



NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2010

Garden Party 2010

... in the garden of the
Schools at Somerhill, by
kind invitation of the
Governors.

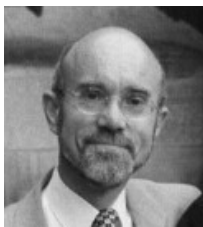


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Front cover: Low-relief sculpture in the arch above the entrance to the Police Station. Is this threatened by the plans for the Town Hall?



Personally Speaking

by Chris Jones

Three changes ... You will have noticed changes to the Newsletter this issue.

- The printer who produced it for the last eight years, and who introduced us to colour, has gone out of business. We have great hopes of the new printer, whose quality seems very good - though I am writing this before seeing the finished product.
- We have also introduced a new logo. It may take a little time and some experimentation to decide how best to present it, but in the meantime we would be interested to hear what you think.
- The third change was a last-minute re-arrangement of the content to allow us to include Ptolemy Dean's article about the Town Hall, reprinted from *Country Life* - see pages 12 and 13.

The Town Hall ... I would like to think that those responsible for this pantomime were doing what they thought best for the town, but what a desperate disregard for the democratic process they have shown as their schemes have unravelled, and what poverty of aspiration they displayed in the first place. They spend too long in Maidstone.

Julian Fall ... one-time director of Goulden & Curry in the High St, and one of the original members of the Civic Society, has died in Salisbury, aged 85.

- Julian Fall was responsible for saving the archives of Beale & Sons - one of the town's largest building firms, responsible for much of Madeira and Warwick Parks. Apparently, many years' worth of house plans were being dumped in a skip some time in the 1970s. Fall and Elizabeth Bateman of Halls Bookshop intervened and secured the material for the CKS archive. It has recently been catalogued by John Cunningham.
- He also left five hours of recordings in the Oral History collection at the British Library. This includes memories of his childhood in Croydon and his wartime service, but also of life in 1950s Tunbridge Wells. There was Lady Bennett, for example, who would not come into the shop, but stayed outside in her Rolls. He would take her a selection of books, say, for her grandchildren. She would make her choices, write cards, and he would then package and post them for her. He also relayed a story from before the first war, when the shop sold newspapers. It seems they would sell *The Times* to a customer in the morning, then send an apprentice to retrieve it from him at lunchtime, and sell it again, second-hand, in the afternoon.

From the Planning Scrutineers

by Gill Twells



West House, Camden Park – We are disappointed that permission has been given to replace the existing timber post-and-rail fencing on the road boundary with new, two metre high, iron railings which we feel are inappropriate in this semi-rural setting.

Site of Creggans & Old Garden – Another application has been submitted for the re-development of these plots at the northern corner of Dunorlan Park, this time with two new detached houses. The earlier application, for nine dwellings in several blocks, was refused.

17 Calverley Park – An application for repairs to the Orangery has prompted us to respond by suggesting that a full survey be conducted to identify and prioritise all the necessary repairs to the whole building before this particular application is determined.

18 Calverley Park (below) – An application for extensive repairs to the building structure and alterations to its internal layout has been approved, and work has already started on site.

Site of Kent & Sussex Hospital

There is to be a public consultation on the future use of this site after the hospital is vacated in the middle of next year. The consultation will be held in the Kent & Sussex ‘Choices’ Restaurant, on October 1st and 2nd. An exhibition of the proposals will be displayed. One assumes that it will be attended by appropriate people with whom to discuss the options.



18 Calverley Park before work started.



Chairman's Letter

Tunbridge Wells
September 2010

Looking back over my term as your Chairman I'm aware it's been a combative two years. A period of celebration would have been more restful! But we didn't choose the issues, and often those we have engaged in reflect basic questions about our town.

We sought to have the importance of tourism recognised. We are not a Bath or a Stratford, but our distinctive charm is valued by visitors, and their appreciation is expressed in earnings of about £200m a year. It was, and remains, hard to believe the Council wanting to replace the award-winning Information Centre in the Pantiles with a desk in the Gateway and electronic terminals in pubs.

We fought for the bandstand in Calverley Grounds. The much-loved structure that stood there until June had an interesting history but was not a distinguished feature of the park. The Society's position was always that we needed a replacement echoing the original, not just as a social facility and venue for public performance, but as a year-round focus for the landscape.

Another battlefield concerns the fate of the Town Hall, or strictly the whole complex including the Assembly Hall, Police Station, Library, Museum and Art Gallery (see Not for Sale in the last newsletter). We had already challenged the need for a separate Gateway, the closure of the Town Hall to the public, and the description of town hall functions as 'back office'. When we reacted to the leaked document proposing to move to Hawkenbury and co-locate with other public sector agencies, the Council Leader described it as 'only an exercise'.

Since then we have seen the 'action plan' which describes the town hall site as 'suitable for a mix of town centre uses', and heard the Leader call it the key to the regeneration of the town centre, suitable for a department store and a major increase in multiple shops, with offices and possibly some housing. The details are still unknown but this does seem to presage substantial demolition of the buildings. Promises have been made about a replacement for the Assembly Hall and an 'arts quarter', evidently elsewhere, and also that the Adult Education Centre and the Burton houses in Calverley Terrace are not threatened at present. They are however included in the redevelopment site along with much else.

Meanwhile the Council has borrowed £20m and had its offer for the Land Registry accepted subject to due diligence. Axa/PPP who wanted the building for their planned expansion in Tunbridge Wells were excluded by a Treasury ruling that the sale could be restricted to public bodies. The Council's purchase was rushed through, normal scrutiny and reference to the Audit Committee were waived, and essential documents were withheld from the public.

The Society vigorously opposed this proceeding, and Philip Whitbourn's eloquent words to the Town Forum about it are reproduced elsewhere in this issue. Others in the town were deeply concerned, many members signed a petition circulated by a private individual, and 140 people squeezed into the function room of the Royal Wells to hear the Council Chief Executive at our most recent monthly meeting.

We argued against the loss of a near-unique listed civic group of considerable presence, which was well capable of being modernised - dating from a time when councils took pride in dealing with all aspects of public welfare. (The Burton houses survived because this was the site for the fire station which would have completed the ensemble). We questioned the financial security, from the town's point of view, of a deal apparently led by a developer's interest in a key site. And of course we found it extraordinary that the leadership had committed itself to such a major step in advance of public consultation or open debate in the Council.

The Society is waiting for a chance to respond to specific proposals, and remains open to the possibility of transformative change. But meanwhile, like apparently thousands of residents, we oppose the removal of the town hall from the town centre, on the basis that its functions are 'back office'. This is the reverse of the coin of which the modish face is the reduction of local government to a matter of 'services' delivered at a Gateway, just as stamps are provided at a post office, requiring only 'providers' to be brought together. The theory has resulted in the sidelining of democratic debate, the closure of the town hall to the public, and the increasing invisibility of the paid staff who now exercise many of the Council's powers.

Reducing local government to the level of a post office is of a piece with seeking a 40% increase in shopping, with downgrading tourism provision, with banishing the bandstand, and threatening the future of the Assembly Hall. It is not what Tunbridge Wells is about.

Alastair Tod

The Future of the Town Hall and Civic Centre



A short introduction to the History and Architecture of the Civic Centre as presented to the Town Forum in June by Philip Whitbourn

When, in 1828, the eminent architect Decimus Burton laid out plans for the Calverley New Town, he effectively moved the centre of Tunbridge Wells from the bottom of Mount Pleasant to the top. Then, at the crucial crossroads on the brow of the hill, he designed a group of buildings where the present Civic Centre stands.

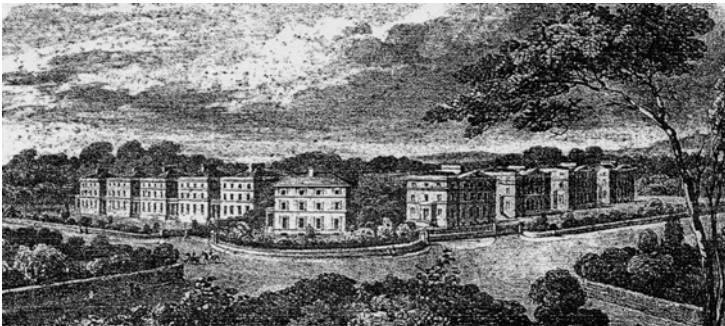
Miraculously, two of those buildings, a pair of villas in Calverley Terrace, now numbered 9 and 10 Crescent Road, still survive, and are included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Also surviving from Burton's scheme are the locally quarried stone walls along the Mount Pleasant and Crescent Road frontages.

The Council started acquiring this group of buildings as far back as 1895 when, of course, there were no provisions

for the protection of historic buildings, and, in 1934, the Council promoted an architectural competition for the design of a new Civic Centre on the site. This was won by another distinguished architect, Sir Percy Thomas, who was President of the Royal Institute of British Architects from 1935-7, and who was awarded the Royal Gold Medal in 1939.

His design broadly follows Decimus Burton's building line, including the splayed corner, and he incorporated most of Burton's stone walls into the scheme. The architectural style of the winning design is a blend of the Art Deco and Modernist fashions of the period, and the traditional Georgian vocabulary of sash windows with gauged arches.

Three low-relief sculptures on the Assembly Hall represent Dance, Drama and Music, while those in the Police



Burton's original layout on the Town Hall site - Calverley Parade, The Mount and Calverley Terrace. The 1934 scheme follows the same building line, including the splayed corner to Mount Pleasant.

One of the low-relief sculptures on the facade of the Assembly Hall, representing Music.



Station and Court House arch symbolise Justice (see front cover). On the frieze of the Library and Museum, Greek and Roman Gods signify the roots of western culture in classical civilisation. Art Deco touches include metalwork that reflects the enthusiasm for ancient Egyptian motifs in the era following the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in the 1920s. The whole of Sir Percy Thomas's unified Civic Centre scheme is, also, included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

The Assembly Hall and Police Station were the first parts of the complex to be completed, and the Assembly Hall was opened by the Marchioness Camden, amid great celebrations, on Empire Day 1939, the Golden Jubilee of the granting of Tunbridge Wells' Charter. The opening of the Town Hall by the Mayor in 1941 was necessarily more low-key, because of the war.

Although built in carcass form by 1941, the Library and Museum were not fitted out until after the war, and were opened by Lord De Lisle and Dudley in 1952. The Museum possesses wonderful Tunbridge Ware and other collections, some of which, including the fine costume collection

and the Ashton Bequest of genre paintings, are at present a wasted resource, held in storage for lack of display space.

Pre-dating the Competition scheme is the War Memorial, which is set into Burton's stone walling, and features the heroic figure by S. Nicholson Babb 1922. The area around the War Memorial comes very much to life on





Remembrance Sunday, and it has the makings of a good civic space, even though the old Clverley Parade, now re-named ‘Civic Way’, with its line of parked cars, is not all that it might be.

Which brings me to the key question of the **function** of a Civic Centre, as distinct from

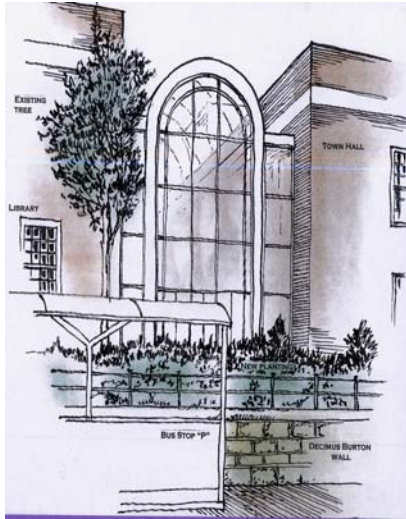
any architectural or historic interest it may be thought to have. It is, and these are my personal views, an absolute disgrace that our Town Hall is closed to the public. This sends out all the wrong messages about the open-ness of local government in Tunbridge Wells, and it deprives the community of much-needed facilities. Valuable public-spirited community groups, such as the Friends of The Common, and the Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery were born in this Chamber, and they are no longer allowed to meet here.

A Town Hall should not be a secret bunker, where bureaucrats can hatch up plans, locked away from the eyes of those who pay for them, and who will have to live with the consequences of those plans,

long after officials have moved on to pastures new. Neither should it be a private club for the political elite, nor regarded as just another piece of real estate to trade with a ‘Regeneration Company’. Rather, it should be an inviting place where citizens can readily witness democracy in action, and a vibrant centre where community groups can be welcomed and encouraged to flourish.

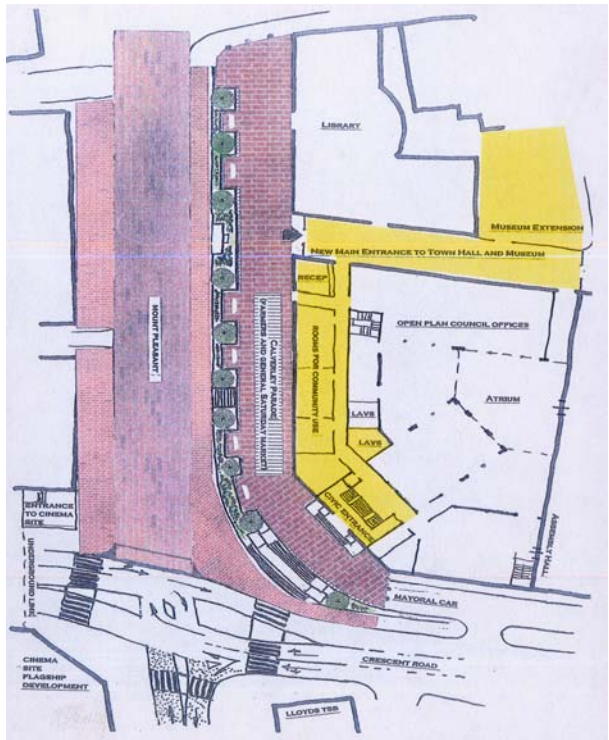
Much has been said by the new Government about creating a ‘Big Society’, where people take responsibility for their own communities, and perhaps it is time to turn some of those words into deeds in Tunbridge Wells. A dead Town Hall and an even more dead cinema are adding up to a seriously dead hub at the centre of our town.

So, in the short term, I should like to see a properly open approach adopted towards our Town Hall, and the best possible use made of the existing accommodation, both for community activities, and for the Council’s work. Then, as a next step, perhaps the possibility could be explored of updating some of the layout, to make the most effective use of the whole complex, including the Adult Education Centre, the Court House, the Library / Museum and ‘Civic Way’, in order to form a worthy Civic and Cultural Quarter at the heart of our town. Without such a heart, Royal Tunbridge Wells could risk becoming just another ubiquitous shopping centre set in a dormitory suburb. **PW**



An effective way of linking the Library / Museum building, on the left, to the main Town Hall, thereby creating usable internal space.

For years Council leaders have repeated the claim that the Town Hall is 'not fit for purpose', a convenient mantra for those who wish to re-develop the site. Yet an architectural survey demonstrated that the building was quite capable of modernisation, including individual computer use, air-conditioning, and so on. This schema (right) shows how the site could be adapted to provide an extended museum and space for community organisations.



Tunbridge Wells: ‘Disgusted’ with good cause

Plans to redevelop the heart of the town threaten to destroy it and set a worrying precedent for us all. Ptolemy Dean is outraged.

RIGHTLY or wrongly, Royal Tunbridge Wells is linked in the popular mind to what is almost a genre of English literature: the disgruntled letter to a local newspaper. If it were possible to provide an architectural caricature of the authors of such epistles, then it would take the form of the Tunbridge Wells Town Hall. A large, slightly pompous building, it stands, well presented, at the top of a hill with rows of tasteful neo-Georgian windows, turquoise-painted balustrades (in a faded and no longer fashionable modern style) and a very large front door. If buildings had buttons, this one would have them of brass and they would be very well polished.

Erected in the late 1930s when appearances mattered and protocol was religiously adhered to, this polite and urbane structure is the centrepiece of a group of other civic buildings of similar date and style. An assembly hall and police station form an orderly line to one side, and there is a library on the other—with a particularly good semi-circular reading room. The splendidly florid Edwardian Adult Education Centre is immediately adjacent but around the corner to avoid any embarrassment to the

rest of the group.

These buildings are listed and form the symbolic heart of Tunbridge Wells, separating on one side the older area with its famous Pantiles (the first pedestrianised street in Britain dating from about 1606) from the far less attractive and more recently pedestrianised street of chain stores on the other. This natural division works effectively, leaving the smaller independent shops to serve the historic side as the chain stores provide their standardised and ubiquitous offer on the other.

In 2008, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council formed an alliance with a large commercial property developer to realise the value of council-owned assets to ‘regenerate’ this already very prosperous and attractive town. Their plans have now been published and are being pushed through with unseemly haste. The Town Hall site, which is in generally tip-top condition, is now to be ‘regenerated’ as a new shopping precinct, allowing the council to relocate to an edge-of-town building recently abandoned by the Land Registry.

Even in broad terms, the proposed deal

seems far from equitable. The town-hall site with the five substantial buildings in the town centre is apparently worth only £3 million; the Land Registry site on the outskirts of the town will cost the council £9 million, with refurbishment costs on top. The library, adult-education centre and assembly rooms, meanwhile, will all be closed. Then five public buildings, all of which are handsome, solidly built, easily adaptable and entirely fit for purpose will be gutted to create a screen for the shopping precinct behind.

The philosophy that apparently underpins the scheme should be of concern to us all: that shopping and shopping alone is all that is required to make a successful town centre. As libraries, education centres and assembly rooms don't offer significant commercial value, they should be 'regenerated' and replaced by chain stores. This misplaced attempt to increase the commercial mass of the town would obviously appeal to the council's commercial development partner, who has no one but its shareholders to please. It's difficult to understand, however, why it should satisfy a Conservative borough council.

Tunbridge Wells is a rare and special place. Uniquely, its centre is still largely residential and it has not been wrecked

by ring roads. It has a large common on one side and seven hills that have curtailed large scale redevelopment. About two years ago, the common came on the market for the first time in more than 200 years. Although it was readily affordable (and for a fraction of the cost of the old Land Registry site), the council declined to buy it. A year later, when £30,000 was needed to repair the bandstand in the town's prime park, the council instead chose to demolish it. Now the administrative 'acropolis' of the town is to be sold, apparently at a knock-down price, to property developers with the agreement of the borough council.

By placing no value on its civic buildings and what they represent, the authority is about to perpetrate an attack on the very civilization of the town, which these public buildings, for all their stuffiness, serve to uphold admirably. If there can be any doubt about the extent of local official ignorance of the true values of urban living, then this was proved six months ago, when road signs were introduced onto the main routes into the town that proclaim: 'Love where you live.' One is tempted to add: '...before your elected local authority entirely destroys it.'

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Farewell to the Dungeons

Jane Dickson is leaving Tunbridge Wells to move to Somerset with her husband Max. In this article she looks back at her work in the Borough Archives, and in particular at the work of architect CH Strange.

Working in the Borough Archives has been a curiously addictive pleasure - the smell of the dusty documents, the spasmodic lighting and the dry cold becoming just part of the job. Stage 1 of our work was completed last Autumn: bundles and boxes of documents having been identified and logged individually onto a data base. My particular task in Stage 2, working with another volunteer who has specialist legal skills, has been to ensure that the vast collection of documents relating to the water supply for the expanding town around the 1850s is accessible under one heading, making further study much easier.

One of my best moments was the



discovery of 'The Box of Delights' which I described in detail in the Spring 2007 edition of this magazine. It was my introduction to the work of the architect CH Strange. When the library asked for a volunteer to work on *their* archive of his work - 60 rolls and huge folders of drawings and tracings lying somewhat neglected in their basement (below left) - I was pleased to be able to spare a few more hours to learn more about this quiet, self-effacing, gifted man. Together with HM Caley, the Cronks, Weeks and Hughes, and Beale, he developed much of the town that we know today.

Charles Hilbert Strange was born in Tunbridge Wells in 1867, the eldest son of Charles Matthew Strange, chairman of the building company Strange and Son. They were descendents of Edward Strange who had come to the town in 1779, as lodging house keeper of Green Pales (later called Sion House) on Mt Sion. Charles Hilbert grew up in Nevill Lodge, the family home at the far end of the Pantiles. The elegant Pump Room was built on its site, later to be replaced by the frightful Union Square.

One of the best finds in my box was the short unfinished account of his childhood memories. These were written in 1942 but provide a wealth of detail

about the characters and life on the Pantiles seventy years earlier. William Nash, for example, who kept the head Post Office in two rooms adjoining Woods Passage, and who also sold Bibles and prayer books, was apparently a rather short-tempered gentleman. And I have often wondered about the origin of the initials A and N situated under the eaves of the top-heavy building over Flat House Passage. Apparently they belonged to Alfred Nicholson, a Pantiles pharmacist who was responsible for the Cronk-designed rebuilding of the old Flat House. Nicholson had a large family of boys who all wore highly magnifying specs.

The Corn Exchange housed a regular Friday afternoon market, but business was done mostly in the numerous pubs.



Baptist Church, Upper Grosvenor Road



Charles Hilbert Strange

One unexpected feature was the large number of tramps who lodged in the Coach and Horses, especially in hop-picking time, much to the annoyance of local residents. Richard Pelton, the printer, is described as being ‘of striking appearance and genial manners’. He was also a pioneer of the telephone, allowing the public to use the equipment connecting his two shops, on payment of 1d. And apparently, the great social event of the year was the Annual Flower Show at the Great Hall.

Charles began work as an architect in 1898, becoming an FRIBA in 1920. As a devoted non-conformist he designed and worked on many Congregational, Methodist and Baptist buildings, the most familiar being the Baptist Church in Upper Grosvenor Road (left), built in 1937. The lovely chapel in Hill Street, originally a Wesleyan Methodist Mission



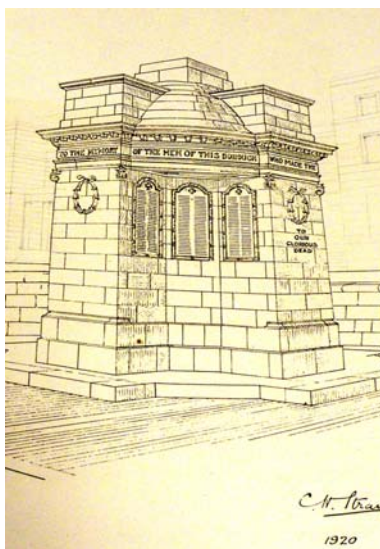
The Hill Street Mission Hall today (picture by Harry Fenton) and one of Strange's original drawings.

Hall (see above) is less familiar.

Strange was a good amateur musician serving as organist for the Congregational Church (now Ismails) for many years. He served on the Town Council for six years, and, as a Trustee for the Dudley Institute, he was largely responsible for the arrival of a public library in the town. Trustee of the Friendly Societies' Hall for 25 years, Commissioner for Income Tax and Commons Conservator, his work for the

town was immense. He married Emily Jones and had 4 children, losing his son William in the Great War. His design for the Town's War Memorial (below left) is particularly restrained and beautiful.

He was responsible for the designs for the new council estate at Hawkenbury in 1919 and for many of the fine houses built for the wealthy late Victorian and Edwardian incomers. The Homeopathic Hospital in Church Road (below right) was one of his greatest projects and many schools in the area have additions by him. Cowsheds, kiosks on London stations, interior designs of any description, his range was enormous, his work always meticulous, as was his research into his family tree, for a book on the subject in 1920. He also wrote a History of the Non-Conformist churches of Tunbridge Wells with many fine illustrations, still available in the Reference Library along with his Family History.



Left: Strange's design for the War Memorial. His proposed site was at the apex of the Mount Pleasant corner, in front of where the Town Hall now stands.

One of Strange's drawings of High Brooms School for the Southborough School Board, 1902

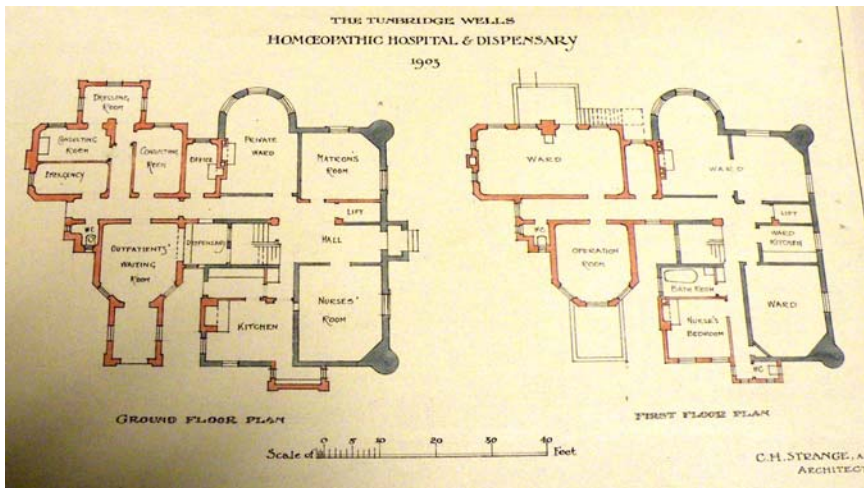


Let us hope that one day there may be an exhibition in the town to pay a fitting tribute to him. He died in 1952.

Although I have little or no confidence in the Town Planners of today - those new steps in Calverley Park are truly dreadful, work in the archive has taught me that nothing has really changed in our town. Both fine and dreadful buildings have come and gone, and complaints to the council have always been about the same

things: the state of the roads, parking problems for both horses or cars, uneven pavements with binge drinkers lying on them. Lack of funds has always been the reply. I know that I will miss the place and most of all my wonderfully talented friends, but as long as people can walk along Mt Ephraim at dusk and fall under the spell of the magical panorama, I know that generations will still want to live and work here. **JD**

Homeopathic Hospital and Dispensary 1903





FRS and RTW

2010 is the 350th anniversary of the Royal Society. Mike Hinton thought we should recognise the many Fellows with links to the town. The following is a small selection, not necessarily the most significant, taken from the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

Baillie, Matthew (1761-1823), **morbid anatomist and physician.** ‘... enjoyed good health until early 1823, when a wasting decline, possibly tuberculosis, which was not arrested by a stay in Tunbridge Wells, set in.’

Barlow, Peter William (1809-1885), **civil engineer.** ‘Acted as engineer-in-chief for the Tunbridge Wells branch of the S.E.R.. This involved him in experiments on the atmospheric railway system. His critical conclusions were reported in 1845 in a paper entitled *The comparative advantages of the atmospheric railway system.*’

Bayes, Thomas (1701?-1761), **mathematician and Presbyterian minister.** ‘In 1731 was appointed minister to the meeting-house in Little Mount Sion, and in that year a tract attributed to him — *Divine benevolence, or, An attempt to prove that the principal end of the divine providence and government is the happiness of his creatures* — was published ... In 1752 Bayes retired from his ministry, but continued to live in Tunbridge Wells.’

Bird, Golding (1814-1854), **physician.** ‘He purchased an estate, St Cuthbert, at Tunbridge Wells, and stayed at Hastings while the house was being renovated, but his enjoyment of his new

property was brief, for he died there on 27 October 1854.’

Brande, William Thomas (1788-1866), **chemist.** ‘... made a significant contribution to bringing science and technology together in the 19th century. He died on his 78th birthday at his country house in Tunbridge Wells on 11 February 1866.’

Douglas, John (1721-1807), **bishop of Salisbury and writer.** ‘He seldom visited his livings but spent the winter in London, in a house next to that of his patron (Lord Bath), whom he accompanied in the summer to Bath, Tunbridge Wells, and to nobles’ houses, acting as his chaplain and secretary.’

Faraday, Michael (1791–1867), **natural philosopher, scientific adviser, and Sandemanian.** ‘From the mid-1840s Faraday had occasionally taken a house for a month (for instance in Hampstead, Norwood, Tunbridge Wells, and Wimbledon) and commuted to the Royal Institution, principally to avoid the bustle of London and the institution.’

Forster, Thomas Ignatius Maria (1789-1860), **writer on science and phrenologist.** ‘married Julia, daughter of Colonel Henry Beaufoy FRS, and moved to Spa Lodge, Tunbridge Wells. There he collected plants and made

astronomical observations. He published an edition of *Catullus* and on 3 July 1819 discovered a comet.’

George, prince of Denmark and duke of Cumberland (1653-1708), consort of Queen Anne. ‘spent that summer (1691) away from court at Tunbridge Wells.

Grey, Thomas de, 6th Baron Walsingham (1843-1919) **politician and entymologist**. ‘At the age of nine he was sent to a private school kept by a Revd Goldney in Southborough.’

Hervey, James (1750/51–1824), **physician**. ‘Financial independence enabled him to visit Tunbridge Wells each summer for recreational rather than professional purposes. He died in 1824.’

Jurin, James (*bab.* 1684, *d.* 1750), **physician and natural philosopher**. ‘He established a successful medical practice in London and in Tunbridge Wells during the summer months.’

Mayo, Thomas, (1790-1871), **physician**. ‘On his father’s death (in 1818) Mayo succeeded to his lucrative practice at Tunbridge Wells. In 1835 he settled in London, in Wimpole Street.’

Nelson, Robert (1656-1715) **philanthropist and religious writer**. ‘Nelson promoted the building of a number of churches. He and his mother each subscribed a guinea for the church of King Charles the Martyr.’

Pickford (Lillian) Mary, (1902-2002), **neuroendocrinologist**. ‘Sent home to England in 1908 to live with an aunt and uncle, Mary Pickford shared a governess with her cousin before going

to Hamilton House, Tunbridge Wells.’

Porter, George Richardson (1792-1852), **civil servant and statistician**. ‘died at Tunbridge Wells. The immediate cause of death was an insect bite on the knee which caused mortification.’

Smirke, Sydney (1798-1877), **architect**. ‘President of the Architects’ Benevolent Society, until his death at The Hollies, Frant Road, in December 1877.’

Smith, Horatio [Horace] (1799-1849), **writer and humorist**. ‘After a severe attack of laryngitis in 1841 Smith scaled down his literary activities. In 1849 the family took a house at 6 Calverley Park, where Smith died on 12 July, underlying gout having developed into serious heart problems.’

Spratt, Thomas Abel, Brimage (1811-1888), **naval officer and hydrographer**. ‘From 1866 to 1873 was a commissioner of fisheries, and from 1879 chairman of the Mersey conservancy board. Spratt died at his residence, Clare Lodge, Tunbridge Wells, on 10 March 1888.’

Wildy, (Norman) Peter Leete (1920-1987), **virologist** ‘...born on 31 March 1920 at Tunbridge Wells, the only child of Eric Lawrence Wildy, electrical engineer, and Gwendolen Leete.’

Wilson, Sir Charles William (1836-1905), **army officer**. ‘In 1899 and 1904 he visited Palestine and devoted much time to the controversy over the sites of Golgotha and the Holy Sepulchre. He died at his home, 16 Calverley Crescent, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, on 25 October 1905.’ **MH**

Local History Group

Reconstruction of the Local History Group

John Cunningham, Chairman of the Local History Group, explains the need to re-register your interest.

The RTWCS Local History Group (LHG) was founded in July 2002 as an integral part of the Civic Society. Since then it has published twelve Local History Monographs, and been behind a range of initiatives: the municipal celebration of the 4th. Centenary in 2006; the celebration of the Centenary of the 'Royal' title in 2009; the magenta Distinguished Persons Plaques - now on twenty four buildings; and the supply of volunteers to catalogue the TWBC archives. Some of its schemes have been less fruitful: the Planning Index Register has yet to be launched; the Oral History Project has only just 'got off the ground'; and the campaign for up to eight 'Heritage Trails' in Tunbridge Wells is *still* 'hamstrung' by TWBC financial restrictions. But the Group was responsible for resuscitating and developing the Heritage Open Day Scheme in Tunbridge Wells, which now has over 40 venues and events each September.

While there has never been any subscription to join, a prerequisite for membership has been prior membership of the Civic Society. Initially, members were asked to register formally as a member of the Group, in order that we could identify those who were interested and also those who had a specific knowledge, skill or interest. As it turned

out, a large proportion of Society members registered and so at the time, it was decided that future registration was unnecessary.

Time has shown that this was a mistake – nearly all RTWCS members are interested in Local History, but for many it is a passive rather than an active interest, and it is of course those with an active interest which the LHG needs to recruit for its purpose and programme. At present, there are less than 20 active members of the group, but we are sure that there may be many more who could be involved, if we knew of them and their details.

So we are asking ALL Members to respond again, *using the enclosed form*, even if your interest is only passive, or non-existent. Then we will know who is interested and what they are interested in; who has a passive interest (i.e. happy to attend meetings on Local History subjects, but does not want to do active admin or research) whom we will keep informed of what we are doing; and those who have no interest at all, whom we will not trouble further.

SO, WHATEVER YOUR LEVEL OF INTEREST, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM AND RETURN IT. (An electronic version is available on the RTWCS website – www.thecivicsociety.org)

The Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association

We received an enquiry recently from Alan Underwood who is researching the history of the MDFCTA (see above). This was founded in 1859 to improve the supply of clean water for Londoners, following two cholera epidemics in the previous ten years. It was an immediate success, attracting donations from public health campaigners, and from supporters of the Temperance movement. As well as providing fountains for human use, the association identified the need to provide water for dogs, horses and cattle (often driven to market over several days).

Since 1859 it has installed some 4,000 fountains and 1,000 troughs. It is still active, providing fountains in schools and parks, and wells in Third World countries. Its activities were not restricted to London. In Tunbridge Wells there were fountains and/or troughs at:

- Lansdowne/Calverley Road (1891)
- London Road (1901)
- Upper Grosvenor Road (1902)

- Forest Road/Benhall Mill Road (1909)
- St. John's Road (1882)
- Langton Road (1887)
- Rushtall Common (1887)
- Eridge Road (1930)

The first and last of these are known to survive. Alan is asking what we can tell him about the others. Are they still in situ? If not, have they been re-used, eg as flower planters? If you have any information, please let me know .

The Eridge Road trough (see below) is particularly interesting as it was funded by an Australian charity. George and Annis Bills made their money from the manufacture of spring mattresses in Sydney. When he died in 1927 he left £70,000 to provide animal drinking troughs. George was born in Brighton, and Annis died there while on holiday in 1910, but whether this had anything to do with the funding is not known.. **CJ**

The trough in Eridge Road
with benefactors: George and Annis Bills



Faversham



Civic Society visit to Faversham August 2010



Roger Joye, who organises our programme of events, previews the talks for the remainder of the year.

The meeting on Thursday **14th October** will be presented by **Ann Bates** of the Local History Group. She will be following up her recent publication by taking a look at some of the people and places associated with “**Tunbridge Wells during the Second World War**”. Ann is keen to open up the evening to hear the memories of others who lived through the period, and who perhaps might like to bring along mementoes.

On Thursday **11th November** the **Annual General Meeting** of members of the Society will take place. This will be supplemented by a presentation from **Tony Burton**, the **director of Civic Voice**. This is an opportunity for you to find out what our new national umbrella body is achieving and planning on behalf of all civic societies, and also to contribute your own thoughts on the subject.

Our final meeting for 2010 will be in the Victoria Suite of the Camden Centre at 7.45pm on Friday **10th December** (please note the unusual venue and day). This should provide an entertaining, and perhaps challenging, evening in the form of a presentation by **Tim Moorey** entitled “**The Life and Times of a Crossword Setter**”. Tim supplies crosswords for a wide range of publications including national newspapers, and he runs courses and writes books on solving crosswords, so we may need to have our wits about us.

And if we might advertise a talk from another group: on Friday 3rd December, June Bridgeman will be presenting an illustrated talk to the Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery, on “Canon Edward Hoare, ‘Protestant pontiff’ of Tunbridge Wells”. This is at 7:30 in the Camden Centre. More talks from other groups in the next issue.

Situation Vacant

Our treasurer, Roger Joye, has indicated his intention to retire when his present term of office ends at this year’s AGM on 11th November, so we are actively seeking a successor. Roger says that the essential criteria for the job are to be numerate, methodical, and comfortable with basic computer use. He will provide a full handover to his successor and be available to be consulted for ongoing support if required. If you are interested in this vacancy, please contact Roger by email - roger.joye@thecivicsociety.org - or telephone him on 01580-211711.

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Abbey Street, Parish Church of St Mary of Charity, Door-case supporter in Abbey Street, Market Place, Columns underneath the Guildhall.

My thanks to Robin Christie, Richard Still and John Sworder for sharing their photographs.



CIVIC SOCIETY

Forthcoming Events

Meetings start at 7.45 on the second Thursday in the month (unless otherwise stated). The location can vary, so please check the details below. Please remember to bring your membership card. Visitors are welcome, but from September there will be a £2 charge for non-members.

Oct 14th	A talk by Ann Bates of the Local History Group: 'Tunbridge Wells in the Second World War' . Royal Wells Hotel, Mount Ephraim
Nov 11th	Annual General Meeting (see agenda below) Followed by a presentation by Tony Burton , director of Civic Voice , and an open forum for members. Royal Wells Hotel, Mount Ephraim
Dec 10th (Fri)	'The Life and Times of a Crossword Setter' : a presentation by leading compiler Tim Moorey . Christmas meeting followed by refreshments. Victoria Suite, Camden Centre

Agenda of the Annual General Meeting

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 12th Nov 2009
3. Matters arising from the minutes, not covered elsewhere on the agenda
4. Chairman's report and address
5. Elections - Vice-Presidents, Committee members*, Officers*
6. Annual accounts and report - Roger Joye, Treasurer
7. Report on the Local History Group - John Cunningham, LHG Chairman
8. Date of next Annual General Meeting
9. Close of Annual General Meeting

*Nominations, signed and seconded, must be received by the Secretary (address on page 3) by Thursday 28th October.

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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