

# Herne Bay Historical Records Society

Founded 1932

Registered Charity No. 1148803

## Custodians of the Town's Archive



## Quarterly Newsletter

Summer 2016 Issue No. 2

### Welcome

We are pleased to be able to publish the second 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 numerous activities.

Thank you for your positive feedback on the format and content. We welcome contributions that can be considered for future issues.

### Recent Society Events

#### Visit to the Walpole Bay Hotel, Cliftonville

May proved to be a busy month for the HBHRS, with 14 members enjoying a cream tea at the Walpole Bay Hotel, Cliftonville. This hotel dates back to 1914 and retains many of its period features and fittings, including a lift dating from 1927. Apart from tea, members were treated to a behind the scenes tour and the opportunity of viewing artefacts in the hotel's museum. A few words here are inadequate to describe the museum's content, such is the diversity, but anyone who was unable to attend on this occasion would certainly find a visit worthwhile.



Members enjoying tea!

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### Walk back in Time

For many years the HBHRS has conducted walks along the seafront under the heading of a "Walk back in time". Typically, these have taken place as part of the town's summer festival.

We are looking to up refresh these walks and add an extra dimension by utilizing period costumes. A trial run took place on 15<sup>th</sup> May and five members were able to enjoy the experience. Future dates are planned, so please check the events list for details. We look forward to seeing you and any friends that may be interested.



Colleen, Pete and Margaret posing as Edwardian visitors on the steps of the Clock Tower.

## The Coastal Road

Mike Bundock

Last October marked the eightieth anniversary of the completion of the Coastal Road that now runs as the A299 between Brenley Corner, Faversham and the Thanet resorts. Nowadays the road is more commonly known as The Thanet Way, but those with local roots will almost certainly recall the earlier name. At the time of completion in 1935, it was hoped that H.R.H the Duke of Kent might perform an official opening in the following spring, but it seems that this did not happen.

Prior to the building of this road, the recognised route to Whitstable and Herne Bay was via the A2 and Canterbury, or by means of B roads through Graveney. Increasing traffic volumes either side of The Great War put a great deal of pressure on road planners and the need for a new road along the north Kent coast was acknowledged during a Chambers of Commerce conference held in 1912.



The Roman Galley, one of the road houses built to serve the new road. (HBHRS/Gough)

Eventually approval was given for the building of the road and the project became the first entirely new road constructed by Kent County Council. The overall budget was just under £700,000 with 75% of this sum provided by central government. In terms of design, the road was built using the latest construction techniques of the day, with a concrete surface of approximately 12-inch thickness put down in layers onto a base of drainage medium.

Due to the size of the project, the road was built in sections, with Messrs Ellingham of Dartford used as the main contractors. Work started in 1930 with the Herne Bay to St. Nicholas section. Arguably this was the most technically demanding part of the scheme due to the need to cross the Chislet Marshes. Stability of the road surface on

this section was ensured by the use of extensive deep piling and numerous drainage culverts. Other parts of the road, although less technically challenging, were complex and time consuming undertakings, providing much needed employment.



The Chez Laurie, the now demolished road house, that once stood along the Coastal Road at Hawthorne Corner. (HBHRS)

Even before the road was completed, commercial opportunities presented by the anticipated influx of motorists using the road were being taken up. Two brand new road houses were built close to the town. The first of these, the Roman Galley, built of red brick near Reculver, was opened in 1932, while the very modern looking Chez Laurie opened in 1937. The Roman Galley building survives although not as a licensed premises, having been converted into accommodation. The Chez Laurie was demolished some years ago, leaving the former site abandoned and undeveloped.

Those motorists in need of fuel were served by a number of filling stations, including those standing on each side of the carriageway at Hawthorn Corner, Hillborough, Link Garage at Eddington and a service station built by George Fitt motors at the Chestfield roundabout.

In more recent times much the original road has been updated to become a dual carriageway, with the section between Whitstable and Herne Bay taking the form of a completely new bypass road that opened in 1998. The old section of road is still in use, but this is now known as the "Old Thanet Way" and this has been renumbered the A2990.

This now all seems so very different from the days when as a youngster, I used to cycle along what was then the main Coastal Road to and from school each day!

## Some Recollections of Herne Bay 1930 to 1950

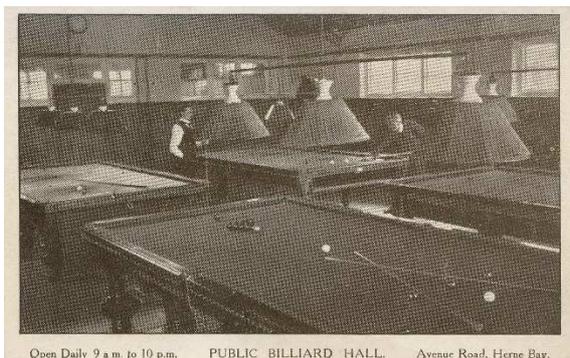
Michael Weeden

I was born at 174, High Street, Herne Bay on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1930 to Emily Dora (Nee Shrimpton) and Archibald George Weeden, at the Ideal Fish Shop run by my mother and my sister, Kathleen, where I lived until called up for service in the Royal Air Force in March 1951. My memories of prominent businesses on the main streets of the town and those who ran them are still very clear and this is how I recall them.

The Broadway to Canterbury Road

The Broadway – North Side. Hoare's Store. A rowing companion, Peter Hoare, worked in and helped manage the shop.

Avenue Road – North Side. The Billiard Hall, which, I believe had four or six tables and later became a venue for whist drives which my father, known as Arch or George, and my sister, Kathleen frequently attended.



Inside the Avenue Road Billiard Hall

The Odeon Cinema opened shortly before the war, I think around 1937 and the first film was Snow White. Further along on the corner was Root & Clark, a Garage, owned by Bob Root. I can't recall anything significant between there and Bob Scrivens, Photographers, who, between him and his father, captured photographically, so much of Herne Bay's history. On the other corner of Richmond Street was George Fitt Motors, owned by a member of the well-known Fitt family of Herne Bay and Whitstable which included Arthur Fitt, landlord of the Richmond Tavern and the Diver's Arms and his son, another close friend and rowing companion, John Fitt. After the war, Arthur Fitt created a caravan site east of the town. Moving on, we come to the Red Lantern cinema, a strange

name, I always thought, which became a uniform clothing factory during the war and just along from this was the Herne Bay Gas Light & Coke Company showroom and offices, later to become the Gas Board, which had its gas works in Sea Street. Across the road was the Methodist Church, then, a few paces away was the Baptist Church, next door was the Constitutional Club, of which I later became a member and then, the solicitor, Jack Iggulden, a well-known Herne Bay resident. He had a brother, Col. Douglas Iggulden. Next was the office of the Herne Bay Press and on the corner of the High Street and William Street was ironmonger, Adolfus Hill which had tin baths hanging outside and on the opposite corner, the Midland Bank, next to which was the Fire Station. During the war, my sister did voluntary fire watching duty on the roof, spotting any fires caused by enemy incendiary bombs which may have been dropped on our town. Then came Thundow's, a sweet shop, which, I think, became an Estate Agents, run by another friend, John Hawkins. Next door was the Congregational Church, the main entrance of which was in Mortimer Street. Very unusual at that time, the Minister was a woman, the Revd. Elanor Shakeshaft, who took on that duty when her Minister husband died. I have fond memories of it as I was baptised there and became a member of the attached Boy's Brigade where I learnt to play the bugle, which eventually equipped me to join the station band, playing the trumpet and tenor horn at RAF Benson. Miller the florist came next, then, I think, an opticians and a ladies' hat shop owned by a French woman, Madame Blanchette., which, I think, later became a Dry Cleaners. When I was a child, opposite our shop was the house made infamous by Smith, the Brides in the Bath murderer, who was said to have purchased one of the notorious baths from Adolfus Hill. Next came another ironmonger, Admans, then another ladies shop and then Joy the Builders in which Gilbert Joy, a pre-war coxswain of the Herne Bay Amateur Rowing Club worked. On the corner of Bank Street was a small garage and on the opposite corner, Spry, the electricians, next to which was Bridges, the greengrocer, owned by another friend, Bertie Bridges, then a few cottages and Minter's the fishmonger, owned by Harold Minter.

To be continued next quarter.

## The Reculver Giant

Dr Brian Philp MBE

Older members my just recall that I directed excavations at the Roman fort at Reculver for 18 years. This, with the loyal support of Harold and Anne Gough, discovered more than 12 important Roman military buildings. We also discovered over 20,000 Roman artefacts including a nationally important inscription from the headquarters building. For the first time our work revealed a sequence of Roman occupation spanning three centuries.



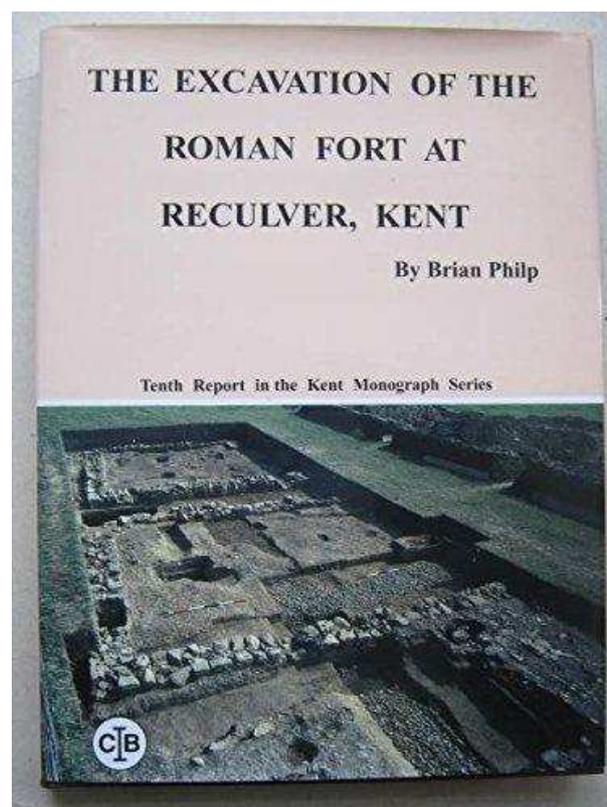
Reculver 1968. Excavations as seen from the West.

In spite of the importance of this work, it was almost the least significant discovery that attracted national attention. This became known as the "Reculver Giant". It was in 1969 that our trench inside the ancient Reculver church revealed a grave dug through the church floor. In it we found the skeleton of a large man. Unusually, there were three iron bands across his chest, waist and legs. The famous *Herne Bay Press* (Mr. Smitherman) soon identified this as a manacled giant! Then the local vicar visited and his theory was that giants were often mad and thus had to be manacled! So Fred, as we called him, suddenly became a manacled giant! This attracted the local police chief who declared that we could see a padlock!

All this excitement attracted the national press and soon over 2,000 visitors flooded to the site. My old custodian friend, Dennis Hicks, was delighted for it pushed up ticket sales (then 3d and 6d) to the

towers. A few days later our careful examination of the metal straps established that they were no more than the metal straps that had once been attached to the top of the wooden coffin. The wood had eventually rotted and the straps had fallen onto poor Fred. Furthermore, he was only 5 feet 9 inches tall!

Do any of our members recall these dramatic events, now at long last corrected?



The full excavation report on the Reculver Roman Fort was published in 2005 and dedicated to Harold and Anne. Members wishing to have a copy can do so at the special reduced rate of just £9 (plus £3 postage); normal price to non-members is £28.

234pp, illustrated in black and white and with folding plans and colour plates. Size: 280x210mm.

Orders should be sent to KARU, Roman House, New street, Dover, CT17 9AJ



St Mary's Church, Reculver c.1800

## **“Those were the Days” A snapshot of Entertainment in Herne Bay in 1960s**

Margaret Burns

It was while I was looking through some papers relating to my childhood in Herne Bay that I came across several programmes of the Summer Shows held at the Grand Pier Pavilion from late 1950's and early 1960's.

As I read through them I was instantly reminded of a time, back in the day, before the advent of television when our main source of entertainment was live, individual, participative and eagerly anticipated every year.

When my sister and I were growing up as children just after the second world war we spent a great deal of our time on the beach, up and down the seafront, walking on the pier and during the summer we took advantage of the entertainment opportunities provided by the Herne Bay Urban District Council at their various venues. One of our favourites when we were quite small was the Punch and Judy show which was run by “Uncle Colin” at his pitch just outside the Pier entrance. If we were lucky my mother would buy us an ice cream from the Eldorado man who pushed a white refrigerated barrow along the promenade and always seemed to appear on cue just as the show finished. We weren't allowed to run around eating it though, we had to sit down – usually on the low sea wall – until we had finished and our hands and faces were clean.

As we grew a bit older up we were frequent visitors to the Central Bandstand where the resident band I remember was Wylie Price and his orchestra. There were two performances a day throughout the season which lasted from mid-June to the third week in September. These were designed to cater for all sections of the community and the huge number of summer holiday makers staying in the town. You could enter for the weekly Talent Show (mainly singers and amateur magicians I remember) take your baby along to the Baby Show or just sit and listen to the music at the band concerts. One of our favourite sessions was the Old Time Dancing evening as both Mum and Dad were good dancers – we used to practice at home by rolling up the living room carpet and dancing the light fantastic to Harry Davidson's weekly music programme on the radio “Those Were the Days” – so we knew all the dances; the Gay Gordons, Military Two Step, Barn Dance, Valeta, St Bernard's Waltz, Palais Glide and many others. Our other favourite evening was Party Night on Fridays when

everyone ( including the band ) let their hair down ,usually dressing up for a particular theme and always finishing the evening dancing the conga all around the bandstand ,up on the stage over the top of the sun deck and falling about exhausted and happy at the end.

My Mum and Dad remembered enjoying similar events with the resident band that preceded Wylie Price, from before and just after the war, Billy Merrin and his Commanders, who were quite well known nationally through their records and radio broadcasts. The other entertainment that we looked forward to were the summer shows held at the Grand Pier Pavilion. The two shows that I particularly remember were “Sincerely Yours” which ran from 1955 to 1957 presented by Jack Rogers and “Zip-A-Hoy” presented by Jerry Jerome from 1959 to 1963.

When the name of the current show was displayed on the front of the Pier Pavilion at the beginning of every summer replacing the winter one which just said “Skating” we knew that the entertainment season had really started. The shows featured a mixture of musical items, dancers and sketches and there were usually four separate programmes which ran consecutively throughout the season ensuring that if you were staying in the town for a fortnight's holiday you could see a different show in your second week. Some of the artists I remember were Avril Fane, a regular singer with the “Zip-a-Hoy” shows and Marty Swift a young comedian who was new to Herne Bay in 1961 but continued to come back with the show for the next couple of years until they finally finished by the mid-sixties and Jerry Jerome took the show to Southend.

In 1963 I worked as an usherette at the Pier Pavilion and this was the first year that the show moved for three performances a week to the King's Hall as a cabaret type show. We were then also employed as Bar Waitresses and the floor of the auditorium was arranged with separate tables where customers could drink and snack whilst the show was going on. It was a very successful format and the evenings were usually well patronised. Unfortunately, the scene was soon to change with the advent of cheap air travel packages abroad in the late 60s and early 70s which altered the social pattern of traditional family holidays, spent in seaside resorts such as Herne Bay, forever. Television was also a factor influencing people's entertainment expectations resulting in the decline in popularity of the live “end of the pier shows” and open air band concerts. However, I still remember them as an integral part of Herne Bay's history and for me, in my memory, those were the days.

## 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 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.

This quarter, we have included three images that support Margaret's article about entertainment on the pier during the 1960s. The two colour images show covers of the programmes, complete with lucky numbers. The banner promoting Sincerely Yours can just be seen above the arched window on the front of the pier.



## Society Contacts

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

Website [www.hbhrs.org](http://www.hbhrs.org)

Email [hbhrs.org@gmail.com](mailto: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	David Birch, Margaret Wood

## Membership

The Society welcomes applications for membership. The current subscription is £10 per year (renewable 1<sup>st</sup> 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,

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 £3 per head per meeting.

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

### 2016

6 <sup>th</sup> October	AGM & Short film(s) on Herne Bay
20 <sup>th</sup> October	Westgate-on-Sea: A New Watering-Place, Dr Dawn Crouch
3 <sup>rd</sup> November	The Life & Times of Edith Cavell, Melanie Gibson-Barton
17 <sup>th</sup> November	More tales from the cemetery, Pete Watson
1 <sup>st</sup> December	Winter lecture 4 (speaker and subject to be announced)

### 2017

2 <sup>nd</sup> February	Herne Bay's changing High Street, Mike Bundock
16 <sup>th</sup> February	Non-conformists of Herne Bay, Peter Watson
2 <sup>nd</sup> March	Winter lecture 7 (speaker and subject to be announced)
16 <sup>th</sup> March	Studd Hill, a Motorist's Mecca, Margaret Burns
7 <sup>th</sup> April	Members Evening – Projects update and display

### Other Society events (all 2016)

27 <sup>th</sup> August	History Day at the Clock Tower Information Centre, 81 Central Parade
10 <sup>th</sup> October	An evening of First World War History with Andrew Tatham. (see flyer)

### Heritage Walks (bookings via The Kings Hall 01227 374188)

21<sup>st</sup> August

### Other Events of Interest (all 2016)

13 <sup>th</sup> August	Herne Bay Carnival
14 <sup>th</sup> August	Herne Bay Air show and Queen Tribute Band
20 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup> August	Herne Bay Festival
17 <sup>th</sup> September	Unveiling of the Amy Johnson statue
19 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>Fund raising quiz evening (Please support us for this event. Full details to be confirmed, but the format will follow that of last year, with food and soft drink supplied. Tables to consist of eight, but individuals and smaller groups will be most welcome).</b>

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## NOTICE OF AGM

The AGM of the Herne Bay Historical Records Society will take place at 7pm on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016 at the Lower Hall of the Herne Bay United Church, High Street, Herne Bay. All officer and committee positions are reappointed each year and anyone wishing to nominate a paid up member for a post is requested to advise the Secretary, Pete Watson c/o the society address on page 7.