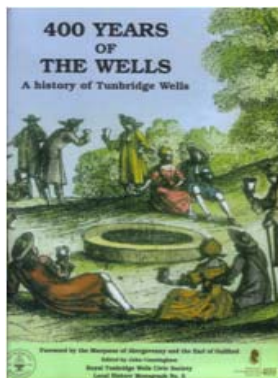


Autumn 2016



Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society



Christmas Offer

The Local History Group catalogue now comprises seventeen titles: thirteen monographs and four 'occasional papers'.

Members of the Civic Society are entitled to a **25% discount** when buying direct from the Society. See our website <http://thecivicsociety.org/Civic105.htm>* for the list of titles and the standard prices.

Additional discounts are on offer in the period up to Christmas:

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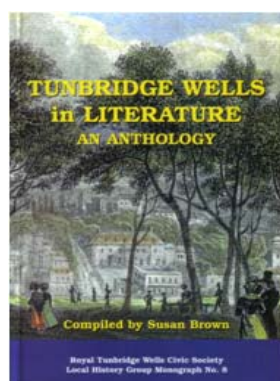
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Postage and packing is £1.50 per book (£5 for the atlas), or you can arrange to collect them without charge at any meeting of the Society (we hold limited stocks at meetings, so please order in advance).

* The web-site may not yet include our latest offer: 'Eminence Grise', a biography of the 1st Marquess of Abergavenny, by John Cunningham. £5.95.



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Personally Speaking

by Chris Jones

Only connect ... Have you been spending your Sunday evenings with Rufus or with Aidan? The town has closer links to 'Victoria'. The evil uncle in the earlier episodes, hoping to become Regent, was a visitor in 1796 and possibly other years too. There is a suggestion that Cumberland Walk was named after him - though the dramatist Richard Cumberland who lived on Mt Sion is also a possibility. The other manipulative character, Sir John Conroy, also visited the town, accompanying Victoria and her mother. During their 1834 stay he took a house in Calverley Park, though sadly we do not know which one. There were links too with the Cornish mining industry, though perhaps a little later than Poldark. Henry Gould Sharp, who lived in Lansdowne Road, was a promoter and dealer in mining shares. He published his 'Capitalists Guide' to Cornish and Devon mines in 1859. Charlotte Fullarton in Mount Ephraim Road was an investor.

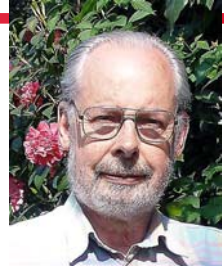
Memories ... In the last Newsletter we asked whether readers had any memories of the characteristic sounds and smells of the town. Many thanks to Brian Woodgate for responding so quickly - please see his memories on page 11. Another way to experience recent history is through the short films that were made by the Regency Film Unit in the 1950s and 60s. David Sandford has identified another one:

<http://player.bfi.org.uk/film/watch-city-gents-1965/>

The importance of footnotes ... Living in Tunbridge Wells one gets used to the image of the place as being snobbish and excluding. Perhaps we accept it too readily. There is a story that in 1874 the town petitioned the railway company not to introduce cheap third-class fares, for fear of lowering the tone. It's repeated in one of my favourite books on Victorian history. I decided to check the source. He cited an earlier history, which in turn cited another earlier history. They all ultimately refer back to a statement in a 1962 book by railway historian Edwin Course. Course does not indicate a source. John Arkell and I have searched through the *Courier* and *Gazette* for that year and have found no such petition - what the town was actually campaigning for was lower fares for all classes. Assuming that Course had found some sort of petition, might it have been generated by the railway company themselves, seeking to justify not lowering the fares? Has anybody seen any real evidence?

From the Planning Scrutineers

by Alastair Tod



Since our June notes the Society has submitted a detailed objection to the replacement of **Union House** with 128 large flats, but the application has still not reached the Planning Committee. We are concerned about the delay, and about the reason for it, that the officers are tying up legal issues including a (presumably large) payment to the Council under s.106. Our view is that contractual agreements, with fees paid to advisers, should be left until after the *planning* issues – substantial in this case – have been decided in public by the elected members, whose role is otherwise devalued.

Possibly because of the exceptional weather, tables and chairs have been appearing on the pavement, not just in the Pantiles but in some more unlikely locations such as **Chapel Place**. In most cases this requires planning permission (whatever the ownership of the land), and often a licence from KCC to occupy the ‘highway’. In 2015 the Argentinian steakhouse **CAU** in Upper Mt Pleasant enclosed about half the wide area created by the shared space scheme with screens, planters and umbrellas before applying for planning permission, and when this was refused obtained a licence and continued to occupy the pavement. After protests from the Town Forum and others about congestion TWBC took enforcement action and another planning application is now pending. We welcome the café culture subject to practical considerations and did not object to the principle, subject to the area occupied being reduced and the enclosure not becoming permanent or year-round.

By the efforts of local residents a row of fourteen houses in **Newcomen Road** was listed Grade2 by Historic England last year. They are ‘model dwellings’ - what we would now call social housing – from the 1840s, thus preceding those designed by Prince Albert for the Great Exhibition, and as houses, rather than flats, possibly pioneers. Some of them have been sadly knocked about and one was in the hands of a developer at the time of listing; the developer had consent for some works but not for changes to the windows, rather a feature of the original design. He has now replaced several windows with standard UPVC units and applied retrospectively for planning permission. Since his work was well underway before the house was listed we had some sympathy but felt we could only object to the use of this material and an incompatible design.

Chairman's Letter



Tunbridge Wells
September 2016

“On the one hand... on the other...”: the old cliché that there are two sides to every question is one that we all tend to accept. Yet there are times when one has to come down in favour of one side or the other, and this can prove complicated.

Such an issue is the recent development of what is often referred to as the “café society” in Tunbridge Wells. Or to use modern jargon, enhancing the streetscape of the town.

The Civic Society has been considering this matter for some months and our members have expressed a variety of views. We try on the whole to steer a middle course but it is not always clear where the middle is in this matter.

Certainly we have found that most people welcome the increasingly frequent practice of coffee shops, cafés and restaurants providing outdoor seating for their customers. Seeing people enjoying a meal on a fine day in the greenery-edged square outside Côte presents an agreeable distraction from the barren slope of the old cinema site over the road.

And we are pleased that our “nagging” has ensured that Prêt à Manger has finally enclosed their bins so that they no longer impinge upon those sitting at tables around the Fiveways piazza. (This scene will of course now be disrupted by the overdue replacement of the paving – another issue we along with many others have pursued).

While we appreciate the improved ambience such tables can provide, we are aware that there can be too much of a good thing. We have objected to the over-extensive tabling outside Pizza Express at the bottom of the High Street – and lost that case. Now we wonder where Number One Warwick Park is going to manage to squeeze in tables they have applied for on the often parked-on pavement by its front door.

However, the major ‘pinch points’ - where those enjoying a drink or a meal at

* Enjoying the Garden Party 2016

outdoor tables can conflict with those attempting to pass by or to enter shops - become most acute on a fine day or a jazz evening in Chapel Place and the Pantiles.

Shop-owners hoping for custom from the increased footfall sometimes complain that entry to their shops can be obstructed by those occupied tables. Passers-by can find it difficult if not impossible to negotiate their way through the groups chatting and socialising in the narrow through-ways.

Yet who would want to object to the people of the town enjoying the all-too-rare pleasure of a sunny summer's day or a balmy evening? Certainly many of us are there participating in these events.

Calls for us to raise objections, therefore, have to be met with the realisation that the last thing we want to do is act as a wet blanket over the enjoyment of our town – the very reason for our existence. What we try to do is accept a reasonable proposal – such as that by the Cau restaurant at the corner of Dudley Road and Mount Pleasant for two rows of tables and chairs rather than the three originally hinted at, which we felt would obstruct even that wide pavement for passing pedestrians.

In the Pantiles, there seems now to have developed an informal agreement that the passage through in front of the shops must be kept clear so that those wishing to enter shops or to continue on through have a clear route. We hope that this best of all possible results – a sensible compromise with no compulsion involved – has resolved the matter to the satisfaction of all and the improved ambience of Tunbridge Wells.

Janet Sturgis



Oh dear, Fiveways ...

Alastair Tod explains our (limited) involvement in the choice of materials for Five Ways.

A story is going round that the Civic Society is responsible for the grey stone slabs at Fiveways. We aren't, and here is what happened.

Some ten years ago we started urging the Council to do something about Fiveways, which at that time had more than sixty metal bollards, a lot of modern red bricks, and not much else except the blessed clock (which is a different story). In due course we joined a Council trip to Ashford to view what had been done there to create a 'shared space'.

On return we gave our backing to shared space and re-paving for Fiveways but said specifically that standard materials should be used as far as possible, to save costs on laying and maintenance and make it easier to extend the scheme to adjacent areas. All aspects of the design we urged should be planned together, seats, lights, bins, planters and signage.

The Society was in fact consulted on the paving materials. It seemed the Council was committed to using stone and we voted for a pale gold natural stone

similar to that used in High Street. We also helped to choose the granite block pavers. But we had no say in the layout and the final choice of materials was in the hands of Kent County Council, as highway authority. At a late stage KCC apparently insisted on the grey synthetic slabs – allegedly because they wanted the same material used throughout Kent.

The seats and bins were chosen by TWBC after the paving work started; we weren't consulted, but were shown them after they had been chosen. The lights and signage, being highways matters, weren't part of the project at all. We had hoped that the clock could be moved, if not to another site at least to a central location in Fiveways where it would help to unify the space. This was found impossible and it was instead jacked up so that the base damaged by skateboarders could be replaced.

Of course it's difficult to say how the grey slabs would seem if they had been properly laid on a solid base, and we had nothing whatever to do with that.... **AT**

Subscription Reminder

Subscriptions for the new year were due on September 1st. Many of you have standing orders, so payments will have been made automatically. If not, please send your cheque to our Membership Secretary: Trina Lewis, Claremont Lodge, 49 Claremont Road, TN1 1SY. The rate is £15 for individuals, £22.50 for a couple. If you are a tax-payer, you might like to consider Gift Aid, by which the government further boosts your contribution. A form is available on the web-site: www.thecivicsociety.org.

Heritage Open Days

There was a time towards the end of last year when it seemed that there would be no Heritage Open Days this year, or at least no involvement by the Civic Society in arranging them. Nobody had come forward to take on the steering role, so the Committee agreed that we should contact TWBC to explain that we were withdrawing. But then up popped Horatio Cunningham, turning a blind eye to the minutes, and saying ‘I see no reason why we can’t do it’. And do it he did, with the support of a newly-formed committee, below. And of course with the involvement of the hundreds of volunteers who actually open their houses and churches and lay on the events: blacksmiths and bell-ringers, walkers and talkers. Our thanks to you all for providing a most successful weekend. So who’s up for it next year?



HODs committee 2016. From left: David Sandford, Ann Bates, Caroline Auckland, Horatio Cunningham, David Wakefield, Alastair Tod, Lionel Anderson, Pat Wilson. Missing from the line-up: Sarah and David Bartholomew.

Kent Archaeological Society

There may still be time to attend the KAS study day on ‘**The Restoration Church and the Parish**’, at King Charles the Martyr on Sat **October 15th**. Three speakers, workshops and discussion. £17 to incl lunch. Details in the last Newsletter or see <http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/churches-committee/>.

On 26th November KAS is holding a one-day conference in Canterbury with the title ‘**Villas in the Roman Landscape**’ or ‘ what the Romans built for us in Kent’. Tickets £25, excl lunch. Further details and booking form on the KAS website, as above.

— So how well do you know the town? —

In the last Newsletter we asked whether you could identify the following parts of town: Bath Square, Bath Yard and Bath Terrace. I regret that I didn't ask you to send in your answers so I have no idea how difficult this was. Anyway, here are the answers.

You must all know **Bath Square**: at the eastern end of the Pantiles, where the spring is / was. It was presumably given that name in the early 19th century when the Bath House was built. The picture, right, is from a magazine, *The Mirror*, of October 1831. They comment on the time of year “when early leaves fall and remind young and old of their wrinkles”. There's a cheery thought.



Bath Yard is less well-known. It was at the lower end of Vale Road - before there was a Vale Road that is. I haven't really researched it, but here are some snippets. Bengé Burr talked of a cold bath ‘about a furlong from the Walks ... neatly fitted up in a pretty retired situation’, and Sprange in 1786 described Mr Skinner's lodging house as near the Cold Bath. Mr Skinner eventually had three

lodging houses: Little, Middle and Great Bath House - where Post Office Square is. It was later the base for William Cramp ‘riding master’. Bath Yard was a line of 13 cottages behind, sometimes called Bath Row. They were prone to flooding, particularly when the drains from Calverley Park were fed into the stream which ran down behind them. Vale Road was cut through to the High Street by the late 1860s. A little more work is needed on this.

Bath Terrace was, I assume, the most difficult. It is the last row of houses at the bottom of Rochdale Road. The picture, right, is of the top end. I always think it looks attractive when I get my paper from the shop opposite, with St Luke's church in the distance. The name Bath Terrace was used in a Kellys Directory in the late 1880s - I wonder whether it referred to the swimming pool in the new Grosvenor Rec. CJ



The Sights and Sounds and Smells of Tunbridge Wells

In the last Newsletter Jane Dickson spoke of the smell of the brewery dominating the town. We asked for other memories of sounds and smells. Brian Woodgate remembers growing up amidst the saw-mills in the centre of town.

My father, grandfather and great grandfather all worked for the Baltic Saw Mills in Goods Station Road, Tunbridge Wells. They each lived in tied cottages in Tunnel Road. As a child in the 1940/50 era I lived with my parents at no. 60 Tunnel Road.

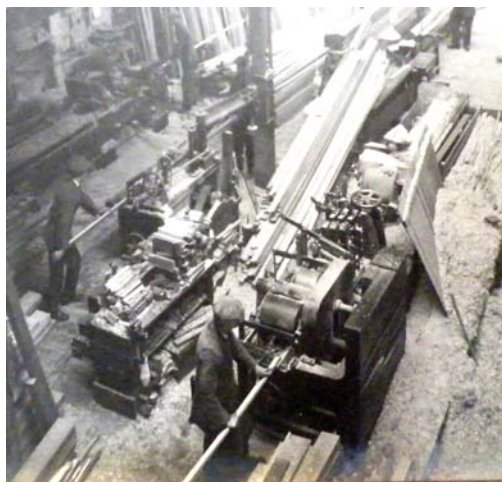
You refer to the shriek of circular saws and the smell of sawdust from freshly-cut timber. To this add the sound made by the saw-doctor as he sharpened saws of all descriptions. The sound was a rasping one as his file honed the teeth of the saw. A sound that was painful on the ears and often went on in the evenings as he also sharpened saws for carpenters and builders, to make extra income.

In those days the machinery was driven by a complex system of belts

attached to a steam engine located in one corner of the mill. As a child my father would take me to see it in action. To a child it looked huge and was kept in pristine condition by the man who was both chief engineer and stoker, wood cuts and shavings being the chief fuel. There was the smell of lubricating oil and burning wood. All brass fittings gleamed brightly.

There was also the sound of cutters being shaped for tongue and groove flooring and architrave work which required particular skill, as builders would come in with their own designs and the cutters were shaped accordingly. My father was an expert at this painstaking work, the sound that of stone shaping metal ie a grinding sound, and when I was allowed to watch, a shower of sparks.

The water for the steam was drawn from a deep well in the back yard; you could not call it a garden. A huge water tank dominated the yard and twice a year men would come to service the electric pump which raised the water to the tank. This involved moving a large flat stone which acted as a cover for the well. The well was deep and I was allowed, under supervision, to peer down but it was not possible to see the bottom but the dropping of a stone was!



Cutting mouldings at the Kensington St. mill.
Where the Camden Centre is now.

Then somewhere deep in the earth a splash was heard! I think the well was fed from the Jacks Wood underground springs.

Other sounds were those of the two carthorses that each drew a cart laden with fire logs. They were stabled in Commercial Road and I was allowed to go and see them. There was the wonderful smell of the stable but I had to be lifted up to see over the stable door.

Living next to the railway line, although it was in a deep cutting, we both heard and felt the trains as they whistled when they entered the tunnel and the ground shook. On a foggy morning we heard the sound of the fog warning signals, like a small explosion.

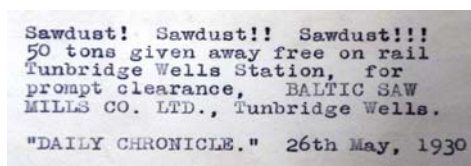
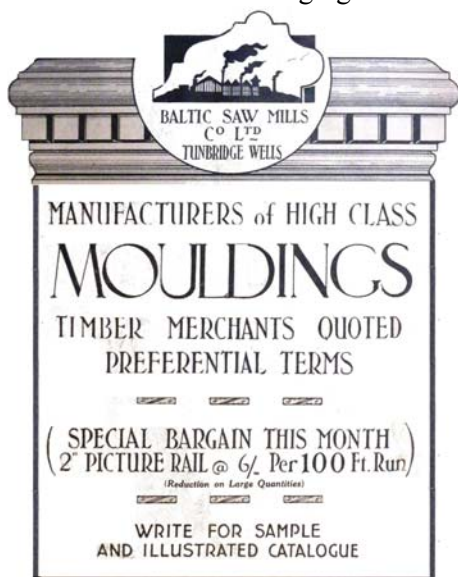
At night we would hear the sound of shunting coming from the Goods Station Yard. The clatter and banging of trucks



being moved around is a unique sound. Bang, bang, bang accompanied by clatter, clatter clatter. The engine puffed back and forth in short energetic bursts, sometimes all night long.

Another sound was the shout of the night watchman. After the mill was closed we boys would climb over the fence to play on and around the stacks of cut timber. Our way of escape was down the railway bank and back through the coal wharves, where the distinctive smell of coal filled the air.

Sometimes we would go to the railway track and place pennies on the line and then wait for the next train to run over them. Thus flattened they would be at least twice their normal size.



Sawdust - the inevitable by-product - was also sold - 6d. a bag in 1933.



The main office in Goods Station Road. There were also premises in Commercial Road, Kensington Street, Western Road and at the West Station.

The scrap metal dump adjacent to the coal wharves was also a source of material for constructing home-made go-carts out of old pram wheels, axles and pieces of wood.

Another source of smells could be found in St. Barnabas Church. It was always left open in those days. We would creep in and be overawed by the smell of incense and candles and its high roof and

sense of mystery. The much-loved Father Oman was priest at that time.

Then there was the Ice Factory opposite the Baltic Saw Mills. I used to watch the men pulling out huge blocks of ice for transportation to local fish shops and beyond. From time to time they would de-ice the refrigeration units and tip the fragments of ice onto the yard outside. In the heat of summer these became 'iced lollies' for free!

I too can remember the sickly smell which spread through the town from Kelsey's brewery, when the wind was in the right direction.

I think that's more than enough for now, I seem to have got carried away.
BW



Trouble at Woods Gate, 1602

We tend to think that history round here starts in 1606. Dr Susan Pittman describes problems in Pembury four years earlier.

Woods Gate lies on the junction of the A228 with the old Hastings Road, and was once a gated entrance into the extensive Southfrith forest, with its exclusive hunting rights.

It was at this busy crossroad that Henry Terry took over an alehouse adjoining Southfrith Lodge, and 'within two bowshots of a common robbing place'. Under his proprietorship the previously orderly alehouse soon became notorious.

Since Terry's arrival on the scene he had become the bane of Richard Baker of Flimwell, who on 5 September 1602 wrote to two JPs, Sir Thomas Waller of Groombridge and George Rivers of Chafford, requesting their help to bring Terry to justice.

The problem was that Terry and his alehouse companions molested Baker's men, passing that way from Hastings bringing fish to the royal household. 'Last

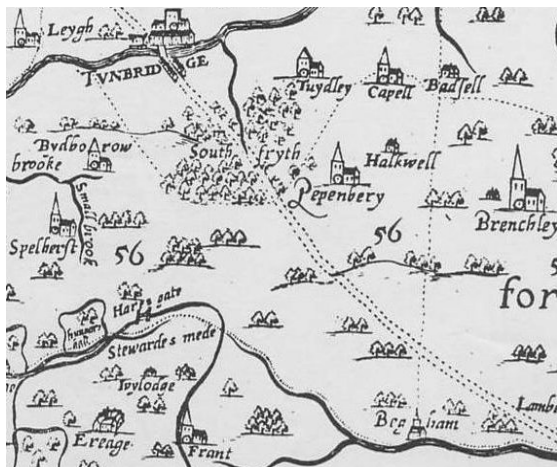
week my men had to run so fast to escape them that they nearly broke the shoulders of their horses, and one Brad took a dosser of fish' (dosser = pannier). Baker went on to complain of the disorderly alehouse in which lights were on at all hours no matter how late his men tried to ride past to avoid trouble. When Terry heard that Baker was about to make a complaint he had tried to bribe him with an offer of venison. In those days deer were privately owned by the upper echelons of society and kept within the bounds of expensive parks or forests, such as Southfrith. Venison was neither bought nor sold on the open market so any that Terry had acquired would have been poached.

At the Maidstone sessions of 28 September 1602 Terry's licence was revoked, and he was 'never to keep a victualling house again.' He was also fined and bound over to keep the peace.

However, the fine was not paid so later the sheriff was ordered to imprison him, until he paid the fine and found sureties to ensure that he observed the victualling laws in the future. **SP**

(Nos. 335, 733, 1250 in 'Kent at Law 1602' by Louis A. Knafla, HMSO 1994)

Woodsgate lay at the point where the road from Hastings entered South Frith 'forest'. Note that 'Pepenbury' (Pembury) is the old church, near the reservoir. Symondson map 1596. From the excellent website: <http://pembury.org/history>.



Stephen Beeching: Piecing Together a Life

Anne Carwardine uses the example of Stephen Beeching to demonstrate the sources now available for local / family historians.



Everyone who knows Tunbridge Wells will be familiar with the Lloyds Bank building on the corner opposite the Town Hall and some will be aware that it was originally home to the Beeching bank. Recently I have been researching the life of a member of that family. Stephen Beeching did nothing extraordinary and (as far as I am aware) left behind no diaries, letters or photographs. But he provides a good case study of how a life can be pieced together, using some of the amazing range of sources that are now available. The end result is an interesting picture of a man and the life he led.

Non-conformist birth and baptism records show that Stephen Beeching was born on 4th January 1800, the third son of Thomas and Elizabeth Beeching of

Tonbridge. He had two older brothers - Thomas and Horatio, and three younger sisters – Anna, Elizabeth and Mary. Finally there was a younger brother Alfred, born in 1812.

Linen draper Thomas Beeching began offering banking services from his shop in around 1815, opened a bank in Tonbridge in 1824 and a further branch on Church Road, Tunbridge Wells in 1826. His three oldest sons all joined him in the business, which later expanded to Hastings, St Leonards and Folkestone. Stephen's obituary in the *Courier* stated that he started in the family business in 1820 and when he married Anne Green of Sevenoaks in 1828 he was described as a banker from Tunbridge Wells.

When searching online I also found a reference to a Stephen Beeching, born in 1800, who served in the British army (the 4th Regt of Foot) between 1823 and 1829, mostly in the West Indies. I've not located any other Stephen Beeching born around the same time, so it seems possible that this was the one from Tonbridge, even though it's hard to tie it in with other information.

Stephen and Anne set up home at Percy Cottage on St John's Road, just along from the brewery, and soon had a growing family. Elizabeth was born in



Right: 1835 Poll Book for the two-member constituency of West Kent. H (Hodges) and R (Rider) were Whigs, G (Geary) was a Tory. Entitlement was based on property ownership rather than residence.

1829, Thomas in 1831, Rose in 1834 and Stephen in 1835. An unnamed son was stillborn in 1836.

Voting in the 19th century was not the private business it is today. Poll books were published listing how men had cast their votes and the West Kent Poll Book for 1835 shows that Stephen voted for the two Liberal candidates in that year's general election. He seems to have been out of step with his father and older brothers, who all voted Tory. However it also appears that Stephen's views changed as he became older: poll books for 1867 and 1868 show him voting Tory.

In Stephen's case, as for many people, the only tangible connection to him is a grave. In the grounds of Trinity Church is a tomb to the Beeching family (one of the few monuments still remaining in place). Stephen was buried there, although there is no inscription to him. However on one end, barely legible, is a reference to the death of his young son Stephen, which occurred in 1838.



| TONBRIDGE DISTRICT. | | 149 | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-----|---|---|
| TONBRIDGE. | | H | R | G |
| NAMES. | RESIDENCE. | | | |
| Balcock, Edward Holmes | Hanway-street, Oxford-street | | | |
| Barcham, Asher | Tonbridge | | | |
| Barnett, Thomas | Ditto | | | |
| Barrett, Aaron | North Row, Tonbridge Wells | | | |
| Bassett, Stephen | Mount Pleasant | | | |
| Batchelor, William | Tonbridge | | | |
| Batchelor, John | Ditto | | | |
| Batchelor, Benjamin | Ditto | | | |
| Beeching, Horace | Ditto | | | |
| Beeching, Thomas | Ditto | | | |
| Beeching, Thomas | Tonbridge Wells | | | |
| Beeching, Stephen | Ditto | | | |
| Bell, William | | | | |

In early June that year Stephen and Anne Beeching made a trip to London, leaving their children in the care of servants. While they were away nursemaid Sarah took nine-year-old Elizabeth and three-year-old Stephen for a walk and it seems that, while the children were collecting flowers at a pond close to their home, she had a fit and fell into the water. Stephen went to try and help her, while Elizabeth ran to Lidbetter's brewery on St John's Road to call for help. Brewery employees ran to the pond and pulled Stephen from the water. They took him back to Percy Cottage, but were unable to revive him. Elizabeth had been so distressed, it was only then that she remembered the nurse. Sadly when the men returned to the pond they found that she too had died - she was to have been married the following week.

In around 1843 Stephen was appointed as churchwarden at Holy Trinity church, a position he held for most of the following thirty years. From 1853 onwards he was minister's warden for the well-known cleric Canon Edward Hoare.

The Beeching tomb in Trinity churchyard.

The brewhouse pond in 1820. The Beeching home was a little to the right.



In the 1850s the Beeching's address changed to Percy House. It may have been an actual house move, or it may have simply been a change of name. Percy House was roughly on the site of the present BP service station (the brewery was on the site of the Shell station). This is where Anne was recorded in the 1861 census. (Stephen and their daughter Rose were away on the Isle of Wight, visiting the family of Rose's future husband, Marcus Newall).

Newspaper columns over the following years give glimpses of Stephen's life, including his children's marriages, the business of the Beeching bank and the activities of Holy Trinity vestry. Sadly, in November 1862 Stephen's younger brother Alfred committed suicide, just two days after the death of his older brother Thomas (from natural causes). An article in the *South Eastern Gazette* reported that Mr A J Beeching, solicitor, of Grosvenor Road, had been suffering from mental depression for some time and concluded 'He was a gentleman of great correctness.....and his only error seems to have been too close

application to the interests of his profession, to the neglect of his own mental health.'

The familiar building at the top of Mount Pleasant was constructed for the Beeching Bank in 1874, to the designs of architect Henry Cronk, who was also responsible for designing a number of the town's churches. By this time the next generation of Beechings had taken over the business. Stephen was suffering from ill health and died in November 1878, aged 78. It was a sad year for the family; his brother Horatio and son Thomas had died earlier in the same year. An obituary in the *Kent & Sussex Courier* said of Stephen '...it would have been impossible for anyone to have enjoyed, in a greater measure, the respect and confidence of all who knew him.'

The funeral was conducted 'in a most impressive manner' by Canon Hoare and Stephen was buried in the family vault at Trinity church graveyard. (Since 1849, when the Woodbury Park cemetery was opened, the only burials permitted at Holy Trinity were where family members had already been buried there).

The story of Stephen Beeching's life, as told here, has been pulled together from a variety of easily available sources (see below for further information). Where previously information had to be tracked down in local libraries, churches or archives, a great deal is now available online. However, I'm sure there is plenty

I have not found yet and I look forward to learning more. **AC**

Postscript: The name Beeching brings to mind the savage railway cuts implemented by Dr Richard Beeching the 1960s. However, a quick check reveals that Dr Beeching had no close connection to the Tunbridge Wells family.

How to find information on a life such as Stephen's

- Three of the most comprehensive online genealogy websites are *Ancestry.com*, *Findmypast.com* and *Familysearch.com*. (The first two of these are subscription services, but can be consulted for free at local libraries). These databases contain information taken from the registration of births, deaths and marriages; from census returns (1841 to 1911); and from a huge range of other sources including probate records, immigration records, army records and poll books.

- The *British Newspaper Archive* (BNA), which is also a subscription service, contains digitised copies of many local and national newspapers. Most usefully for local researchers, it includes the Kent & Sussex Courier (from 1873 to 1950).

- Some local newspapers not covered by the BNA are available on microfiche at Tunbridge Wells Library. These and other titles are available (on microfilm or as print volumes) at the British Library at St Pancras. (Print volumes have to be requested at least 48 hours in advance of your visit).

- A Kent County library card gives access

to useful sources in the *Online Reference Library*, which can be accessed via kent.gov.uk. These include the Times newspaper, the Illustrated London News and part of the British Library's collection of 19th century newspapers.

- A search of *Google Books* can be a good way of finding information. For example the Poll Book which showed how Stephen voted in 1867 was found this way.

- The *National Archives* hold many records relating to individuals and organisations. A search can be done on their website. Some records can be downloaded, others have to be viewed at Kew.

- There are many other useful websites which are free to access. For example, there is information relating to the Beechings bank in the *London Gazette* online archive.

- Directories can be a good source of information on when and where local businesses were in operation and where individuals were living in particular years. Tunbridge Wells Library has a comprehensive collection of directories, including long runs of Peltons and Kellys.

AC

Donovan George Joyce

We report with very great sadness the death of long-standing member Don Joyce. Don joined the Society soon after its formation in 1959, and was a much-valued member for around half a century. During this time he worked as a ‘Planning Scrutineer’; served on the Executive Committee; and played an important role as Secretary. He was Secretary in 1999 when we marked our fortieth anniversary and was instrumental in organising Heritage Open Days in the 1990s.

Donovan trained as an architect at Portsmouth, qualifying in 1954, and later took an Academic Diploma in Town Planning at UCL. He had a most useful talent for producing a quick sketch showing how a particular proposal might look.

His telling ‘before and after’ sketches at the time of the 1970 ‘Ring Road Inquiry’, illustrating the impact that the Council’s ill-conceived highway scheme could have on Willicombe’s Lansdowne Road, are shown below.

Don’s first home in Tunbridge Wells was at 5 Sandrock Road, an enclave which, with his encouragement, also produced the Collings and Wormleighton families as stalwarts of the Society. From there, he moved to Ramslye Farmhouse, and then to East Grinstead and Withyham. However his moves did not diminish his love for the town, or his concern for its well-being. He continued to practice here, at first in partnership with Society founder-member Don Tucker and Nigel Laws, at 5 Clanricarde Gardens, and then under his own name, at 27

Church Road. His professionalism and commitment, alongside that of other consummate professionals such as Kenneth Miller, Dick Greenslade, Maurice Blackshaw and Gill Twells greatly helped to earn the Society a reputation as an organisation to be taken seriously, and an influential force for good in the town,

Sadly, Don’s health was not good towards the end and, with some reluctance, he moved to Jersey, where he died peacefully on 30th August. His funeral was at the ancient Church of St Michael, Withyham, on 28th September. **PW**



Before



After



The Romney Marsh Churches

Another very successful visit organised by John de Lucy





Garden Party at Hungershall Lodge

Our thanks to Ian and Sheila Marshall



Pics: Charmian C-J, J de L

Programme Notes

‘Sound bytes from a Spa town’ - Dec 8th

From the Boatman of Dunorlan to a 90 year old Assembly Hall jazz drummer, the voices of Tunbridge Wells have stories to tell that are not found in history books.

In this talk about oral history Liz Douglas celebrates the work of a team of dedicated Museum volunteers who have been capturing fascinating local testimonies and preserving social history.

Samples of the oral histories will be played along with an explanation of how the interviews have been used in the Museum and their exciting future possibilities with the advent of digital technologies.

Remembrance Day - Nov 13th

The Society will be laying a wreath at the Remembrance Day parade on November 13th. If you would like to join us, we meet at about 10:45 outside the NatWest bank opposite the library.



Remember the Sixties?

Got any pictures to prove it?

A request from Liz Douglas at the museum:

“Do you have any photos of yourself or friends wearing outrageous ‘youth’ fashions in the 1960s in Tunbridge Wells?”

I am putting on a small costume display about 60s fashion in Tunbridge Wells featuring clothes from our collection. I am looking for an image of iconic fashions of the time, e.g. miniskirts, bee hives, paisley suits, go-go boots.

It does have to be of youth fashion worn in the local area and the image is going to be enlarged as a backdrop so does need to be of relatively high resolution.

Thank you.”

The costumes will be on display from October so please don’t delay. Even if you don’t have any pictures, and even if you don’t remember those years, come along anyway and have a look.



BE INSPIRED AND CHALLENGED / SHORT COURSE PROGRAMME

A selection from our inspiring
autumn programme, which
includes some Saturdays.



01732 352316

www.kent.ac.uk/tonbridge
tonbridgeadmin@kent.ac.uk

University of
Kent

Tonbridge
Centre

How to listen to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Study day Sat 29 October
10.00-16.00 £37

A Crisis of Brilliance: six 20th-century British artists

6 weeks from Mon 7 November
10.30-12.30 £82

Contemporary Art

Study morning Sat 19 November
10.00-13.00 £22

Getting to know the ancient Greeks

Study day Sat 5 November
10.00-16.00 £37

New York and the Movies

Study day Sat 26 November
10.00-16.00 £37

Manipulating Monarchs: Tudor & Elizabethan Propaganda

4 weeks from Thurs 3 November
10.30-12.30 £55

The Black Death: plague, pestilence & social disorder

Study day Sat 5 November
10.00-16.00 £37

Winter's Tales

4 weeks from Fri 25 November
10.30-12.30 £55

Revelations of Royal Tonbridge Wells

Two linked study mornings on
Sat 19 and 26 November
10.00-13.00 £44

Haiku Workshop

Charlie Bell MA
Study day Tue 6 December
10.00-16.00 £42

University Centre Tonbridge, Avebury Avenue, TN9 1TG
Just a few minutes walk from the railway station and close to the High Street



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 13th | RTWCS Awards Evening Town Hall |
| Nov 10th | Annual General Meeting (see agenda below) Town Hall |
| Dec 8th | The Tunbridge Wells Oral History Project Liz Douglas talks about the project which is adding a new dimension to the recorded history of the town. Town Hall |

Agenda of the Annual General Meeting

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 12th Nov 2015
3. Matters arising from the minutes, not covered elsewhere on the agenda
4. Chairmen's report and address
5. Elections - Vice-Presidents, Committee members, Officers*
6. Annual accounts and report
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 Society (address on page 3) by Thursday 27th 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