Welcome

We are pleased to be able to publish the first in our new series of quarterly newsletters. The aim is to keep both members and others with an interest in the history of Herne Bay and the surrounding area updated with our various activities.

For those not familiar with the society and its activities, a brief overview of our background, interests and scope is included overleaf. We would welcome potential new members to come along and meet us.

Why “Healthy” Herne Bay?

Margaret Burns

This appealing, pleasing and alliterative phrase to describe our town was used to very good effect by many of the guide books, holiday brochures, railway posters and entrepreneurial advertising and publicity material throughout the 20th century and indeed continues to the present time.

It seems to have its origins in a report of 1883 when the Registrar General described Herne Bay as ‘the healthiest watering place in England’.

The advertising gurus from thereon cleverly built on the growing Victorian and Edwardian beliefs in the health-giving properties of sea air and sea bathing. Herne Bay, situated on the North Kent coast with its closeness to London and the growing urban sprawl, became the ideal candidate for promoting these popular qualities in order to attract both holiday makers and prospective residents to the developing town.

Phrases such as bracing air, invigorating ozone and even ‘salubrious health giving propensities’ as well as many mentions of its outstanding sunshine records were used to advertise the benefits of the area. Great emphasis was also given to healthy outdoor recreations such as yachting, boating, fishing, tennis and bowls which appealed to people of all ages.

A delightful image from the cover of the Herne Bay town guide for 1927

So the origins of “Healthy Herne Bay” seem to have been based on many of the qualities that we still value today and long may they last for many future generations.
The origins of the Herne Bay Historical Records Society

Mike Bundock

We were formed over eighty years ago back in 1932 as the Herne Bay Records Society, under the auspices of Dr. T. Armstrong Bowes MA, MD, FSA when various archaeological specimens and other records relating to Herne Bay and district were donated to the Society. The Society’s name was changed to Herne Bay Historical Records Society in 1988 to emphasise the nature of our interests. In September 2012 the Society became a registered charity.

A corner of the premises at 53 Mortimer Street

The Society’s Museum and its archives were originally accommodated in the hall at No. 53 Mortimer Street before moving to the Public Library in the High Street in 1939.

Some of our artefacts on display

During the early 1990s there was pressure on space in the town’s public library and the society’s space was required for offices. After a while in store, the collection was moved to the newly opened town museum in William Street where it has been stored since 1996. Additional gifts, bequests and acquisitions in recent years have placed further pressure on storage space for our collection. Our aim is to secure better access to the Society’s collection as this will mean that it will open to a much wider audience and encourage further research into the history and background of our wonderful town and the surrounding villages.

Every spare inch of space in use

The society is keen to add to its collections and would particularly welcome the donation of any historic pictures of the town and the surrounding villages. We do not necessarily need to keep the original, often the opportunity to scan and use a copy would be welcomed.

Anyone interested in knowing more about the activities of the Society or getting involved further is invited to get in touch with a member of the Committee.

Current society projects include:
• The town’s shops
• Graveyard recording
• The names on the town War Memorials
• The town’s buildings
• The town’s cinemas and theatres

The historic images shown above come from the Society’s extensive collection.
Life and Death in Herne Bay
Pete Watson

What happened to our dear departed in the early days of Herne Bay's existence?

Before Herne Bay was recognised as a proper “Town”, the only burial place for all inhabitants was Herne Churchyard. This had been the case for centuries and, by the 1820’s, must have been overcrowded to say the least. As was the case for many churchyards, old bones would have been removed to make room for new ones. Despite the potential danger of disease, and ever-present smell, nothing, apparently, was done to alleviate the problem. The register of burials contains the remark that, in August 1834, 28 persons had died of the cholera.

Some small assistance was afforded by way of a new chapel, being built at the top of what is now called Chapel Street, at the plot of land now occupied by the Co-op store in Mortimer Street. The car parking area, on the High Street side, was where a few of the faithful flock of the Independent Congregation, were buried (whether they were ever removed remains a mystery); there is a register of 17 burials on that site, dated between 1828 & 1834, and there were possibly others after that date. The last 5 in the register very likely died of cholera, as we know there was an outbreak in the area (see above).

A rather more effective solution (to the overcrowding) was brought about in 1841, when the newly consecrated Christ Church was licensed to perform baptisms, weddings & burials; these burials were to take place in the area of land not occupied by the building itself (except for 6 burials in the crypt). However, this woefully small plot proved totally inadequate to cope with the number of deaths in the town, and the churchyard was closed by Order of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, in 1866. Almost 300 burials had taken place there! In 1867 major alterations were made to the church building, and in consequence, some remains, and some headstones were removed to another part of the yard. Anyone who has walked through the garden between William Street & Underdown Road, will have seen a few remnants of the gravestones there; the rest were removed to the garden at the other side of the church, where they now form the path.

The size of the new cemetery was much smaller than it is now; it extended from the gates, both sides of a roadway, with a lodge at the right of the entrance and a chapel at the centre; plots were marked A-J, and laid out just as they can be seen today. The right-hand side of the roadway was consecrated by the rites of the Church of England; the left-hand side, being unconsecrated, was reserved for all other denominations, or others considered not fit to lie in consecrated ground. Extensions were made either side of the road, steadily up the hillside, then continued with further plots purchased, on the left side, back down the hill. The first extension was KLMN, opened in 1898; plots O to V in 1906; WXY in 1923, then Z to EE in 1929, and so on down the hill from 1939. Plots OP were purchased by the Roman Catholic Church for burial of their own flock.

A survey of the churchyards and cemetery was made in 1909-1914, by Edward Dwelly, who lived in Herne Bay for a time, and had his own print works. His memorial inscriptions were published in 1914 as “Dwelly’s Parish Records, Volume III, Kent M.I.”, and this is an important work for local historians today, as, over 100 years later, we no longer have access to many of the memorials that Dwelly painstakingly transcribed. On making a brief survey myself in 2015, I found that many of the stones had disappeared under the ground, and many more, being of a temporary nature (glass cases, wooden crosses, etc), had perished or been replaced by a permanent stone. I calculate there are about 7,000 stones up there; a new survey is much needed, and a start will be made soon!
I William Street
Mike Bundock

The Society is currently undertaking a number of projects relating to the history of the town. One of these is recording of the various shop premises in the town and their current and previous use. Initially, we are focusing on William Street which along with Mortimer Street formed the main retail area of the town rather than the High Street.

Looking south down William Street, no.1 is on the left

Some readers will remember Webb’s the Jewellers situated on the corner of Charles Street and William Street. Although today the premises are occupied by an optician, this building served as a watchmakers and jewellers for over 100 years. The business at number 1 William Street was started around 1871 by Jonathan Carter, a watchmaker who also had premises situated in Market Street, Faversham that were opened around the same time.

As Webb’s, before it became an opticians (V. Martin)

After his retirement, Jonathan Carter continued to live in the town and lived along Mickleburgh Hill. Carter died in August 1911, aged 78 and is buried at Eddington.

Until relatively recently, the premises boasted a double dial clock high on the front wall of the shop. At one stage the dial boasted that the time shown was ‘timed daily by wireless’. In reality the two dials were probably driven by a battery powered master clock, although these were renowned for their accuracy. Today the shop still retains a period front door with frosted glass bearing the name of J W Webb, but this is the only evidence of its previous occupants now that the clock has gone.

It is perhaps Jonathan Carter’s interests outside of business that has left the greatest mark on the town, for he was a staunch Methodist and was largely responsible for the building of the Methodist church in the High Street. This church building designed by architect Charles Bell, stands on the corner of Beach Street and follows a distinctive Early English style of architecture with a tall spire that rather dominates. This church was opened in August 1885 and Carter is credited with doing much of the work involved in founding the church, along with two other townsmen, John Hogbin and Samuel Neal Mobbs. It is sad to reflect that today this building is no longer in use as a church, having undergone an extensive conversion into apartments.

One of Carter’s adverts from the mid1880s

Carter was born at Banbury in Oxfordshire and seems to have settled in Faversham to pursue his trade as a watchmaker. By reference to a number of trade directories for various years, we can learn that Carter’s Faversham business was soon run in partnership with William Webb. It seems that the relationship was quite close as it was Webb who took over from Carter when he retired in December 1893. From press adverts placed for the first few months of 1894, we can see that Webb must have purchased Carter’s stock as he was running a half-price sale.
Herne Bay’s War Dead

John Fishpool and Colleen Ashwin-Kean

We are now, of course, mid-way through the centenary of the Great War and nationally there has been considerable activity undertaken to record those who lost their lives during this conflict. The Society has been busy looking behind the names on the Herne Bay War Memorial and seeking to discover more about the people recorded there and some progress has already been made in this direction.

The Society is now looking to extend this work by means of an ongoing and ambitious project to find out as much as possible about those named on the various war memorials in the area and to learn more about their lives and backgrounds – in other words we are attempting to put some flesh on the bones. As you will no doubt appreciate this is a major task and initially we intend to concentrate our efforts on those who died in the Great War and whose names are recorded on the town’s War Memorial in the War Memorial Park. It is hoped to eventually to produce a publication on this subject - a ‘Roll of Honour’ in memory of those who gave their lives for their country.

We desperately need your help! Any photographs or details relating to any of those named on any of the war memorials in the area would be most gratefully received. Please note that the Society does not need to retain the original images but can scan them into our archives and return the original to its owner. Moreover, if you would like to get actively involved in this project and carry out some research of your own on behalf of the Society please contact John Fishpool (Project Co-Ordinator) on 01227 366863 email address: johnafishpool@hotmail.co.uk. Your assistance in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

There are many tools at our disposal and some are listed below:

1. Obituaries in local newspapers (‘Herne Bay Press’ etc);
3. Official Records: certificates of births, deaths and marriages obtainable from the General Register Office;
4. Personal recollections – obtained from elderly relatives/friends of the deceased;
5. Photographs – which give a visual image of the deceased or of their headstones.

We are also working with Canterbury City Council, along with Herne Bay in Bloom and the Royal British Legion, on the Fields in Trust/Centenary Fields Project

[www.fieldsintrust.org/centenaryfields.aspx](http://www.fieldsintrust.org/centenaryfields.aspx)

Centenary Fields is a national initiative launched by Fields in Trust to honour the memory of the millions of people who lost their lives in the Great War. Its aim is to dedicate open spaces throughout the UK as Centenary Fields. Herne Bay War Memorial Park has been chosen by CCC for the initiative as it is well suited to the aims of the scheme. The park will be legally dedicated via a Deed of Dedication and the land to be held in perpetuity alongside existing designated open spaces.

Running alongside the dedication will be several other projects:

Creating an Edwardian style garden (this has already been planted in the War Memorial area)

Interpretive history trail, with educational links to schools, to tell the story of Herne Bay during The Great War.

Artwork for the park and the interpretation boards. To involve local artists and schools.

To link with the Royal British Legion commemorations in November 2018.

If any members would like more information or be involved in these projects please contact Colleen Ashwin Kean, 01227 365014 or email hbhrs.org@gmail.com

A good introduction to Herne Bay during the Great War is provided in John Fishpool’s book produced as part of the Society’s publishing programme.
Picture Gallery

The Society is proud to own and manage a wide ranging collection of artefacts, documents and images relating to the local area. Many of these items are on display within the galleries of the Seaside Museum in William Street and others are often used within some of the regularly changing temporary exhibition programme. We have been pleased to support Canterbury City Council recently with the supply of some pictures for use on display panels attached to the outside wall of the toilets at St Georges on the seafront.

We will use this page to share a few more of our images and welcome suggestions and requests from readers for subjects for possible future inclusion and coverage.

The former Bun Penny building on the corner of William Street has been demolished now and a large modern building is being built in its place. The building started life as a doctor’s surgery and became The Royal Hotel early in the twentieth century. The name was changed to the Bun Penny as recently as 1972.

It seems hard to believe that just a few years ago the Central Bandstand was threatened with demolition. Fortunately the building was saved and fully refurbished. It is now used as a popular café, Indian restaurant and multi-use space. Building work took place in two distinct phases. The first half (shown here) was built in 1924 with the front half added in 1932.
Society Contacts
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Treasurer   John Fishpool (as above)
Curator & Archivist  Mike Bundock (as above)
Events Co-ordinator  Colleen Ashwin-Kean (as above)
Publications/merchandise  John Fishpool (as above)
Committee Members  David Birch, Margaret Wood

Our Publications
The Society has produced a number of publications and these are available for purchase by members and the general public. Our books are available from the Herne Bay Seaside Museum, 12 William Street, A Bundle of Books, 6 Bank Street and Demelza Bookshop, 165 Mortimer Street. Alternately, books can be purchased directly from the Society via John Fishpool (contact details above). We are able to post books worldwide and we would be pleased to quote postage and packing costs.

Titles currently available:
HBP 1 – Herne Bay’s Piers by Harold Gough
HBP 2 – Herne Bay’s Hotels and Public Houses by John Fishpool
HBP 3 – Mills & Milling in the Herne Bay Area by Harold Gough.
HBP 4 – Schools and Colleges in the Herne Bay Area by John Fishpool & Pauline Turner.
HBP 5 – A Town At War – Herne Bay in the Second World War by John Fishpool.
HBP 6 – Victorian Herne Bay by Mike Bundock.
HBP 7 – Smuggling in and Around the Herne Bay Area. by Harold Gough & John Fishpool.
HBP 8 – Public Houses in the Herne Bay Area by John Fishpool
HBP 10 – The Kings Hall Herne Bay – Celebrating 100 Years by Mike Bundock.
HBP 11 – Herne Bay Then & Now: A Pictorial History Celebrating 180 Years
HBP 12 – Herne Bay in the Great War 1914-1918 by John Fishpool

The cover price of each title is £7.50, except for No. 11 which is £12.00.

Members are currently working on new titles and we look forward to adding to this list later this year. Suggestion for subjects to be covered in the future would be welcome, c/o the Chairman.
Events and dates for your diary

Herne Bay Historical Records Society

We hold a series of ten winter lecture style meetings between October and April. These meetings are held in the hall of the United Church, situated next to the Fire Station in Herne Bay High Street. Doors open at 6:30pm for a 7:00pm start. These meetings are free to members, and visitors are welcome for donation of £2 per head per meeting.

Our meeting dates for 2016/2017 are listed below. Further details available from our Events Co-ordinator.

2016
6th October  AGM & Short film on Herne Bay
20th October  Winter lecture 1 (speaker and subject to be announced)
3rd November  Winter lecture 2 (speaker and subject to be announced)
17th November  Winter lecture 3 (speaker and subject to be announced)
1st December  Winter lecture 4 (speaker and subject to be announced)

2017
2nd February  Winter lecture 5 (speaker and subject to be announced)
16th February  Winter lecture 6 (speaker and subject to be announced)
2nd March  Winter lecture 7 (speaker and subject to be announced)
16th March  Winter lecture 8 (speaker and subject to be announced)
7th April  Members Evening – Projects update and display

Other Society events (all 2016)
10th May  Outing to Walpole Bay Hotel, Cliftonville – Tour & Cream Tea (booking req’d.)
27th August  History Day at the Clock Tower Information Centre, 81 Central Parade
19th November  HBHRS Fund raising quiz evening (please book via Colleen)

Heritage Walks (bookings via The Kings Hall 01227 374188)
29th May, 26th June, 31st July & 21st August

Other Events of Interest (all 2016)
18th May  Expo 16, (Business and Community Group Showcase) Kings Hall 12 noon -5pm
11th June  Giant Picnic and a Celebration of the Queen’s 90th birthday.
11am – 4pm War Memorial Park.
13th August  Herne Bay Carnival
14th August  Herne Bay Air show and Queen Tribute Band
20th – 28th August  Herne Bay Festival
17th September  Unveiling of the Amy Johnson statue

Membership

The Society welcomes applications for membership. The current subscription is £10 per year (renewable 1st October each year). Please contact the Membership Secretary, Mrs Sybil Kent (contact details overleaf) for further details. Members are able to participate in a number of activities, including attending our popular winter lecture series, assisting in the sorting of our extensive collection in preparation for cataloguing and research work towards our ongoing projects.