



Preserving the past for the future

Newsletter

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The good news is we intend to resume having group meetings in The Centre starting in September. The last time we were able to get together was in February 2020. All meetings start at 7.30pm. All three of the meetings for rest of the year will be presented by our own members. We realise some of you may have reservations about the easing of Covid restrictions, but like other groups we feel that the time is right to make this move. We will not be booking speakers for next year until we see how well these meetings are attended.

September 30th **'Our Island' an illustrated talk on the Isle of Thanet. *John Robinson***
October 28th **'My House Through Time' an illustrated talk. *Colin Bridge***
November 25th **'Quiz Night' (Bring your own nibbles) *Doug & Ann Holmes***

We have asked for the bar to be opened, but this can't be guaranteed. At present they will only serve bottled drinks or cans, and only before a meeting starts, not during an interval.

From the Newspapers

When looking through reports from old newspapers, it becomes apparent that problems we have today first made headlines long ago. Take the issue of 'foul smelling seaweed' for instance. The following article appeared in the long gone 'Thanet Advertiser & Echo' nearly 100 years ago, in September 1923.

At a Parish Council meeting it was stated that the seaweed in its decomposing state was disgusting and offensive to visitors. A letter was received from a gentleman who was driven away by the nuisance and would not return unless the problem was dealt with.

A suggested scheme for coping with the seaweed was suggested by Mr Remnant. He said his idea was both simple and cheap, and hoped to put it before the council in the spring. Outlining his ideas Mr Remnant said he had carried out experiments of having seaweed thrown on the tide and found that it was carried away and apparently did not come back, or if it did it was clean. His suggestion was that when the tide was right out, men should throw the weed nearer the sea and then put some old fishing nets fixed to sticks around the heaps. The tide would wash it into the nets, and when it went back he thought it would be carried right away. Mr J.W. Gardner commented, "that will never do it". Mr Remnant thought it would work, the only other alternative was to have it carried away he said.

On the same subject the council had received an account from a Mr Jordon for the sum of £18 for supplying two carts for twelve days for carting away the seaweed. The matter was held over until a statement had been received from Mr Jordon as to the sum he had received from the sale of it.

*Our long serving newsletter editor Peter Bateman is recovering from his recent hospital stay and asked to be excused for his involvement in producing this edition of the newsletter.
I'm sure you wish to join me in wishing Peter a full recovery.*

If you head out of Birchington towards Brooks End, and instead of continuing onto the dual carriageway you take the left fork, you are on Seamark Road. This takes you to the rear of Thanet Earth and on to the Monkton roundabout. I had never thought about the roads name until one of our members, Chris Sandwell, sent me a copy of a photograph of an old brick obelisk which used to stand in this area. Searching the internet, I found a couple of mentions of it in old books of the late 1790s, and a detailed report by the Canterbury Archaeological Society in 2011-12, of a dig that took place on the Thanet Earth site in 2007-8.



Windmills had stood on this plot from as early as 1596, and would have been used as a sea mark by sailors negotiating the Thames Estuary, and was particularly valuable as it was in line with the north spot of the Margate Sand. The last windmill on this site was removed in 1782, and re-erected at Sarre, where it preceded the present structure.

The sailors immediately complained about its removal, and in September 1783 Trinity House ordered that a replacement beacon or sea mark be erected. By October their first timber beacon was completed, and closely resembled a ships mast, complete with rigging, and topped with a large timber vane.

Not being distinctive enough a second mast was added two years later, unfortunately this was soon blown down by a gale. A replacement in 1786 suffered the same fate, being flattened in 1790.

In August 1791 Trinity House ordered that a brick-built beacon be erected on the same site. It was about 10ft in diameter, and 40ft tall. The base accounted for about a quarter of the height. Above this the obelisk tapered slightly, and was topped with a stone conical cap. (See photograph above).

According to Zechariah Cozens, writing in *A Tour Through The Isle Of Thanet* in 1793, with this sketch for illustration, on the north side was a tablet inscribed ‘This beacon was erected by the Corporation of Trinity House, Strand, in the year 1791, for the safety of navigation.’



By the late 19th and early 20th centuries the beacon was neglected as such structures became less important to shipping. In August 1920 it was inspected and found to be in poor condition, the brickwork cracked and bulging. The cost of repair would be considerable, and two years later it was Scheduled for demolition, and by 25th October 1922 it was gone.

In our museum we have details from Phillip Foad, that his grandfather, Albert, was one of the workmen employed by Mr. J. Pettman, a builder from St. Nicholas, to help knockdown the obelisk. The cone which was perched at the summit of the beacon was placed in the rock garden at Monkton Court.

All that is left to help us remember this tower that lasted 130 years, and the preceding masts and windmills, is the name of the present SEAMARK ROAD.

We had an enquiry from Judy Barclay (nee Winder) in Queensland, Australia regarding her great grandfather William Winder on whom she has done a vast amount of research and has kindly sent us various documents and photographs for our archives. However she wanted to know the connection her family had with Birchington.

William Winder was born in 1844 in Buckland, Dover. At the age 14 he joined the Royal Navy with a continuous service record of 13 years after which he joined the Navy Reserve.

In 1871 William's naval record shows him serving on *HMS Barossa*. A photograph taken of the crew on board this ship shows the only photograph the family believe is William.



He is standing in the back row second from right and is clean shaven and bears a distinct resemblance to his son, Bertie Winder (Judy's grandfather) who went to Australia when Judy's father, Norman was 5 years old.

In 1872 William joined the *HMS Challenger* expedition organised by the Royal Society for the purpose of laying the foundations of oceanography. In all the ship covered a total of 68,890 nautical miles from North & South Atlantic/Pacific oceans during 4 years at sea.

On returning to England in 1876 William worked as a Coastguard in Essex at Stansgate and in 1877 he married Annie Plummer the Chief Boatman's daughter. William and Annie's first three children were born in Essex.



The 1891 Census records show William's occupation as Chief Boatman, Epple Bay Coastguard Station and living at No 1 Coastguard Cottage with 5 children Edith, Bertie, Eva, Ethel and Mabel.



The family had always thought the photo on the left was Bertie (with the walking stick), but now wonder if this could be William? The photo on the right is definitely Bertie Winder.





In 1901 William was living in 'Swiss Cottage' Epple Bay which is now named 'Swiss Chalet' and is vastly different from when he was living there.

William died in 1916 and is buried in All Saints Churchyard together with his wife Annie who died in 1910. The stone cross has fallen down, but the inscription at the base is in lead lettering so is readable. Also buried in the Churchyard is their son William George who died age 5 years in 1889.



Card from Ethel Wynder with her bicycle. Possibly she changed the spelling of her name (using a y instead of i) because it sounded better.

The reverse reads:

"Swiss Cottage Birchington."

"I said you sh'd have a photo didn't I? How do you like me in this position? How are you two boys getting on? Aren't you glad you showed your grit and struck out for yourselves? I am expecting a long letter with a lot of news. Lovely weather here. Nothing startling happening as far as I am concerned. Everybody seems well at B'ton. Kind regards to Stuart. Be good."

BIRCHINGTON ALPHABET

Kings Road. *The houses were built between 1963 and 1967 by Medhurst & Co. Thanet Limited. In the museum we have a list of specifications for materials to be used in the construction. The plans were for 25 terraced houses and 2 bungalows.*

Knott, Edward. *In 1917 Edward Knott was serving in France, when he and five colleagues were gassed in a dug-out. They took shelter in a devastated small Catholic Church. Here Edward was given a carved figure of Christ by a priest who comforted and cared for the men. Edward died in France in 1918 of influenza, only two weeks previously his wife had died in Birchington. Their two daughters cherished the figure given to their father, and in WW2 they presented it to the vicar of All Saints Church, who had a wooden cross made to display it. It has hung over the pulpit ever since.*

The full story of Edward and his family, with photographs, can be seen in the museum files.