

# Spring 2017



**Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society**

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## Annual Garden Party

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### Camster, Camden Park Saturday, July 8th, 6-8pm

By kind permission of Jenny and  
Alastair Cook.

Members of the Civic Society and  
their guests only.

Tickets £12.50 and must be booked  
in advance - see opposite.

There is adequate parking nearby.



The Crossness Pumping Station,  
designed by Sir Joseph Bazalgette and  
opened in 1865.

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## Visit to the 'Cathedral on the Marsh' Tuesday, July 18th,

Our outing to the Crossness Pumping  
Station at AbbeyWood (the 'Cathedral on  
the Marsh') also includes a visit to the  
Thames Barrier, and an opportunity to ride  
on the Emirates cable car.

Coach will leave TW at 9am and return  
by 6pm. The combined cost of the coach  
and tour of Crossness is £27. Cheques  
(RTWCS) or cash to John de Lucy, 28  
Warwick Park, TN2 5TB. 01892 540560.

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Garden party tickets are available from Trina Lewis, address above. Please make cheques payable to RTWCS, and enclose a sae. Directions will be provided.



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## Personally Speaking

by Chris Jones

**Too much television?...** There's a programme on at present based on Captain Bligh's long journey in an open-boat after the mutiny. It reminded me of something I had read earlier. (I'm afraid that the rather rambling article on page 18 was also triggered by a television programme - I need to get out more.) This particular story relates to T.T. Barrow who produced that 1808 map of Tunbridge Wells. Barrow was a surveyor, though he also seems to have had a grocer's shop on The Lew. It might, of course, have been a different T.T. Barrow, and the possibility of mistaken identity increases as I follow a T.T. Barrow through three marriages to an eventual home in Enfield. Mr T.T. Barrow of Enfield wrote to a newspaper in 1850 claiming to have known one of the mutineers: Charles Churchill. And the relevance of this to us? Well, Barrow was only nine at the time of the mutiny and his family then lived at Rotherfield, Boars Head and Bidborough. So maybe Churchill was a local too. Apparently that was not his real name, so we may not be able to identify him, though there is a description: 5 foot 10, fair complexion, bald on top, tattooed in several places. Not really like Liam Nelson who played him in the 1984 film. Does anyone know anything more of him?

**The Cultural Hub ...** We went to the presentation of plans for the 'Cultural Hub' the other week and felt reasonably reassured. There seems to be a real appreciation of the value of the Adult Education building (H.T. Hare, 1902). The idea is to demolish the rear part of the library (where the differences in floor level upstairs would cause problems) and replace it with a section linking the two buildings. The huts would also go, replaced by an extension along that of the plot, leaving an open courtyard in the centre. It's a pity that it could not be incorporated more into the wider campus of the Civic Centre.

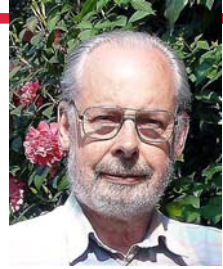
**Financial Summary ...** In the last edition I indicated that there was some uncertainty in the allocation between Restricted and Non-Restricted Funds. In fact those figures were fine, but there were two errors elsewhere. Income from events should have been £3,107 (not £3,170) and Support Costs £1,715 (not £1,655). As a result the Net Incoming Resources should have been £621 (not £745) with corresponding changes to other totals. I apologise for the confusion.

**National Trust ...** I do hope you are using those National Trust passes we issued with last summer's Newsletter - the final date is 31st May. Be aware, though, that they are not valid on Bank Holiday weekends.

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# From the Planning Scrutineers

by Alastair Tod



In the last newsletter we reported a proposal to enlarge **23 Lansdowne Road** and build in the garden. Lansdowne Road is all of a piece, but 23 has been damaged by its institutional history. That application was turned down, but a new application proposes expanding and remodelling the house in a pastiche style. In this case we endorse the principle of pastiche reconstruction, with some doubts about the bulk and the details of the design.

Last year Wealden Council consulted about a development of 49 houses on **Benhall Mill Road** opposite the old Isolation Hospital. Now there is a similar consultation for 159 houses planned on the adjacent site sloping down to the railway line. Although tight against the Tunbridge Wells boundary both sites are in Sussex. There is little to be done about this but we have protested about it, and in the second case about a lack of detail. We recognise the desperate need for more housing but we deplore a situation where our representatives have no control and the process seems to be wholly subject to commercial decisions.

The electricity suppliers have applied to fell two trees at the entrance to **Camden Park** ‘because of continuing complaints from the neighbours’. The trees, a sycamore and a holly, are a feature of the corner, in good health and not dangerous, but have made the mistake of growing in, or very near to, an electricity sub-station. We understand the neighbours value the trees and only want them maintained, and we will add our objection to theirs.

It may be due to stamp duty that loft conversions are booming; many of these are inoffensive and intelligent uses of space, but some are not, and a number involve **hip-to-gable** conversion of a semi-detached property. These often disregard the other house, and in many cases the imbalance is a minor disaster. We don’t take up cases which are purely issues between neighbours but many of these raise wider concerns.

We were amused by an application by **Collins**, the royal jewellers in the High Street, to mount a public clock on their (listed) façade. The famous clock on Payne’s survived the recent change of ownership, and now adorns a clothes shop. A clock on Collins seems rather more appropriate and we didn’t see any problem with two public clocks within a hundred yards as long as they tell the same time.

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## Chairman's Letter

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Tunbridge Wells  
March 2017

### **Communication Problems Still Exist in this “Linked-in” Age**

*I'd like to begin by apologising for the very late notice of the cancellation of our January Members' Meeting. Because the speaker's message - explaining that the snow forecast would make his journey dangerous - arrived late in the afternoon of 12<sup>th</sup> January, there was little we could do to contact members apart from sending an email message. Even those with an email connection did not necessarily check their inbox before setting out for the Town Hall. We do the best we can, but sometimes that's not good enough.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Compensating for Past Outrage**

*Sometimes in life there comes along an opportunity to remedy to a degree the pain of a past event. The Civic Society has found such an opportunity in a new development planned for Calverley Grounds. I hasten to add that I am not referring to the proposed new theatre. To explain, I need to remind members of an event from the past which became something of a cause célèbre in the summer of 2010.*

*Many of you will recall the outrage felt about this episode: the destruction of the bandstand in Calverley Grounds. For those new to this episode of what was felt at the time to be official vandalism, I shall summarise. The bandstand in Calverley Grounds, like so many others around the country, had provided live musical concerts through the years and was a charming feature of summers in the park. Neglected over the years, the bandstand was admittedly in need of repair. Still, it was a shock when it was suddenly closed for “health & safety reasons”. Then an abrupt announcement declared the structure beyond repair. Alastair Tod recalls writing in the Summer 2010 Newsletter that the Civic Society had withdrawn an objection to that decision “on the understanding that we would be consulted about a replacement”. It then emerged that the bandstand had been demolished and would not be replaced.*

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*Time has passed and the bandstand story has faded from public memory as other issues come to the fore. Then recently, a new body – The Friends of Calverley Grounds – has taken an interest in reviving this wonderful park in the town centre, and making it more appealing to the many children who visit it. To that end, they have designed an attractive new play area, to be “crowd-funded” rather than depend on hard-pressed Council funds.*

*The plan involves a low wall to mark off the area. The donations of those who contribute to the project will be acknowledged by their names being engraved on this wall for posterity to appreciate. At our February Executive meeting, we agreed to contribute to this project which, although certainly not compensation for the lost bandstand, will serve to bring a new generation of Tunbridge Wells citizens to enjoy this park, one of the treasures at the heart of our town.*

*As to the bandstand, in view of the one reconstructed so effectively on the Brighton seafront recently, perhaps we could suggest that one should be included in the plans for the theatre/civic centre, as the architects are keen to acknowledge the past in their design.*

*Janet Sturgis*



Ragroof Theatre perform by the bandstand in Summer 2006.

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## Society Awards 2016

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Presented by the Mayor, Councillor David Neve, at the Town Hall on October 13th. The Community Contribution Award was given to the 'Nourish Community Foodbank', an organisation with the aim that 'No one need be hungry in Tunbridge Wells'. There were no shop-front awards.



Clockwise, from top left:

- 1, Cumberland Walk (refurb.)
- Brecknock, Camden Park (new)
- 32, Norfolk Road (extension)
- 2, Clarence Road (restored glazing)
- Hill House, Upper Dunstan Road (new)





Clockwise, from top left:

- The Brook, Upper Cumberland Walk (new)
- Public spaces, Greggswood Road (new)
- The Mead School (extension)
- Tunbridge Wells Bar & Grill (new courtyard)
- The Wells Free School (new)



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## Fifty Years of Conservation Areas

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### Philip Whitbourn celebrates the Civic Amenities Act 1967.

The year 2017 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the bringing into being of Conservation Areas, under the Civic Amenities Act 1967. It is perhaps surprising that so much of our built heritage managed to survive the feeble legislation of the early years of the “Swinging Sixties”. There were no Conservation Areas, and there was no system of Listed Building Consents. Any unlisted building in a historic area could be legally demolished, and the illegal demolition of a listed one only attracted a derisory fine of up to £100. Some ancient towns, such as Dover in Kent and Poole in Dorset, were suffering badly, and the British Travel Association was becoming alarmed about the effect this was having on the tourist industry, warning that such carelessness over the industry’s raw material was becoming economically ill advised.

So step forward the late Duncan Sandys MP, former Minister of Housing and Local Government, and founder of the Civic Trust, later Civic Voice, the umbrella body for Amenity Societies such

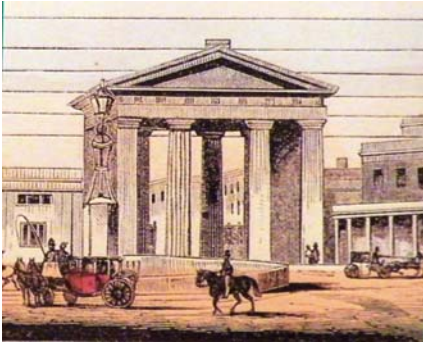
as ours. He not only introduced into Parliament the Civic Amenities Bill as a Private Members measure but, very importantly, succeeded in securing government support, together with cross-party backing.

The Bill, for the first time, required Local Authorities to identify and designate whole areas of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which deserved to be preserved. Also, with regard to the demolition of individually listed buildings, the Bill sought to render flouting the law unprofitable.

Older members of the Society may remember some of the names of parliamentarians who spoke in support of the Bill. Tom Driberg deplored the ‘calculated barbarous demolition’ of the Euston Arch (opposite) and the Coal Exchange in London, while Nicholas Ridley took up the theme of the importance of historic areas to the tourist industry. ‘We have not got the sun’, he declared, ‘we have not got French food’. But he went on to point out that what we have got to make this a beautiful island which tourists from all over the world want to come and see, are our countryside and historic towns. In the Lords, Lord Holford spoke of the need to maintain a ‘sense of place’, while Lord Kennet expressed the hope that authorities would not just designate Medieval yards and the ‘obvious



Duncan Sandys addressing the inaugural conference of the Civic Trust in 1957/58.



The Euston 'Arch' 1845, from a child's alphabet book. It was demolished in 1961 as part of a Modernisation Programme.

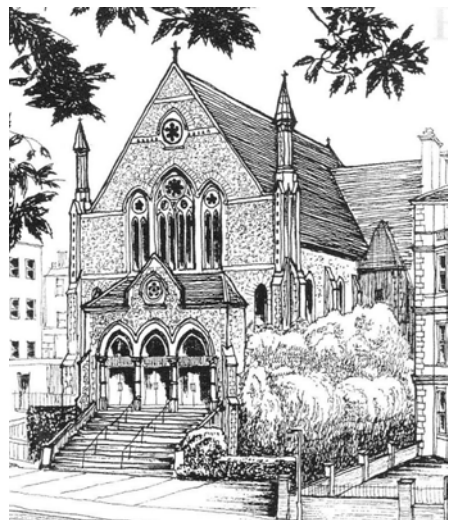
bits', but also Victorian quarters, where 'fine streets are untouched and should remain untouched'. All very relevant to Tunbridge Wells.

Since 1967 much has been achieved here. In the year 2000 the Council commissioned a Conservation Area Appraisal that should be a key planning document. Unlisted buildings of character, such as the Vale Royal Methodist Church have been saved from demolition, and in 2007 the Civic Society joined forces with the Town Forum to produce a Local List of heritage assets within the Royal Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Conservation Areas.

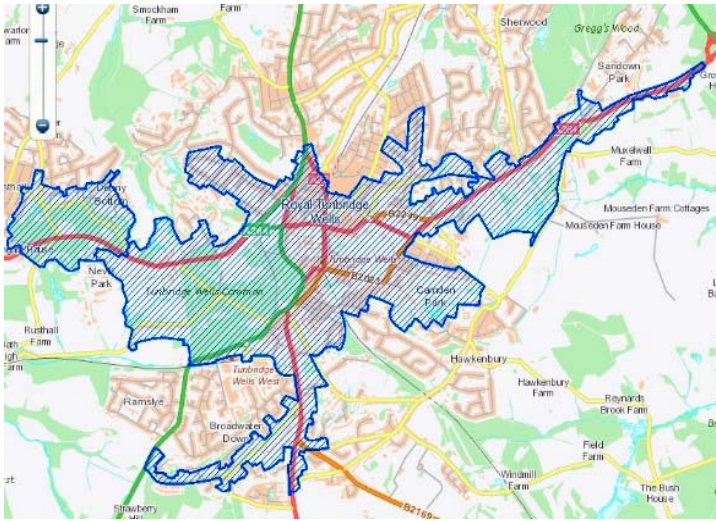
The law now is fine: the problem is currently with the way in which it is administered, both by central and local government. In recent years we have seen former senior Ministers complaining about the planning system, resulting in a watering down of government policy and advice in its National Planning Policy Framework. Thus, even if a local authority tries to take a strong line over

unsuitable development, it may well find its efforts brought to nothing by an overruling on appeal. With local Councils currently strapped for cash, few are likely to have much appetite for wasting valuable time and money on appeals that lead nowhere. So, sadly, we are seeing seriously missed opportunities, such as the Union House redevelopment at the end of The Pantiles.

We are fortunate in the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies in having as our President, Duncan Sandys' daughter, Laura Sandys. Like her father, Laura is an inspiring speaker and is keen to see the full potential of her father's legacy realised. It would be good to think that the fiftieth anniversary of his enlightened landmark legislation might act as a wake-up call to the conservation movement, before it is all too late. **PW**



Vale Royal Methodist Church, saved from demolition.



www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/residents/planning/conservation-and-heritage/conservation-areas

Conservation areas (blue) superimposed on the map of Tunbridge Wells

The original Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall conservation area was created in 1969, covering the Commons, Pantiles and town-centre areas. As the value to the town of its 19th century heritage became more widely understood further areas were added: Molyneux Park in 1983, Broadwater Down in 1989, and Pembury Road in 1992. The combined Tunbridge Wells area now comprises eleven 'identity areas', plus Rusthall which remains distinct. The value of conservation areas is that they protect groups of buildings where inappropriate intrusion can be damaging - to the value of individual houses and the amenity of the town as a whole. Lansdowne Road (below) is one of those Victorian quarters, where 'fine streets are untouched and should remain untouched'. In 1869 Bracketts called them 'very genteel and convenient moderate-sized houses'. They lift the spirits of those who walk past.



# — The Richard Burnett Heritage Collection —

## Richard and Katrina Burnett write about their plans for the future following the sale of Finchcocks

### *Katrina Burnett writes:*

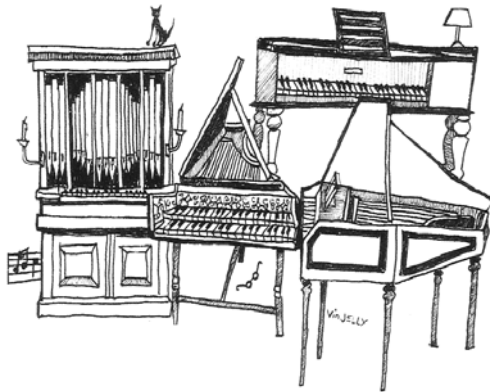
In 1971 we bought Finchcocks and for forty-five years we ran it as a centre for period keyboard instruments. In May 2016 we held an Auction, and ninety-nine instruments were sold. In November 2016 Finchcocks was bought by Neil and Harriet Nichols, as their family home. In November also Richard and I moved to our Victorian house in Tunbridge Wells, together with fifteen keyboard instruments. In a nutshell, that's it.

Of Finchcocks itself much can and has been written. The fine Grade 1 house, built in 1725, with magnificent brickwork and a facade attributed to the baroque architect, Thomas Archer, commands the beautiful valley which links Goudhurst to Lamberhurst and provided in many ways the perfect setting for a museum of historical instruments. The smaller rooms had friendly acoustics which suited the intimacy of clavichords, spinets and square pianos; for chamber music concerts and recordings there was the main hall, with its high ceiling and oak panelling.

The decision to leave Finchcocks was a swift one, made a little over one year ago. Over one hundred important

instruments were too many for us to look after effectively, and to keep our heads above water financially we would need to concentrate too much on commercial rather than musical enterprises. Although there was inevitable sadness – it did at times feel as if we were selling our children – it was absolutely the right decision. The Auction last May was both exciting and positive, and it also brought funds for our Finchcocks Charity for Musical Education, which supports our developing musical projects. It was good to know that the magnificent 1766 chamber organ by John Byfield will soon be on display and a star of a brand new musical museum near Paris, that the Portuguese Antunes harpsichord now belongs to one of the great collectors in the USA and that the 17th century Guarracino virginals will soon be seen and heard in the Horniman Museum in south London. Also that some of the instruments now belong to friends and neighbours.

However it was never our intention to say goodbye to them all. We always wanted to keep a small fleet of important instruments in good playing order, so we could



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continue in our core project of offering an Open Resource that could bring alive the sound-world of the great classical composers and could be used for concerts, recordings, courses, study and research.

**Richard Burnett writes:**

It was jolly difficult to make the final selection and there were a lot of arguments! We hope, in the end, we made the right choice. The aim was to choose instruments which covered the ground from c 1700 to mid 19th centuries. They have now been officially (and rather grandly) called “The Richard Burnett Heritage Collection”. There is no space in this article to mention them all, but I would love to tell you about a few of them

Small instruments have always been popular for domestic use. The Collection now possesses three square pianos, one clavichord and, our earliest instrument, a delightful little spinet. This is attributed to Cawton Aston, and is veneered in walnut, and designed to fit into the corner of a room. One of my favourite instruments is the little square piano built in Vienna

by Anton Walter, the friend of Mozart, in about 1805 (see above); it was known as a “travelling piano” (*reisende klaviere*) as it was especially designed to fit into a carriage. There is only one string for each note, which makes tuning much easier – though of course if you break the string, you lose the note. Although it is so small, it is wonderfully clear and has a sparkling tone quality, and can be heard surprisingly well in large



Travelling piano. Anton Walter c.1805.

settings. As a result it has been taken over the years to many different places.

Vienna was the great centre of piano building in continental Europe. The Heritage Collection is lucky to possess three original grands, “fortepianos”, from this epoch. Conrad Graf was perhaps the most renowned builder of his day, and his instruments were played by Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin and Liszt. Our 1826 Graf (see opposite) was one of the very first period pianos I bought, in 1968, (three years before the Finchcocks project was considered) and I took it around for many recitals, chamber music concerts, broadcasts and recordings in the UK and the continent. At this period I usually drove it around in a rather derelict old ambulance; it still had AMBULANCE emblazoned on it, so cars usually stopped so I could sail pass. However the roof soon started to leak, so for some time we drove with an open umbrella over our heads in the front. The Graf is an exceptionally fine instrument, and has four

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pedals: the keyboard shift (to two strings), sustaining, the moderator (in which layers of cloth are placed between hammer and strings) and the bassoon (or “fagott” – a strip of parchment pressed down on the strings to make a sort of growly-bassoon-like noise). There are even more gadgets in the Viennese fortepiano by Johann Fritz in 1815 (see next page), which includes “Turkish Music” and imitates the percussion instruments played in the streets by the Turkish gypsies, with three little bells, a brass cymbal and a small drum which whacks the underside of the soundboard.

No collection of period keyboards would be complete without Broadwoods, and we have two grands from this famous firm, the oldest existing piano company in the world - one of 1801, and one of 1823. Another English piano, a grand of 1822, comes from the workshop of the brilliant Italian musician, Muzio Clementi. It is an exceedingly stylish piano, which combines an Italian clarity and incisiveness with the romantic glow of sound which Clementi recognized was much to the English taste, with the help of his so-called “Harmonic Swell and Bridge of Reverberation”. This rare (and very expensive) device, which Clementi uses to dramatic effect in his compositions, consists of a set of unstrung strings that are free to vibrate in sympathy with every note that is played. The French piano school is represented by the Pleyel piano of 1842 (much loved by Chopin). The latest instrument is the



Grand fortepiano. Conrad Graf 1826.

Erard grand of 1866, veneered in amboyna wood.

***Katrina Burnett:***

All fifteen instruments at present live in our house in Frant Road. It is a bit of a squash but we are planning an extension, and already we have visits planned for small groups. For concerts we are having fun exploring new locations, especially those in easy reach of Tunbridge Wells. Our first “outreach” events took place in December: two concerts in Hendall Manor Barns, near Uckfield – a well restored complex owned by Peter and Nicola Young, and for these we transported our largest instrument (the Erard) and the smallest (the tiny Walter square). The Erard can be heard again on 25 June at Penshurst Place, played by the fine pianist Michael Dussek, in a

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chamber music recital presented by Primavera. Braylsham Castle, close to Mayfield, is a fascinating reconstruction of a medieval castle, created by John Mew in 1995, and we thought it would provide a suitable background for a concert with the Kirekman harpsichord of 1756, which will be played by Steven Devine, joined by the soprano Kate Semmens, on Sunday 24 September. Further afield at Bromley Arts Centre, on Saturday 20 May, the Viennese fortepiano by Rosenberger and the Clementi square can be seen and heard in a programme of duets performed by the talented couple Julian Perkins and Emma Abbate, which follows a recording of the same repertoire made in February. Further away still, there are concerts arranged in Wales and in Essex, as well as courses which will give students, children and adult enthusiasts the opportunity to explore the possibilities of the instruments for themselves.

All these activities are supported by The Finchcocks Charity for Musical Education, which remains a very active force in our new Era. One of the biggest challenges that faces lovers of period keyboard instruments today is the dearth of a new generation of skilled curators, tuners and restorers. Without their contribution the instruments are mute, or sound terrible. If a concert is planned, the first necessity is to book the tuner. The Charity is committed to assist the vital role of training and has already started a scheme of providing bursaries for this end.



Fortepiano. Johann Fritz 1815.

In this project we are fortunate in enlisting the help of the gifted and experienced specialists who have been associated with Finchcocks in the past.

If you would be interested in being kept up to date with our events and projects, or would like to be on our Mailing List, these are our contact details.

Richard and Katrina Burnett,  
The Finchcocks Charity for Musical  
Education,  
Waterdown House, 51 Frant Road,  
Tunbridge Wells TN2 5LE  
tel 01892 523203  
email: [katrina@finchcocks.co.uk](mailto:katrina@finchcocks.co.uk)  
website: [www.finchcocks.co.uk](http://www.finchcocks.co.uk)



## Trinity Gallery

**Bryan Senior**

### 'Tunbridge Wells & Nearby'

May 9<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>

Bryan Senior, a professional artist who lives in Upper Grosvenor Road, has been a member of the Society for many years. There is to be an exhibition of his work at Trinity in May. It will be his fortieth solo exhibition: the most recent were in Cork Street, London, in 2013, and at the Hampstead Museum in 2015. The works date from between 1984 and 2006, but are being displayed here for the first time as a complete group. Though the images are based on local subjects, and can be appreciated as such, they are, as Bryan says - "above all PAINTINGS which resonate beyond their original context".



Family with Cows,  
Speldhurst. 1997.



Trees at Scotney.  
1998.



Figures at Groombridge.  
2002.

Top:  
On the Common.  
1995.

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## Let Right Be Done

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### An intriguing story from 1836, though sadly inconclusive

We watched a recording of ‘The Winslow Boy’ the other night, where a father, played by Nigel Hawthorne, risks the happiness of his whole family in his determination to prove the innocence of his son - accused of stealing a five shilling postal order. I was struck by the parallels with a story from Tunbridge Wells in 1836. Thinking about it now, I accept that perhaps the parallels are not that striking, but it is an interesting story, and does involve the law being used to defend a family’s good name.

The story involves Cuthbert Webb, a grocer, and his family. Webb was a local man, born in 1776. From 1800 or so he and his wife had a shop in Pembury. About 1817 they moved to Chapel Place in Tunbridge Wells - either the site of Hall’s Bookshop, or, more probably, the shop behind it facing London Road. It was a grocery and hardware store, though they

also let out rooms - ‘Webb’s Apartment’ it was called in Sprange’s 1817 Guide. Webb also operated as a house agent, handling some of the new Calverley houses in the 1830s. In 1836, though, he was very ill, and left much of the shop work to two daughters, Sarah and Elizabeth. There was also a 21-year-old shopman called William Murton.

The other parties to the story are the family of the Rev William Pope, minister of the Chapel of Ease (King Charles the Martyr) for nearly fifty years. Pope never married but was part of a family circle including three other clerics who had married his sisters. The first was the Rev Richard Whately, who at the time of the story was Anglican Archbishop of Dublin. The second was Rev Henry Bishop, and the third was Rev Baden Powell, though that marriage was not until 1837. (These details all come from David Bushell’s excellent book about Pope and Bishop.)

Bishop was from a family of wealthy sugar refiners so did not need to work. He settled in Tunbridge Wells with his wife, Louisa, at 9 Grove Hill (now 4 Grove Hill Gardens). Pope was living with his sister, possibly Charlotte - the future Mrs Powell - at Claremont Lodge.

Chapel Place 1826. Webb’s shop is probably the building on the left; Pope’s chapel, the building to the right.



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They were all involved in a wide range of charitable activities in the town.

On 15th November Rev Bishop came into Webb's shop claiming that four weeks earlier his nephew Edward Whately had been charged three shillings and three-pence, for a file priced sixpence. Edward was the 12-year-old son of Archbishop Whately, staying with the Bishops at that time. Murton, the shopman, denied the claim, but Bishop was adamant and left in a temper. That evening his wife wrote to the shop saying that they were withdrawing their custom. Elizabeth Webb visited her, but Mrs Bishop simply said that she had made her decision.

On 19th, Murton went to the Popes to collect their weekly order and was told that they, too, were withdrawing their custom. Miss Pope gave him a note stating that 'any explanation is quite unavailable, as the matter admits of no explanation or excuse'. She hoped that this warning 'may in every way be useful to Mr Webb's family'. At this point they started blaming Webb's daughter of dishonesty rather than the shopman.

Murton then went to see Aretas Akers, the magistrate, to express his innocence. Akers suggested that they find some mutual friend to explain and resolve the matter amicably.

On 22nd, though, Webb received an anonymous letter from a 'Lady' who said that she, along with several 'families of the highest standing in the neighbourhood', had been warned 'by a certain most respectable and upright quarter' that the



Rev Pope in later life.

Webbs were, effectively, 'swindling imposters'. Charles Trustram, the young surgeon from Bedford Place, visited Pope and Bishop on behalf of Webb, seeking some reconciliation. They explained that the accusation was based on an entry in Edward's account book. When they refused to withdraw the accusation, Trustram suggested that the matter be put before a magistrate to adjudicate, but they refused that too.

The following day Webb received another letter from the same anonymous source urging him to confess 'his unhappy error'. If not, the Lady had heard of five leading families who had determined discontinuance with Webb, and she must certainly join them. The threat was clear.

Webb then issued a handbill, headed 'Libel', calling on the anonymous writer to supply details of the accusers so that they might be called to explain themselves. 'For upwards of fifty years, I have borne

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an unblemished reputation, and I will not, in my old age, tamely allow it to be tarnished.' Nigel Hawthorne could not have done better.

There was no response, so Webb arranged for his daughters and Murton to make formal declarations before the magistrates on 30th November. Robert Foreman, the solicitor, stood ready in the part of Sir Robert Morton, but the Popes and Bishops did not attend. Edward Whately was never asked publicly to give his account of the affair.

And there, disappointingly, the story tails off. The author of the account in the '*Brighton Patriot*' makes clear his view, that it was 'unjust and tyrannical conduct', and a 'trumpety charge' against the Webbs. He concludes: 'In justice to Mr Webb, we must say that a general feeling of indignation prevails against the authors of this calumny, and in the whole town we have not heard one person who believes the charge!' We should note that the '*Brighton Patriot*' was a reforming newspaper that would tend to champion the cause of a small tradesman against the gentry.

I don't suppose we will ever know what really happened. It does ring another bell though. Have you read '*Tunbridge Toys*' by Thackeray? (Unfortunately the relevant bit comes before the extract in our '*Literary Anthology of Tunbridge Wells*'). It tells of the young Thackeray's anguish over a pencil case for which he owes a fellow pupil three shillings and sixpence - three shillings and sixpence which he hopes to recoup from 'tips' from

**T. G. MATHEWS,**  
(Late C. WEBB.)  
**HOUSE AGENT,**  
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL  
**Grocer, Tea-Dealer, Cheesemonger,**  
AND OILMAN,  
Adjoining the Kentish Royal Hotel,  
TONBRIDGE WELLS,  
Families supplied with Stores at the London prices.

visiting relatives. Perhaps Edward was in a similar situation, and thought to handle it by some judicious entries in his account book, which were then difficult to explain to his uncle.

Webb died in 1838. He was buried at the parish church in Tonbridge. His daughters, there were five or six of them altogether, married other shopkeepers and farmers, though I'm not sure what happened to Elizabeth.

And William Murton - the apprentice who was so keen to protest his innocence? I don't know what happened to him. Perhaps some of you with better access to genealogical records will be able to track him down. The shop was taken by a Thomas Mathews (as above).

Young Edward Whately went to Rugby, then to ChristChurch and on to a career in the Church of England. He was described recently as 'an amiable mediocrity whom Trollope would have relished'. Most of us are mediocrities, but how nice to be thought of as 'amiable'. There is a nice circularity to the story for fans of television detectives. Edward's great grandson is Kevin Whately. I'm sure that D.I. Lewis would have been able to sort out the mystery of Edward's expensive purchase. **CJ**

### Ian Burn (1930 - 2017)

It is with very great sadness that we record the death of former Civic Society Secretary Ian Burn, on 2nd February, at the age of 86.

John Urquhart Burton Burn, to give him his full name, although universally called Ian, was proud of his Scottish roots. His family had come south before World War II, but then young Ian found himself again north of the border, but this time as an evacuee. His National Service was spent in the RAF, following which he qualified as an architect, working in the Property Services Agency and the Foreign Office

on projects such as embassy buildings and court houses.

To the post of Secretary of the Civic Society Ian brought a professional approach, always courteous, but combined with firmness. For many years he lived with his wife Judy, and their two children, at no. 7 Cumberland Walk, an interesting house, possibly by Amon Wilds, which he lovingly restored.

Two past Chairmen of the Society joined family and friends at Ian's funeral at the Kent and Sussex Crematorium on 21st February. **PW**



### **Kent History Federation** **One-day Conference. Saturday May 20th** **Sandwich Guildhall**

This year's conference is hosted by the Sandwich Local History Society, and will be held at the Guildhall (see above).

Sandwich has been described as 'the completest medieval town' in England, so this is a great opportunity to be shown it by experts. It was one of the original Cinque Ports, which, before the founding of the Royal Navy, provided ships to protect the south coast.

The conference starts at 9:45

(registration from 9:15) with three lectures in the morning, and an opportunity to see Sandwich's own copy of the Magna Carta. In the afternoon there is a choice of seven guided walks.

The cost is £17.50 including refreshments. A buffet lunch is available for an extra £7.50.

For further details and booking form see: [www.kenthistoryfederation.org](http://www.kenthistoryfederation.org), or contact me (Chris Jones).

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## Putting Faces to Names - Paul Avis

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Paul Avis lives with his French wife, Anne, and their three children, Emilie, Sarah, and James, in Underwood Rise, Tunbridge Wells. After living and working in America, they moved back to England to be closer to family and their roots.

Paul's family has lived in the Tunbridge Wells area for some 200 years. He was born in Southborough. He went to Skinners, like his father; and then to Oxford, where he studied Architecture. He was trained in the traditional way, to design not only the buildings, but their interiors, furniture and fittings; and the landscapes in which they sit. He has applied that training throughout his career, resulting in an impressive portfolio of projects. His design work has won awards, and has found its way into the homes of heads of industry, show business personalities, and royalty.

Although comfortable designing in most styles, Paul specialises in historical buildings, and is currently working on a number of listed buildings, including a country residence, a mansion of national importance, and a local Victorian Gothic church. He divides his time between offices in Tunbridge Wells and London, where he consults for a company specialising in contemporary working and living spaces for clients in the arts world.

Paul's design work has not been



confined to architecture. He has been commissioned to design jewellery and objects d'art and his work has found its way into many of the top goldsmith houses. Some of his recent commissions have been for the Royal Jeweller, G. Collins and Sons, in Tunbridge Wells.

Paul also enjoys writing. While at Oxford,

his work 'Templa Quam Delecta', on the importance of the garden buildings of Stowe, was published well before the National Trust started preserving the wonderful Temples and garden monuments there. His recent book 'The Spire within our Midst', about the history of his local church and its immediate neighbourhood, was a major success and has led to him to write a further edition covering the whole parish, one of the largest in Tunbridge Wells. He attends his local church, St. Marks, the subject of his first book, and has recently been appointed as the editor of the new church magazine.

Paul was co-opted onto the Executive Committee of the Society in November, and has become Chairman of the Heritage Open Day Committee. He has found a warm welcome there from the more established and experienced members. He looks forward to an exciting future for the Society and for Tunbridge Wells as a town.

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## Programme Notes

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### Roger Joye previews our talks for the coming quarter

Our talks for members continue to take place at 7.30pm on the second Thursday of every month (except for July and August), with the venue flitting between the Town Hall and the Royal Wells Hotel on Mount Ephraim, as shown on your membership card. As usual, we do ask you to keep an eye open for messages about any late changes to the schedule, either in the newsletters or – nearer each date – on our website and in your email inbox.

The second quarter of 2017 opens at the **Town Hall** on **13<sup>th</sup> April**. **Kelvin Hinton**, Policy Manager in the Tunbridge Wells Planning Department will give us an insight into the planning policies of the borough and the challenges faced in trying to enforce them. In particular, he will cover the issue of the national government's assessed housing need for the borough of 648 dwellings p.a. for each of the next 20 years. **Adrian Berendt**, chairman of the Town Forum will also be present. He has a particular interest in the impact of planning on issues such as employment and transport.

On **11<sup>th</sup> May** we move to the **Royal Wells Hotel** for **Jim Preston's** illustrated talk on "**Malting and Brewing in Kent**". Although malt is the basic ingredient of beer, malting is now a forgotten industry. Kent was, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, a major supplier of malt, not only for local demand but also for London brewers. However, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the industry was transformed from a structure of small maltings (often mistaken for hop oasts) controlled by independent maltsters, to one controlled by the larger scale commercial brewers. Thereafter, the fate of malting was tied to the changes in the brewing industry, where consolidation and amalgamation on a regional and national scale have left Kent with one large-scale brewer who no longer has maltings.

We are back at the **Royal Wells Hotel** again on **8<sup>th</sup> June** for something completely different: "**The Green Man in English Churches**", a beautifully illustrated talk presented by **Imogen Corrigan**. Around the year 1400 there was a proliferation of Green Man images (more correctly called 'foliate heads'). The talk considers how the image may have evolved from pagan and Classical times, and what its purpose may have been. Although perhaps originally connected to ancient fertility rites, most such images show either distorted or very mature faces – which seems to contradict the notion that they were associated with May Day frolickings. It may be that we can learn more about the meaning if we take into account the historical events of the time and their effect on the nation's imagination.





# 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.

<b>Apr 13th</b>	Representatives of TWBC and the Town Forum (see p.23) will discuss current issues and take questions from the audience. <b>Town Hall</b>
<b>May 11th</b>	<b>'Malting and Brewing in Kent'</b> - Jim Preston's illustrated talk considers major changes in the materials and facilities used in beer production in the last four centuries, and the effect on sites in our county. <b>Royal Wells Hotel</b>
<b>Jun 8th</b>	<b>'The Green Man in English Churches'</b> - Imogen Corrigan examines the evolution and possible purpose of these fascinating features which proliferated around 1400. <b>Royal Wells Hotel</b>
<b>July 8th (Sat)</b>	<b>Annual Garden Party</b> At 'Camster' in Camden Park, by kind permission of Jenny and Alastair Cook. See page 2 for details.
<b>July 18th (Tues)</b>	<b>Visit to the 'Cathedral on the Marsh'</b> Visit to the Crossness pumping station and other technological marvels. See page 2 for details.

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.

Published by the Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society.

Registered Charity No. 276545

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