

Autumn 2014



Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society

A message from Helena Twells



Dear all,

This is a quick email to let you know that following the successful sale of Eden Villa, Gill Twells is now living at Halliwell care home on the Kingswood Road in Tunbridge Wells.

Halliwell is very near Dunorlan Park for those of you who know Tunbridge Wells.

Gill is very keen to stay in touch with family and friends, catching up over lunch, or coffee or for a stroll are all options.

If it's inclement, tackling her newspaper concise crossword together in one of the comfortable lounges at Halliwell is a good option.

If you have a car, Gill also enjoys a drive out, if there is something on or to visit familiar places such as the Pantiles. Gill has a disabled parking 'blue badge' which can make finding a parking spot easier.

Joining Gill for lunch at Halliwell in the hotel-like dining room is easy and all paid for. It's best to 'phone her first so that she can let the kitchen know.

Alternatively, if there's room for an extra seat at your table, Gill would find this a great treat as she understandably misses home hospitality.

Gill's telephone number remains (01892) 527493 – the same as her old number.

Gill's address is:

Halliwell
Kingswood Road
Tunbridge Wells
Kent TN2 4UN

Many thanks to those who have kept in touch and also helped Alex and me clear Eden Villa.

Best wishes,

Helena Twells

Front cover: Frontispiece to James Thomson's *The Seasons*, edition of 1774.

Beneath the picture are the words:

"Reading and Reflection are the Rational Pleasures of Wise Men"

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Personally Speaking

by Chris Jones

Devon Twells... I am sure you have all heard the sad news of the death of Devon Twells early in August, and seen the details of Gill's new home on page 2. Gill and Devon were both architects - Devon being an expert in the design of hospitals. Though he was never an officer of the Society, he contributed many articles and comments to the Newsletter. He was always great company, both interesting and interested. He and Gill were made Life Members of the Society when she retired from the Committee. They made a great team, and maybe we should take this opportunity to recognise all the other spouses who provide essential support behind the scenes. While it is often unacknowledged it is nevertheless appreciated. Our thanks to all of you.

What, I wonder, has happened to www.anke.tw, Christopher Cassidy's blog about all things Tunbridge Wells? All it says is that 'the blog is no more'. I particularly wanted to point you to a posting about a BBC recording made from the Assembly Hall in 1963. I think the tape had been stored in the Museum archive, but, without anke, we might never have heard of it.

The recording is of a series of interviews for the 'Town and Country' programme, in which they take 'a critical look at the town'. It starts, as I suppose one would expect of a programme about Tunbridge Wells, with stories about old ladies. Eventually one of them says that they don't like being called old people - good for her. So they then talk to some climbing enthusiasts about Harrison's Rocks.

Some of it is really rather relevant to the town today. There is Dr St John Lyburn on problems with the chalybeate spring. He had to threaten not to pay his rates before the council would do anything about them. Then there is the planning application for Union House: huge blocks, eight and fourteen stories high. What was eventually built was horrible enough - we can only hope that any new scheme pays more regard to the unique setting of the Pantiles. Someone on the tape claims that "there is no reason why tall office blocks should change the character of the town". One only has to go to Cheltenham to see what nonsense that is.

Christopher has provided us with a link to the recording, but it is too long to include here. We will put it on our web-site.

Quiz Question (no prizes, but a mention for the first person to respond with the correct answer)... We all know the connection between Winnie the Pooh and Ashdown Forest, but what was the creative link between Tunbridge Wells and Paddington Bear?

From the Planning Scrutineers

by Alastair Tod

The Society Executive considered an application by the **Duke of York pub** on the Pantiles to extend the area of outside seating and enclose it with moveable screens. We were contacted by a neighbouring shopkeeper who feels that the existing area of seating obstructs access to his shop. Eating and drinking, often outside, has caused something of a renaissance of the Pantiles but we had already heard of problems, and we objected to the Duke of York application. However consent was granted.

We also objected to an application to demolish a bungalow in **Claremont Road** and replace it with a three-storey house. The bungalow is not worth preservation but the proposed replacement is too large for the site, of an undistinguished design which pays no regard to neighbouring properties, and the footprint threatens a protected tulip tree. Although described as a house the second floor appears to be laid out as an office with seating for eighteen. The application has now been withdrawn.

We were concerned about changes in **Trinity churchyard**, a vital green space in the town centre, and a key link in the Council's green strategy. The changes include a paved area with temporary Teflon-type awning, and gravelled areas accommodating up to twelve parked cars over an area of gravestones. Following protests from others, the awning was removed and a planning application for some of these changes was approved. The Society was responsible for saving Trinity as an arts centre, which now operates with a much reduced grant, and the Executive felt we should not do anything to put its future in doubt. We continue to watch developments here and will respond as necessary.

The Society was consulted by the prospective developer of nine town houses on the site of **Broadwater Garage** in London Road. This is a long-term derelict site in a prominent position opposite the end of the High Street. The scheme is a sensitive modern design which incorporates car parking and the restoration of an adjoining area of the Common, and we gave it our support, subject only to improved facilities for those crossing London Road on foot.

Since our last report it has become possible to see the overall effect of the changes to **McColls** at the corner of Chapel Place. It is a pity that after friendly contact with the firm at the start, the result seems to be as unsympathetic as we feared, and much more so than the other refurbishment they showed us as an example.

Finally we commented on the proposal to fell the protected **monkey puzzle** tree at Oakfield Court. At sixty foot this is thought to be the largest in Tunbridge Wells, but was said to be dangerous. The Society's comment was that it was valuable and unless it was diseased it should be pruned and kept. The Council tree officer confirmed it was not dangerous and agreed with us.

Chairman's Letter



Tunbridge Wells
September 2014

It would be perverse to write just now without recording that at the moment of writing, after fourteen years, the derelict buildings on the Cinema site are just about down. The Council's successful campaign to recover business rates from the owner seems to have finally tipped the balance. It would be good to think the Society's protests played a part in removing the eyesore.

It would be even better if the site was redeveloped properly and soon. It seems the architect of the abortive Waitrose scheme is working on an alternative comprising a hotel, restaurants and shops, and that this will be submitted for planning permission before the end of the year. Doubts remain that the market will support development on the owner's terms.

Even levelled, the site is an unsightly gap in the town centre, which affects the ability of the Council to pursue its long-term objectives, in particular extending the improvements of the public realm. Work has now started on repaving Fiveways, with replacement of seats and bins to follow. The plan is for the same treatment to be applied to the whole route from the post office to the High Street.

We support this and were glad to be involved in the choice of paving; we approved this with the comment that a more economical specification would ensure it could be used more widely without being unduly constrained by cost. We were also given a sight of the bins and seats, about which we were less happy. They were said to have been chosen to reduce maintenance costs while making Tunbridge Wells distinctive: we applauded the objective but wondered if the chosen designs were really distinctive. We also regretted the absence of lighting from the redesign, apparently because this is largely a matter for the County Council.

At present the Council doesn't wish to ask the Heritage Lottery Fund for approval to moving the clock (part-financed by the HLF's predecessor the Millennium Commission), in case this prejudices their current application for the cultural hub. We find this puzzling and are disappointed at what seems the piecemeal nature of the redesign – this might be unavoidable in the town generally as particular items need replacement, but a comprehensive approach ought to be possible at key sites. It is interesting to learn that the Society advocated a water-feature at the time the clock was chosen.

An important aspect of the redesign of Fiveways and Upper Mount Pleasant is the siting of bus stops, which connects to the routeing of buses round the town centre. The present stops are not ideal for users and make serious pinch points on the pavements; current bus designs are incompatible with some tight junctions. Proposals have now been made for a comprehensive review, including changes to one-way streets, bus-only lanes, and a bus hub between Tesco and the post office. Such matters are apt to be controversial, and there is likely to be prolonged debate, but we welcome the comprehensive approach and will take part in these discussions.

A provision of the Localism Act was the right of local communities to have public features designated as Assets of Community Value. If these were subsequently put on the market, any sale would be frozen for six months to allow the community to make a bid. The provision has been successfully used to acquire the Royal Oak in Prospect Road.

While the Act was going through Parliament it was realised that it was a Right to Bid, not a Right to Buy, and the effect has now been demonstrated. In June the Friends of the Commons had Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons designated an Asset of Community Value; in response the owners – Targetfollow, who also own the Upper Pantiles - put the Commons ‘on the market’. When asked, they confirmed that they were not marketing the Commons and had no intention of selling; they merely intended to allow the six months to run out, thereby ridding themselves of a commercial restraint. It seems nothing can be done about this at present, but we support the Friends and will be particularly vigilant for any new proposals by Targetfollow.

I delayed writing this note (my last Chairman’s Letter) until we knew the result of the Scottish referendum - particularly conflicting for an Anglo-Scot living in England. Putting the unpleasant and irrelevant racial undertones on one side (25% of the ‘English’ gene pool is said to be Scottish and another 25% Irish), one could only admire the Yes campaign’s mobilisation of a huge cross-party, or non-party base. The debate exposed key problems that concern societies like ours: how to represent increasingly diverse needs, allow real local determination, and soften the control of central authority.

Regardless of the decision it can only be good if government is now obliged to revisit these.

Alastair

An Enemy of the People?

Ted Robbins lives in West Sussex but is a frequent visitor to Tunbridge Wells. He first encountered William Webber when doing research in Suffolk. 2014 being 150 years since 1864, it seemed a good time to look into the background of the Webber Riots.

In 1864, Henry Solomon Colbran, printer and stationer of Tunbridge Wells, took it upon himself to spearhead a vendetta against a fellow resident of the town, 64 year old Dr William Webber. He printed verses, composed by the “poetic cobbler” Reuben Gibbs, comparing Webber to a boar who should be hunted down. He posted these on walls and lamp-posts throughout the town and sold copies for one penny. The end result was the “riot of Tunbridge Wells”, when Dr Webber’s Sion House was attacked by a mob, his effigy lynched, windows broken and fireworks thrown. A frightening

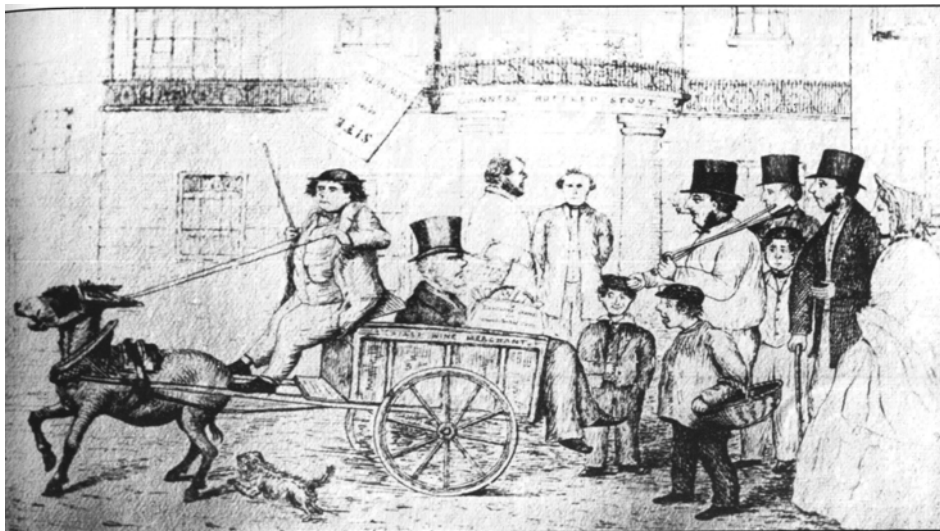
experience for Webber and his family, but there was little sympathy for the man. The courts took action and the perpetrators were bound over to keep the peace; Webber was awarded £50 in damages, but landed in jail when a lawsuit related to the incident went against him.

Webber was born in Friston, Suffolk in 1800. He trained at St Bartholomew’s Hospital and practised at St Giles, Norwich. He was a qualified surgeon, helped found the Norwich Royal Free Hospital for Incurables, designed surgical instruments, and took interests in animal research and husbandry. However, he saw fault in all around him, and if anyone can lay claim to the title “Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells”, it was Webber.

At St Bart’s he was a man to be avoided, expounding his theories to anyone he could corner. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons on the second time of trying, but refused to accept until he had been told who had black-balled him on the first occasion. The RCS would not provide this information and a stalemate ensued that was never resolved. Webber suspected that his



Dr Webber’s house was no. 1 Sion Terrace - the one on the left in this modern photo. In 1864 there was a balcony on the first floor. This was set alight by the rioters, who were said to number between 500 and 2000.



A cartoon assumed to show Webber in front of the Kentish Hotel. The man with tools over his shoulder may have been the Town Surveyor - about to investigate the drains. Webber had earlier antagonised the town by failed projects to extend the Kentish and Sussex Hotels. Three weeks after the riot, he pulled out a revolver during an altercation with Thomas Kinlan on the hotel step.

objector had been Sir Spencer Wells, surgeon to the Queen's household. Years later he got his revenge, but his triumph was short lived. Wells had left illustrated lecture notes in a hotel where Webber was staying. These notes, and in particular the illustrations, were said to have caused offence to the ladies, and Webber made the most of it by sending a letter of complaint to the RCS. The letter was passed to Wells who then sued Webber for libel and was awarded £300 in damages.

The hostility in Tunbridge Wells was triggered when Webber sent a letter to the Home Secretary expressing concern about the sewage system in the town. Tunbridge Wells is a spa town, famous for the natural spring water, and the issues raised by Webber threatened the

reputation and prosperity of the town. A health inspector was sent from London and reported that all was satisfactory. But by this time the council were fed up with Webber and his "offensive meddling and ridiculous pretensions". Chairman, Dr Charles Trustram,¹ said that gallows should be erected to hang Webber; others felt that he should withdraw from the town at once. In response Webber said that the inspector's report was a compilation of erroneously-drawn inferences, mis-statements, marked by an utter contempt for truth.

The shop keepers and donkey-drivers of Tunbridge Wells became concerned that the adverse publicity would affect their trade. Encouraged by the tone adopted at the council meeting, they set about making Webber's life hell. He was

forced from his home and in return, subpoenaed 50 witnesses and took the ringleaders to court. The courts found in his favour but he received little in recompense.ⁱⁱ Webber and Trustram next sued each other for libel. Trustram – accused of improper use of his position as a member of the Tunbridge Local Board - won the case. Webber refused to pay the damages and was imprisoned as a debtor. He remained in prison for months, becoming ill, and asked to be released on compassionate grounds, but Trustram refused to budge. Webber pleaded he was unable to pay, but few believed him, as he was a director of the Royal Kentish Hotel Company and had married into the wealthy family of Sir Thomas Preston.ⁱⁱⁱ

Webber continued to fight through the courts for justice but with little success and, saddened by the death of his son in New Zealand, moved to the safety of Kingston-upon-Thames. Although a pariah in Tunbridge Wells, he was a respected authority in other quarters. In

1865 he had published a paper about disease in cattle titled *An Essay on the Cattle Murrain and Pole Axe Murders*. His interests in animal husbandry came from his years of owning a farm called Moulton Paddocks near Newmarket, Suffolk, now a race horse training establishment for Godolphin. He was also an authority on “hospitals for the incurables”, having established one of the first in the country. He had identified the need for specialist care - not then available in general hospitals - that could extend the life or cure those with severe illnesses.

William Webber died in 1875; his wife Eliza died in 1885. His eldest son, William Thomas Thornhill Webber, became the Bishop of Brisbane. His youngest son, Henry, at the age of 67 joined the British army during the First World War; he was thought to have been the oldest combatant to have been killed in this conflict. **TR**

Readers may also like to see Roger Farthing's account of the case in his book on Mount Zion.

Footnotes

i. Dr Charles Trustram, a physician and member of the Royal College of Surgeons, lived in Bedford Place. (*1861 and 1871 census*).

ii. The rioters prosecuted were: Thomas Cole, Edward Beene, Alfred Taylor and Henry Butcher. (*Dover Express - Saturday 24 December 1864*). They were bound over and ordered to pay £20. Butcher was described as a labourer, and Beene as a billiard marker. Cole may have been a fly proprietor. All were from Tunbridge Wells.

iii. Webber set up a Riot Prosecution Fund and employed a secretary, Mr George Mansfield of London, to administer this. However, Mansfield (unaware of Webber's reputation) discovered that nobody in Tunbridge Wells would contribute. Webber then wanted the collection extended across the country and beyond with similar results. Webber did not pay Mansfield for his work and was sued. (*Sussex Advertiser - Wednesday 23 November 1864*).

Local History Group

To be published on November 6th.
Order now to ensure your copy.



This latest Monograph is not about the First World War as such, but about Tunbridge Wells in the First World War – what it was like before; what it was like during; and to what extent it changed afterwards. How the town, with a population of 36,000 which was 60% women, with 40% of them working; and with a well-above average number of retired people, coped for four years with the War itself and with the influx of nearly 10,000 soldiers in training, or in transit, or recuperating from their wounds in the 17 VAD military hospitals.

A5 format. 290 pp. 175 illustrations.

ISBN 978-0-9560944-8-4

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Special Price for Civic Society members : £7. 50

Please send a cheque, payable to Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society, to Christo Skelton - address on page 3. Please add £2.20 p&p per copy, unless you would like to collect it at a Society meeting.

— Familiar in the mouth as household words —

In our Spring edition we asked whether any readers remembered Randall Martin, a Tunbridge Wells doctor who had fought at Arnhem.

We had a number of responses from people who had known him well. This month is the 70th anniversary of the battle. David Wakefield outlines its history, considers the role of airborne forces, and identifies other Tunbridge Wells residents who were involved.

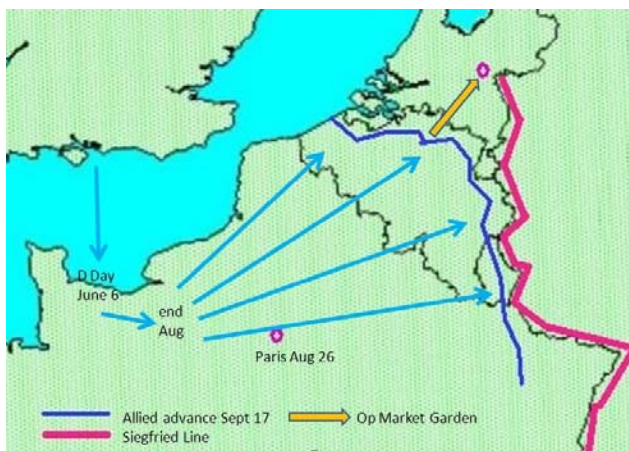
The hopes raised in the 1930s for that new arm of warfare, the soldier dropped by parachute, championed by the nascent Soviet Union, were not to be borne out in practice.

The first chance to utilise this new weapon of war fell to the Germans, in their capture of Crete in 1941, but the losses suffered by them forced even Adolf Hitler to abandon their use for the rest of the conflict.

The allied experience was different. Though some losses were suffered in the assault on Sicily in 1943, these were put down to errors of judgement on the part of the pilots, in releasing their charges too far from the landing beaches. The success of the tactic on “D” day, where airborne forces sealed off both edges of

the invasion zone, and also captured key targets such as Pegasus bridge, persuaded Montgomery that this was a war-winning weapon, useful in the last stages of the campaign.

The D-Day landing in June 1944 had established a bridgehead in Normandy for the liberation of Europe, but it was only the beginning of a very long and bitterly-fought campaign. By the end of August the allied forces had made the decisive breakthroughs to the east, crossing the Seine, and liberating Paris on 24th. They then made relatively fast progress through northern France and Belgium. Facing them though was the strongly fortified ‘Siegfried Line’ (Westwall), and the need to make the highly symbolic crossing of the Rhine.



Bernard Montgomery, leading the British armies on the left (northern) wing of the Allied advance, sought to outflank the German defences by moving north through the Netherlands.

The plan, called Operation Market Garden, involved using airborne forces to capture a series of six bridges, thus facilitating the advance of land forces. The land force, in turn, was

expected to close the gap quickly, before the Germans could overwhelm the lightly equipped parachute divisions. Arnhem was the sixth bridge. As we now know, it was a bridge too far, a gamble that failed.

Amongst the VCs won at Arnhem, the one nearest to our own hearts, is that of Captain Lionel Queripel.

His family, of Channel Islands extraction (hence the unusual name), lived in Warwick Park, Tunbridge Wells*. He went to school at Marlborough, and was a graduate of Sandhurst. He served first in the Royal Sussex regiment, and was present at the great battle of El Alamein in 1942, where four battalions of the regiment, formed up as the 133 Royal Sussex brigade. Lionel was in the second battalion.

After the battle, with greatly depleted numbers, the whole of the second battalion were asked if they would volunteer for a new parachute battalion (10 Para), forming its core. I have it on the authority of CSM Wotton, still alive and living in Lewes, that not everyone volunteered, fearing the dreaded physical



Lionel Queripel
VC

efficiency tests, but Lionel did. 10 Para returned to England, and embarked on the Arnhem campaign.

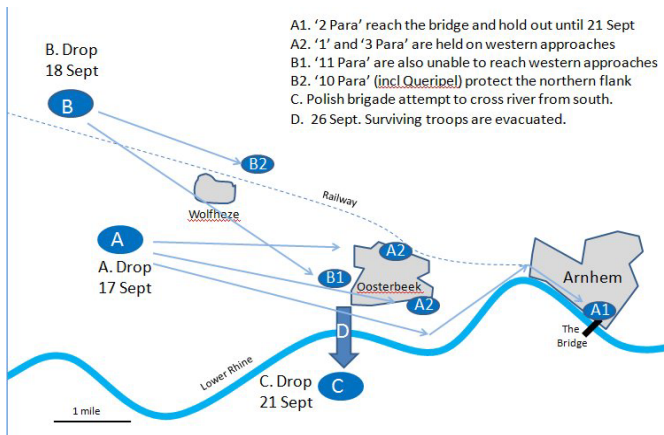
Market Garden was a huge operation, involving some 35,000 airborne troops. Despite having some 2,000 aircraft the drops had to be staged over a number of days, thus losing the element of surprise. It should be noted that not all the troops were paratroopers. Almost half, and all the heavy equipment, was landed from gliders, towed over the Channel by bombers.

The first drop at Arnhem, on Sept 17th, went reasonably well. From the dropping zone, about 6 miles to the west (marked



* Readers might remember Lionel's sister, Rose (Robinson). She was a member of the tennis club, and attended their annual prize giving every year until her death in the early 2000s.

Officers of the 2nd Bn., Royal Sussex Regt., before the battle of El Alamein. Lionel is far left. George Langridge who later became the manager of Barclays Bank Tunbridge Wells, is fourth from left.



ferried across the river in small boats. Of the 10,600 or so servicemen who had reached the north bank, about a quarter were evacuated, 1,485 died and over 6,000 were taken prisoner. During the battle the town was severely damaged and up to 500 Dutch civilians were killed.

For a full account of the campaign and of

A on the plan above), 2 Para was able to fight its way to the road bridge and capture it. Other units were held at the western approaches. Queripel's unit, 10 Para, landed on the second day (B) and tried to approach the town from the north. By then German defences were alerted and were able to stop them. Fog in England interrupted further lifts, especially of a Polish airborne brigade, most of whom arrived on the fifth day and were dropped south of the river (C).

By then the advancing land force was supposed to have arrived to relieve the paratroopers (it was led by Brian Horrocks, who was a television presenter in the early 1960s). However they were held up by a failure to capture the fifth bridge. What had been an attempt to capture the bridge and town at Arnhem, now became a race to extricate the surviving attackers. The remaining members of 2 Para holding the bridge were over-run on the 4th day, while those to the west formed themselves into a defensive zone and were eventually

Queripel's role, readers are referred to Richard Snow's excellent book, "Ten Brave Men and True". Queripel was killed while trying to protect the northern boundary of the region held by the entrapped attackers. I only have space here to quote his platoon sergeant, Sergeant Sunley, who was the last to see him alive:

As the German armour came nearer, Captain Queripel said "Sgt. Sunley get the men back", and on my orders they left. I remained but the



Captain told me that the order included me as well. I said "Sir, if you stay, I stay" but he was adamant saying "that's an order Sgt. Sunley" and I had to leave him, and that was the last I saw of him.

In the confusion of the battle it was not clear whether Queripel had been killed or captured. It was not until later that his body was identified - it had been buried by the Dutch Red Cross.

Lionel Queripel will forever be remembered in Tunbridge Wells - in the VC Grove in Dunorlan Park; by the naming of Queripel Close in Connaught Park; and the placing of a plaque on his old home in Warwick Park.

It was not until April 1945 that the Allies finally crossed into Arnhem. One result of the earlier failure was the death of more than 15,000 Dutch civilians during the winter. Dutch railway workers had sought to assist Market Garden by striking. The Germans responded by cutting off food supplies, creating a widespread famine. The failure in 1944 also allowed the Germans to continue using the Netherlands as launch sites for V-2 rockets.

The parachute arm was used once more in the war, at the very successful crossing of the Rhine in January 1945, and then never again. Nor will it ever be. The helicopter offers a much more accurate way of placing airborne forces exactly where they are wanted, and more safely too, since their approach being under the radar, means less chance of detection.

After the war there was much criticism and recrimination over the mistakes made at Arnhem. Lessons were no doubt learned. At this stage we can simply remember those who were involved and recognise their bravery. Philip Reinders, the Dutch researcher who first asked us about Dr Martin, has identified others with a connection to Tunbridge Wells. If you know of others please let us know.

RMM Adams 1922-2011.
d.TW 156 Para evac'd.

VA Britnev ?-1994
d.TW 1Para capt'd.

VDR Martin 1919-2001
d.TW RAMC capt'd.

PT Stainforth 1921-
b.TW RE capt'd.

JC Taylor 1916-1995
d.TW RAMC

J Timothy 1914-1995
d.TW 1Para capt'd.

JW Walker 1922-2011
d.TW KOSB evac'd.

Bernard Montgomery, mining his Shakespeare, said "In years to come, it will be a great thing for a man to say 'I fought at Arnhem'." We might make a further extract and say:

... then shall their names.

Familiar in the mouth as household words

... Be in our flowing cups freshly remember'd **DW**

Some thoughts after watching a film at Trinity

We watched the film 'Belle' at Trinity this summer. It was pleasant enough, though it seems that some of the history had been manipulated for the benefit of the story. It struck me (as it always does) how one can find a link to Tunbridge Wells in almost any topic; but also how strange it is that one particular topic is not addressed more often in the histories of the town.

The story is about Lord Mansfield and his great-niece, Dido Elizabeth Belle Lindsay. Mansfield (William Murray, 1st Earl, 1705 - 1793) was Lord Chief Justice from 1753 to 1788. He lived at Kenwood House in Hampstead. Dido was the illegitimate, mixed-race daughter of his nephew, and was more or less adopted by Mansfield and his wife. She lived with them for 30 years or so.

The film centres on the case of the slave-ship *Zong*, where some of the captives had been thrown overboard when water became short. The owners

claimed the value of these 'chattels' from their insurers. Mansfield's quandary was that, despite his personal affection for Dido, he felt obliged to make his judgement solely on legal rather than moral grounds. In the film Dido is instrumental in providing evidence that there were good legal reasons for him to come to the correct verdict.

The connection with Tunbridge Wells is simply that in later life Mansfield was a frequent visitor, staying with friends on Mt Ephraim and at Gt Bounds. He seems to have been very popular. Fifteen years after his death, Amsinck was still being very complimentary. Richard Cumberland considered his presence an attraction for potential residents. One unnamed lady, hearing that he was thinking of leaving, called on the nymph of the spring:

Arise, fair Naiad ! from thy well;
Arise, and tune thy vocal shell,
Try ev'ry soft bewitching art,
To charm the ear, and please the heart,
Till Mansfield shall thy voice obey,
And near thy spring consent to stay.

So there is the obvious link between the film and the town. But isn't it strange that we hear so little about the links between slavery and the town, given a) that the slave trade was one foundation of British wealth in the 18th century, and b) Tunbridge Wells was popular with wealthy 18th century Britons.

The information has always been



Lord Mansfield from Lewis Melville's book on Tunbridge Wells Society in the 18th Century (1912)

Dido Elizabeth Belle Lindsay and her cousin Elizabeth Murray. c. 1778

available, but is perhaps more easily accessible these days. There is, for example, the on-line database created recently by UCL from the compensation payments made after 1833 to dispossessed owners.

We can read there of William Lushington, who put together the Mount Pleasant estate between 1819 and 1823. He had made his fortune in India, but on his return invested it, not entirely successfully, in the West Indies. On his death in 1823, his daughter Charlotte sold Mt Pleasant to John Ward and it became Calverley Park and Grounds. After 1833 she and her sister Augusta, who lived in Mt Sion, were awarded some £7,000.

The Lushingtons are an example of how a family could include both slave-owners and abolitionists. William's nephew, Stephen, a lawyer, was a powerful advocate for abolition. And, in another link to Tunbridge Wells, as Chancellor to the diocese of Rochester, he attended the consecration of Holy Trinity in 1829.

Among early residents of Calverley Park was Sir Henry Martin at no.4 (he had previously lived in Calverley Terrace, in one of the houses that have survived). His family had been planters in Antigua for a hundred years, and his father had actively campaigned against abolition. Then at no. 24, was Jane Wildman. Her



father and uncles, who were lawyers, had made their fortune from administering the Jamaican estates of the young William Beckford.

The most intriguing, and possibly the wealthiest, of the early Calverley Park residents, was Richard Lee at no.14. Described as a West India merchant he had been born in Jamaica, but sent to school in England. When he died in 1857 he left £600,000. There is a suggestion that he was of mixed descent. His father, Robert Cooper Lee, was a successful lawyer from England, but his mother's identity is less clear. She is described as 'free mixed race woman'. Perhaps it doesn't matter. Perhaps it did matter in the 19th century. Richard's sister married David Bevan of the wealthy banking family. They had three children but her name is mysteriously missing from their entry in Burke's Peerage. **CJ**

Garden Party at Blackhurst



Many thanks to Graham and Gilly Charwood



Visit to Greenwich



July 3rd 2014



Putting Faces to Names - John de Lucy

I moved to Tunbridge Wells in 1980 from Sheffield with my wife, Olivia, and our four young children who all attended local schools. Nine jobs later I took voluntary redundancy from the British Library in early 2011 and have been retired since then, doing a great deal of traveling, and researching family history.

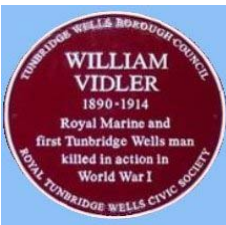
Already a church watcher at King Charles and on the planning scrutiny committee, I feel I would like to contribute more to local issues, especially the major redevelopments in the town and the proposed water features being planned. I love living here and hope to help in a small way to make it a better place for the local community to thrive, but also an attractive town for visitors.

My career has been in Facilities and Property Management and I have always had a strong interest in Architecture and Town Planning.



John leading the group on the visit to Greenwich in July.

Unveiling of first new plaque



The first of a new series of commemorative plaques was unveiled by the Mayor at a ceremony on the Town Hall steps on August 6th. The plaque was dedicated to Marine William Vidler, the first resident of the town to be killed in action during the First World War - exactly one hundred years earlier. The ceremony was attended by relatives of Private Vidler and by the current owners

of the house in Hawkenbury to which the plaque will be fixed.

The plaques are funded by the Tunbridge Wells Heritage Partnership Grant Scheme - an initiative of the Borough Council. A Society sub-committee has been working to identify and validate candidates, and has come up with a list of some two dozen. The plaques will be fitted in two tranches once agreement has been reached with the relevant property-owners. A full list of the chosen names will be provided in the next Newsletter.

Harold Blakey 1923-2014

Long-standing members will be sad to learn of the death of Harold Blakey at the age of 91. In the first fifty years of its life, the Civic Society had only six Treasurers, each of whom served for a decade or so. Harold was one of that dedicated group who, year on year, faithfully reported on the Society's finances, and ensured that we lived within our means. Then, turning from his balance sheets to his well-equipped workshop, Harold played a key practical role in the early restoration of the listed Town Pound in Grove Hill Road. Until recently, he was to be seen around the town, although looking increasingly frail. The Society has cause to be grateful to him and to others who work tirelessly behind the scenes for the good of our town. **PW**



Harold Blakey (right), with the then Chairman, Philip Whitbourn, and Committee Member Carol Wormleighton, behind the Civic Society's stall at a 'Dickens Christmas' event on the Pantiles in the early 1970s.

Other societies

Readers may be interested in the following events that have been advertised by other societies. It would be wise to confirm details and prices beforehand.

Friday **7th November**. "*Inconvenient people - the Victorian treatment of madness*" a lecture by Priya Sinha, for the Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery. Camden Centre. 7:30.

The Friends have a further talk on Victorian medicine "*Alive or dead or the workhouse*" in February next year. If that sort of thing appeals, you might also be interested in the Rye Medieval Conference on Saturday, **18th October**. There are six talks on the theme of "*The Hazards of Life and Causes of Death in Late Medieval England*". For details see www.ryemuseum.co.uk.

For something slightly different, on Friday **10th October**, Emily Maguire is singing for CREATE at St Barnabas School. Like the 1960s all over again.

By the way, CREATE and Friends of Woodbury Park are both competing in the Courier's 'Heart of the Community' scheme and request your votes.

Heritage Open Days 2014

Fiona Woodfield reports on this year's events.

There was good coverage in The Courier for three weeks in a row in the run up to Heritage Open Days.



COMMUNITY NEWS Courier Friday

OPEN DAYS: Somerhill in Tunbridge, the second largest manor in Kent, will be opening its doors on Sunday afternoon

Visit historic buildings for free this weekend

here are more than 50 venues and events to enjoy



M Saltmarsh (above), the oldest arts supplies shop in the country, was one of the venues in ITV Meridian's feature about HODs in and around Tunbridge Wells

Several thousand Heritage Open Days visits were made this year to our 54 participating venues. Somerhill (above) with 200 visitors in one afternoon was among the venues attracting record attendance. All the guided walks were popular, with several attracting over 40 walkers. At the Tunbridge Wells Opera House, tour guide Richard Marsden made full use of his theatrical voice to fire the imagination of a group of over 50 visitors on his behind-the-scenes tour. World War 1 themed exhibitions across the Borough were well attended and appreciated.



More events to enjoy than ever before for fans of local heritage

Free entrance to venues and exhibitions



There was a stream of visitors throughout the day to the World War 1 exhibition at the Royal Victoria Hall, Southborough (left), helped by an earlier article in the Courier (above).

Tour of Hoppers, Five oak Green. Hoppers was originally a 17th century farmhouse, then a pub, then a hop pickers' hospital. It is now a Christian residential centre with a WWI memorial.



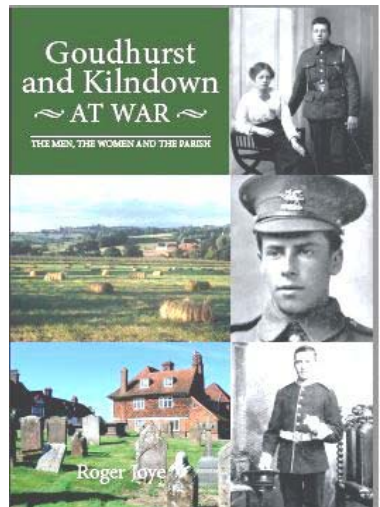
Left: Ready to go: the Victorian Walled Nursery in Hawkhurst took part for the first time. The Nursery was delighted with the number of visitors from Tunbridge Wells who came to visit their restoration project.

Pics: Richard Woodfield, David Elliott.

Roger's Book

This page of the Newsletter is usually allocated to Roger Joye, our one-time Chairman and Treasurer, to tell us about the forthcoming talks he has organised. Roger left Tunbridge Wells some years ago for the rural life out there in the Weald of Kent. He has been busy recently combining his new village identity with his long-held interest in the First World War, to produce the book shown here.

Over more than 400 pages it tells the stories of the 80 men and 2 women commemorated on the war memorials of the two villages. The first edition of the book sold out within three weeks. If you are interested in buying a copy, then you can register that interest on the website: www.goudhurstlocalhistorysociety.org.





CIVIC SOCIETY

Forthcoming Events

Meetings start at 7.30pm on the second Thursday in the month (unless otherwise stated) in the Town Hall or the Royal Wells Hotel. Remember to bring your membership card. Suggested £2 donation from non-members.

Entrance to the Town Hall is via the main door. If you are late and find that it is locked, please ring the bell and wait to be admitted.

Oct 9th	RTWCS Awards Evening Town Hall
Nov 13th	Annual General Meeting (see Agenda below) David Jukes will speak on matters of current interest in the town. Town Hall
Dec 11th	'Tunbridge Ware' A look at our locally-made, but widely-famed form of decorative woodware, with Dr Ian Beavis . Town Hall

Agenda of the Annual General Meeting

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 14th Nov 2013
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 - Nigel Price, Treasurer
7. Report on the Local History Group - John Cunningham, LHG Chairman
8. Date of next Annual General Meeting

*Nominations, signed and seconded, must be received by the Secretary (address on page 3) by Thursday 30th 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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www.thecivicsociety.org