the large window in St Margaret's. We eventually found the plaque on the north wall of the north aisle. Photos were duly taken of both the grave and the plaque and sent to Dublin. There was also a possibility that Rose was buried with her mother and sister. This was clearly answered in some of the wording on the plaque, which stated that Rose died and was buried in Letchworth, Hertfordshire.



*Plaque in Memory of Helen & Rose Trevor
to be found inside All Saints Church*

The next question was "Could you please find out why Helen's mother was buried in Birchington?" She came from a very large estate in Northern Ireland, but came to live in London after her husband's death in 1872. The research from Dublin had found no connection with Birchington at all. My suggestion was that perhaps she had been unwell and came down to stay in one of the convalescent homes here, in the hopes of making a better recovery. If this was so, unfortunately we achieved the same result with Mrs Trevor as we did with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who also came to Birchington for health reasons, just five years later. (For anyone who doesn't know what that result was - he died here in 1882 – so our 'healing air' failed again.)

Like so many of the questions we receive, there is often no final answer, which is very frustrating!



Mrs Trevor's Grave of 1877

Jennie Burgess

Birchington's Alphabet

DEARMER GEOFFREY - born in 1893 Geoffrey was a poet and journalist when the first world war broke out. While serving in Gallipoli he wrote a number of his famous poems. After many years working for the BBC he moved to a retirement flat at Homebirch in Birchington, where he died in 1996 at the age of 103. A memorial stone in his honour was erected in the garden in front of our library in 2014. For further details a booklet entitled 'Geoffrey Dearmer, soldier and poet' is available from the museum.

DENNOTT'S COTTAGES - these cottages stand on the site of the old Lime Kiln works in Canterbury Road. They were built in the early 1900s, but the right hand one was considerably extended in the 1980s.



Jennie Burgess presenting the Raven Award to John Wood of Blue Mondays. This award is made in recognition of people who have maintained the heritage of the Village.



Blue Mondays in Station Road has one of the last remaining iron canopies in the Village. The corrugated curved iron panels are supported on decorative wrought iron brackets. The canopy was first installed and paid for in 1894 by G H Pettman with permission from the newly formed Birchington Parish Council. The current owner, John Wood has continued to maintain the canopy and it is due to him that we still have this unique Victorian phenomenon.



F W Pettman Greengrocers c. 1920s



R G Scott & Sons, Pork Butchers c. 1964

PAST EVENTS

Summer Variety Archer & Porteous - 27th July 2017

This was entertainment at its best. The rapport between Nigel Archer (our Bay Warden) and Chris Porteous was superb. We were treated to a variety of comic cameos and songs, to the accompaniment of the ukulele and keyboard. Audience participation enhanced the evening and we all enjoyed ourselves.

Birchington's Alphabet

DIP - The dip at Minnis Bay dates back to at least the mid 1800s. It may have been used to extract brick clay at the time when there brickfields in Birchington, or for extracting chalk. Over the years the dip has been used for many different functions, including large exhibitions and fairs in the late 1800s. In the 1920s and 30s there were attractive gardens and tearooms here. It is now a play area.

Janet Robinson

BHT Dates For your Diary

Thursday, 21st September 2017

Talk by Susan Johnson
'Ladies of Quex'

Thursday, 26th October 2017

Event - Quiz Night presented by
Ann & Doug Holmes
£3.00 per person

Thursday 23rd November 2017

Talk by Imogen Corrigan -
'The Goose is Getting Fat'

Meetings 7.00 for 7.30pm at
The Centre, Alpha Road, Birchington.
The Bar will be available