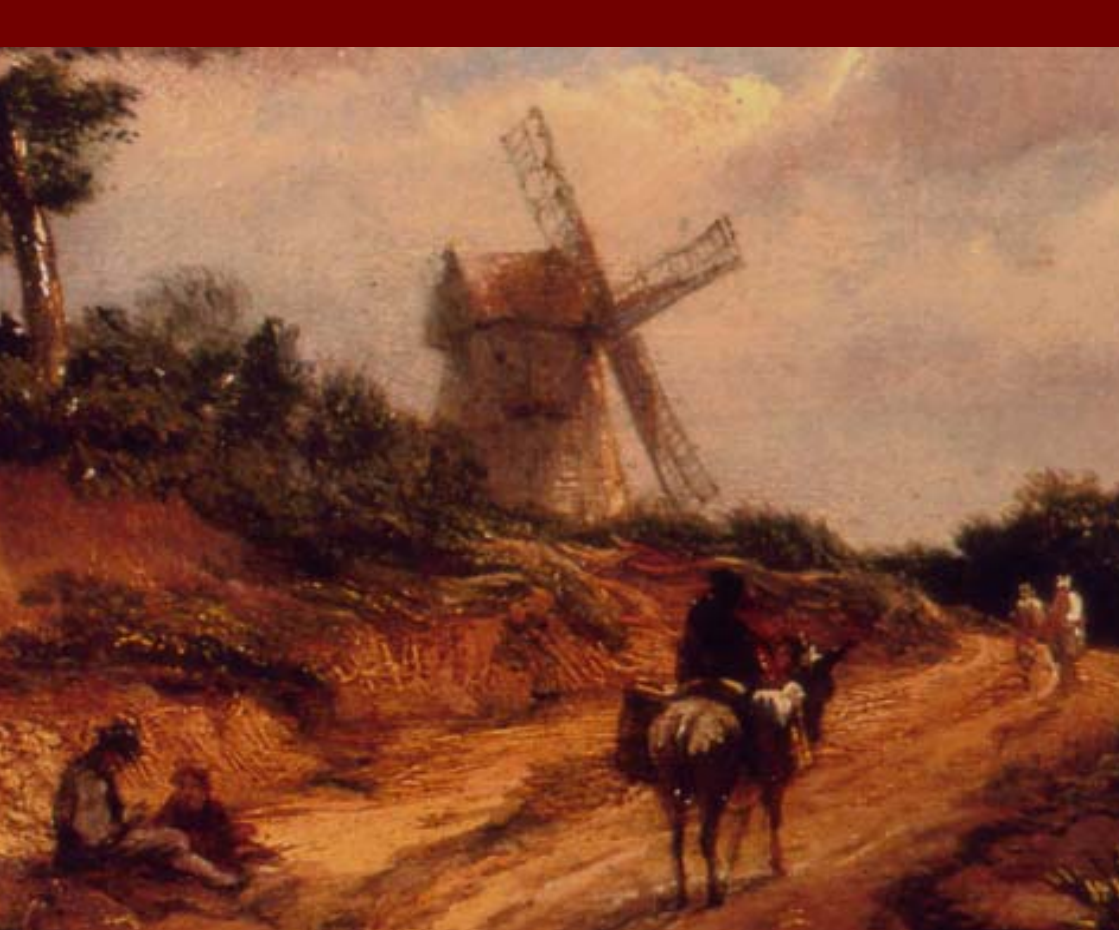


Autumn
2007



Royal Tunbridge Wells

Civic Society

Newsletter



In this Issue:



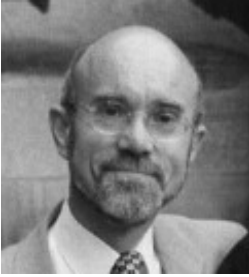
HOD's Garden Party Opera



Contents

- An Uncommonly Complicated Business ... 4**
Chris Jones simplifies the history of the Manor of Rusthall.
- From the Planning Scrutineers ... 7**
Notes from Gill Twells.
- Chairman's Letter** by John Cunningham ... 8
- Joseph Josiah and Charles Tattershall Dodd ... 10**
Philip Whitbourn considers what the work of two Tunbridge Wells artists can tell us about changes in the appearance of the town.
- Absolutely SPAB ... 15**
Kate Minnis explains the history and role of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.
- Heritage Open Days 2007 ... 18**
- Local History Group News ... 20**
More details of the Tattershall Dodds.
- A Season of Arias ... 21**
and a memory of Venice from Chris Jones.
- Putting Faces to Names - Michael Doyle ... 21**
- Garden Party 2007 ... 22**
- Forthcoming Events ... 24**

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An Uncommonly Complicated Business

by Chris Jones

There seems to have been considerable surprise amongst the townsfolk, on being told that the Common was for sale, that it was not already publicly owned. I suppose that that just shows what an effective arrangement we have had over these last many years, whereby a privately-owned asset has been enjoyed by all. But to pursue that particular line of thought would take us into an argument about how we should respond to the news of the sale, and the point of this article is simply to examine the history of the Manor of Rusthall and explain how we got to the current situation.

The Manor of Rusthall pre-dates Tunbridge Wells by some centuries. There were references to Rusthall, or rather Rustwell, in Saxon times, though initially only as a temporary settlement for a few weeks each autumn as pigs were brought to the area to feed on acorns and beech mast. Only gradually did permanent settlements develop and then only sparsely.

Yet even in medieval times this insignificant bit of land, off the beaten track, had an organisational identity and a structure. The first person whom we can identify as Lord of the Manor -

Hilary de Sutton in the 13th century - will have held the manor from some greater landlord, in return for payments or services. When he sold or rented parcels of the land to tenants, they were liable not only to rent, but to other services as well. In a sense these were simply another form of rent, but they also reflected the reality of the manor as a working unit. The converse of these duties owed by the tenants, were rights that they had over aspects of the manor beyond their own particular holding - to graze their animals, for example, on common land, and to collect wood, animal bedding and other materials. In an agricultural economy these were important aspects of property ownership.

The Manor of Rusthall covers the area from London Road westwards towards Langton, and from Eridge Road northwards to Rusthall and Speldhurst. Over the years 'tenants' or 'freeholders' took ownership of the better bits: in Rusthall and along Mount Ephraim. In the centre was the area known as the 'manor waste' - largely uncultivated land on which the tenants had various rights to graze and forage.

By the late 17th century, though, it

was obvious that the Wells presented a considerable money-making opportunity. In 1682 the Manor was bought by Thomas Neale, a London property developer, with a view to the development of what was to become the Pantiles.

But the Pantiles lay on the area of the 'manor waste', and although Neale owned the land, he had to get the agreement of the 'freehold tenants' before he could use it. Theoretically this was agreement to the loss of their grazing rights, but the area was relatively small, so it was probably more a case of them simply wanting their share of whatever money was to be made - all the more so because the new facilities would affect the business they were themselves already getting from the visitors.

A settlement was reached in 1687 between the Manor and the Freehold Tenants in which the latter received an annual payment for the loss of their grazing rights. Fifty years later the settlement was extended and formalised in the Rusthall Manor Act of 1739. This included a division of the Pantiles properties between Manor and Tenants in the ratio 2:1. That ratio has been used ever since by the Tenants in claiming their share of any income from the Common. The Act also placed restrictions on any future 'encroachments' on the waste.

This was the arrangement that applied for the next one hundred and fifty years or so. The Common was managed by the Freehold Tenants, who col-

lected rents, policed encroachments, maintained and improved the land.

The next major change came with the Tunbridge Wells Improvement Act of 1890. This Act was essentially to regulate the affairs of the newly-incorporated Borough of Tunbridge Wells, but the new Council took the opportunity to extend its influence over the Common (or rather, Commons, as there are two of them). In return for the cost of upkeep, the Council got access and further restrictions on development. One important aspect of the Act was the creation of the Commons Conservators to take over the day-to-day management of the Common. There are twelve Conservators, four each appointed by the Lord of the Manor, the Freehold Tenants, and the Borough Council. The 1890 Act also, for the first time, included a provision that "the inhabitants of Tunbridge Wells and the neighbourhood shall have free access". Although the 1890 Act is no longer in operation, its main provisions were re-enacted in the County of Kent Act of 1981.

In the meantime, the Lords of the Manor were collecting their rents and developing their property in the rest of the Manor. One particular holder of the Lordship, Frank Baird, was especially keen on the application of manorial rights no matter how obscure, or how long the properties had been in private hands. One particular right was that of Heriot - under which, on the death of a tenant, the Lord of the Manor

could claim the tenant's best beast. It is recorded that on the death in 1912 of Edward Kelsey, of the brewing family who owned the Red Lion in Rusthall, the Manor demanded and received a horse. There is also a story that they (unsuccessfully) claimed a pet dog on the death of another tenant. These rights were finally extinguished in the 1920's.

So, the situation that we appear to have at present is as follows:

- the Manor of Rusthall is in the hands of members of **the Menuhin family** (specifically Jeremy and Gerard, with a share held by the Yehudi Menuhin School in Stoke d'Abernon). They inherited it from their mother Diana, who inherited it from her mother. They now wish to sell.

- the Manor includes ownership of the Commons and various other properties, principally on the Pantiles. These include most of the Upper Walk, including the Bath House and Swan Hotel; the buildings opposite, from what was Todd's Vintry up to, but not including, the Duke of York; the old Fishmarket, and the block from Trevor Mottram's to the Musick Gallery. It also includes what we might think of as public spaces - the Walks themselves, and the colonnade.

- it may be that the Manor is actually owned by a **Trust**, held for the benefit of the Menuhins. There are two trustees, long-time residents of Tunbridge Wells. Technically, therefore, it could be the Trust that is selling

the Manor.

- then there are the **Freehold Tenants**. At present there are about 30, though this is simply to say that only about 30 of the people who live in properties within the defined boundaries of the 'waste' have registered. To some extent the role of the Freehold Tenants was taken over by the Commons Conservators in 1890, and for much of the 20th century they were largely inactive. It seems though that the damage caused by the Storm of 1987 stung them into action and they have played a more active role since then. They do have a distinct financial interest. As noted above they can claim a third share of any revenue generated from the Commons. Although there is little income these days from grazing, it does come from access rights across the Common, from the car park on the Fairground site; and from various wayleaves granted to utility companies.

- and finally, the **Commons Conservators**, who meet four times a year to define strategy and manage the work of the Commons Warden, Steve Budden. They have an annual budget of over £100,000, provided by the Council, and also get support from the Friends of the Commons and the Freehold Tenants. Though there is no suggestion that they work against either of the other parties, their mandate is to preserve, maintain, regulate and improve the commons, for the benefit of the **inhabitants of the borough** and neighbourhood.

From the Planning Scrutineers

by Gill Twells



An Appeal has been submitted against TWBC's refusal, for the second time, of permission for the redevelopment of nos. 69 & 71 **Culverden Park Road** into a new block of 7 flats. The Society commented that "we remain concerned by the substantial change of character such a development will create. In our view, it is the proposed multiple occupancy element of the scheme which will contribute in large part to this unwelcome change of character."

The appeal against refusal of the first application resulted in a Public Inquiry and a dismissal of the appeal. This appeal is to be conducted by 'written statement', so there will be no Public Inquiry. Anyone may send in written comments to the Inspectorate, by 9th October. The Inspector's decision is expected in due course.

We have hosted 2 pre-application presentations on proposals for new blocks of flats, one on a site between **Kingswood** and **Bayhall Roads** – and the other for the site between the Spa Valley railway shed and the **Eridge Road**. Both proposals were also displayed at public exhibitions and both

seem to us to have been suitably modified following comments by the public and the Society.

Former **Habitat** – approval for Cotswold Outdoor Ltd with café on the ground floor and tables on a portion of the pavement. We are pleased that the permission given included conditions restricting delivery times and management of refuse. We have, however, suggested improvements to the proposed signage on the building.

We are disappointed that the TWBC has permitted the conversion of the front garden of 63 **Mount Sion** to a hardstanding for car parking. Whilst we realise that being unable to park outside one's house must be a nuisance, we are concerned that this will create a precedent which will change unfavourably the streetscape of the whole west side of the road.

A new fabric canopy over the open area at the centre of **Ely Court** has been approved as part of a refurbishment of the whole area. This proposal is like many others recently approved for protection for smokers wishing to visit pubs, who may only do so now in the open air.

Chairman's Letter

Two new issues - the sale of the Manor of Rusthall's assets and the Council 's search for a Development Partner - have arisen since my last Letter, to be added to the two major issues listed last time – 'Back-Garden Grabbing' and Affordable Housing .

*As everyone now knows, the **Manor of Rusthall** has put up for sale the title of Lord of the Manor, the two Commons (Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall, in all some 256 acres) and that part of The Pantiles which it owns (said to be about a third). Rather than use their local agent, Ibbett Mosely, they have appointed the largest agent in the world – CBRE (CB Richard Ellis) which is headquartered in Los Angeles and has 250 offices worldwide and 14,000 employees – so it clear that they are looking for a rich buyer and probably from abroad. It is believed that they want a single purchaser for the lot and will only consider breaking it up, if such a person does not come forward. If this is the case, the price for 'the lot' would be likely to be such, that it would preclude most, if not all, local initiatives; and the sale would go to an outsider. CBRE are preparing a report and prospectus which, it is said, will be available at the end of September.*

This is the first time the properties have been on the market since the 1750's. The Pantiles and the Commons are the epitome of all that is Tunbridge Wells and there is a very natural concern about who the purchaser might be and what they might do with it. It is said that the interests of the inhabitants of Tunbridge Wells particularly in the Commons are fully protected by various Acts of Parliament, including the latest County of Kent Act of 1981. However there is always the fear that some clever lawyer might find a loophole in what is thought to be watertight and fireproof. There is also the fear that the new owner, particularly a foreign one, might not have the same understanding of the nature of Tunbridge Wells as its inhabitants, and might wish to make changes without due consideration and consultation.

Until the report/prospectus is published, everyone is very much in the dark and it is difficult to know what can or should be done about the sale. But in anticipation of publication, the Civic Society has done several things. It has registered itself as 'an interested party' with CBRE in order that it can receive all documentation. It has held an emergency Executive Committee meeting to discuss the issue and authorise the funding of any minor administrative costs. It has joined with other organizations in the Town who have an interest in the Commons, such as the Friends of the Commons, the Inner London Road Residents' Association and the Town Forum, to form a Coordinating Committee which could act collectively, if necessary. That Committee has already met with both Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and Kent County Council (KCC) to establish where both these bodies stood on the issue. Both these bodies are as much in the dark as we are and what can or should be done, must wait until more information is available. It is however fair to say that both bodies indicated their moral support of the aims of the Committee, but whether that can turn into practical and/or financial support is another matter and will depend on how the sale is marketed.

It should however be recorded that when 2,000 acres of the Ashdown Forest was put

up for sale by Earl de la Warr in 1988, it was bought for £1million for the public by an 'in effect' consortium which consisted of East Sussex County Council, the Uckfield Rural District Council, other local organizations and public subscription. It should also be recorded that TWBC has Capital Reserves variously estimated at £28-40 million, although TWBC maintains that most of their Reserves are already committed. However by the time you read this, everything may be out in to open; and my remarks above may be out-of-date and superseded.

Another new matter of concern is TWBC's search for a Development Partner which is currently underway and is down to a short-list of six, the largest of which has a capital value of over £1.2 billion and even the smallest has a value of over £350 million. While accepting that TWBC with its annual turnover of under £15 million, needs a development partner for its £90 million of properties, our concern is that a very large sophisticated developer could 'eat TWBC for breakfast'. TWBC is offering its new Partner 'the right of first refusal', together with the use of the Council's powers of compulsory purchase and our concern is that the Council unwittingly may be 'playing with fire' in having such a large Partner. A smaller partner might be more suitable, more amenable and more controllable.

Other local issues on which we need to keep a close watch are

- * the performance and attitude of KCC Highways, and their continuing failure to maintain the condition of roads, pavements and street lighting in TW;
- * 'grot spots' on which there does not seem to be too much current activity by TWBC;
- * 'planning blight' (there is still no application submitted for the Ritz site);
- * and the review of RTW Conservation Areas.

Our Garden Party this year was held on Saturday 14th. July in the grounds of Adam's Well Cottage, Langton Green, by kind permission of the owners, Mr. & Mrs. Peter Harbour. The Mayor and many other members of the Council attended and we were fortunate in having a fine evening to enjoy the sylvan setting.

Heritage Open Days took place from Thursday 6th. September to Sunday 9th. September this year and once again the Civic Society took the lead in organising them. Our special thanks go to Daniel and Katharina Bech for their invaluable part in the organisation, particularly of publicity. Last year's event was deemed to be a great success, with 30 properties/events participating and an estimated 5,000 visitors. This year the number of participating properties increased to 40, with 'new' properties such as Mabledon and Eridge Park and the number of guided walks being increased to five. Our 'guesstimate' of attendance is about 7,000.

Our **Annual Conservation Awards** are being presented by Greg Clark, MP at our next meeting on Thursday 11th. October:

Our **Annual General Meeting** takes place on Thursday 9th. November; at which there will be the Election of Officers and Committee. Members are urged to put themselves forward for election. More details can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Pauline Everett.





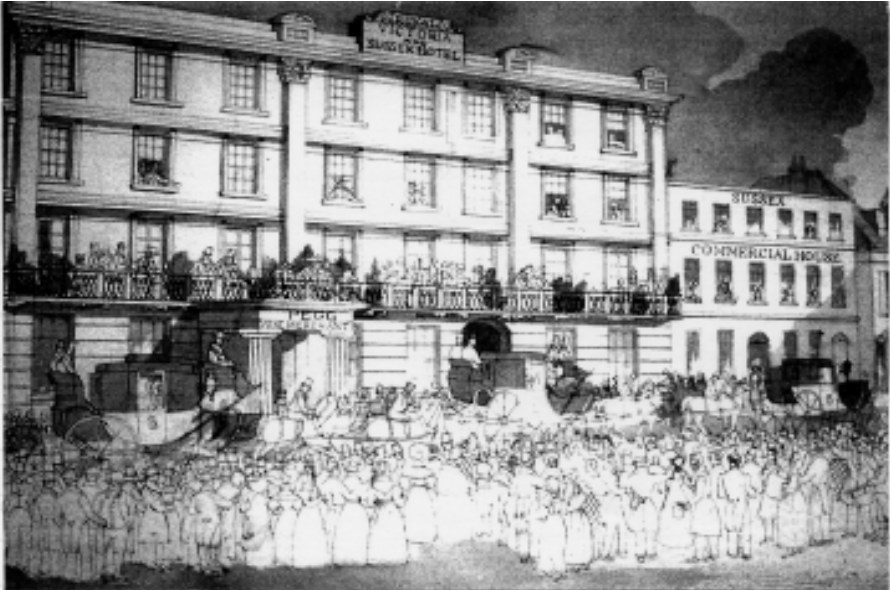
Joseph Josiah and Charles Tattershall Dodd - Artists of Tunbridge Wells Wells

by Philip Whitbourn

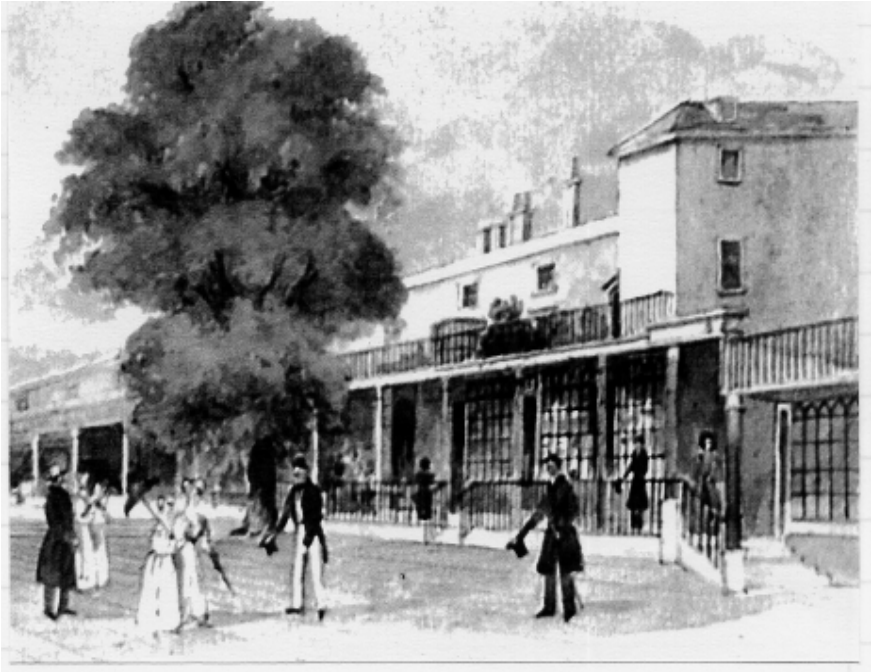
The name of the Tunbridge Wells artist Charles Tattershall Dodd will have been well known to many members of the Society for some long time. That of his elder brother, Joseph Josiah Dodd, probably considerably less so. It was good, therefore, to see the work of the two brothers brought together recently, in the Art Gallery Exhibition entitled “Re-united”.

From a local history point of view,

we can be grateful to both artists for portraying Tunbridge Wells scenes at a time of great change. Joseph was born in 1809 and first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1832, at the age of about 23. His younger brother Charles, born in Tunbridge Wells in 1815, did not become a Royal Academy exhibitor until 1847, some fifteen years after his brother, although he had exhibited at other galleries. A friend of the artist



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The Royal Collection. Copyright: 2007 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

W.P.Frith, RA, Charles continued to exhibit at the Academy until 1859, his address throughout that period being in Mount Pleasant. Later in life he established the family home at Grosvenor Lodge in Grosvenor Road, a house that still survives. For much of his life, however, Charles was living where Hoopers shop now stands, from which vantage point he would have looked across the road at the new railway station, and witnessed the many changes that the coming of the railway in 1846 brought to the town.

By then, Joseph was far away in Manchester, where he taught perspective and architectural drawing at the School of Design from 1848 to 1850, before moving to North Wales.

Joseph's work in Tunbridge Wells belongs to a somewhat earlier period, the era of Decimus Burton's Calverley and the Princess Victoria's royal visits. The first of these visits was recorded by Joseph, as the Princess left The Pantiles in November 1834 (see opposite). There is a strong tradition that Joseph or his brother gave lessons to the young Princess although, sadly, this is not confirmed in her diaries. What is certain, nevertheless, is that in 1835 Joseph presented the Princess Victoria with a morocco-bound album of watercolours and pencil views of Tunbridge Wells and the surrounding area. This is preserved in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle. The volume is inscribed: "To her Royal Highness the Princess Vic-

toria, this volume is humbly dedicated by her Royal Highness' most obliged humble servant J.J.Dodd". The dedication is embellished with coats of arms, cupids and painting equipment, and it bears the inscription "Aut vincere aut mori" ('victory or death').

Among the views is a watercolour (see previous page) of The Pantiles showing, apparently, the Princess and her mother walking in Bath Square, with gentlemen dutifully doffing their top hats. The royal arms are displayed above what was then Nash's bookshop, and is now The Pantiles Bookshop. Another watercolour in the volume shows Trinity Church, with the Royal Standard flying from the top of the tower. The painting is inscribed "New Church Tunbridge Wells from Calverley Park", and is signed and dated J.J.Dodd 1835. Trinity Church

also features in a view (see below) produced by Joseph for the antiquary John Britton's "Descriptive Searches of Tunbridge Wells and the Calverley Estate" published in 1832.

A little later, younger brother Charles provided illustrations for Colbran's Guides of the 1840s. One such view (see opposite) is a print of London Road and Mount Ephraim, which features the Cottage Orn e St Helena and its associated outcrops of rock. A painting also exists from a similar viewpoint and reminds us that The Common had a different character when grazed by animals. By the early part of the 19th century romantic landscape painting had become a central theme of British art and both brothers seemed especially at home with subjects that included trees and rocks. High Rocks and Toad Rock needless to say, were both the





subject of works by the two brothers. Charles' illustration of Toad Rock (see below) in Colbran's Guide shows a distant view of Culverden Windmill which, again, was a subject painted by both brothers. It is said that when Constable painted "Hampstead Heath with a rainbow", he added a windmill that had never existed there. The Dodd brothers did not need to take artists' licence

to such lengths, as a convenient windmill certainly existed in the vicinity of the present Culverden Park Road. Charles Tattershall Dodd's oil painting of Culverden Mill is shown on the front cover of this newsletter. Another delightful reminder of a past age is Charles' watercolour (see overpage) of the Turnpike Gate on Frant Road. From The Pantiles, in former times Turnpike Roads led westwards, by way of Major York's Road towards Maresfield; southwards along Eridge Road and through Ropers Gate towards Uckfield; northwards towards London and Pembury; and eastwards towards Frant, Wadhurst and Mayfield. The 1846 Tithe Map for Frant Parish shows the Frant Road Toll Gate close to the present junction with Broadwater



Down. However, in 1847 it was moved, not without protest apparently, to Rumber's Hill. Charles Tattershall Dodd illustrates the old Toll House, Montacute Cottage, and a covered cart of the period passing through the toll gate.

Charles was a staunch teetotaler, and was Secretary of the Temperance Society, an interest that was not, apparently, shared by his brother. Charles was also Treasurer of the Freehold Land Society, and his name features, rather to the surprise of some, on title deeds of various properties in the town. He died on 27th November 1878 at the age of 63 and is buried in Woodbury Park Cemetery, along with his wife Jane, and other members of their family.



Joseph lived on until 20th June 1894, when he died near Oldham at the goodly age of 86. However, the legacy of the brothers lives on through a series of works that both delight the eye and provide a unique topographical and historical record.

Please see page 20 below for further details of Grosvenor Lodge and the Culverden windmill.



Copyright: Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery



Absolutely SPAB

**Kate Minnis explains the role of the
Society for the Protection of Ancient
Buildings**

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) was founded by William Morris in 1877 making it the oldest buildings' conservation society in the country. The 19th century saw a growing interest in medieval architecture and ancient buildings and with it a desire to 'restore' such buildings to return them to an imagined medieval appearance. Many Victorian architects were engaged in such 'restorations', particularly of medieval churches and cathedrals which resulted in stripping back the fabric in an attempt to return them to their original appearance. The impetus to establish a society to protect old buildings came about as a reaction to this trend.

One particularly notorious case was that of St Albans Cathedral which in the 1870s underwent a restoration scheme by Lord Grimthorpe which stripped away the historic fabric of the west front, replacing genuine medieval craftsmanship with a Victorian idea of what a medieval cathedral should look like.

But it was the scheme by George

Gilbert Scott for Tewkesbury Abbey in 1877 that spurred Morris to propose 'an association to be set on foot to keep watch on old monuments.' He went on to found it himself and was actively involved in its early years, attending more than 400 committee meetings between the founding of the Society and his death in 1896. Other members of the new society included many of Morris's friends from the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of artists – William Holman Hunt, Edward Burne-Jones, William de Morgan – as well as other influential figures of the day such as the MP Sir John Lubbock. Also prominent on the committee and particularly important in establishing the principles on which the SPAB was to work was the architect Philip Webb who designed the Red House at Bexleyheath for Morris.

Those principles, which continue to underpin the Society's work today, were to encourage repair rather than restoration and to remove as little as possible of original work. As Morris himself said 'What old buildings need is mending, not renewing'. He also



William
Morris,
founder
of the
SPAB

believed that any work carried out on an old building should be based on a thorough understanding of its construction and that new work should be sympathetic to the existing fabric. It was this opposition to restoration that gave the society its early nickname of ‘anti-scrape’.

From the beginning the SPAB attracted many famous names to its ranks. Members have included such figures as Octavia Hill, Beatrix Potter and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as well as many architects and craftsmen. Some even took a more active role. Although Thomas Hardy is best known today as a novelist and poet he trained as an architect and retained a life-long interest in ancient buildings, undertaking many site visits for the SPAB in his native Dorset.

Today the Society continues to work towards the preservation of old buildings by educating, advising and campaigning. Unlike other amenity societies such as the Georgian Group or the Victorian Society it is not associated with a particular period of architectural history, campaigning for all old and in-

teresting buildings, although in terms of case work it deals with buildings constructed before 1720. The Society is one of the groups which must be consulted on all Listed Building Consent Applications and comments on about 2,000 such applications each year.

One of the most important ways the Society seeks to preserve ancient buildings is by education and advice. For many years the SPAB has been concerned with training architects and crafts people in traditional construction techniques and materials through its Lethaby Scholarships for architects and later the William Morris Craft Fellowship scheme. More than 100 young architects have been through the Scholarship, travelling around the country learning about ancient buildings and construction and about 50 craftsmen and women, including stonemasons, glaziers and thatchers have developed their skills learning from older craftsmen, ensuring that traditional techniques and knowledge are passed on to new generations.

The SPAB also runs numerous courses, both for professionals and for owners of old buildings who want to learn more about how to care for them and offers technical advice on all aspects of repair and maintenance.

The most recent major project undertaken by the SPAB which draws together several strands of the Society’s work is Faith in Maintenance. This five-year project is funded mainly by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Eng-



Left: St Albans Cathedral before the 'restoration' of the 1870's.

Below: The West front of the cathedral today.



lish Heritage and aims to offer training in maintenance to the thousands of volunteers in England and Wales who care for historic places of worship. Thirty courses a year are planned with the aim of training 6,000 volunteers over the life of the project.

It is open to all faiths and provides free, one-day courses covering basic maintenance tasks and how to spot potential problems in the fabric of the building before they become a huge repair project (with an equally huge bill!).

It is based on the belief that faith buildings are an enormously important part of many people's lives, not only for religious reasons but also as some of our most significant buildings and an important part of the landscape of our towns and cities.

The aims and objectives of the SPAB remain much the same as those set out by William Morris 130 years ago and its purpose is still best summed up in his words from the Manifesto for the Society which is still followed today:

"It is for all these buildings, therefore, of all times and styles, that we plead, and call upon those who have to deal with them, to put Protection in the place of Restoration, to stave off decay by daily care, to prop a perilous wall or mend a leaky roof by such means as are obviously meant for support or covering, and show no pretence of other art, and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament of the building as it stands... thus, and thus only can we protect our ancient buildings, and hand them down instructive and venerable to those that come after us"

Note: Kate Minnis, who recently left Tunbridge Wells to live in Hitchin, is Project Administrator for SPAB Faith in Maintenance. Ed

Heritage Open Days 2007



St Marks, Eridge Park, The Opera House,
Somershill, The Spa Hotel

Thirty five
properties
open to the
public.



Which ones
did you visit?

Local History Group News

Publications - There have been no meetings of the LHG in recent weeks, but work has been progressing on our publications. We hope to get Sue Brown's 'Literary Anthology' to the printers in the next ten days or so, and to have both that, and the 'Historical Atlas', ready for publication in November.

Miscellaneous - A couple of points caught my attention in Philip



Whitbourn's article on the Dodd brothers. I thought you might like to see a picture of **Grosvenor Lodge** (the Tattershall Dodd's home for 40 years) as it is today - set back from the shops on the right as you go up Grosvenor Road. There's a nice rounded bay-window on the right - originally it looked out over a neighbouring garden. There's still quite a big garden at the back of the house. Dodd apparently built himself a studio at the bottom - it is now a separate house.

The other thing that interested me was the location of the **Culverden wind-**

mill. You can see it near the top centre on this extract from ES Gisborne's map of 1849, but it had gone by the time of the 1867 OS map. Using the route of St Johns Rd, and the position of Culverden Farm, I reckon it was at the far end of Culverden Park Road - about the position of the fourth building down on the east side.



A Season of Arias

Sunday Afternoons at the Opera House

Some time ago we were in Venice. We met some friends whom we hadn't seen for many years. So we went off for a meal together to catch up on each other's news. We were enjoying our meal, and having a good natter, when the waiter, alert to the presence of non-Italians, took up a guitar and started serenading us. The song he chose was *Volare*. You remember *Volare* – Dean Martin used to sing it. It's real name is *Nel Blu, Dipinto di Blu*. But *Volare* can be rather loud, and we couldn't hear what the others were saying. So we talked more loudly. But the waiter just sang even louder. So we talked even more loudly. In the end he stopped. Perhaps it was a bit rude of us.

I was reminded of that incident when listening to the recitals in the Opera House in July. It was a really nice idea - three thirty-minute sessions of operatic arias each Sunday afternoon - sung from the boxes by professional singers with piano accompaniment. The selections were carefully chosen - Mozart, Donizetti,

Delibes, etc, - a mixture of old favourites and some less-well-known pieces. We went two weekends running, and thought they sang very well. But it was a rather odd experience. Most of the customers ignored the singing and continued eating, drinking, chatting and watching the golf on the giant TV. I wonder what the singers thought. At least they didn't try to up the volume and drown out the noise.

I hope the Opera House will not be deflected from their imaginative programme of events, but this particular idea probably needs further development. Perhaps they could try *Volare - oh, oh, oh, oh*.

Photo: Matthew Quirk



Putting Faces to Names: Michael Doyle



Born and brought up in the Wirral, I went to school in Birkenhead. So perhaps it wasn't too surprising that, aged 16, I followed my

father and mother's father into the Merchant Service; and became an indentured Midshipman with the Blue Funnel Line, sailing to Malaya, Hong Kong and Japan.

I served four years in the Far East and then six in the US and Canadian cargo trades. I also served in the RNR, reaching the rank of Lt. Cmdr. In 1961 I got my Master's Certificate so was able to spend the last five years of my sea-going career in Cunard liners.

But by 1965 "gracious-living-at-its-best" as offered by Cunard was not enough to tempt travellers away from the airlines, so we turned to cruising in a vain attempt to make the ships cover their cost. When I left, Cunard had 13 passenger liners - within 18 months it had three, and they were up for sale.

I joined Burroughs Corporation in Liverpool, selling computers. My territory was half the city and included the Head Offices of all three of my previous companies - but none of them bought any of my products!

In 1970 I was offered a management position in Burroughs' Nairobi office, covering five countries. With

decimalisation due in Britain, a move to a different continent seemed like a good idea! So the Doyles, with two young children, made the move. But our little girl was diagnosed as mentally handicapped so I asked for a posting back home. We came to Kent, and lived in East Farleigh, near Maidstone.

Anxious for our son to go to Judd School, we moved to Tunbridge Wells in 1977: he is now a liveryman in the Skinners' Company and a governor of his old school! In 1980 I switched to the stationery and supplies division of Burroughs, and subsequently ran my own dealership. After a period in insurance, I joined Gleeds, Chartered Quantity Surveyors, in York Road; and so began my involvement with TWBC in general, and planning in particular. I am currently part-time Marketing Manager for a printer in Southborough.

In 1997 we moved to Hawkenbury and I joined the Village Association. At present I am the co-chairman, and its representative on the Town Forum. The HVA was formed in 1994 to oppose a 200-house development on Hawkenbury Farm, and we have been successful three times to date. I expect that we will have to fight again. The HVA's area includes or adjoins Forest Road, Kingswood and Benhall Mill Roads - all hot-spots of contested development plans.

Garden Party 2007

Adam's Well Cottage - July 14th

The home of Mr and Mrs Peter Harbour



I think that there was general agreement that we had an idyllic setting for this year's Garden Party. So, many thanks to Peter and Anita Harbour for inviting us to their home. Thanks also to Frances Avery and Gill Twells for the catering and all the other arrangements, to John C for all his work, to Richard and John S for supervising the parking, and to Charmian for helping with the drinks and for hand washing and drying 170 wine glasses - twice.

Royal Tunbridge Wells
Civic Society
Forthcoming Events

Meetings start at 7.45 on the second Thursday in the month (unless otherwise stated), in either Committee Rooms A and B or the Council Chamber within the Town Hall. Please remember to bring your membership card. Visitors are welcome.

Oct 11th	Conservation Awards Evening - the awards will be presented by Greg Clark, MP.
Nov 8th	Annual General Meeting - and Open Forum for members. Includes the launch of the latest publications from the Local History Group ' An Historical Atlas of Tunbridge Wells ' and ' A Literary Anthology of Tunbridge Wells '
Dec 13th	'The Caged Lady' - a living display of costumes from a bygone age by Mrs Lee Ault . Christmas meeting - there will be refreshments after the talk.

Advance Warning: We have been unable to book the Town Hall for **some** of our talks next year. These will take place at the Royal Wells Inn instead. Details will be provided with next year's programme.

The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of the named author or of the editor and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Society.
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