



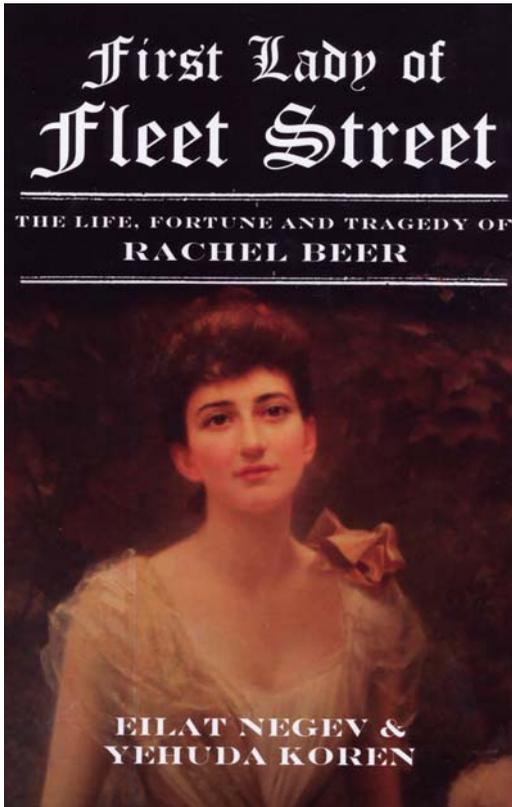
Summer



2011

NEWSLETTER

Rachel Beer - the Tunbridge Wells Connection



You probably saw reviews of this book in the quality newspapers recently - it seems to have been very well received. It tells the story of Mrs Rachel Beer, a young Jewish women of very wealthy background who edited *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer* simultaneously in the 1890s. It is a tragic tale telling of her decline and breakdown after the death of her husband, and the rather uncaring attitude of many in her family, including Siegfried Sassoon.

What you may not have realised is that there is a significant Tunbridge Wells connection. Rachel Beer lived here for over twenty years, though in a rather subdued way, first in Earls Court and then Chancellor House.

The authors, Eilat Negev and Yehuda Koren, visited the town in 2008 as part of their research.

Garden Party

This year our **Garden Party** is on **Saturday 23rd July** at **Mabledon**. We are very grateful to Mr Hari Saraff for allowing us to use the grounds of this impressive Decimus Burton building for our annual event. Tickets are £10 each and are available from Frances Avery, at:

16 Great Courtlands, Langton Green, Tunbridge Wells, TN3 0AH.

Tel. 01892 862530.

Please make cheques payable to RTWCS, and include a sae.

Contents

Personally Speaking ...	4
From the Planning Scrutineers by Gill Twells ...	5
Chairman's Letter by John Forster ...	6
Putting Heritage First ...	8
Fiona Woodfield on using heritage to encourage regeneration	
Finding Henry ...	10
Peter and Michèle Clymer discover the history of their house	
Grosvenor Recreation Ground ...	14
Philip Whitbourn gives a brief history, and reports on a new Friends Group	
Mabledon Park ...	18
Fiona Woodfield explains its history and its gardens	
Putting Faces to Names: Sue Daniels ...	21
Local History Group ...	22
Heritage Open Days ...	23
Forthcoming Events ...	24

Editor: Chris Jones. 52 St James Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2LB
Tel 01892 522025 (evenings and weekends) Email clissold.jones@btinternet.com
Secretary: Christo Skelton. 4 Caxton House, 19 Mount Sion, Tunbridge Wells TN1
1UB. Tel 01892 513241 Email christo.skelton@gmail.com



Personally Speaking

by Chris Jones

Help - Ferndale ... Many of you know that I am researching the history of Ferndale - the people and the buildings - in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of you have already helped me with it. The biggest problem has been that there are so very few pictures, so it has been difficult to work out what the houses looked like. I now have an idea of most of them, except perhaps Springhead and Sandhurst, the two big houses at the far end of the road, but they were not really in Ferndale. But



I am still unsure about no. 2, Ferndale Point - the first house on the right as you go down from St James'. All I have is this very grainy aerial picture, which was never meant to be reproduced. It appears to show a building with an Italianate tower, perhaps similar to no. 3 on the opposite side of the road. Ferndale Point was a nursing home after the war, and was there until about 1970, so it is possible that somebody remembers it and can tell me what it looked like. Anybody?



Visit to Chatham Dockyard Saturday 13th August

It doesn't look as though we will have enough takers to justify a coach for our trip to Chatham Dockyard in August. We will arrange car-sharing instead. Lionel Anderson, tel T/W 538307, remains our organiser, and will be contacting all those who have already booked. The price will obviously be lower - in the region of £12 for entrance and a guided tour.

From the Planning Scrutineers

by Gill Twells



Kent & Sussex Hospital / Brewhouse Hotel and Old School House ... Planning Forums for both of these proposals have been held, but no decisions have yet been issued.

40 Grove Hill Road / 10 Earls Road ... We are annoyed that both of these applications for front “garden” car parking have been permitted.

9 Park Road ... There have already been two applications for the re-development of this site behind the recently-built “Pegasus Court” and Woodbery Park Cemetery. Both applications were refused and the second was dismissed at Appeal. We have commented this time that the application drawings of the elevations are very confusing, uninformative and unnecessarily complicated; and that a full description of all the materials to be used externally must be given. We have also said that an isometric or axonometric sketch of the new buildings must be provided before we can make a considered comment.

Land adjacent to “Dormers”, Bayham Road ... A new application has just been submitted for 45 new dwellings on a greenfield site extending from Bayham Road on the east side, to the rugby ground on the west side. The site has already been identified in the KCC document ‘Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment’ (SHLAA), but TWBC decided that any development there should be delayed. The application is submitted by a developer and is an ‘Outline’ one.

The proposal is for 9x1-bed and 3x2-bed flats, and 13x3-bed, 11x4-bed and 9x5-bed houses. Sixteen of them will be ‘affordable’ units. The adjoining residents in Bayham Road are proposing to object but the Executive Committee of this Society is still considering its proposed reaction.

Land adjacent to Brook Cottage, Upper Cumberland Walk ... This is the second or third application to build a new house on the garden land of Brook Cottage between the existing house and the disused railway line from the West Station to the Central Station. The proposed house is large and of a “modern” design but we are told that discussions with local residents have been held, resulting in minor modifications and general approval. We have decided we have no objection and so will not submit any comment.

Chairman's Letter



*Tunbridge Wells
June 2011*

*As I write this newsletter the edition of the Courier from Friday June 3rd is on the table in front of me. Under the headline ‘**Town to get 1,300 new homes that it doesn’t even need**’ is a story highlighting the importance of the consultation on the Core Strategy Review.*

The council launched this review in the light of government changes to planning legislation, including the revocation of the South East Plan and the housing targets that it contained (6,000 new dwellings to be built in the Borough between 2006 – 2026). The council is seeking feedback on various alternative ways of calculating the Borough’s housing requirements over the remaining 15 years of the plan (incidentally some 1500 have been built in 5 years to date). Note that the review only considers overall numbers and not specific sites.

It also covers the use of minimum density targets, ‘Garden Grabbing’, Green Belt boundaries, Gypsy & Traveller pitches, and the definition of Hawkhurst as a ‘Small Rural Town’, together with two technical planning definitions.

By the time you receive this newsletter the closing date for the consultation period (26th June) will have passed. But I hope that many of you will have taken the opportunity to comment.

It is clear that however many new houses are decided as being required for Tunbridge Wells the council must take due account of the infrastructure required to support the resultant influx of people and vehicles, e.g. roads, schools, community services, etc.

* * *

Well, the M&N report on the consultation exercise has been published. Although it seems a long time since we all filled in the forms, it was delivered to the Regeneration Company on time. Those of you who have accessed the report on the TWBC’s website and have ploughed through it to page 107 will not have been surprised that it doesn’t reach any meaningful conclusions – perhaps it never could have. Alastair Tod has produced useful notes on the report and summarises its conclusions as follows:

Cultural facilities

- Strong feeling that these belong in the town centre.*
- More space and better access needed, and no interruption to availability.*
- Art Gallery and Museum have lower profile.*

Civic Uses

- *Demand for 'public open space' - (most) a civic square.*
- *Concern about the war memorial in some quarters.*
- *Demand for a town centre cinema.*
- *Restore public access to town hall (some) locate front-line services there.*
- *Make council services as accessible as possible.*
- *Adult education important for community spirit.*
- *Police should be visible and accessible in centre of town.*

Leisure

- *More for young people and families.*
- *Interest in events (jazz at the Pantiles).*

Retail

- *RVP most used but Bluewater preferred, especially by young.*
- *Centre 'too long and fragmented'; people don't visit more than one area.*
- *Pantiles popular but not as a shopping destination.*
- *Camden Road valued for independent offer.*
- *More independents and a department store wanted.*

Transport and Access

- *This was raised unasked – general perception of problems.*
- *Town centre development must not make it worse.*
- *More and/or cheaper parking required.*
- *Introduce park-and-ride.*

Redevelopment

- *Question 'deliberately not asked' whether people wanted it.*
- *Improve facilities of civic complex.*
- *(Most) Preserve exterior etc. of civic complex.*
- *Commercial development should not dominate the cultural and civic elements.*
- *Continuity for all uses during development.*
- *Take strategic view of whole town centre.*
- *(most) Fresh design approach and highest standards of design.*
- *(some) Reference Pantiles and Calverly Park Crescent.*

'What is clear is that as many people wanted to see change and improvement in the civic complex and town centre as a whole as did not want anything at all to change' [Just to be clear - this is the M&N conclusion (on p107) not Alastair's.]

Where do we go from here? The RTWCS Executive Committee is due to meet Councillor Atwood in the near future and this question will be high on our agenda.

John Forster

Putting Heritage First

In many towns across England regeneration is driven by retail, a strategy that too often produces little more than cloned High Streets. But is retail the only driver to economic regeneration ? Fiona Woodfield suggests we take a look at Norwich, where the answer would seem to be an emphatic “no”.



Under the guidance of the City Council, Norwich’s regeneration enterprise takes the form of a private charitable trust: the Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART).

HEART works with the council and heritage organisations, building owners, local businesses, and the Norwich Civic Society to improve the quality of life for local people and visitors, support the renaissance of the local economy and maximise the city’s cultural attraction.

The Trust explains that its aims are to “achieve heritage-led regeneration which delivers measurable economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits to demonstrate why heritage should not be seen as a marginal issue”.

“Heritage-led regeneration isn’t just about conserving wonderful buildings.

It’s also about increasing the economic viability of an area, improving what is offered culturally, raising social inclusion and building an environmentally sustainable urban structure.”

“Every penny spent by a visitor .. has a ‘multiplier effect’ as it feeds into the local economy. Every improvement to our physical and cultural surroundings creates a more welcoming and exciting atmosphere for businesses looking to relocate their staff and money.”

“Every child that learns about the proud history of this fine city and feels their part in it is more likely to become an ambassador for it.”

HEART’s current projects come under five broad headings.

The first two are: ‘Norwich 12’, which identifies their twelve key visitor attractions (nine public, three corporate) as a collective destination; and ‘SHAPING 24’ which places the Norwich 12 alongside similar buildings in the city of Ghent, with a view to increasing awareness of the longstanding historical links between the two regions.

Some practical work is undertaken to ensure that



Dragon Hall - c 1430 - one of the ‘Norwich 12’

conservation management plans for the various buildings go forward. But HEART's most important role is as the umbrella organisation under which events and education projects are co-ordinated between the attractions and marketing is done collectively. Their latest education project seems particularly interesting, highlighting court cases once held at the medieval Guildhall, featuring the mock trial of the case of eight year old William Tuck. I particularly like schools history projects which highlight something that actually happened in an individual community. When there are so many great local examples, why not use them?

The third project 'String of Pearls' looks at sites across the city under different topic headings, e.g. Leisure; Beliefs; Merchant Heritage; Defence; and Who's Who. A recent research project assessed the city's subterranean heritage for potential visitor interest.

The fourth project 'Time and Space' emphasises the distinctiveness of different areas. Some are obviously touristy, such as Norwich's Lanes, near the medieval Castle and Cathedral; but there are other, smaller areas such as Elm Hill with a residents' project on the history of just a single street. And yes, they did use the dreaded word "quarter", which sometimes makes me cringe.

The final string to HEART's bow is the management of an individual visitor attraction - the Colman's Mustard Shop and Museum - which had been under threat of closure.

As in Tunbridge Wells, visitors and



St Stephen by Sheena McIntyre-Warnock (runner-up in a photographic competition)

residents are provided with an impressive range of local history publications, postcards, and guided walks. HEART's website has a range of animations and film shorts, produced in collaboration with the local universities. The various partner venues offer heritage activities throughout the year, including an arts festival, photography competition and, of course, Heritage Open Days with over two hundred venues. In addition there are three innovative schemes:

- the 'Norwich Ambassador Scheme' - training for anyone whose work brings them into contact with visitors,
- intern placements for young people starting careers in heritage,
- a bursary scheme for undertaking research into local history (does the tenth commandment specify that thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's bursary scheme?)

Norwich's experience of driving regeneration through heritage can be studied on its web-site:

www.heritagecity.org **FW**

Finding Henry



Peter and Michèle Clymer found their dream house, then went looking for the story behind it.

After thirty years of rural living in a crumbling mediaeval house we decided it was time to become townies again. We needed a smaller house without the seven acres we had in Snoll Hatch - a hamlet not far from Tonbridge.

We'd always had our eyes on Tunbridge Wells. While browsing through a free newspaper during a summer concert at Tonbridge Castle in 2005, we saw it - there was only one picture, but it was love at first sight! After a little negotiation our offer was accepted, but, as will become apparent, it wasn't quite that simple.

Two months later, while we were taking our daughter to University for her first term, the agent called - the vendor had withdrawn and accepted a cash offer. We were devastated. Despite the alleged improving market of 2005 we had received no sensible offers on our own house and could not complete.

Determined to move, though, and having had a taste of the Wells, we extended and refreshed our cottage and put it back on the market in 2007. We received a flurry of offers. Buoyed by this apparent success we started house-hunting again. Alas, we could find

nothing to compare with that first house in Frant Road. I called the agent to ask what had happened to it. *'Well, the owner spoke to me only a week ago. I think he may be considering selling'* was the surprising response.

You can imagine our reaction - but what if the current owner had extended/improved/ etc.? Fortunately he had only bought it as a stopgap, so it was basically as before, just a bit shabbier - ideal for our plans! The price had increased somewhat but we also had profited from the mini property boom.



After an on-off deal over some six months (too complicated to explain but involving a huge bridging loan) we moved in on 17 March 2008. Now the work could begin!

We had always had designs on the house, namely to improve and extend, and were delighted when the planners commended us on our ideas and actively endorsed the proposals to balance the asymmetric facade and add a new wing. A few risks on the way but nothing ventured nothing gained!

Plans submitted, approvals granted, work started in June 2008. We built extensions to the side and rear, a new bedroom suite over the kitchen and a new conservatory. We also (deep breath) waterproofed the cellar; replaced rotted timbers; rewired and replumbed; added bathrooms; installed a new kitchen and utility room; renewed floors; replaced ceilings; repaired the lath and plaster; replaced missing cornices and plaster detailing, and so on. This old house didn't know what had hit it!

Builder appointed, we donned deerstalkers for a spot of detective work on its history. Alas we found no evidence to substantiate what we had been told - that it had been built for a dowager in Georgian times. We spent days, if not weeks, visiting libraries, checking what estate records could be found. Old maps, dusty volumes, reference books were little help - it's obvious now that we were looking for the wrong information.

Then a brainwave (not really if we'd thought about it) - I contacted the Civic



Henry Hollamby

Society. John Cunningham kindly replied and put us on the right track (though some of even his data was wrong). He told us that the house had been owned by Henry Hollamby of Tunbridgeware fame. Armed with this new lead we set off detecting afresh - more dusty records, maps, ledgers - intent on finding Henry.

We consulted the RIBA, the Chartered Institute of Building, the RICS, census records, East Sussex and Kent County Archives, libraries in Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells, the museum, planning records, Land Registry, the Construction History Society, Railway History, English Heritage... and old newspapers, Kelly's Kent, the electoral register and, of course, the Civic Society.

Meanwhile the building work was proceeding. Being a construction professional with my own practice and used to running projects far more complex I took on the job of project manager - I could surely do it standing



TunbridgeWare item produced by Hollamby's firm.

on my head and in my spare time.

Alas, all did not go well. Apart from the Managing Director deciding to spend all our savings (including the secret fund for the Aston) a few challenges presented themselves. These included: allegations of non compliance with approved details (untrue), plumber no 1 suffering a near fatal motorbike crash, plumber no 2 having a hissy fit about changing a basin, late night leaking pipes, painter no 1's nervous breakdown, painter no 2's sulky attitude. Nearing completion, two companies failed - the joiner and the kitchen specialist, in neither case was their work complete. Last, but by no means least, Minette, our aged but surprisingly spry cat, developed an interest in scaling scaffolding and investigating the roof - at night. Torchlit expeditions to rescue a mewling moggie became a regular occurrence.

The first Christmas was rather fraught - our children arrived to a draughty and cold house (the extension was not complete so we had stuffed sacking into

the gaps to reduce the wind chill factor.) Christmas no 2 was when the kitchen company failed, leaving the work half done. Then the supplier of the appliances decided we did not own them (we did - they had not been paid by the kitchen contractor) and refused to address the defects until legal action was threatened.

During the works we had been living (with cat) in two rooms and cooking on a two-ring camping stove. We bought a secondhand tent as site accommodation for the builders. It leaked, so we bribed them with doughnuts every Friday. During the 18 months of building we only spent two nights away from the house - in the local Travelodge, with the cat.

In the meantime we returned to the house history, to gigantic estate ledgers at the County Archives (each approx 3'0" square). Those documents plus county libraries, old maps, reference libraries etc. confirmed the house had been built by Henry Hollamby. He signed a 75 year lease on 29 September 1855 at an annual rent of £71 6s 0d plus ground rent of half a crown with one shilling for the tithe.

According to the estate ledgers the house was built in 1856. On 20 November that year Henry married Caroline Rosa Collins - we like to surmise that he moved into the new house with his young bride. At the time of his marriage Henry was 39, Caroline was 19. She bore four children between 1860 and 1874.

Three years later Henry leased Brampton Rise at £8 2s 0d pa and at about the same time he leased further land at

nos 27 -29 Frant Road (at £6 7s 6d pa) where he built his factory. He also leased no 12 The Pantiles as his shop.

Henry Hollamby became the largest manufacturer of Tunbridgeware in Tunbridge Wells. He is credited with changing the method of making the marquetry pieces to improve efficiency. He specialised in topographical and naturalistic pieces which were extremely popular. He exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851, winning a bronze medal for a chess table comprising over 200,000 pieces, a writing desk of 80,000 pieces and a workbox of 100,000 pieces. There are examples of his fine work in the Tunbridge Wells museum.

The factory was destroyed by fire in 1891 and Henry retired. He died in 1895. Caroline survived him and continued to live at the house until her death in 1914.

The refurbishment is now complete, a year later than we planned. As for the budget, I do not dare think. The last set of curtains was hung a few weeks ago and we are still friends with the building crew. This year our builder won the Federation of Master Builders' award for the best medium-sized renovation project in the South East.

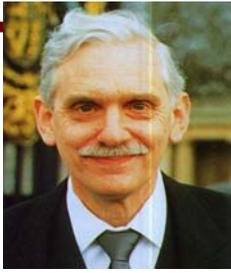
Having set out seeking a lady and a Georgian house we found Henry and a Victorian villa. We've enjoyed the whole experience, the history of the house is in fact more interesting than we expected.

Would we do it again? - possibly, for the right house, but now we've settled in, it's unlikely we'll find another perfect opportunity like this one, which we have renamed Hollamby House in honour of Henry.

P&MC



Picture by Harry Fenton from 'The Story of Tunbridge Ware'



Grosvenor Recreation Ground

Philip Whitbourn gives a brief history, and reports on recent moves to form a Friends Group

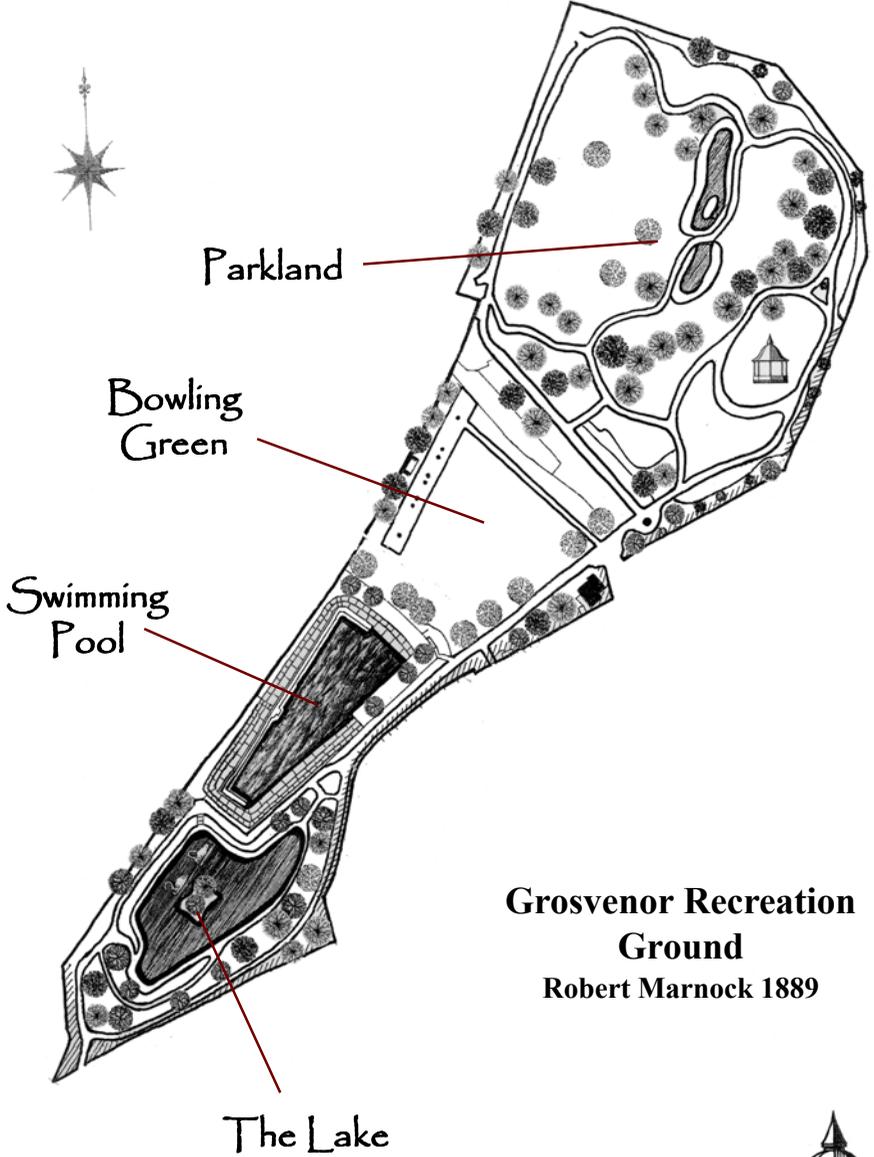
Robert Marnock, one of the outstanding landscape gardeners of the 19th century, is well known to many people in Tunbridge Wells as the designer of Dunorlan Park. Less well known, but just as significant in its way, was his plan for the Grosvenor Recreation Ground. Dunorlan, of course, was not originally a public park, but the private grounds of one of the grand mansions that lined Pembury Road's "Millionaires' Mile". In contrast, the Grosvenor Recreation Ground was Tunbridge Wells' first municipal park, and was established to serve the industrial classes living at the northern end of the town.

Opened in June 1889, the recreation ground is situated alongside the railway, which runs roughly north-south between High Brooms and Tunbridge Wells. On the accompanying plan (opposite), the boundary with the railway is on the left-hand side and, as may be seen, the layout falls into four main parts. At the narrow southern end, nearest to Grosvenor Bridge, Marnock formed a picturesque lake out of former reservoirs of the old Calverley Water Works. This survives intact, with its central island and the "dripping wells" or grottoes at its southern tip.

To the north of the lake was an open-air swimming pool, also formed out of an old reservoir, but this has long since been filled in. Then, moving further north, comes a level play area, where swings were provided for the children of the area. The open ground was originally intended for cricket but, in 1912, a bowling green was opened here, Sir Robert Vaughan Gower formally throwing the first Jack. A game then followed between members of the Corporation and the newly formed Grosvenor Bowls Club, which celebrates its centenary next year. Final score: Grosvenor Bowls Club 82, Corporation 62.

At its northern end the recreation ground widens out, and the land gradually slopes down into a hollow, where two lower lakes were formed. These were separated by a bridge and a weir and, as our cover picture shows, they were a popular feature of a very beautiful parkland scene. Connecting the lower lakes with the periphery of the ground were a series of undulating winding paths. On the higher ground above the lakes an octagonal bandstand was provided, to the designs of Henry Elwig.

Sadly, both the lower lakes and the bandstand were lost to the town in the



**Grosvenor Recreation
Ground**
Robert Marnock 1889



1930s. Nevertheless, some of the serpentine paths survive, and the 1930s also saw a huge expansion of the grounds by the addition of the Hilbert Recreation Ground, on the former Charity Farm lands.

Robert Marnock (1800-1889) (see right) had worked with his contemporary Decimus Burton on the Royal Botanic Gardens in London's Regent's Park, and his other works include Alexandra Park in Hastings, and the grounds of Hall Place at Leigh, near Tonbridge. The Tunbridge Wells Recreation Ground was, however, regarded by Marnock as the best site with which he had ever had to deal.

With the object of raising awareness of the ground's history and its vital role to the local community, a fledgling

'Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Parks' was launched at a meeting held on 11th May, at which the possibility of making



improvements to the ground through a Lottery bid was discussed. These included restoration works to the dripping wells, a new bridge over the stream, enhancement of the wetlands area, additional bins and seats and refurbishment of the toilets. The Council has received around £300,000 from companies that have developed new houses and apartments near the park, and a survey of those living nearby has been conducted, seeking the views of local residents. One obvious cause for concern was the urgent need to form a satisfactory entrance to the lake area from the end of Grosvenor Bridge.

A further meeting was held on 8th June, at which the newly formed Friends Group elected a Chairman, Paul Lambert, and Secretary, Jane Melville. More meetings are planned for the first Wednesday of the month and, if the Group can follow in the successful steps of the Friends of Dunorlan and of Woodbury Park Cemetery, it could prove a force for good in one more of Tunbridge Wells' important landscapes. **PW**





Grosvenor Recreation Ground - the Lake



Grosvenor Recreation Ground - the Woodland area in Winter

— Mabledon Park —

Mabledon Park is our Garden Party venue this year. Fiona Woodfield explains something of its history, and the significance of the gardens.

For most people not fortunate enough to have an invitation to go inside, Mabledon Park is usually glimpsed through the trees from the A26. This Grade II listed building at the top of Quarry Hill has the only garden in Southborough listed in its own right.

I am currently researching the possibility that the site may once have belonged to Tonbridge Priory, but as yet this remains just a theory. As far as I know, the earliest record is Andrews Dury and Herbert's map of 1769, which shows several buildings on both sides of a drive curving in and back out onto the line of the road to Tonbridge. The location is named "Quorry" Hill.

In 1805 the developer James Burton – formerly Halliburton – spent over £6,000 on an estate, along with what was probably a modest size dwelling by the name of Quarry House. It seems likely that he intended from the start to demolish and rebuild (much like the current fashion). He commissioned his friend and fellow architect Joseph Parkinson – then about thirty - to create a Tudor revival country residence for the enormous Burton family. Four year old Decimus was to become the best known of the brood.

Five years later, Paul Amsinck's guide of 1810 gives us the earliest known description: "an elegant imitation of a castellated mansion". Amsinck also mentions the use of architectural salvage.

To judge by a little stone porcupine (the heraldic device of the Sidney family) at Mabledon, Amsinck's mention of recycled stone from Penshurst Place is indeed accurate.

In choosing the name Mabledon Park, Burton was drawing on an old place name dating from Tudor times, an appropriate choice given the architectural style of the new mansion. Almost certainly, however, the original name Mabledon - and its medieval predecessor Godfrays – refers to the site of Mabledon Farm which is not - and never has been - associated with the Mabledon Park estate.

But what of the setting of Mabledon Park? Amsinck's illustration and another of a similar period from Wise's Tunbridge Ware range show the garden to be in the, then, less fashionable Capability Brown style with grass right up to the house. Soon there would be landscape alterations to set off the new house to its best advantage. As a first step, Burton embarked on some landscaping, setting a trend to be followed by a number of other Southborough landowners, by rerouting a road which came too close to the front of the house. In January 1811 Burton obtained permission to reroute a quarter of a mile of the road which had led past his house down Watery Lane to Brook Street. This method of improving the setting of a mansion was soon followed by Reverend Thomas Stephens at Southfield Park who rerouted Powder

Mabledon from Paul Amsinck's 1810 guide to Tunbridge Wells



Mill Lane in 1813. A third example is the first Sir David Salomons, who rerouted Broomhill Road in 1845.

It seems likely that the garden would have been laid out soon after, probably sometime before 1820. What is beyond doubt is that the tithe map and apportionment of 1838/41 confirm the existence of a terrace, a kitchen garden and ‘houses’ (perhaps glass houses), shrubberies, plantations and extensive park land and farmland. In all, the estate totalled over a hundred acres.

The gardens and estate are in a style known as the “villa garden”, a genre found mainly in three areas: West Kent, the area around Bath, and in Cumbria. The style is fairly natural with features such as lawns, terraces and a kitchen garden close to the house; a lake somewhere; a parkland setting often with a small home farm, and finally a skilful blending of any pre-existing landscape features whether natural or

man-made.

What one might describe as the gardens at Mabledon (as distinct from the surrounding parkland) are situated to the south and west of the house and include a number of grassed terraces and a parterre (a small flat lawned area). A sunken path set between rhododendron bushes leads to a small lake, about fifty yards from the kitchen garden. A ha-ha ditch still marks the dividing line between the gardens and the parkland.

About fifty yards from the house lies the ancient quarry – from which the old House took its name – blended into the parkland. This part of the gardens is regarded by experts at the Kent Gardens Trust as a “sister quarry garden to the better known example at Scotney”. The quarry, of Tunbridge Wells sandstone, is only about twenty feet deep. It is believed to have been laid out as part of the walks round the grounds. Private walks – as any reader of Jane Austen

knows – would have been an essential recreational feature of any good country house. The Kent Gardens Trust experts point out that the old quarry is clearly visible on the OS map of 1865, and suggest that the small building above it would have been a gazebo, to rest or take tea overlooking the garden. The meandering walks would have led past groups of rocks and beds of the latest flowers and shrubs. The vertical rock face would have created a dramatic backdrop to the walk. The Kent Gardens Trust note in particular that quarry gardens, such as those at Scotney and Mabledon, are typical of the “picturesque” style but were also practical - once the stone to build Mabledon had been extracted, it was then possible for Burton to transform the remaining quarry area into a fashionable part of the garden.

Gardening at Mabledon Park provided employment for a substantial number of men – in the early 20th century the head gardener had twenty two staff. Kitchen garden produce at Mabledon Park was particularly noteworthy. Even today, one can still see the extent of the walled kitchen garden and the original conservatory. The exotic fruit grown there included: peaches, grapes, melons, oranges, lemons, bananas, papaya and passion fruit. No food miles for them! After the outbreak of the Great War, Mabledon was the only English garden to have retained the facility for growing pineapples – using a contraption called a pine stove which achieved temperatures

of at least 70° Fahrenheit. A fascinating personnel record has survived of a young man with stellar job references coming for a job interview. Of course, the junior staff probably knew much more about the specialism of exotic fruit growing than their would-be foreman, but those excellent references clinched the job.

As far as I know, Mabledon Park was simply used as a private country residence by the Burtons. But their successors the Deacons – who bought it in 1830 - were very much involved in community life in both Tonbridge and Southborough, using the garden regularly for community functions. The last record of the comfortable country life at Mabledon Park before World War II gives an account of the Tonbridge Parish Church fete of 1939 with sideshows, stalls and refreshments in the garden. Children’s amusements featured the then eleven year old Disney characters Mickey and Minnie Mouse, while adults could watch tug of war between the local firemen and policemen.

Sadly, a matter of weeks after that happy afternoon, war was declared, Frank Deacon – last of the family line - died, and Mabledon Park was taken over for war time use. First an officers’ training establishment, then a prisoner of war camp, Mabledon Park finally became a rehabilitation institute for displaced persons. Eventually Mabledon Park was returned to the Church Pastoral Aid Society, to whom it had been bequeathed, for use as a Christian conference centre and the gardens were restored. **FW**

Putting Faces to Names: Sue Daniels

What was the last thing that made you mad? That made you incensed enough to write to your local paper, fulminating that “something must be done”? For me it was the demolition of Calverley Grounds’ bandstand. To my mind it marked the culmination of a number of wanton acts of civic vandalism perpetrated by our very own council. And that was before the plans for the Town Hall.

As I was already a “sleeping” member of the Civic Society, I thought it might provide the campaigning clout required to achieve more sympathetic and visionary development of the town. I decided to get more involved and was pleased to be asked to join the Executive Committee.

This new commitment happily coincided with a change in my own circumstances. At the end of 2010, I was a Government communications adviser. I had worked in most communications disciplines across several major Government Departments, with ministers of all political persuasions. In 2011, I am running my own vintage collectables business. I believe this is what is known as a “portfolio” career. It is proving enjoyable and challenging in equal measure.

I have many other enthusiasms: history; the theatre and foreign travel to name but three. However, I am also passionately enthusiastic about where I live. Tunbridge Wells is blessed in being surrounded by beautiful countryside and



delightful villages and small towns, while itself achieving a happy mix of green spaces and urban living.

In my view, though, the town is at a critical point. It needs to adapt imaginatively to the challenges of the future while making the best of its historic past. It has suffered from a lack of imaginative thinking about how to cope with the pressures of population growth, traffic overload and the legitimate needs of residents and businesses. There seems a lack of civic pride.

I visited Folkestone recently and happened on their bandstand, restored in 2008, and wondered why Tunbridge Wells had not done something similar. In Hampstead I noted several modernist buildings sympathetically blending in with the “village” feel of the place. Why are we content to accept the current bland architectural offerings instead of seeking a high quality built environment that future generations can admire and wish to preserve as we do with the Pantiles?

I hope that the Civic Society will be championing just some of these ideas in the future so that we can continue to be proud of where we live.

Local History Group

Meeting to Review Future Activities

Over thirty members of the Local History Group attended a meeting at the Nevill Golf Club on 4th April, to review future activities and objectives. John Cunningham, the Chairman of the Group, has prepared a summary of the meeting and will circulate it to those attending and to other members of the Group who were unable to be there.

The Hawkenbury MI Project

One new initiative to emerge from the meeting was a project to document monumental inscriptions at Hawkenbury Cemetery. June Bridgeman has agreed to apply the expertise and knowledge gained from Woodbury Park to get the new group established, but hopes to be able to hand over its running to others. A group has already met and is establishing procedures for working with the TWBC officers responsible for the site.

Oral History Project

Oral History was one of the Local History Group's original activities four or five years ago, but many members were put off by the apparent complexity of the equipment and the procedures that were involved. Ann Bates and Charmian Clissold-Jones persevered however, and a half-dozen or so recordings have been made. This project is being re-launched, and has a number of subjects lined up, so if you would like to get involved with the interviewing, please contact Charmian on T/W 522025.

Other Events

You may be interested in the following events, presented by other local groups:

- Sunday, 24th July 2011 3:00pm. **“Victorian Concert in Woodbury Park Cemetery”**. More information from the Secretary of the Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery, 01892 525578 or see their web-site: www.fwpc.org.uk



The Victorian Society

The Victorian Society has a photographic exhibition running in the Eastbourne Heritage Centre called ‘Saving a Century’. It was curated by Gavin Stamp and celebrates the Society's campaigns over fifty years (1958 - 2008) many of them successful, some of them unfortunately not. It is open every afternoon from 2pm to 5pm and costs £2.50 (£2 students/seniors). Unfortunately it closes on July 4th, but re-appears at the Jubilee Library in Brighton in September.

Heritage Open Days

Fiona Woodfield presents a progress report on arrangements for Heritage Open Days, which this year run from September 8th to 11th.

Thank you to Anna and Catherine for responding to the article in the last newsletter and volunteering to be walk leaders for Heritage Open Days.

Forms are steadily arriving, confirming details for the local programme, again likely to be over forty venues and events. But it is not too late for more offers or suggestions. If you live or work in a building of historic interest, do consider taking part in Heritage Open Days. Private houses usually open for booked visits only, so it need not be too daunting. Contact the local organiser Fiona Woodfield on 01892 544429 for more details.

So far, we have **eleven new events** or venues confirmed:

- A History of Tunbridge Ware – a guided walk led by David Wakefield
- From Victoria to the Royal Victoria Place : the development of retail in Tunbridge Wells – a guided walk led by Anna Lambert and starting from Love Boutique, the former Romary biscuit factory
- Historic Modest Corner - Southborough Society Heritage Walk, taking in the cemetery with its gas lit chapel
- High Brooms at War – a guided walk by Judy Johnson, author of “The Southborough War Memorial” and a guide in the French battlefields
- Exhibition at the Wesley Centre, Paddock Wood – a heritage of stories, pictures and art, organised by the History Research Group
- Hoppers’ Hospital, Capel – a former public house, later a Victorian mission to hop pickers, now a church centre for London parishes
- Pembury Old Church – a 12th century place of worship with a notable roof structure and interesting listed tombstones, set in the woods
- Pembury Upper Church - the 19th century church in village centre
- St Peter’s Church, Fordcombe - including a talk by John Sworder, highlighting links to the Hardinge family and the local papermaking industry, where Bank of England notes were once made
- Holden House, Southborough - Grade II Georgian house , once the home of an 18th century iron master and a 19th century international timber merchant
- Southborough Cricket Club exhibition - where cricket has been played since the eighteenth century.

Look out for full details on websites from July and in leaflets from late August www.heritageopendays.org.uk or www.tunbridgewellsheritageopendays.org



CIVIC SOCIETY

Forthcoming Events

Meetings start at 7.45 on the second Thursday in the month (unless otherwise stated). The location can vary, so please check the details below. Please remember to bring your membership card. Visitors are welcome, but there is a £2 charge for non-members.

July 23rd (Sat)	Annual Garden Party On the lawns of Mabledon, by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Hari Saraff. 6-8 pm. Please note that this is open to Civic Society members and their guests. Please see page 2 for details.
Aug 13th (Sat)	Visit to Chatham Dockyard Please see page 4 for details.
Sept 8-11th	Heritage Open Days Please see page 23, or check: www.tunbridgewellsheritageopendays.org
Sept 8th	A presentation by senior TWBC representatives, followed by your opportunity to question them. Royal Wells Hotel, Mount Ephraim
Oct 13th	Mel Henley , TWBC Parks Manager, will talk about his earlier work with the parks in Buxton - the northern spa town. Royal Wells Hotel, Mount Ephraim

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

www.thecivicsociety.org