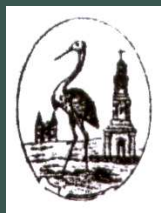


Herne Bay Historical Records Society

Founded 1932

Registered Charity No. 1148803

Custodians of the Town's Archive



Quarterly Newsletter

Winter 2017 Issue No. 4

Welcome

Society News

David Birch



It is with regret and great sadness that we announce the passing of David Birch. David has a long connection with the HBHRS, serving as a Trustee and until recently, as our Chairman. David was Herne Bay born and bred and was always pleased to share his vast firsthand knowledge of the town. Many members will have enjoyed David's talks and guided walks over the years. David leaves Valerie, his wife of nearly sixty years and their two sons, Alastair and Stewart, to whom we pass our thoughts and sympathies.

Wit & Wisdom

We are delighted to announce that this year's Wit & Wisdom evening has been booked for Saturday 18th November. The venue will revert to the Retreat Hall in Clarence Road. Full details will follow, but please note the date in your dairies so that you do not miss this popular annual event.

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Herne Bay's Grand Pier Pavilion (see page 5)

Archive Update

Much has happened since our last update. By the time you read this, most of our collection will have been removed from the museum and put into storage. From the start it was recognized that this would be a sizable task, but under the skillful project management of Colleen, our Assistant Curator and Archivist, this task has been undertaken smoothly and efficiently. The task has been made easier by a small army of volunteers from both the HBHRS and the Seaside Museum. To everyone involved, not forgetting Craig Bowen, from CCC Museums Service, I extend my sincere thanks on behalf of members.

Herne Bay Gas

Mick Hills

Herne Bays iconic Gas Holder (often incorrectly called a gasometer) is about to be demolished. Although referred to as No 3, it is in fact probably the sixth at least to be built in the town.



Gas Holder Sea Street Herne Bay

The original Herne Bay Gas Company was formed in 1839, to manufacture gas from coal and to light the towns 24 street lights. But it soon closed down and it was not until 1852 that it restarted as Herne Bay Gas and Coke Company.

The works were located between what was then Salts Lane (Park Road) and Kings Street (Kings Road). The building we know today as the Hippodrome was an 1898 extension to the manufacturing plant.

The largest Holder on this site was on what was to become the forecourt of Jacksons Garage, today the Practical Car and Van Hire Company.



Holder site being excavated for Jacksons Garage

This proved inadequate to meet the demands of the growing town and very soon two further Holders were built on the site which is now Aldi Supermarket.

A condition on the purchase was that no retorts or purifiers were to be built on the site.

This site also contained Beach House comprising the Managers House, Offices and Social Club

The town was still growing and the works were inadequate. Demand for gas was increasing and a new, more efficient works was needed. Customers were now using gas for a wide range of appliances which included cooking and heating as well as lighting

By 1912, Sea Street Works was underway, eventually with its own railway siding and the No 3 Holder. This together with the two holders in Kings Road/Beach Street stored the gas, which was manufactured in a continuous process 24 hours a day, until it was required by customers. Further demand and efficiency soon required a major rethink. The decision was made to rebuild the Dover Gas Works, install a network connecting all the systems in the East Kent Towns and then close down the small local works.

Works like Herne Bay soon became redundant and in 1957 ceased manufacturing gas. But part was retained on standby until 1961, when it was finally closed down and together with the two holders in Kings Road/Beach Street, demolished.



Kings Road Holders awaiting demolition

The No 3 Holder remained in use to meet peak demand for gas, being filled overnight from Dover and emptied as customers lit their appliances in the morning. This continued even when the town was converted to Natural Gas in the early 1970s. Dover itself was closed and Herne Bay then supplied from a National Grid

Improvements in pressure, together with new mains has resulted in local Holders being unnecessary, costly to maintain and no longer required. No 3 has not been used for some 2 years and is scheduled for demolition.

Some Holders in parts of the country have preservation orders and although no longer used are still a part of the national skyline.

Some Recollections of Herne Bay

1930 to 1950 (continued from last quarter)

Michael Weeden

On the corner of Bank Street was Maison Charles the Ladies and Gentlemen's Hair Dressers. I believe Mr Charles was of Austrian descent, but as he remained in situ during the war, he must have been naturalised as a UK citizen. His main assistant was Percy Craddock, a Welsh Wizard with the clippers! On the opposite corner was the Druid's Head pub, its landlord Ernie Pearson, was a leading light in the Fire Brigade. I clearly remember on many occasions seeing him run past our shop wearing his uniform and an impressive, shining brass helmet, on his way to the Fire Station, in response to the maroon which was fired with a loud bang, to summon the volunteer firemen. Next to the pub was Gough the cobblers and the sign on the shop fascia proclaimed, "Gough – Rhymes with Cough", just to remove any doubt about the correct pronunciation. The son, Harold, attended Simon Langton School with my brother, Kenneth George, and became well known as Librarian and local historian. Then there was a row of terraced houses and just before South Road, after the war, Ormiston, the undertakers and monumental masons were established and I was friendly with the son, Les Ormiston and together, we made a not very sea worthy boat out of deal coffin boards which we paddled along the sea front, ending up with vast quantities of black, sticky stuff on our legs and clothing from the tar we used, not very successfully, to seal the many leaks. The things one does at fifteen. The next stop and final business on the High Street was Cox's Garage.

I recall many other business in other parts of the town, including Mount's, Haulage and Turf, owned by Norman Mount, who lost his brother, Reg, in WW2, Joiner's the builders, owned by Stan Joiner and later by his son Alan, another school chum with whom I'm still in contact, George and Dorothy Hodgetts managed the St George's Hotel on the West Cliff, now flats, Maccari's Ice Cream Parlour on the corner of William Street and the Sea Front, the Joinery Works, which made ammunition boxes during the war and its owner, to celebrate the end of the war, generously hosted a grand party in the Park, including strawberries and cream, for the good people of Herne Bay. Pullinger the butcher, at one time Chairman of the Council, in New Street was a well respected member of the community and in Beltinge, Cecil Barton owned a building firm and I still see his son, Andrew, from time to time, who now lives in Margate. Welch, the

undertakers was another old established firm and a late member of that family, John Welch, was another of my school friends and rowing companion. In Mortimer Street, Waters furniture store was owned by Peter Waters who for many years was captain of the highly successful Herne Bay Roller Hockey team which had numerous international successes. An anecdote from the war; the local boatman and professional fisherman, 'Ninety' Pressley who operated from Neptune Jetty, recovered a German pilot shot down off Herne Bay. On arriving at Neptune Jetty he looked around and said, "Ah, Herne Bay. I wonder if Mr Cuttler is still teaching at the Ecole International?". He referred to the language school in Downs Park where a large number of foreign students learnt English before the war. I have French friends who live nearby in Esher and on first meeting I asked the wife, Helene, "Where did you learn to speak such good English?", to which she replied, "You won't know it, a small place called 'erne Bay!" A small world, indeed. The recent Len Goodman TV show which featured Herne Bay made an error when it was said, the Pier was cut in two. In fact, it was cut into three sections at the start of the war, one gap just north of the Pavilion, the other between the second shelter and the Pier Head, which were repaired with wooden bridges after the war. I was delighted to see Herne Bay featured on TV as I had become convinced it did not appear on a BBC map, as just about every show, including 'Coast' and all others, flip from Whitstable to Margate, with nothing in between.

As mentioned earlier, I left Herne Bay in 1951 for the Royal Air Force service, during which I met and married Shirley and lived first in Hove, Sussex, then Aylesford, near Maidstone and returned to Herne Bay in 1959 where we stayed until 1975, commuting daily to London, when business took me to Ascot, Berkshire where Shirley and I still live. My main interests were rowing for Herne Bay Amateur Rowing Club, eventually progressing to the Senior Fours, Pairs and Single Sculls, competing annually at Herne Bay Regatta and in others around the coast and eventually rowing for the RAF, roller skating and roller hockey for Herne Bay Juniors at the Pier Pavilion, and sea angling. Herne Bay was a great place to grow up in, safe for kids as pre-war in the summer holiday I would disappear just after breakfast at the age of seven or eight, spend all day on the beach with chums, digging worms for bait, fishing off the jetties and pier, and arrive back home for tea. As a teenager, I had lots of friends, including some from the language school and Maccari's was our usual haunt. Life was never dull!

Dandy C

Tim Owen

Dandy C was built in 1938, by R J Perkins, of Island Wall, Whitstable. The yard was established around 1918 by Richard John Perkins and closed around 1962. Dandy C was commissioned by a Sergeant J L Cuming and is the only one of her kind built by Perkins. She is a 28' 6" motorsailer, with a beam of 8' 10". Constructed of Burmese teak on English oak frames. She weighs around 6 tons and is powered by a 2.2 Litre BMC commander diesel engine, driving a single screw. Originally she had a 2.0 Litre 1933 Thornycroft petrol engine.



Dandy C rising in a lock

Dandy C was requisitioned by the RAF as an air sea rescue boat in September 1940 (hired at £7.10 per month) and compulsorily acquired by the Ministry of War Transport on the 26th June 1941. She was fitted with a Lewis machine gun aft, painted grey, probably with an RAF roundel, and her pennant flag number "B 024". B was used for the ARB's. She was stationed at Herne Bay, under an RAF crew, with civilian assistance from quite a famous local fisherman called 'Ninety' Pressley, and a man called Frank Holness, whose nephew has told me that "she was no stranger to contraband" and was once filled with pencils. He also told me that she once picked up an unconscious German airman, who returned to consciousness, and pulled a gun on Ninety Pressley only to be returned to unconsciousness with a punch. He was taken back and locked up in the basement of the local pub. Herne Bay was the smallest of the ARB bases in the Nore Command. Its existence, according to the book "The Battle of the East Coast" by J P Foynes, being "mainly justified by the nearby bombing base at Reculver", of Dambuster's fame. From Herne Bay she patrolled the coast from Whitstable to Ramsgate. Although officially an ARB, her duties included mine-spotting and picking up debris from attacks on the merchant shipping running the east coast.

As an ARB, she performed several rescues. On 27th November 1941, she saved five from a Wellington Bomber which suffered engine failure and was forced to ditch. "X3287 Airborne 1713hrs 27 Nov 41 from Honington. Starboard engine caught fire while crossing the Dutch coast, homebound, and the Wellington was later abandoned over Herne Bay, Kent. Two of the crew fell into the sea and were drowned; the injured were taken to the local Victoria Hospital. Sgt W.T.Ramey RCAF Inj., Sgt G. Armstrong RCAF KIA, Sgt J .Amphlett Inj., Sgt K.W.Stevens Inj., Sgt J. Rutherford Sgt P.W.Bilsborough KIA."



Dandy C moored up

On the 25th January 1943, Dandy C picked up Flight Lt. E P Wood, who ditched his fighter after a raid on Flushing. And the BBC's 'People's War' project records the following: "I recall local boatman Ninety Pressley and his involvement in the rescue and recovery of ditched airmen in the estuary. These rescues were effected by Ninety and the crew of his high-speed motor boat, Dandy. He went from the Neptune jetty to all points between Herne Bay and the Channel forts located on the Shivering Sands, Red Sands and the Knock John Tower, off Margate. German and British survivors were recovered & returned to the jetty, where on arrival and usually wrapped in blankets, they were immediately treated for exposure and wounds dressed, then marched over to the New Dolphin public house. There, military or civilian police would ensure the disposal of Germans to a POW holding wing, or in the case of the British lads, to the nearest air station, usually Manston. Our boys were sometimes back in the air within the hour, full of sustenance supplied by the good offices of Mr Ken Standen, the licensee. The temporary mortuary for the

unfortunates recovered, was an old garage housed in Eddington Lane, where a high wall screened the windows from the public. We could climb the wall and look at the shrouded bodies through a skylight window, to be chased off by the mortician when seen.” And this: “Then there was the German pilot who was shot down off Herne Bay. One of the few boatmen allowed on the sea was "Ninety" Pressley who went to rescue him. On stepping ashore, the pilot remarked "Ah, Herne Bay! Is Mr Cutler still at the Ecole International?" Pre-war, he learnt his English at this particular local language school.”

And from the obituary of Ninety Pressley :

She was requisitioned at the height of the Battle of Britain, to help stem the losses of British airmen off the Kent coast, , and the log book from this period – 1940 to 1941 – survives. Though it is not in my possession, sadly – yet! A few typical entries below; including her inventory from September 1940 : Apparently – according to old Whitstable folk – she took part in Dunkirk, but what part I don't know. Dunkirk was over by the time she was requisitioned. And there is no record of her in R P Orde's lists at Greenwich. She may have helped, in some way, at this end, but it's unlikely she went across the channel. Unless she escaped Orde's attention – which is unlikely, given the incredible thoroughness of his typewritten documents. After the war, she was owned by a Mr Osborne, who undertook the endless task of scraping the grey RAF paint off her. And after Mr Osborne, Ian Forwood, who either added, or rebuilt, the mast. In 2003, she was bought by David Thompson, who had her cockpit rebuilt and deck restored. I bought her in 2006.

These days, she is moored up the Thames, at Peter Freebody's famous old boatyard at Hurley. She has recently been taken back to bare teak and given 9-12 coats of varnish. Her mast and fittings were restored and various bits of (wrong and rotten) pine and mahogany were taken off and replaced with teak. Her cockpit was also strengthened with teak lips around the windows. She has had a new 'all over' cover made to protect her during winter, and gunmetal stanchions, cast by Davey & Co. to the original 30's patterns, were fitted in the summer of 2015. She also has a new crew, in the form of our sons, Ben (born 2014), and James (born 2015). They love the boat, and we spend most Saturdays on her. Sometimes going off up the river, and sometimes just cleaning her, playing with her wheels and ladders and switches, and feeding bread to the coots.

The opening of the Grand Pier Pavilion 3rd August 1910

Margaret Burns

It was in 1908 that Herne Bay Urban District Council was given the chance to purchase Herne Bay pier for £6000 as part of a deal with one of the main creditors of the recently bankrupt Herne Bay Pier Company. This was the town's third and longest pier and had been opened in 1899 in order to extend the shorter second pier with a view to attracting more visitors from the passing steamer trade. The opportunity to gain possession of the pier as a municipal enterprise at what seemed to be a bargain price, a mere ten per cent of the cost of its original construction, was too tempting to ignore and at a Special Meeting of the council on October 28th the terms were accepted.



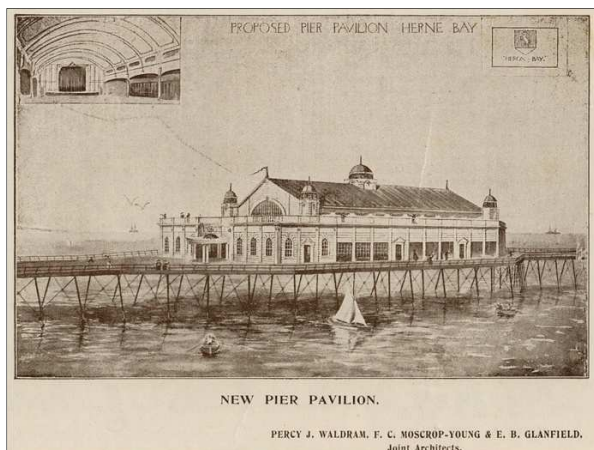
Herne Bay Pier, around 1900

The Council's first move was to look at ways of improving facilities for the general public and to create a more permanent place of entertainment on the main deck where there was still only a temporary marquee. This would require a considerable enlargement of the widened bay on which the marquee stood as well as a wider deck leading from the entrance. Application was made for a loan of £26,000 to cover the purchase and at least some of the improvements. A Local Government Board Enquiry in February 1909 approved this and a Provisional Order was granted. Royal Assent was received in August and the purchase was completed on 28th September. The pier was formally transferred to the Council on Thursday 30th September 1909 when the Town Flag was raised on the Pavilion at the entrance.

Within a short time a professional competition was launched for the design of a new Grand Pier Pavilion to replace the marquee with a prize of £2,000 awarded to the winning design by Percy J Waldram F.S.I. and Messrs. Mascrop-Young and

Glanfield of London as Joint Architects. The design was selected in a public competition the assessor appointed by the Royal Institute of British Architects being Mr T.E Hall.

Even before the widening of the deck had taken place the first load of steel framing was taken on the pier on 16th June 1910 under the contactors Messrs G Sands of Nottingham. Even after work being hindered by bad weather the new pavilion was ready for opening seven weeks from the start on 3rd August 1910.



The architect's drawing of the winning design

In the brochure produced by the architects at the time of opening the description of the building includes the following features *“an auditorium of 133ft long and 94ft wide... a floor covered with Rock Maple for roller skating ... a stage 50ft by 26ft to accommodate a large operatic company...the auditorium to seat 2000 people...considerable attention given to the ceiling curves with a view to securing the best acoustic properties.. a buffet and tea room arranged on each side of the entrance vestibule reached from either the auditorium or vestibule..turrets formed on the roof to thoroughly ventilate these and the cloakrooms are made prominent features of the exterior design”*.



Building work in progress

The grand opening was undertaken by the Lord Mayor of London the Right Honourable Sir John

Knill Bart. accompanied by The Sheriffs and Corporation of the City of London. They arrived at Herne Bay railway station at 12.23pm and were received by the Chairman of the Council and proceeded by carriages by way of Station Road, High Street, William Street, Mortimer Street Beltinge Road, Belle Vue Road, Beacon Hill, East Cliff Hill, and Sea Front to the Pier. Miss Winnie Greenwood presented a bouquet to the Lady Mayoress, Mr Percy Waldram, on behalf of the architects, made a presentation of a key to the Lord Mayor who then performed the opening ceremony. Everyone sat down to luncheon in the new pavilion at 2pm.



Sir John Knill, Lord Mayor of London

As can be seen by the copy of the menu from the opening brochure it seems to have been quite a sumptuous spread and the Toast list includes some interesting items including a humorous song by Mr Charles Coborn! The Lord Mayor and his retinue returned to the railway station at 3.30pm but the town's festivities concluded proceedings with a Grand Gala Fete on the Pier at 7pm.



A sumptuous spread indeed!

Society Contacts

Postal address = c/o CTIC, 81 Central Parade, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 5JQ

Website www.hbhrs.org

Email hbhrs.org@gmail.com

Officers

President	John Fishpool 01227 366863
Chairman	Mike Bundock 01227 362105
Vice Chairman	Colleen Ashwin-Kean 01227 365014
Secretary	Pete Watson 07783 386477
Membership Secretary	Sybil Kent 01227 637446
Publicity Officer	Margaret Burns 01227 369365
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	Margaret Wood and Tony Smith (co-opted)

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.

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 and 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 and John Fishpool.

HBP 8 – Public Houses in the Herne Bay Area by John Fishpool.

HBP 9 – Will Scott & Herne Bay by Kay Steventon and Judith Ford.

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,

HBP 13 – Digging up the Past by John Fishpool,

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

We have several new titles in the course of compilation, so we are hoping to expand this list over the course of the next year or so. Ideas for new titles are always welcome.

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 2017 are listed below. Further details are available from our Events Co-ordinator.

2017

2 nd February	Herne Bay's changing High Street, Mike Bundock
16 th February	Non-conformists of Herne Bay, Peter Watson
2 nd March	The secret life of Northfleet, Christoff Bull
16 th March	Studd Hill, a Motorist's Mecca, Margaret Burns
6 th April	Members Evening – Projects update and display
5 th October	AGM

Other Events of Interest

TBA	David Birch Memorial Lecture
12 th August	HBHRS History Day
12 th August	Herne Bay Carnival
18 th November	HBHRS Wit & Wisdom fundraising evening

** Forthcoming Publication **

An Illustrated Chronology of Herne Bay compiled by Mike Bundock

Due for publication May 2017

A4 paperback – page count to be finalised

This important work will detail many of the major events in the town's history over the past 250 years. Chronological entries will start with the very earliest mention of Herne Bay, just before the first record of sea bathing in 1770 and continue right up until more recent times. Each event listed will include descriptive text, encompassing wherever possible appropriate illustrations to add interest and context.

The page count is as yet unknown and pricing is undecided, but it is our intention to invite subscribers to place prepaid orders at a discount to the published price. Those subscribing by 31st March 2017 will (if desired) be able to have their name listed in the back of the book. Why not surprise a friend or relative and subscribe on their behalf?

Once details are finalised we will advise members and supporters that the subscription list is open.

The HBHRS is grateful to Philip Gambrell of PG & Co. for his contribution towards the cost of printing this newsletter.



Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors
Town Hall Chambers, 148 High Street, Herne Bay 01227 362887