



**SPRING**  
2012

Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society

## Summer Events

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### Annual Garden Party

**Holden  
House  
Southborough**

**Saturday  
July 21st  
6pm - 8pm**



By kind permission of the owners Julie and Alistair Leveck. Open to members and their guests. Tickets £10.00 each, available from:  
Christo Skelton, 4 Caxton House, 19 Mount Sion, Tunbridge Wells TN1 1UB  
Please make cheques payable to RTWCS and include a sae.

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### Local History Group - Visit to Battle Abbey

**Saturday August 18th**

Open to all members of the Society. Transport arrangements will depend upon numbers. If you are interested, please contact either Chris Jones (522025) or John Cunningham (534599)

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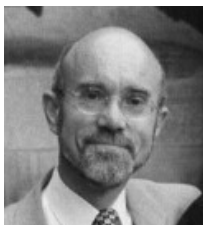
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# Personally Speaking

by Chris Jones

**Significant Women...** Many thanks to those of you who have suggested subjects for future articles on significant women who lived (or live) in Tunbridge Wells. No article in this issue, but perhaps one next time. Further suggestions, and especially offers to actually write an article, would be very welcome.

If you were attracted by the heading to this paragraph, you might find the extract below of interest. From the *Maidstone Journal* of May 25th 1824:

*“At Tunbridge Wells last week - Thomas Harris, a labouring man, put a halter around his wife’s neck and led her to market. She was then led three times across the street and back again, and put up for sale by auction, and several competitors appeared. A labourere named Thomas Young, was the happy purchaser, at the sum of £3. The lot was immediately delivered.”*

I haven’t spent a great deal of time looking into this, but it seems that purchaser and purchased may have ended up living in a nearby village. If any of you know more, then please do let me know.

**Why Sherwood?...** Much of this edition of the Newsletter is given over to articles relating to Sherwood. Why Sherwood? Well, one in six of the Tunbridge Wells population lives there; its history, particularly the earlier history of South Frith, is interesting and seldom studied; and the planning issues of retail development there, with the resulting traffic problems, affect all of us.

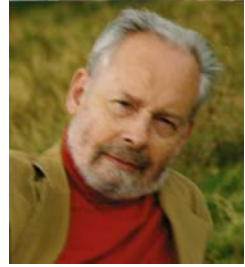
Today we think of it as residential and industrial, but 150 years ago it was described as ‘a pleasant route of about two miles through green fields and shady lanes’. Five hundred years ago it was part of South Frith, the hunting park of Tonbridge Castle - largely wooded, with no population other than those managing the park. In the 16th century the woodland provided fuel for the iron furnaces and forges in the valley running down towards Tonbridge. In the 17th and 18th centuries, farms were carved out. The 19th century brought the railway, the gas works, and the North Farm sewage-treatment plant. Today, despite the residential and industrial developments of the last sixtyfive years, there are still significant areas of woodland and open fields.

Our articles look at part of the area in the 16th century; the occupiers of the ‘big house’, Sherwood Park, in the 19th and 20th centuries; and a recent campaign that has safeguarded some of the remaining woodland.

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# From the Planning Scrutineers

by Alastair Tod



In the absence of major planning proposals this month I report on another of our activities.

**Public Realm ...** This is the space between buildings; involving the design and siting of signs, seats, posts and poles, barriers, bins and paving. In busy areas these tend to accumulate, with different agencies responsible. The resulting clutter can be confusing and unsightly and the elements often need a level of maintenance which is not achieved. There are 66 bollards, for example, at Fiveways, and 24 columns (lighting etc) at the Church Road/Mt Pleasant junction.

Achieving a high quality public realm may mean merely eliminating whatever is not specifically required by law or for safety, and can actually reduce costs. Or it may require a more drastic redesign.

The Society joined a visit to Ashford and Canterbury arranged by Cllr Linda Hall, to view recent developments. Cllr Hall believes our public realm could be much improved by simplifying, and not necessarily at high cost, as we have argued ourselves in the past.

Ashford has spent heavily on redesigning a section of the inner ring road, part of it as 'shared space'. This removes kerbs and signs, slows the traffic and gives greater precedence to pedestrians without the need for formal crossings. The scheme is backed by the local Access Group, representing the disabled, and we saw how well it works in practice, with traffic giving way freely to mobility buggies crossing the busy road. But the designers aimed to create local character by using very expensive materials, and we felt this was not likely to be generally appreciated, while maintenance would be unduly costly.

In Canterbury a much simpler approach has been taken, with York stone paving in pedestrian shopping areas. In a new residential development, pavements and signs have been largely eliminated, but the result was rather oppressive, probably due to the very high density, an attempt to reproduce the former industrial character of the site.

The Society helped survey part of our own town centre to see how these lessons could be applied. While there is room for improvement everywhere, we agreed to focus on Mt Pleasant - all concerned agreed there was no point in waiting for the redevelopment of the Cinema site! Separately the Council is pursuing the question of poorly maintained or ill-sited safety barriers, the responsibility of Kent Highways.



## *Chairman's Letter*

*Tunbridge Wells  
March 2012*

*It is pleasing to be able to hold our meetings back in the Town Hall once again. When we booked the Council Chamber for the year we were told that it was already booked for our January and October dates. For these two months we booked a Committee Room on the basis that it could accommodate our usual audience numbers. January's meeting though, had more than the average number of members. Although the Council staff put additional chairs in the room we unfortunately had to turn some late arrivals away on the grounds of health and safety as the room was becoming over-crowded. I regret that this was necessary and would like to apologise to all those affected.*

*In February we were back in the Council Chamber and as Philip Whitbourn's talk on Decimus Burton was so popular we had to use the balcony to accommodate the 106 members and guests who wanted to hear him speak. They were not disappointed.*

*We have an interesting programme of talks this year and we expect the attendances to be high so please get there early for the 7:30 start. As it is a condition of our use of the Council Chamber that we are out of the building by 9:00, I will always try to close the evening by 8:50 and would ask that you leave the building by the deadline.*

### **Sub Groups**

*As you will be aware from the AGM and the previous newsletter we have formed a number of subgroups to cover the expanding number of issues in which we find ourselves involved. These are now firmly established and report to the monthly Executive Committee meetings. Progress is being made in a number of areas but we could still use more help. If you are interested in joining one of the groups please contact any committee member.*

### **The Lower Pantiles**

*The Society was pleased to read the reports in the local press that our President, The Marquess of Abergavenny, has purchased the Lower Pantiles. Obviously we are very interested in his plans for this important historic area and hope to be able to make a valuable contribution to them. His Lordship has acknowledged our interest and has agreed to meet us for a discussion as soon as his plans are sufficiently developed.*

### **Putting Water Back in 'the Wells'**

*At the AGM, Professor Michael Holman, one of our members, proposed that the Town should celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee by erecting a fountain. I have*



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*to admit that I was initially sceptical about the idea with concerns about the time it would take to raise funds, identify a site, overcome the various engineering design issues and provide for the long term maintenance of a fountain. However the idea has developed further; the project is no longer centred on the Jubilee Year and has moved away from a fountain to water features in general. Tunbridge Wells only exists due to the discovery of the Chalybeate spring and to many people the town is known colloquially as 'The Wells'. But there is very little evidence of water in the town. Together with two other members of RTWCS, I am part of a small working party, under Michael's chairmanship, formed to promote the incorporation of water features of different types in any major new development or public work in the Town. With an impending drought forecast it is not the time to press hard for water features but the group will be looking at various potential sites and types of water feature during the year, along with funding and maintenance options, with the aim to promote 'putting water back in the Wells'.*

### **Garden Party**

*Our garden party at Mabledon last year attracted nearly 160 members and guests. It was one of our largest ever with many people curious to visit this historic house. I am delighted that this year we have managed to arrange another exciting venue; Holden House. Chris Jones gave an insight into its history and described the battle over the future of the house in the Society's Newsletter Autumn 2004. The house and gardens have since been beautifully restored by the current owners who have kindly agreed that we hold our Annual Garden Party there on 21<sup>st</sup> July this year. If you want to re-read Chris' article and no longer have your copy of that particular newsletter, you can access it on our website [www.thecivicsociety.org](http://www.thecivicsociety.org). If you would like a virtual tour of Holden House to preview what you can expect to see in July you can do so on their website [www.holdenhouse.org.uk](http://www.holdenhouse.org.uk). Put the date in your diary. To help us with our planning and in respect of the owners generosity in allowing us to use their stunning property, I am insisting that admittance will be by ticket or invitation only. **NO ENTRY WILL BE ALLOWED ON THE NIGHT WITHOUT A TICKET.** Tickets will be on sale at our next three members' meetings and by post from our secretary (full details on Page2)*

*John Forster*

## **— Sub-Group Reports —**

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**Over the last three months the Executive Committee has established a number of ‘sub-groups’. Each of these is looking at a particular aspect of the Society’s operation, with a view to recommending improvements in the way we do things. Two of the sub-groups present reports, below, on their work to date.**

### **Manifesto Sub-Group - John Forster**

The intention of the proposed Manifesto is to expand on the Society’s stated objectives and thus to provide clarity for the membership and others on the workings of the Society. It will also provide an indication of the line that the Society is likely to take on issues that occur within its areas of interest/concern.

The term ‘Manifesto’, however, is considered inappropriate for this document and the current suggestions are ‘Our Approach’ and ‘Our Aims’ –a final choice has yet to be made.

A contents list, originally proposed, has been modified through contribution from group members and the current proposal is:

1. Area and scope of interest
2. Relationships with other bodies
3. Conservation and new development
4. Care of the environment
5. Advice to others
6. Activities
7. Newsletter
8. Local History
9. Campaigns and achievements

The next step is for each of these sections to be drafted for discussion and amendment by the sub group. It is hoped that the document can be completed for approval and adoption by the Executive Committee at the end of April.

### **Green Agenda Sub-Group - Sue Daniels**

Going green in the Civic Society is not such a radical thought as some may believe. Many of our members are concerned about the environmental consequences of development on the place they love to live. Indeed, five of us (Alastair Tod, Richard Still, Sally Balcon, Helen Featherstone and I) got together in February with the aims of: recommending areas of legitimate Civic Society interest in preserving and enhancing the town’s environment; and implementing appropriate initiatives, with other stakeholders where appropriate, to the benefit of the town.

The Executive Committee has now endorsed our suggestions to:

- Include a “green” criterion in considering Civic Society awards;
- Promote more tree-planting in the town centre;
- Support and develop our links with groups involved in the care of the town’s parks and commons;



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- Develop a consistent view from the Society when considering planning applications on matters such as solar panels, garden grabbing, front garden parking, phone masts, alternative energy provision, recycling, light pollution;
  - Support traffic reduction measures such as public transport and parking provision; park and ride, cycling and cycle ways; and finally to
  - Support individual/ one off initiatives such as Britain in Bloom.

This is of course a large shopping list for a relatively small Society to hope to cover adequately. However, I believe it is important to set out our ambitions for the town as it is the lack of vision by those in authority that has caused some of our current problems.

Within our sub-group we already have contacts with the Commons Conservators, the Friends of Tunbridge Wells Common, the fledgling Friends of Calverley Grounds, the Friends of Grosvenor Park, the Town Forum and the Borough Council's "public realm" group. We are keen to hear from members who are already members of groups such as Transition Town, the Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery, Dunorlan, and any similar organisations who would be willing to build links between this Society and them. Together we can achieve more than going solo.

## Patrick Shovelton 1919-2012



Patrick Shovelton CB, CMG.  
Photo: Jenny Blackburn

Members will probably already be aware of the death in January of Patrick Shovelton, at the age of 92. Obituaries in the national press have described his career: as a senior civil servant, Director-General of the British Council of Shopping, and then a director of Maersk UK.

Patrick was a member of the Civic Society committee in 1991, but left to set up the Friends of the Common. His articles in the Newsletter in subsequent years described their achievements. In 1997, for example, they replicated the 'Diversions' of 1797, with an afternoon of sports and sideshows: donkey races, a stoolball match, a tug-of-war between teams of firemen, and a firework display.

Memories of Patrick include his determination to stand up to the Council and not be brow-beaten. A reminder perhaps that he was named after Patrick Pearse, a leader of the 1916 Easter Uprising in Dublin, and his mother's cousin.

## Picture Quiz

My thanks to all those who submitted entries to our Christmas Picture Quiz. There were four entries with a complete set of correct answers, but only three prizes, so the following prizewinners were selected at random:

Sue Brown  
Alan and Christine Harrison  
Ronald and Jill Rowley

Answers:

- A Sladen Chambers (bottom of Mount Pleasant) (right)
- B Victoria Snooker Centre (Friendly Societies' Hall), Camden Road
- C Opera House
- D Grove Hill House (picture turned through 90°)
- E Belvedere Terrace
- F Entrance to Bird Cage Walk (the Grove)
- G Trinity Arts Centre
- H Calverley Crescent
- I Monson Terrace (Citizens Advice Bureau)
- J 14, York Road
- K Signor Franco Restaurant, High Street
- L King Charles the Martyr (above the sundial, on the south wall)
- M Victoria Lodge (entrance to Calverley Park / Grounds)
- N 3 Lonsdale Gardens
- O Memorial / water trough at Carr's Corner
- P York Road - the old school
- Q Hoopers
- R Vale Royal Methodist Church
- S The Pound, Grove Hill Road
- T Bridge Club, London Road
- U Ismail/Cotswold (ex Congregational Church)
- V Crystal Palace pub, Camden / Victoria Road
- W Entrance to Lonsdale Gardens
- X Calverley House (ex NPI). Calverley / Camden Road
- Y Calverley Crescent. Carr's Corner
- Z Steps in Calverley Grounds (picture turned through 90°)



My thanks to Brian Lippard for providing the pictures.

## Why 'Sherwood' ? ■

Why 'Sherwood'? Why is the area to the east of Sandhurst Road called 'Sherwood' or 'Sherwood Park'?

The simple answer may be that John Guy, who built the first house there, named it after his mother-in-law.

Guy was a solicitor from Hampton Wick who came to Tunbridge Wells in the 1860s. He was one of the earliest residents of Ferndale. In 1867 he acquired part of the Calverley estate, and built Sherwood Park, on Pembury Road. He and his family were recorded there in the 1871 census - the first official use of the name (though it was being used in the *Tunbridge Wells Gazette* from 1869).

Sherwood was the maiden name of Sarah Guy's mother, who had died when she was seven. They had already used it as a Christian name for their eldest son, but then it is understandable that Sarah might wish to remember her mother in this way. It is perhaps less clear why John

Guy, 12 years later, would name his new house after a mother-in-law he had never met. They may, perhaps, have used a Sherwood inheritance to pay for it, but there are no family documents that would confirm this. (It is also puzzling why Guy then sold the new house so quickly - in 1874 he moved to Carlton Road.)

There are other possible origins of the name. There are references in a document of 1867 to a Richard William Sherwood. His involvement is not clear; he does not seem to have been related to Mrs Guy. Could he be the source?

A third, perhaps less likely, possibility, is that part of the area, known as Burnthouse Farm, was leased in the 1820s by a Thomas Usherwood. Farms were often known by their owner's name. Might 'Sherwood' be derived from Usherwood's?

On balance the mother-in-law theory seems the most convincing. **CJ**



John and Sarah Guy.  
Was Sherwood  
named after her  
mother?

*My thanks to Mrs  
Joan Matthews (née  
Guy) for the pictures  
and the original  
suggestion about the  
name.*



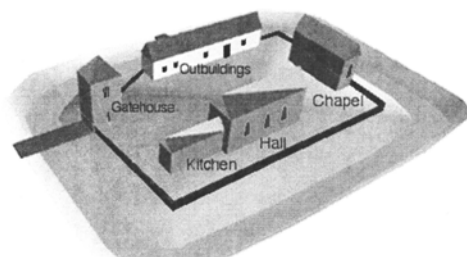
## ■ In Search of Great Lodge

**The history of South Frith in the centuries before the development of Tunbridge Wells is the special interest of Linda Glanville. Linda took a degree in the theory and practice of local history at the University of Kent at Tonbridge. In this article, she uses old documents and evidence on the ground to search for one particular building.**

The name 'Great Lodge' is used these days for the 'retail park' that is home to B&Q, PCWorld and Toys 'R' Us, on the left-hand side as one drives through the North Farm estate towards Knights Park. As a name it reminds us of the earlier history of South Frith - the word 'lodge' meaning a hunting lodge; and it broadly indicates the area where the original 'Great Lodge' was sited.

The early history of the building would have been lost forever, were it not for an inventory of the goods and chattels of the late Thomas Culpeper of Great Lodge. This was commissioned by Henry VIII in November, 1541, in circumstances which we will come to later. It formed part of the Crown's accounts, and is held today at the National Archives in Kew. The inventory is divided into three sections, and describes the size of the lodge, the conditions inside, and how it was used.

The document supports the building's



Typical layout of a hunting lodge - based on Writtle in Essex

name 'Great Lodge' - as it was of considerable size. It contained, for example, a hall with a 'solar' (a solar was an area partitioned off a hall which might be used for a variety of purposes), thirteen other chambers and a chapel. To help us visualise it, we might consider the model (below, left) of a similar hunting lodge at Writtle in Essex. The buildings were set within a rectangular-shaped courtyard, with entry via a gate-house and ramp.

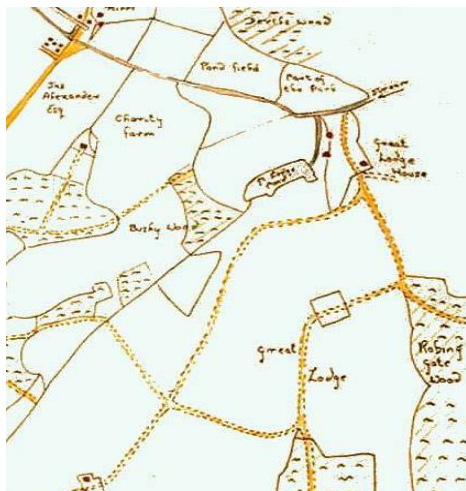
The actual location of Great Lodge is interesting. 19th century OS maps, such as the 'Mudge' map of 1801, which is shown on p.31 of the Historical Atlas, would suggest a position to the north-east of the current retail park. There was indeed an old house there called Great Lodge. It was adapted in 1829 to become Colebrooke Park, home of Sir Edward Colebrooke. Descriptions of that house, though, would suggest that it was a 17th century development.

I would prefer to follow the markings on the 1842 'tithes' map, and a 1830 map in Southborough library (see opposite, top right). These suggest that the original Great Lodge was further to the south - on the site of the recently-demolished Home Farm. The position is to the west of the Odeon Cinema car-park, and on a useful (unofficial) short-cut from Greggswood.

The 1842 title schedule describes the site as ‘homestead and garden’. The layout (see below) corresponds to a typical hunting lodge layout.

Between 1842 and 1868, the ‘homestead’ was converted into Home Farm. Archaeological evidence shows that the buildings were made of local sandstone and could date from the 14th century or earlier. It is possible, using photographs, to identify what would have been the original boundaries, ramp and gatehouse.

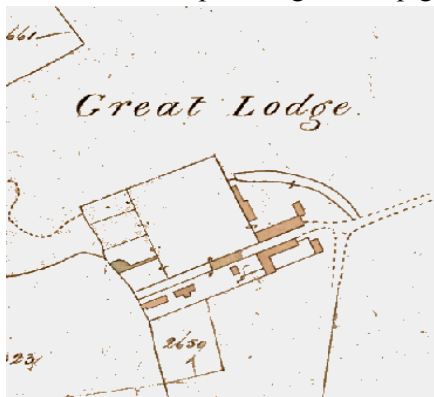
The inventory describes the furniture in the hall and chambers in 1541. The hangings in the hall were apparently in very poor condition and there was hardly any furniture in the chambers. Apart from providing ‘lodgings’ for a hunting party, the lodge may have been used as an important administrative centre for the South Frith chase. The inventory mentions, for example, that the bailiff had collected over £5 (c. £600 in today’s money) in fees from tenants using local woodlands for the pasturing of their pigs.



Budgen map of 1830. ‘Home Farm’ site shewn as a square.

The steward of the chase was entitled to these fees, and to keep one pig from each of the tenants’ herds. At Great Lodge there were over twenty pigs - with the pigs (‘hole hogges’) being valued at 6d each, and piglets (‘demi hogges’) at 3d.

The steward was supposedly responsible for the smooth running of the South Frith chase, and ensuring that none of the King’s deer was poached. This was usually, though, left to the bailiff. The steward typically came from the higher ranks of society, often a lord, whereas the bailiff came more from local gentry families and would live in the lodge. The steward could expect to make in the region of £20,000 a year in today’s money, or more if he held more than one stewardship. Thomas Culpeper, for example, held the stewardship of South Frith, as well as Ashdown and Penshurst parks.



‘Home Farm’ on the ‘tithe map’ of c 1842.

Culpeper was born at Goudhurst, the son of Sir Alexander Culpeper\*. He was related to the Howard family, and a distant cousin of Anne Boleyn. Some of his ancestors had earlier been bailiffs of South Frith chase: Nicholas Culpeper, for example, who, in 1368, had been charged, along with others, of taking timber and deer out of the chase. Thomas Culpeper, however, became a great favourite of Henry VIII, and was created “Gentleman of the King’s Bedchamber”. This brought him into daily contact with Queen Catherine Howard. Rumours began to spread about private meetings between

Culpeper and the Queen. Although there was no proof that they had committed adultery, their servants testified against them, and they were found guilty of adultery and treason against the King. Culpeper was executed at Tyburn on 10th December 1541.

One of the last entries in the inventory shows that there were still twelve pairs of his hunting boots at Great Lodge.

\* Alexander had two sons called Thomas. The elder one, born c. 1501 was known as Sir Thomas. The inventory describes the Great Lodge Culpeper as ‘the younger’, born in 1514. **LG**



## The Building of the Sherwood Estate



The Newsletter provided a detailed history of the building of the Sherwood Estate in two articles by Carole Tyrrell in 2001. The articles also celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Festival of Britain. The Newsletters are available on the Society’s web-site:

[www.thecivicsociety.org/civic\\_newsletter.html](http://www.thecivicsociety.org/civic_newsletter.html)





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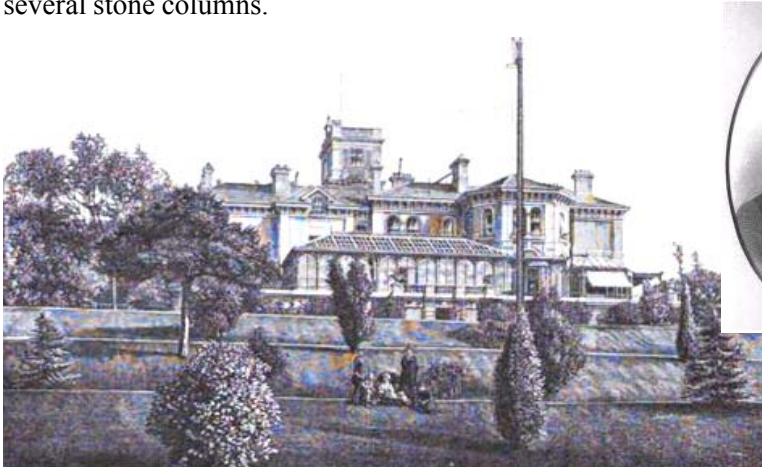
## Sherwood Park 1867-2012 .

**Ed Gilbert is a Canadian who is fascinated by Tunbridge Wells (his grandfather lived here). He uses the Internet to do detailed research, and is currently studying the houses along Pembury Road. The following is an extract from a much longer article on his website [www.allabouttunbridgewells.com](http://www.allabouttunbridgewells.com).**

While not as old as Dunorlan (which was built in 1862) Sherwood Park was one of the first mansions to be built along Pembury Road, on land that was part of John Ward's 1,000 acre Calverley Estate. Ward died in 1855 so it was his sons, Arthur Wellesley and Neville, who, in 1867, sold the land, perhaps 66 acres, perhaps 100, to a retired solicitor, John Guy (see page 11). Guy hired an architect, unfortunately unknown to us now, to design him a grand Victorian-style mansion, and was living there with his family and six servants at the time of the 1871 census. In addition there were two gardeners and a coachman together with their wives and families.

It was an impressive white stone and stucco building with a pitched roof, tower, and decorative front entrance with several stone columns.

The house was sold in 1874 to Charles William Siemens, the German-born electrical engineer. Siemens interests were many: improved steam engines, iron and steel furnaces, telegraph cables; and in time they became very profitable. It is said that he bought Sherwood as a place where he could concentrate on quiet study. However he was far from idle there. Naturally he introduced electricity, not only lighting the house and grounds, but powering estate machinery. He extended the terrace, using a steel and concrete canopy to provide a billiard room underneath. He conducted experiments on the use of arc-lights in greenhouses. He enjoyed discussions with the much younger Sir David Salomons of Broomhill, but also hosted grand events at Sherwood - an 'at home'



Sir William Siemens

Sherwood  
Garden Front

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for the Emperor of Brazil in 1877 and a celebration with over 2,000 guests in 1879. He died in 1883, having been knighted six months earlier. Lady Siemens survived until 1901 retaining Sherwood as her country residence.

The house was then bought by Benjamin Minors Woollan, a wealthy 45 year-old accountant. Woollan was born in Canada but came to England with his parents when aged three. He made his fortune in South Africa, founding the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in 1887. He took an active part in the life of Tunbridge Wells, was a JP and served as Mayor between 1906 and 1909. In 1906 he bought the 'Nelson memorandum' - the original text of a signal sent by Nelson, explaining his tactics at the start of the Battle of Trafalgar. It was displayed in the Town Hall.

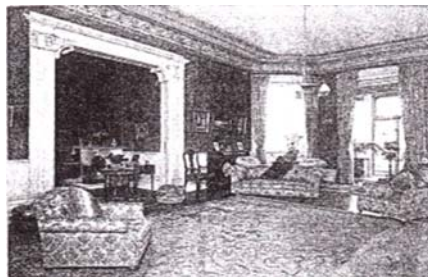
Woollan died in 1909. His widow sold the house in 1912 to John Smith Esq. A name like that is very difficult to research, so we know very little about him. It seems that he moved on from Sherwood to Kingswood in about 1920 and lived there until his death in 1925. Like Woollan, Smith was a supporter of the Unionist



Benjamin Minors  
Woollan.

party and allowed them to hold a summer fete in the grounds of Sherwood in 1912. 'Unionist' was simply the term used for the Conservative party at that time.

The new owner in 1921 was Ernest Errington-Wales, a wealthy banker. He was an extensive traveller. In 1923 he was in New Zealand. On the passenger list on his return journey, he described his occupation as 'none'. He eventually sold Sherwood in 1930 and moved to Kensington. It is possible that, like many country-house owners, he had fallen on hard times due to the stock market crash of 1929, though he seems to have retained his involvement with the British & South American Bank, and continued to travel widely in the 1930s. The sale prospectus of 1930 provides 17 pages of detailed descriptions, including a suggestion that



From the 1930 catalogue

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part of the estate could be sold off for housing.

What was actually proposed was a £500,000 scheme to create “England’s most modern spa”. The promoter anticipated 200,000 visitors each year, coming to a new 4-storey building built around a swimming pool with a wave machine. He also spoke of water from the spring being bottled and sold.

Nothing came of these proposals, but Sherwood became the home of the International Clinic and Spa under the supervision of Dr AJD Cameron. His most famous patient was probably Lady Ottoline Morrell. Unfortunately she died there in 1938, possibly after the use of a new antibiotic drug. Dr Cameron is said to have committed suicide.

In September 1939, Sherwood was taken over by Guys Hospital and Dental School which had been evacuated.

After the war the western half of the estate was developed - private housing along Sandhurst Road, and the council-built Sherwood Estate to the north. The



The Entrance Hall

house itself was unoccupied until 1950 when the Tunbridge Wells Hospital Committee took it over as administrative offices. It remained in health service ownership for the next 45 year.

In 1995 the Secretary of State for Health sold it to Gleeson Homes Ltd. Gleesons converted the main building into flats (Civic Society Conservation Award in 2000) and built other houses in the gardens at the southern end of the plot. The new development was originally called Cumberland Park, but it now known as Badgers Holt. **EG**



Sherwood Park, now Badgers Holt

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## Sherwood Lake

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There is a rather nice description of an outing from St James' Church in the summer of 1868. The party:

*“proceeded by a pleasant route of about two miles through green fields and shady lanes to the residence of W.A. Smith Esq. in Colebrook Park, where they enjoyed the full run of the beautiful lawns and fields and the prospect of a pleasant piece of water. Mr Smith had kindly procured a boat which was loaded almost to the water's edge during the whole afternoon with fresh water sailors”*

There was croquet and archery for the ladies; cricket, quoits and athletic sports for the men. Then, after a 'gypsy tea' (a picnic perhaps?) and fireworks, they gave three hearty cheers for Mr Smith and 'wended their way homewards'.

This 'pleasant piece of water' wasn't Sherwood Lake; it was Great Lodge Pond (just recognisable on the map on page 13). Its position, in a narrow Wealden valley, and its shape, with a dam, suggests that it was created as part of the local iron industry. A couple of years later, the house, lawns and lake were conveyed to the Improvement Commissioners to construct the North Farm sewage works.

Sherwood Lake is about a mile to the south, next to the flats, shops and library in Greggswood Road. Its position is not obvious though, the gentle rise of Friars Way hides it from traffic going along Liptraps Lane to the North Farm Estate. You can get there, though, on a 277 or a 287 bus.

The lake is surrounded by wooded slopes, and is built behind a dam, but it

was not related to any iron working. It was an ornamental feature in the grounds of Sherwood Park.

When John Guy bought the land in 1867, there was a spring at this point. A document of 1872 records that he had built a pump-house, perhaps to supply water from the spring to the house, but there was no reference to a lake. It was probably built during the ownership of William Siemens (1874 - 1883). The picture of the lake on the front cover of this Newsletter is taken from a 'Life of Sir William Siemens' published in 1888. There are descriptions of it having three islands and a boat-house.

Although Siemens and later owners opened the grounds for special events, it was essentially a private estate, in a semi-rural setting. The nearest houses were in Sandhurst Road, or nearly a mile away in the new settlement of High Brooms. Woollans used the park for shooting but had a problem with poachers - Ernest Hanmore, for example, got a month in jail for this in 1909.

The situation changed after the second world war. The houses and flats of the Sherwood Estate were built right up to the northern edge of the lake, and the park came into the hands of the local health authority. Although it was still technically private property, local residents started to use it - as a pleasant place for taking the dog for a walk, for bird-watching, collecting chestnuts, fishing, or just for a stroll. There was never any serious attempt to stop this, even when the estate was bought by Gleeson in 1997. Gleeson





was mainly interested in the mansion house, and in building new houses on Blackhurst Lane.

Members of the local community, though, were concerned about possible future development, and formed the Friends of Sherwood Lake. They applied to KCC for the lake and woodlands to be designated a ‘village green’, providing evidence from 58 residents that they had been used ‘as of right for legal sports and pastimes for at least 20 years’. This was granted in 2010.

Gleeson then sold the land and it was

bought by Town & Country Housing Group, the ‘social landlords’ who manage most of the houses on the Sherwood Estate. They are currently negotiating to hand it over to TWBC in exchange for parcels of land needed for other projects in Sherwood and Ramslye.

It was obviously a great step forward that the woods and lake were protected from future development - three hearty cheers for KCC and the Friends - but woods and a lake need to be managed and maintained. Much of this is done by local volunteers (see above left) but professional work, to repair leaks to the dam, must involve the owners, whether TCHG or TWBC. The Friends, though, are concerned that the land should not be over-managed, rather that the ancient woodland be allowed to reclaim the parts landscaped in the 19th century. As John Chappell of the Friends says “we don’t need another Dunorlan”. **CJ**



Sherwood Lake.  
Above and right.  
Pictures courtesy of  
the Friends of  
Sherwood Lake.

## ■ Local History Group

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### Transcribing the Tablets of Stone - June Bridgeman

Six years since the Civic Society helped found the Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery, a new project team under our Local History Group is setting about recording the memorial inscriptions at the Broadwater Down town cemetery opened in 1873 and still in use today.

The Hawkenbury Memorial Inscriptions Project is a challenging task because the terrain is a great deal larger and the number of memorials far greater than in its predecessor.

On the other hand, unlike at Woodbury Park, volunteers do not need to track and clear hidden graves, plant bulbs and wild flowers and conserve memorials, nor to organise fund-raising events. The area has always been admirably maintained by the Council and relatives of those buried there. The project team's purpose is to record memorial inscriptions, identify monuments of special interest and beauty that are worthy of Council "local heritage" listing, and research in an à la carte way the lives of any individuals who catch the interest of transcribers.

Gravestones are unique primary historical records, both as the tablets of stone of the people commemorated, and as a reflection of their family culture and sentiments. Unfortunately time and weather take their toll and inscriptions disappear. A starting point for the project has been camera and computer work on a worn vellum set of early plot maps numbering sections and plots, the burial register entries up to 1911, and the

register of plot sales by the Burial Board, (prices varied according to location, prime spots being path verges and around the chapel). The next step will be the lengthy task of matching and checking transcriptions copied from the memorials with the relevant entries in the registers, with a view to delivering a chronological series of memorial inscription booklets.

Each volunteer is being allocated one of the numbered grave sections where there are thought to be early plots, and a standard format has been agreed for recording exactly what memorials exist there, one page for each memorial, to provide a data base. The work can proceed at whatever pace is comfortable for the transcriber, helped by family or friends as they choose, especially those good at stooping and crawling.

Obviously the more volunteers, the faster we shall get on. By flagging up any stones of special historic or artistic interest in their block for further study, they will provide the makings of an interesting history walk to fit into Heritage Open Days as well as candidates for local listing. We are delighted that some members of the Family History Society are joining in as volunteers and would warmly welcome any further offers from Civic Society members generally, or other organisations, to take on a block of graves for us or help with the transcriptions of the photographed registers. There are plenty to go round!

The Woodbury Park Cemetery Friends



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have derived great enjoyment from gradually discovering more about individuals recorded on the stones. We think the same will happen at Hawkenbury. There is plenty of research experience available to share with those new to this sort of investigation, and willing to work up referenced material for deposit in the Local Studies section of the Library or beyond. For example we have already been able to make two minor corrections to the DNB

Once involved you might want to pursue a theme such as the military and naval men and the campaigns they fought in. Or the paupers from Pembury Workhouse whose chapel is now its sole remaining structure. Or the energetic local personalities who founded businesses, buildings and institutions still

existing in Tunbridge Wells today. The patterns in the heavy child mortality in some years - were they due to typhoid, scarlet fever or diphtheria epidemics, or freezing weather in crowded substandard houses? You will be led down all sorts of avenues of Victorian and Edwardian history.

If you would like to get involved in our exploratory venture, literally at the grass roots, come along with your clipboard and biro on bright spring days, after contacting me for briefing on [jbman@btinternet.com](mailto:jbman@btinternet.com) or 01892 525578

*The Hawkenbury Cemetery was opened in 1873. It was a fascinating period, both locally and nationally. In our next edition June will present some of the similarities, and some of the differences, between then and now.*

## **Sepulchral Symbolism**

The Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery AGM will be held in the Camden Centre at 7:30 on May25th. There will also be a talk by Robert

Stephenson of the Funerary Monuments Group on 'decoding the hidden meaning of graveyard monuments'. Suggested £2 donation from non-members.

## **Grosvenor Recreation Ground**

Angela Darby (Fred Scales' daughter) came across an interesting film clip from

the 1940s which includes footage of the lake and swimming pool in Grosvenor Rec.

[www.britishpathe.com/video/tunbridge-wells/query/tunbridge+wells](http://www.britishpathe.com/video/tunbridge-wells/query/tunbridge+wells)

## **Kent History Federation**

This year's One-Day Conference will be held on Saturday 12th May at Headcorn Village Hall, starting at 9:45. The morning session will include talks by Michael Zell, on Industry in the Weald of Kent, 16th - 17th centuries; Celia Cordle on Hop Cultivation and

Marketing; and by Tim Thomas on Headcorn at War. In the afternoon there are visits/tours to Headcorn and Smarden village centres, Headcorn Aerodrome Museum and Boy Court. The cost is £7:50 plus £7:50 for lunch. Contact Chris Jones (522025) for further details.

## Putting Faces to Names: Peter Clymer



Having retired (well nearly) and closed my practice in Tonbridge after 25 years, I seem, somewhat inadvertently, to have replaced at least some of my workload by becoming a member of the committee of the Civic Society, although I shall not complain having gained some insight into the executive's activities. My joining was the result of a press gang (fairly gentle) preceded by a subtle seduction, hinting at the exotic delights offered by the Society; for the sake of their reputations, neither the seducer, nor the captain of the press gang will be revealed.

I am not sure whether it was desperation on the part of the Society or my CV in construction which prompted the approach. I spent my career working with and for developers, architects and builders, starting as an indentured student at the tender age of 16 years when I was indoctrinated into the mud and fun of construction. My first employer was Trollope & Colls, an influential London builder from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> centuries who built many important buildings in the City. Alas they went the way of many illustrious businesses, absorbed into a multinational organisation. Meanwhile I started my own practice specialising in dispute management, securing fees to argue about anything with anyone, anytime.

In truth I was delighted to join the executive having always had an interest in architecture and construction. The

town has a unique character, hopefully it will strive to retain its individuality which many friends have enjoyed, indeed envied when visiting. We are fortunate so much original architecture remains. However, the town cannot rest on its laurels, much needs to be done to restore its grandeur and elegance, not restricted to architecture. Modern buildings should complement traditional architecture; the streetscape should enhance the environment.

My (French) wife demands frequent visits to that fair country and I always delight in towns displaying their floral charms. Many French towns welcome visitors to a "ville fleurie" - flowers in tubs, baskets and larger displays; disappointingly our town lacks this joie de vivre, the entrances to Tunbridge Wells are somewhat dull by comparison

If the town wishes to benefit from its status as the first tourist location, retain its undoubted elegance and continue to improve, a greater effort on all fronts is needed from all inhabitants. I hope the Civic Society will address these issues and improve this wonderful town. I will certainly do my best to help the process.

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## Programme Notes

**Roger Joye, who organises our programme of events, previews the talks for the coming quarter.**

If you enjoy meandering around the picturesque Weald of Kent, then you will certainly appreciate the double treat being served at our meeting on Thursday **12th April**. It is presented by our neighbours, the Weald of Kent Protection Society, and takes the form of two short films: firstly, John Betjeman's lyrical - and rarely seen - "**Journey into the Weald of Kent**", which is special to WKPS because it was screened at their inaugural meeting in 1960, just a year after our own. Secondly, to celebrate their golden anniversary in 2010, they commissioned a modern-day equivalent film from the students of Cranbrook School, focussing on the changes that have taken place in the intervening 50 years as seen by young people living in the Weald, and highlighting the features that WKPS strives to protect and preserve. While each film is fascinating in its own right, the presentation provides you with the added interest of comparing and contrasting the two – their content, their technical aspects, and their makers' approach. It is hoped that a DVD of the two films will be available for purchase on the evening.



nationalists and internationalists, conformists and modernizers. The consequence was a fascinating array of buildings, from the suburban semi to local authority multi-storey housing, from quasi-classicism to concrete and glass modernism.

This talk will look at some iconic, as well as not so iconic, examples of architecture between the wars, examining ideologies and contexts in order to better understand and appreciate this fascinating period of British architecture.

### **Tradition and Modernity: British architecture between the wars (14th June)**

Between 1918 and 1939 British architecture was dogged by conflict and contrast. At the end of the First World War as the country firmly embraced conservative values, building styles were dominated by traditional and revivalist forms. But some architects, determined to build a modern Britain 'fit for heroes', looked to continental Europe for their inspiration. By the 1930s, a period of significant social change, political uncertainty and economic depression, architecture became one of the battlegrounds between the political right and left,





# CIVIC SOCIETY

## Forthcoming Events

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

**\*\* Please note the change of venue and start time. \*\***

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.

<b>Apr 12th</b>	<b>'A Journey through the Weald of Kent'</b> A lyrical John Betjeman film from 1959, followed by its 2010 counterpart, commissioned by the Weald of Kent Protection Society and made by pupils of Cranbrook School.
<b>May 10th</b>	<b>RTWCS Awards Evening 2012</b>
<b>June 14th</b>	<b>'Between Tradition and Modernity: British Architecture between the Wars'</b> <b>Dr Graham Whitham</b> on the array of buildings produced when British tradition faced European modernity.
<b>July 21st (Sat)</b>	<b>Annual Garden Party</b> see page 2
<b>Aug 18th (Sat)</b>	<b>Visit to Battle Abbey</b> see page 2

For previews of the talks, please see page 23.

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](http://www.thecivicsociety.org)