

SUMMER 2005



**EARLY HISTORY OF THE SALVATION ARMY**

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**THE MONTANA CONNECTION**

## Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society

### Objectives:

1. To stimulate public interest in Royal Tunbridge Wells
2. To promote high standards of planning and architecture in the town
3. To secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest.



Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society is supported by AXA PPP healthcare

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*Front Cover: The opening of the new barracks 1886 (see page 11)*

*Photo from: 'The Salvation Army in Tunbridge Wells 1879 - 1979'*

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## Introductory Notes

**A fine tradition...** There's a popular television programme called 'Grumpy Old Men', and, I believe, a companion series called 'Grumpy Old Women'. It's a very simple concept - just a bunch of grumpy old men, and, presumably, grumpy old women, complaining about life in modern times. Bit like the Civic Society really. But we, at least, can claim to be following a long-established tradition in the town. Paul Amsinck was Master of Ceremonies in 1810. He didn't approve of repairs to Speldhurst church after the spire was burnt down in 1791: 'Its place is occupied by a modern structure; in which a poverty of design and meanness of execution are the chief characters' - a phrase which we could perhaps borrow when responding to certain planning applications. Later in his book he commented on a former proprietor of Tonbridge Castle who had built a modern stone house within the precincts of the castle - 'he cannot certainly be complimented on his taste; it is a species of architectural sacrilege ... a barbarism'. I particularly liked that comment as the former proprietor was Charmian's great, great, great, great grandfather.

**Way out...** Having lived in Tunbridge Wells for 24 years, we decided it was time to visit Speldhurst. The church which so annoyed Amsinck was replaced in 1870. The new building has some fine Burne-Jones windows. The saints (or are they angels?) portrayed therein have muscular necks and strong jawlines and look a bit like Italian footballers. The main door is solid and nicely detailed, but above it there is an illuminated FireExit sign. Is this really necessary? Well, perhaps it is given that the original church was destroyed by fire. I have to admit though that it brought out the Grumpy Old Man within me.

**Hospital plans...** There hasn't been room in this issue for a proper report of Lawrence Bunnett's talk on the new hospital. Now there's a man who enjoys his work. And anyone who can start a talk by explaining 14 abbreviations used in the PFI process, and keep his audience with him, is quite a speaker. At present there are three companies competing for the £300M 'design, build and run' contract - one of them will be excluded in July. Final proposals are expected from the others in November, and these will be available to the public. A single preferred bidder will be chosen early next year and it is hoped that work will begin by the end of 2006 for completion by 2010. The completed hospital is expected to last 60 years. The nursing and medical staff will be NHS, but otherwise the hospital will be run by the winning contractor. **CJ**

## Society News

### Local Plan Inquiry - Inspector's Report

Throughout most of last year we were reporting on sessions of the Inquiry into the Local Plan Review. Last month, June 2005, the Inspector published her findings. Philip Whitbourn had only 24 hours to review the document (13 chapters, 7 appendices, in all more than 500 pages). He provided the following snippets, relating to some of the issues which we had raised.

- Given that the Local Plan has been superseded anyway (by the new planning regime introduced in 2004) the Inspector has tried to avoid recommending unnecessary modifications to the Plan.

- She did, however, comment on the widespread perception among objectors that it had been difficult to negotiate with the council during the preparation of the Plan and that this had caused unnecessary, extra work during the later, more formal stages. This needs to be addressed in the new regime.

- She recommended that the historic importance of the town, and the need to preserve and enhance the character of its Conservation Areas, be recognised as important factors in determining new development. She

recommended the inclusion of the PPG15 assumption against the demolition of buildings within Conservation Areas.

- She recommended that existing market facilities be re-located within the primary shopping area before any incorporation of Market Square within an extended RVP.

- She seemed to accept, however, the proposals to extend the RVP and to incorporate within it Ely Court and the buildings at the junction of Camden and Calverley Roads.

- She recommended that the Town Hall, Library and Adult Education block be excluded from the primary shopping area.

- She recommended that the council consider whether an Area Action Plan should be adopted for the Pantiles.

- She described the proposals for Goods Station Road and the Medway Depot as over-prescriptive, and recommended a landscaped approach to Grosvenor Rec Ground from the bottom end of St James Road

- She accepted that there was a general shortage of community facilities within the town.

We await developments.

## 400th Anniversary Celebrations

After more than two years of trying, we finally seem to have persuaded the Council that the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the Wells is something worth celebrating. They have this month announced a new website:

[www.tunbridgewells400.info](http://www.tunbridgewells400.info)

This incorporates a history of the town; plans for a newsletter and events diary; and arrangements by which clubs and societies can request grants for celebratory events.

Our own plans include:

- a 200-page book from the Local History Group,
- a commemorative calendar,
- a commemorative mug,
- support to the council for a Heritage Walk and 'magenta' plaque scheme.

(more details in our next issue)

And of course we support whatever other initiatives the council is proposing.

## Plans for a Town Forum

TWBC is considering proposals for a consultative body called the 'Town Forum' which would cover those parts of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall which do not have parish or town councils. The body would include Residents' Associations,

borough councillors representing those wards, and presumably other parties. An initial meeting to consider the proposals is to be held in early July. We were disappointed not to have been advised of these proposals at an earlier stage.

## Problems with 'The Vision Thing'

Members who attended our June meeting were probably a little puzzled at the strange layout of the chairs and tables in the Council Chamber. Apparently the interim Chief has instructed that they are to be left in committee format and not moved for public meetings - for health and safety reasons. In the same month we received the progress report from the Audit Commission on the council's attempt to improve on its 'weak'

assessment last year. It seems the Council 'has only made limited progress' and 'a number of challenges remain'. The biggest problem is a lack of vision which means that 'the Council does not have an agenda for longer term improvement or a clear articulation of its future'. Perhaps when we get our new Chief Executive she can concentrate on this and not bother too much about the deck-chairs

**CJ**

## From the Planning Scrutineers

An application was submitted in March for the conversion into flats of **Bredbury**, the Italianate building of 1867 which occupies a prominent position on **Mount Ephraim**. The proposal included large, modern extensions on either side of the current building. The application was rejected, but an appeal is scheduled for July. We have suggested that a more modest extension at the back on the left-hand side would be more acceptable.

Another significant application is for 24 new residential units overlooking the entrance to **Dunorlan Park** from **Pembury Road**. The plan is for a curved terrace of twelve 5-bedroom town houses with three flats at each end, overlooking the park. There would be a further six 2-bedroom cottages and twelve pairs of garages to the rear. We have objected to this proposal saying that the views from Dunorlan must be preserved. Dunorlan Lodge is not part of the development, but we fear that it may be threatened in future.

An application has also been made for development on the adjoining **Fairmile** site further along **Pembury Road**. We have not objected to this, as the proposed modern building is shielded by trees. We have asked,

however, given the modern design, why the architects have not incorporated 'sustainable' features such as solar panels, and south-facing conservatories.

We did object to a proposal to demolish the existing buildings in **Wells Close, Clarence Road** and replace them with a 5-storey block of 23 flats. The new block is 60% larger on plan than the current 3-storey block of 11 flats. We suggested that the height should be reduced by one or two storeys, that no windows be permitted on the north elevation, and that more appropriate external materials be used. We understand that the new building has been rejected, though the demolition has been approved.

We are really rather annoyed about the PVC banners fixed to the pillars at the front of **Habitat** in **Mount Pleasant Road**. These are very unsightly and could damage the fabric of this significant listed building. The retrospective planning application has been rejected.

We have also objected to a change-of-use proposal for **53 High Street**, currently 'India Jane', from A1 use (retail) to A2 (ie, suitable for an estate agent). We do not wish to lose any further shops from the High Street, where there are already 15 estate agents.

We are reviewing an application to the convert Grosvenor House in **Grosvenor Park** from offices to flats. The plan includes a new vaulted roof to allow for a 5th storey. At present the town is said to have 400 unsold/unlet flats, though this cannot be taken into account by the planners.

An amended proposal has been submitted for **Strawberry Hill House**, at the far end of **Broadwater Down**. The new proposal is for 9 rather than 12 flats but would still involve the demolition of the current Abergavenny estate lodge, which we consider to be attractive and worth saving. **CJ**

## Heritage Open Days 2005

This year TWBC has worked with the Civic Society in arranging for eight buildings within the town to take part in Heritage Open Days, the national scheme by which buildings not normally accessible to the public are opened free of charge for one weekend.

The dates are Thursday 8th September to Sunday 11th September, though not all the buildings are open on all days. The details are as follows:

- St. Barnabas' Church: Sat. 9:30 - 6, Sun. 2 - 6
- St. James' Church: Thurs/Fri. 10 - 12, Sat. 10 - 3, Sun. 8 - 12
- Museum/Art Gallery/Library: Fri. 2:15 - 3: 15, Sat. 10 - 11 (see note)
- Town Hall: Fri. 10:30 - 3
- Jordan House, London Rd: Sat. 11 - 4, Sun. 11 - 4  
(ex Tunbridge Ware factory)
- The Pound: Sat. 10 - 4, Sun. 2 - 4
- King Charles the Martyr: Thurs/Fri. 11 - 3, Sat. 11 - 3
- St Paul's Church, Rusthall: Fri. 2:30 - 5, Sat. 11 - 5, Sun. 2:30 - 5

Note: All visits to the Museum/ Art Gallery/ Library must be pre-booked, please telephone on 01892 554171.

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The Southborough Society is organising an exhibition called 'High Brooms Past' in St Matthews Primary School, Power Mill Lane. This will include an opportunity to visit the war-time air raid shelter in the playground. The exhibition will be open on Friday 3:00 - 7:00 and Saturday 10:00 - 4:00.

In addition Salomon's will be open on Thursday from 5:00 - 8:00, providing access to the Science Theatre and stable block. **CJ**

## Visit to Cranbrook Windmill *by Gill Twells*

Our visit to Cranbrook windmill took place on Sunday 15 May – which turned out to be an unexpectedly pleasant sunny day. We assembled in the small building adjacent to the mill and Peg Fryer, of the Cranbrook Windmill Association welcomed us with a cup of coffee.

Peter Cobby, the KCC conservation architect, told us how KCC had been persuaded to buy eight old mills in Kent for £1.00 each – and to set up a Trust, including four other mills, to cover their restoration and maintenance. In fact Heritage Lottery

Funding has been made available for the restoration of all the mills.

Unfortunately, the Chillenden mill has since toppled over in a very strong wind and suffered great damage. Fortunately KCC was able to persuade its insurer that this damage was their liability. Needless to say, KCC now has to pay more for this insurance!

Peter then explained the structural design of windmills and how this varied - some being “post mills”, but in Kent, as at Cranbrook, most are “smock mills”. Smock describes the shape of the structure which supports the “sweeps”, elsewhere called “sails”. Cranbrook is the tallest mill in Kent, being built on a conical brick base, in order to raise it sufficiently above the adjacent houses to prevent the sweeps hitting their roofs !

All the mills were built for milling wheat to make flour, and members of the Cranbrook Windmill Assoc. are now doing this again - when there is sufficient wind to rotate the sweeps. The brick base of the Cranbrook mill is fitted with three floors accessed by steep stair/ladders. Each floor contains various old milling tools and memorabilia associated with milling. There are two old milling machines, one of which is kept clean, under covers, when not in use for milling.



The balcony around the base is used for gaining access to the sweeps for their maintenance and from it there are good views across the surrounding townscape.

The Mill is open to the public (2.30 – 5.00pm), free of charge, on Sats and Bank hols from April to Sept, and on Sundays from mid July to the end of August. There is also a display

of interesting historical pictures. Freshly milled, stoneground flour is on sale in 1kg bags and is highly recommended!

Donations to the Cranbrook Mill Association are always welcome. For more information see their web-site: [www.kentwindmills.homestead.com](http://www.kentwindmills.homestead.com) or telephone on 01580 712256 or 712984. p GT

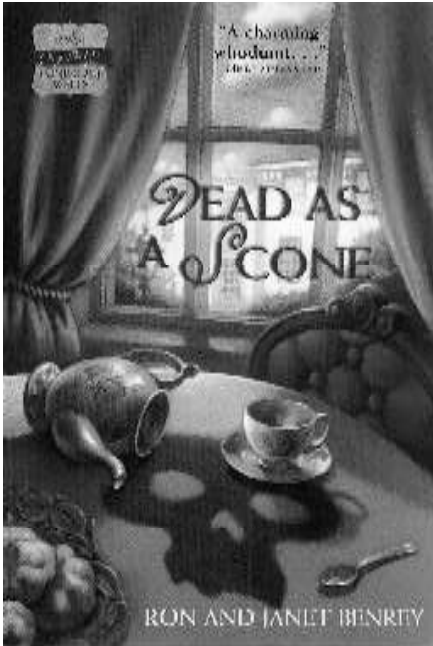
### **Review: 'Dead as a Stone' by Daniel Bech**

As a child you could have glued me to any book and I would have been happy. This changed as I became an adolescent - I left it to film and television to stimulate my fantasies. And nowadays I find only computer handbooks nutritious enough for my brain cells. So it is probably a compliment to Ron and Janet Benrey that I was looking forward to reading their first Tunbridge Wells mystery novel "Dead as a Scone".

I first heard from Ron Benrey when we were promoting our CD-Rom of Tunbridge Wells. He was in fact the first customer. When Ron received his copy he immediately sent an e-mail encouraging us and saying that this was the perfect tool for writers of mystery novels. Ron hinted that he and his wife Janet had made-up a 'tea museum' in Tunbridge Wells where a murder would happen.

Both writers believe in the importance of local research, as they use a "real" town for their crime scenes. Living on another continent makes this rather difficult. So we have tried to help them, and modern communication technology plays a big part in this. Whenever they need an extra inspirational look at a location, we go out, take a digital photo and within hours they have it on their desks.

We finally met in May this year when Katharina and I invited them down from London where they were attending a writers' conference. We organised a cocktail party to introduce them to some local personalities. Unfortunately the date clashed with a Local History Group event. Nevertheless many members of the Civic Society were able to join the other local 'characters' we had invited. Soon the rooms were filled and the Benreys



photographer as well as writer and editor. She is currently a literary agent.

‘Dead as a Scone’ was published in December 2004. The well described Englishness of the tea museum characters travels through all the pages; and the flair of the genteel decaying Spa Town is there throughout the book. For citizens of Royal Tunbridge Wells, it is great fun to put real faces to some of the characters, but equally it must be fascinating for an outsider to read into a plot which folds out of an eccentric English ‘tea committee’.

Such is the success of ‘Dead as a Scone’ in America that the authors were asked by their publishers to continue the series. But not everything works to plan and Ron broke an arm during an unpleasant winter in their hometown of Baltimore, Maryland. So we will have to wait, probably until the end of the summer, to see "The Final Crumpet" arriving on our tables.

And that will then be a second fictional book that I will have read in short succession. p DB

were identifying their next victims.

Ron and Janet Benrey are well known writers in America. Ron has written more than a thousand magazine articles, six books, and scores of major speeches for the CEOs of major companies. Janet, who in her youth lived in Eridge Road, has had a diverse career - as an entrepreneur and professional

## Volunteers needed

If anybody is able to distribute Society leaflets as part of a membership drive during July, August or September, then please contact John

Cunningham on TW 534599. John will allocate the roads to be targeted. You can volunteer for as many or as few as you like.

## **The Early Years of the Salvation Army in Tunbridge Wells** *by Ian Beavis*

**This is an extract of a talk given by Ian Beavis at a reception last year to recognise the work of the Salvation Army in the town over 125 years.**

The Salvation Army's presence in Tunbridge Wells began at an early date in the movement's national history. William Booth, the movement's founder, had originally been a Methodist minister, but his evangelistic methods and independent spirit put him at odds with the leadership. In 1865 he and his wife Catherine, also a gifted preacher, founded the East London Christian Mission to undertake evangelistic and social work among the poor of Whitechapel. In 1878 they adopted the name of the Salvation Army.

In the early days, Booth had a keen supporter in Tunbridge Wells - the Tasmanian entrepreneur Henry Reed who lived in Dunorlan. He was an evangelical preacher himself, happy to support any initiative towards the unchurched masses. He entertained the Booths when they visited the town in 1866, and also offered financial support. In July 1869 he invited nearly 1500 members of the East London Mission to Dunorlan for an outing. He chartered two trains, and they marched up to Dunorlan from the station in procession, singing psalms and waving banners. In the afternoon

an open air meeting was held by the lake. The event was repeated the following year, but this time the party was confronted by a hostile crowd who shouted abuse and made it clear that they never wanted to see them in Tunbridge Wells again. Reed waded into the crowd and told them that they should be ashamed of themselves. The police had to intervene.

Catherine Booth came to Tunbridge Wells in 1867 to assist in a mission led by Bishop Taylor of California at Vale Royal Wesleyan Methodist Church. She returned a few years later for a mission at the Assembly Rooms on the Pantiles for the Pantiles Christian Mission. Luke Pearce, in his history of the free churches in Tunbridge Wells, (1904) talks of meetings being held afterwards in a carpenter's shop in Down Lane "where a wonderful work of grace was carried on under the care of Mr Cameron". The Down Lane mission was later taken over by the Primitive Methodists but, according to Pearce, "the rough and ready sort of people who had been reclaimed were not prepared to settle down under the new management".

The first meeting of the Salvation Army under that name was in May 1879, at the Assembly Rooms above the Old Baths in Calverley Road. The venue had been found by Richard M Lane, an evangelist popularly known as 'Tinker Lane'. His obituary tells how "He arrived in Tunbridge Wells in 1877, with fourpence in his pocket. He saw a lot of men standing about at a street corner, and he went up to them and commenced preaching, thus holding his first open-air meeting in Tunbridge Wells. ... On [another] occasion he was addressing a crowd on the Pantiles when he was arrested for causing a disturbance. He was sentenced to seven days' imprisonment. He spent the seven days in Maidstone prison, during which time he had long spells on the treadmill".

Although not originally part of the movement, Lane is usually credited as its effective founder in Tunbridge Wells. His obituary describes his work: "The room was inches thick in mud, and he had to scrape this and get the room clean unaided. There arose the question of getting it seated for 300 people. It was a hard task for him, as he had his own work to do during the day, but he succeeded in borrowing wood to make a platform and seating accommodation. All being ready, the war began in earnest. The roughest element filled the hall each night, intent

on disturbances, but souls were saved, and there were marvels of grace".

The first commanding officer sent by headquarters was Charlotte Bateson, described by Pearce as "a lass of sixteen summers", showing how the Army empowered women and young people. From the start, says Pearce, "Opposition, persecution and blessing abounded. The police had many times to clear the hall, but the mighty sovereign grace of God conquered many souls". The earliest reference to the Salvation Army in the Police Committee minutes is in August 1880. It records a memo from owners of premises on Calverley Road drawing attention to "the disgraceful proceedings" of people assembling outside a room used by "a sect styling themselves 'The Salvation Army'".

The attitude of the Local Board and police force was initially negative. Pearce relates that "The sympathy of the police in these early days ... was the opposite to that which happily now prevails. Thus, on the march to the meeting one day, refuse of all sorts was thrown over the Salvationists. One of them, a powerful Scotch woman, seized a fellow who had just thrown mud in her face, and held him up until a constable took him in charge. He was marched off to the police station, accompanied by a yelling mob, who in so short a space

left on the Salvationists many marks of violence. The sergeant in charge at the station would not hear what they had to say, but said to the Salvationists 'It's you who are the rioters' and so saying he pushed them out into the street and left them to the tender mercies of the mob". The Police Committee minutes of March 1881 speak of the possibility of banning the Army's street processions altogether.

In March 1881, the Army was turned out of their meeting place in Calverley Road. There followed a long period in which they were unable to find a permanent venue. At times they could only meet on the Common, where there was an accepted tradition of open-air preaching. Other venues included the Volunteer Drill Hall in Victoria Road, the Albion Road Baptist Mission Room, and a hay loft behind St Stephens Church. They also used the 'Camden Road Assembly Rooms', a Working Men's Hall boasting a large club and lecture room.

The first Salvation Army Band in Tunbridge Wells was formed in 1883, under the leadership of Brother Packham who with his wife were the first to don Army uniform in the town. The band caused further controversy. There were complaints to the police about the noise of its playing after other congregations had started their Sunday evening services. The Police

Committee threatened to withdraw their constable from Army processions unless they arrived at the Army Hall earlier than 6:30. This does, however, indicate that the police were by then protecting the Army against harassment. Early in 1884 the Police Committee agreed a list of acceptable locations for the band to assemble.

Although by the mid 1880s the Army had reached an understanding with the Local Board, unofficial persecution reached a peak in 1885-6 with the 'Skeleton Army' disturbances. Local youths banded together as the 'Skeleton Army' to parody their processions, trying to drown out their band, pull down the flags and damage the instruments. "On many occasions", we are told, "Salvationists were assaulted with sticks, stones, turves of grass and any other missiles which came to hand". At the Police Committee in January 1886, "A deputation from the Salvation Army attended and complained of the conduct of members of the Skeleton army ... and of assaults committed by members of the said Skeleton Army". The Committee promised to provide police protection.

Although 1886 was a year of persecution, it was also the year in which the Salvation Army moved into its first permanent home. This was a

new building on the site of the disused gas works in Varney Street, a site which the Army had been interested in acquiring for some time. Although in “a disreputable area surrounded by beer shops, common lodging houses and small tenements of questionable character”, this was where the people the Army was seeking to reach out to lived. Two ladies, the Misses A E and M H Wells, who were both members of the Army, came to live in the town and, Pearce tells us, “bore their share of the trials and persecutions of the times”. Unable to purchase just part of the site, the Wells sisters bought the whole block and donated a part on which to build the new hall or ‘Barracks’. The foundation stones were laid by the Misses Wells on 10 October 1884, at a meeting conducted by General Booth. Work was completed with remarkable speed, and the new Barracks (later Citadel) was formally opened by Catherine Booth on 6 December. Meetings were held there every night at 8 o’clock from Monday to Saturday, while on Sundays there were four: at 7.00, 11.00, 3.00 and 6.30. Attendances reached up to six hundred.

In 1887, the local Salvation Army published a pamphlet of testimonies from their converts entitled *Rough Diamonds from the Caverns of Sin. Where they were found and how they*

*were polished. Some results of Salvation Army work in Tunbridge Wells.* This contained accounts by members relating how their lives had been changed. One said “My wife got saved; this made me worse than ever. I declared I would not live with her, came home drunk, turned her out, ... threw some of the furniture over the hedge, and walked about with a cricket bat over my shoulder, defying anyone to enter the door; but with all this my wife stood firm, and the good overcame the evil”. These people mostly came from the unfashionable part of town, the small backstreets and slums like Ely Lane behind Calverley Road and Camden Road. This was a part of town that respectable folk tended to avoid: it was said ‘One does not shop in Camden Road; one sends one’s servants’.

By the time Pearce wrote his account in 1904, the days of hostility and persecution had passed. As he says, “The work of the Army ... has been of such a character as to commend itself to the sympathy of the inhabitants generally. Souls are being saved, and a good deal of social work carried on”. When General Booth visited the town in 1909 he was given a civic reception. **IB**

*NB The full text of Ian’s talk will be available from the Society’s web-site.*

## A link between Culverden Castle, Wadhurst Park and Castle Drogo *by John Cunningham*

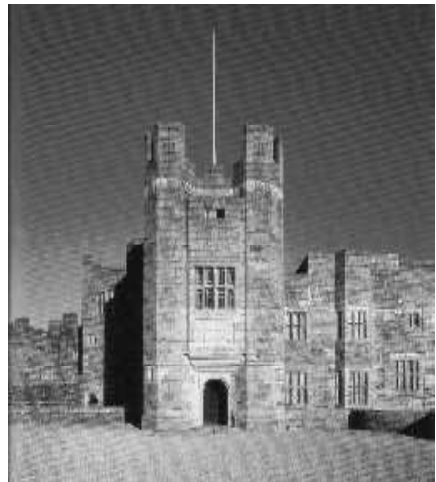
A recent visit to the West Country and Dartmoor in particular, revealed a tenuous but nonetheless real link between Culverden Castle and Wadhurst Park here, and Castle Drogo on the edge of Dartmoor.

Castle Drogo (see below) at Drewsteignton is a very recent castle, built between 1911 and 1925 to a design by Edwin Lutyens. It is now run by the National Trust and is well worth a visit. It was built in granite for Julius Drewe who made his fortune by setting up the Home & Colonial chain of grocers in 1883. Drewe had become convinced that he was descended from a Norman baron, Drogo de Teign, after whom the parish of Drewsteignton had been named; and consequently he bought land there and built his castle on a rocky outcrop, with stunning views all round.

But what was of particular interest, in visiting, was to discover a connection between Julius Drewe and Tunbridge Wells. Julius Drewe had married in 1890 and set up home, according to the Guide Book, 'in a mock castle, Culverden, a romantic battlemented early 19<sup>th</sup>. century building near Tunbridge Wells'. He lived there nine years and his three

sons were born there. Then in 1899, the family moved to what was then called Wadhurst Hall, but originally Wadhurst Park, 'a vast red-brick mansion built in the 1870's by Edward Tarver for two batchelor brothers, Adrian and Cristobal de Murietta,' who entertained the Prince of Wales there frequently.

But clearly, Julius Drewe's wealth and aspirations were increasing in leaps and bounds and by 1910, the plans for the ancestral Castle Drogo were under way. Julius Drewe continued to live at Wadhurst until Castle Drogo was finished in 1925 and was able to enjoy his castle for six years, dying in 1931. **JC**



## The Search for Clayton Stanford Willicombe

Woodbury Park Cemetery is just minutes from the busy St John's Road, but on a fine day it's a really nice place for a quiet walk. The Victorian statuary and the dark conifers contrasting with the brighter green of the not over-manicured grass, have a calming effect. One can imagine the staid, respectable lives of the worthy people buried here: Canon Hoare, vicar of Holy Trinity; Henry Thomas Austen, brother of Jane; and Jacob Bell, founder of the Pharmaceutical Society. So the inscription on top of the Willicombe family tomb (see below) is all the more bizarre. It is to Clayton Stanford Willicombe, "who was shot on Sunday 14th October 1883 at Glendive Montana USA while aiding the Sheriff

in the execution of his duty".

It's a clear, straightforward enough statement, but somehow, in the middle of Victorian Tunbridge Wells, it cries out for further explanation. Just who was Clayton Stanford Willicombe and what on earth was he doing in Montana?

Montana - it's a long way away even now. Up there in the top left-hand corner of the United States, beyond Wyoming and the Dakotas, nestling up against the Canadian border; in 1883 it hadn't yet been recognised as a state. Until the 1860's it was visited mainly by fur-trappers and traders. Then gold was discovered, and silver and lead and copper; and a great mining and metal-working industry developed in the far west of the Territory.



The Willicombe family tomb in Woodbury Park Cemetery, Tunbridge Wells



Main Street Glendive MT 1881. Photo: Dawson County GenWeb site

The eastern part, however, where Glendive lies, remained undeveloped; though fought over in those last, sad years of the Indian Wars. The Little Big Horn, where Custer died in 1876, is less than 200 miles away. In June each year small paddle steamers would make their way up the Yellowstone river bringing in supplies and settlers, and taking away furs and buffalo 'robes'. All that changed in 1881 with the arrival of the Northern Pacific Rail Road, bringing reliable year-round transportation and opening up the land to economic exploitation.

One of the first to take advantage was Pierre Wibaux, son of a wealthy textile manufacturer in Roubaix, northern France. He arrived in 1883, and within 12 years had built up one of the biggest ranching operations in the state, running some 65,000 cattle.

And this, presumably, was the sort of thing that 34 year-old Willicombe had in mind when he arrived in 1883.

Clayton Stanford Willicombe was born in Tunbridge Wells in 1849. His father, William Willicombe, was one of the success stories of the town. He had arrived as a journeyman plasterer 'with 2s 6d in his pocket' in the 1820's when Decimus Burton and James Ward were beginning the development of the Calverley Estate. Willicombe started by working for them, but gradually succeeded as a speculative builder in his own right, being ultimately responsible for much of Lansdowne Road, Sandrock Road and Calverley Park Gardens.

William and his wife, Maria, had at least twelve children. Clayton was one of the youngest. The educational opportunities available to the children

widened as William became more successful. The elder boys had been apprenticed in the building trade within Tunbridge Wells, whereas Clayton, at age 11, and his brother, Gordon Burton, aged 13, were sent as boarders to a school in Regents Park (which seems to have occupied one of the fine houses designed there by Decimus Burton).

We don't know what Clayton did for the next ten years, but in 1871 (aged 22) he was a stuff merchant (ie a merchant of woollen cloth) living in Bradford. This could be a significant pointer to his later plans, as he went to Montana, not to ranch cattle, but to raise sheep. This is not as unusual as it might sound - one of the most successful ranchers in Glendive, Charles Krug, made his money from sheep, having switched from cattle after the disastrous winter of 1886-7.

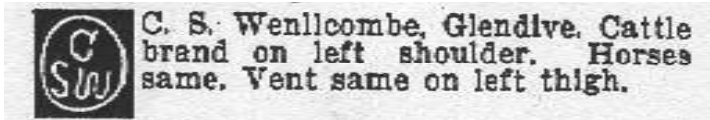
And again, although we don't know the full story, it seems that Clayton had some experience of sheep-raising. In 1875 we think he was on a sheep station in Australia, having borrowed one thousand pounds from his father. Certainly when his father died in 1875, he is the only one among seven surviving sons and three sons-in-law who was not present at the funeral.

In 1881 Clayton was staying with his brother Henry in Calverley Road, in what had been the main family

home when he was a child (in what is now Barclays Bank). He is described as living on 'income from houses'. He could have inherited these from his father, who left the income from various houses in Calverley Park Gardens to his wife and children. In Clayton's case we think that this included a house called 'Newlyn', which today is known as 30 Lansdowne Road.

In July 1883 Clayton and his nephew Mortimer Mansfield (then aged 20 and son of his sister Augusta Maria) arrived in Glendive via Chicago. The Glendive Times of July 14th records that they bought a ranch about six miles south-west of the town, and that they were "very pleasant and accomplished gentlemen [with] unlimited capital to further any enterprise they may project". Two weeks later they bought a second ranch, making them "possessed of two of the finest ranches in the Yellowstone Valley, and no better can be found in Uncle Sam's great domain."

Things started well - they built an 'almost palatial cottage' on the ranch, and in September were complimented on the quality and abundance of the potatoes, rutabagas and water-melons produced there. They also registered a brand for their cattle and horses (see above), though the intention was always to raise sheep. But suddenly it



Clayton's brand, registered in a Montana brand book 1882-1900. It would not have been a very good brand as the closeness of the lines would have made them burn together and it would have turned into a big blotch

all went wrong.

On the evening of Sunday 14th October, Clayton was in the offices of Pontet & Gallagher in the town. Pontet & Gallagher were mainly liquor merchants, but were also land agents and fulfilled certain administrative functions for the county.

That afternoon three Texan cowboys employed by Scott & Hanks Cattle Co. came into town. They came by train from Keith, thirty miles to the east (the town of Keith is now called Wibaux). They started drinking and making a nuisance of themselves. One of them began shooting at a sign. Sheriff Taylor, who had been playing stud poker in the Star saloon, went out to tell him to be quiet, but another of the cowboys followed him from the saloon and the two cowboys overpowered the sheriff, hitting him with the butt of a revolver. No attempt was made to arrest them, and in fact all three returned to the Star saloon, where the cowboys bought drinks for the crowd, including the sheriff. Apparently the under-sheriff and the night constable were also in the bar,

enjoying the hospitality.

This situation continued for perhaps a further hour and a half. Although the officials made no attempt to arrest the cowboys, others amongst the townsfolk, including Clayton, seem to have formed a posse. The command 'Hold up your hands' was given. At this the cowboys, with two or three associates, retreated towards the freight depot, the posse firing upon them as they went. The cowboys crawled under a freight car and waited, their six-shooters ready. They were heard to say that they would not be taken alive.

Having fired some twenty five to fifty shots towards the cowboys the posse split up and made its way towards the depot in ones and twos. Clayton was in the lead. With two others in support he made his way towards the freight car itself.

Placing his hand upon the side of the car he peered beneath. Three shots rang out almost simultaneously, the bullets passing through his chest and neck, no more than an inch and a half apart. He died instantly. At this his

companions retreated, each man seeking shelter for himself. In the meantime the cowboys escaped.

At daybreak on Monday the search for the murderers began. One of them, Homer (or Larry) Wolverton, was caught very early - at the railroad while attempting to catch the 6:10 west-bound train. Conductor Brown of the Northern Pacific was also arrested. He had allowed the cowboys to travel free from Keith the previous afternoon, and had accompanied them for most of that evening. An inquest on Clayton was held that afternoon, and concluded (see opposite) that he had been killed 'feloniously and with malice aforethought' by the three men. Posters were put up in public places offering a reward of \$1000 for the arrest of the two escaped cowboys, named as Dave Coward and Horace Risley. It was reported that the 'citizens are very much excited, and strongly in favour of lynching the men under arrest'.

Two posses were sent to Keith, one by train and one on horseback, but they returned without success. Then, during the afternoon two local men hunting for a lost horse came across the cowboys, in the direction of Clayton's ranch. A posse was made up which found the cowboys asleep and brought them in. On Wednesday, October 17th, the three cowboys were

taken by train to the Custer county jail in Miles City for their better protection. On October 22nd a further warrant was issued for the arrest of James Lynch, a bartender who had been engaged by the cowboys to cook for them, and who had been with them at the freight depot.

On Saturday the Glendive Times reported Clayton's funeral. It said "Glendive has lost a friend, the county a citizen, and people a patron who can never be replaced ... He was a young man just merging into the prime of life ... a noble man and friend to the lowest as well as the highest in the paths of life. He is sadly missed from our midst ... He was followed to his grave by a vast concourse, almost the entire population who could, by any means attend."

And yet that same issue of the paper, having said that the whole affair was a dark blot on the usually peaceable town, went on to say that it did not think that a court of law would convict the cowboys of murder.

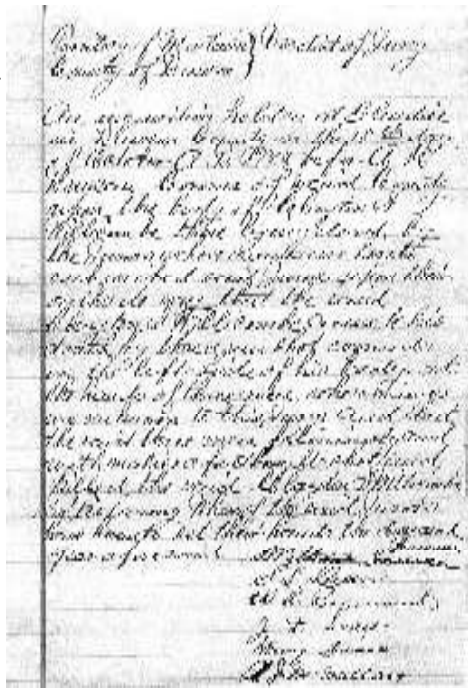
Three days later the daily paper in Miles City reported that \$2000 had been raised to defend the cowboys, and a prominent lawyer from Cheyenne, Wyoming engaged. It claimed that the whole thing had been a drunken row, in which the officers were as drunk as anyone. This drew a ferocious reponse from the Glendive paper, which described Miles City as

'home of thugs, thieves, rounders, incendiary and vigilants'. (Miles City is some seventy miles south west of Glendive. It developed as a trading post providing liquor and other services to army personnel stationed nearby after the Little Big Horn. In 1880 it had a population of 550 and 23 saloons - in 1881 there were 42. The Scott & Hanks Cattle Co ran its 20,000 cattle to the south of Miles City.)

The case eventually came to trial in April 1884. The charge against the three cowboys was not murder, but "drawing and exhibiting a deadly weapon in a rude, angry, and threatening manner, and not necessary self-defence". No charges were brought against Conductor Brown. James Lynch, the cook and bartender, who had been held in jail since the previous October as a possible witness, was also discharged.

The case against David Coward was heard on April 7th. He was fined \$100, and ordered to be held in jail until it had been paid. The case against Horace Resley was heard on April 8th. He appears to have been found not-guilty. Larry Wolverton was discharged without trial on April 9th.

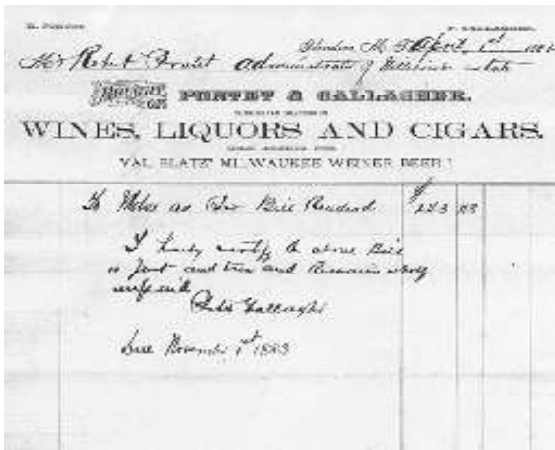
On April 12th David Coward 'moved to be released as a poor person upon his having been confined one day'. The records at this point are very fragile and impossible to read, but it



The report of the inquest Oct 15 1883 looks as though some sort of deal was done. So, the cowboys do seem to have escaped justice, just as the newspaper had forecast.

We will probably never know the real reason behind the events of that evening. Was it just high spirits? or a deliberate attempt to cause trouble in Glendive? or a deliberate targeting of Clayton (which seems unlikely)? And what was the real role of Conductor Brown?

Sheriff Taylor was only sheriff for two years. There was later a Grand Jury investigation of the local



government, specifically addressing the Sheriff's department.

Robert Pontet of Pontet & Gallagher acted as administrator of Clayton's estate. We have details of all the claims against it, which totalled \$1,984. They included \$243.48 from Pontet & Gallagher themselves (see above), \$37.48 in local taxes, \$329.30 from the ranch foreman, and \$18 for a revolver, which may have been that supplied to Clayton when he joined the posse. Clayton's personal estate was valued at \$1,926 and his real estate at \$4,500. Pontet sold the two ranches to cover the claims and legal expenses. It would appear that the estimates of Clayton's wealth when he settled in Glendive - one newspaper reported \$200,00 (£40,000) - had been exaggerated. The principal asset noted in his will was the house Newlyn. From the value of that he made

legacies of £700 with the residue going to his brother Raymond. His personal estate in the UK was calculated at £3 18s and 4d.

And that seems to be the story of who Clayton Stanford Willicombe was, and what he was doing in Montana. I think it's a fascinating story in its own right, but it also provides an interesting context of events

in the outside world as Tunbridge Wells was campaigning to attract the Skinners School, and choosing a site for a new Cricket Ground. Two items remain though. We have not been able to find a picture of Clayton, although we do have the coroner's post-mortem description: fair complexion, blue eyes and light hair. And we have no explanation of those unusual Christian names. Why Clayton? Why Stanford? **CJ**

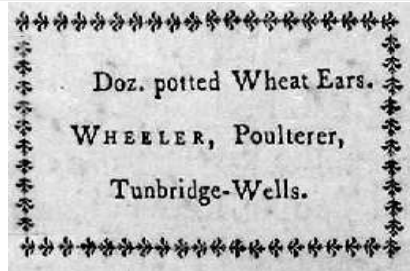
*I should like to record my thanks to Jack McRae, who is a rancher in Dawson County, Montana, and interested in local history. He has done a tremendous amount of work checking through the court records and old newspapers in Glendive. He has also, to my embarrassment, been able to use the Internet to find details from UK census records that I was unable to track down. CJ*

# A Bird in the Mouth - the Wheatear

One of things that attracted visitors to the Wells in the 18th century was the quality and variety of the food. The mutton was good - from South Downs sheep, and the fish was fresh. Defoe is quoted: 'In the season of Mackerel, they have them here from Hastings, within three hours of their being taken out of the sea - and the Difference which that makes in their Goodness, I need not mention'.

There was also the wheatear, a small songbird, which Defoe describes as 'the English ortolan, the most delicious Taste for a creature of one Mouthful (for 'tis little more) that can be imagined'.

The birds were brought in great numbers from the South Downs. They had a white rump, which is what gave them their name, slightly corrupted of course. Sprange describes the way that they were caught. The birds disliked storms, so the local shepherds made little holes in the Downs, covered by turf, and containing horse-hair snares.



At the first sign of rain the birds ran into the holes to hide and were trapped.

The birds were only in season for about three weeks at the height of summer, and were so apt to corrupt that London poulterers would not take them. As a result it was necessary for the epicure to come into the country to indulge his appetite for one of nature's greatest dainties.

Sprange considered the wheatear infinitely preferable to the lark in the fatness and delicacy of its flesh. But I rather like an alternative description of it, from a letter of John Gay in July 1723. He is describing a young lady of 17, with a fortune of £30,000 but whose greatest enjoyment was a pot of good ale. Her figure suffered as a consequence, and he described her as 'not very unlike a barrel - in short she is the ortolan, or rather wheat-ear, of the place, for she is entirely a lump of fat'. What a disgusting practice it was, eating small birds. I wonder why they stopped doing it. CJ



## Forthcoming Events

**Meetings start at 7.45 on the second Thursday in the month (unless otherwise stated), in either Committee Rooms A and B or the Council Chamber within the Town Hall. Please remember to bring your membership card. Visitors are welcome.**

- July 6th     **Annual General Meeting** of the Local History Group  
(Wed 7:30) With reports from Charmian Clissold-Jones, Jane Dickson and Ann Bates on what the Museum Volunteers have discovered in the Borough Archives.
- July 16th    **Annual Garden Party**  
(Sat)        By kind invitation of John and Sheila Cunningham,  
              at 69 Warwick Park , between 6 and 8pm. Tickets £7.50 each.
- Sept 8th     **“The Fourth Centenary of Tunbridge Wells”**  
              A presentation, by members of the Local History Group, of highlights of the town’s history. (Anticipates the publication of ‘400 Years of the Wells’, expected in October.)
- Sept 8th -   **Heritage Open Days**  
Sept 13th   Eight buildings of historical interest in Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall open to the public. See details on page 7.
- Oct 13th     **Conservation Awards Ceremony**  
              Presenter to be announced.

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