

Summer 2017



Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society

Annual Garden Party



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.

See also pages 18-19.



There is parking within the grounds. A map will be provided, but basically you should enter Camden Park at the top of Camden Hill and turn left. Follow the road almost as far as the Bayhall Road gate, and the entrance to Camster, as above, is on the right. There is no entrance from Bayhall Road.

Note: Our outing to the **Crossness pumping station**, the ‘Cathedral on the Marsh’, on Tues 11th July (not 18th July as previously reported) is fully booked. To check whether there have been cancellations, please call John de Lucy on TW 540560.

Front cover: Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells and Sid Vicious -
part of the new mural at Tunbridge Wells Railway Station.
See pages 11 - 14. All images copyright Chris Burke.



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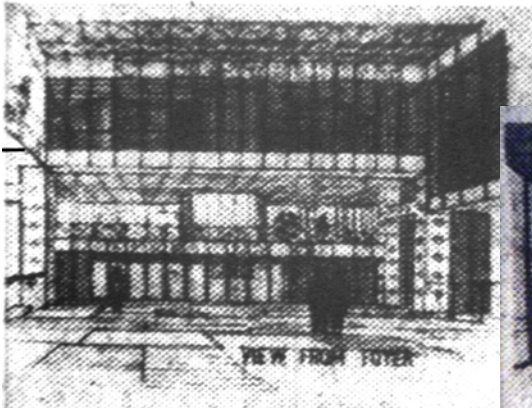
Garden party tickets are available from Trina Lewis, address above. Please make cheques payable to RTWCS, and enclose a sae. Directions will be provided.



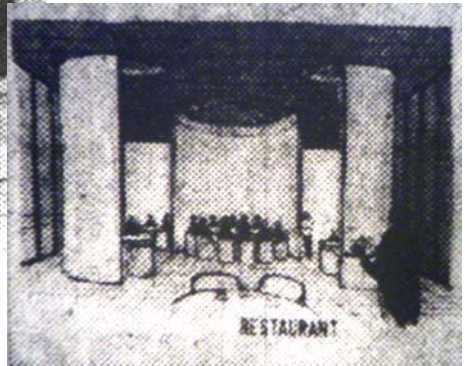
Personally Speaking

by Chris Jones

A new entertainments centre for Tunbridge Wells?... I was looking at plans in the *Courier* (see below) for a new entertainments centre to be built by the Great Hall. They haven't reproduced here at all well, but I hope you can get the idea:



Left: View from the foyer.



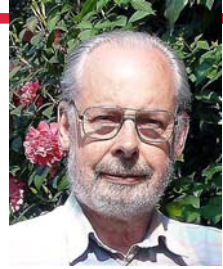
Right: The restaurant.

double-height spaces with big windows onto the park; an emphasis on the vertical; open mezzanines - everything light, bright and airy. The report suggests that it would be an asset not just for the town, but for the south of England as a whole. In the words of the designer it would 'rejuvenate Tunbridge Wells and get away from the music hall image that the town is full of retired aunts taking their afternoon tea'. It's a constant theme, this need to rejuvenate the town, this concern about image. The plans are from 1969. While the great and the good were worrying about retired aunts, the town was actually nurturing the likes of Simon Beverley / John Ritchie, better known later as Sid Vicious.

I had not intended to comment on the current plans for the same site: this was just an accidental discovery; but a sense of *deja-vu* is unavoidable. We might like to consider one of the big changes in thinking since 1969 - the far greater interest in protecting the natural environment, and the importance of green spaces and trees; and ask how that has been addressed in the current proposals.

From the Planning Scrutineers

by Alastair Tod



With a general upgrade of the RVP shopping centre the owners plan a **new western entrance**, and we were consulted on some alternatives. The design submitted comprises a giant glass window in a stone frame, rising above the adjacent Edwardian facades, with which it has no relationship, and contributing little to what is already an incoherent space. On balance we felt it did not justify replacing the present inadequate entrance.

We were also consulted about developing the **Travis Perkins site** in Tunnel Road with housing. The need for housing is undeniable and redevelopment of the timber yard seems inevitable, but the loss of centrally located jobs is unfortunate (and against Council policy). The existing warehouse is to be converted into flats and much of the rest of the site developed with vernacular-style cottages, similar to other recent developments in Tunnel Road.

While not objecting to this scheme we see a general problem with loss of jobs. Under a recent change in the law, offices can be converted to residential without planning permission, a power which threatens all the businesses in **Calverley House**, on the corner of Camden Road, and **Vale House** in Clarence Road. We feel any small contribution to housing need is outweighed by the employment, congestion and parking effects, which would be assessed in the planning process.

The proposed replacement of the **Arriva Bus Garage** in St John's also costs jobs, but again, redevelopment here seems inevitable, and indeed desirable on environmental grounds. The proposal is for a care home with 89 flatlets (about 140 beds) with facilities, with a frontage of five floors to St John's Road in relation to the adjacent two-storey listed former chapel, and costing the loss of the buildings now the Arriva offices. This elevation would be similar in height to Edison Court opposite and only slightly lower than the telephone exchange. We see parking, access and environmental problems with such an intensive development on an awkward site.

Of increasing concern is the scale of development on key sites, the effect of an inflationary spiral whereby developers pay too much for a site, and it is then hard for the Council to resist an over-scale proposal for the sake of the development's 'viability'. This was the case with the **Dairy Crest** and **Union House** schemes on which we have reported, and with **Merevale House** in London Road, where consent has been given for a hotel 78% larger than the present building. We objected to these, and feel it is urgent for developers' expectations for Tunbridge Wells to be deflated.



Chairman's Letter

*Tunbridge Wells
June 2017*

What is the Point of "Consultation"?

To ensure that I wasn't exaggerating my feeling that I had been 'Consulted' more than somewhat in recent weeks, I checked my diary. I found that since the beginning of March, I had been asked to express an opinion either in my own name or as representing the Civic Society about:

- the Cultural Hub design*
- a proposed housing development at 68 Frant Road*
- the proposed new entrance to Royal Victoria Place*
- the latest model of the Belvedere development (aka the cinema site)*
- a revised version of the new entrance to Royal Victoria Place*
- Stage 3 of the design for the new Civic Centre & Theatre*
- the updated design of the Cultural Hub*
- the Council's "Framework" proposal for the new Civic Centre & Theatre*
- the Council's Local Plan for housing over the coming years.*

While I appreciate the democratic nature of being asked for my opinion, I have lost any illusion that that my response will carry any great weight – even when I respond in the name of the Civic Society.

I fear that all this consultation has bred in me a degree of cynicism. We have already noted that one or two planning applications to which we expressed negative views, have listed the Civic Society as "having been consulted" with no mention of the fact that we found their proposal distinctly lacking in various respects. It strikes me that there should be a sort of health warning with all these invitations along the following lines:

While we are keen to ask for your opinion in order to bolster our credential for "listening" to people's views, there is absolutely no guarantee that we will take any notice of what you say.

This scepticism increases according to the need for aesthetic judgement. I have emerged from some of these events thinking "that was actually quite a refreshing approach to this project", to discover that more expert colleagues held quite a contrary opinion. I might even go so far as to suggest that one architect almost never approves of another's design! How anyone could draw helpful conclusions from consultations which inspire such opposing assessments is, to say the least, puzzling.

As a result of all this experience – even older and somewhat wiser – I now respond to these events with a generous pinch of salt.

Janet Sturgis

Civic Centre - our Position

The council's plans for a re-developed civic centre have raised concerns in the town. Alastair Tod explains the Society's position as presented in our response to a recent consultation document.

The Society has responded to a Council 'Framework' plan, which outlines ideas for a large area containing the present civic buildings, and the area between Calverley Grounds and Mt Pleasant. This is designed to provide a context to the replacement of the Town Hall and Assembly Hall with new buildings adjoining Calverley Grounds.

We have long argued for more positive planning from the Council, and criticised the failure to produce master-plans for areas of change such as Vale Avenue. So we should perhaps welcome this 'framework'.

But it still seems to us unsatisfactory. It is expressed as 'could' and 'should', even though it is about the Council's own plans – so its status is unclear. It doesn't make proposals for significant parts of the area, but includes the Great Hall and Hoopers, where no change is expected. Most importantly it seems to be entirely focussed on the theatre and civic offices proposals, so that approval of the Framework could be taken as approval of these moves.

The Council is not yet committed to the new developments although significant sums have been spent on planning for them, and the Society has not so far expressed a view on them. We were in the forefront of opposition to a former administration's wish to demolish the Town Hall and replace it with 'back-offices' elsewhere, perhaps at Hawkenbury. We said the Council's business should be done on a central site accessible to the public, and the Assembly Hall should be preserved unless and until

there was a superior alternative available.

These points appeared to be taken by the current administration. We were persuaded that the cost of bringing the Town Hall and Assembly Hall up to modern standards would be as great as that of building new, while even if modernised the present buildings would remain unsuitable in various respects. So our response to the present proposals was one of cautious welcome while raising several aspects of concern to the Society: design and impact on Calverley Grounds, parking and vehicle access, facilities for the public, and the future of the present civic buildings.

The Framework document does little to clarify these, and some of what it shows is unwelcome, particularly the attempt, at huge cost, to shoehorn as much parking into the area as at present. This has serious implications for Calverley Grounds and for the urban realm improvements planned for Mt Pleasant. The future of the Town Hall and Assembly Hall is still unknown, and there are no proposals for the landscaping of Calverley Grounds, where a large number of trees will be lost. The new civic building is constantly described as 'offices' rather than a civic centre to replace the Town Hall.

We have expressed these points in our response to the Framework, while debating whether we can expect the Society's concerns to be met before the Council takes a decision to go ahead. **AT**

The Writing on the Wall



Alastair Tod explains the Society's role in marking the connection of Tunbridge Wells with the great and good, and some others...

Eliza Phillips lived at Culverden Castle, originally a Decimus Burton folly where the football ground is now. She campaigned against Victorian ladies wearing exotic birds' feathers (as below), and went on to found the RSPB. Charles Lucas won the first VC as a sailor during the Crimean War by picking up a live Russian shell which landed still hot and fizzing on the deck of his ship, and dropping it overboard. Henry Seymour as a young tradesman reacted against the religiosity and jingoism of the 1880s by opening a secularist bookshop in Camden Road and launching *The Anarchist* newspaper there.

Eliza's achievement is now marked with a plaque in the Tunbridge Wells colour of claret on the substantial gatepost of her former home, on the sharp corner in Culverden Down. Charles, who became an admiral and a leading member of what is now the



Hat of exotic bird's feathers. Sadly we do not have an image of Eliza Phillips.

Bridge Club, is not commemorated yet on the site of his former home, the building site where the Kent and Sussex hospital stood. Henry has a plaque on his former shop.

The Society prompted the Council to erect plaques to mark the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the chalybeate spring in 1606, and the first fifteen were put up then – to Queen Victoria, Montgomery of Alamein, Baden Powell, and Edward Hoare, the 'Protestant Pope' of Tunbridge Wells, among others. Some years later we suggested reviving the scheme and there are now 42 claret plaques in place, with names chosen and biographies researched by the Society, and the costs of the programme met by the Council.

Naturally enough the first phase focussed on the great and good: it would have been hard to ignore Queen Victoria even though her connection with Tunbridge Wells was almost entirely summer visits to Calverley House (now the Hotel du Vin) as a child with her mother. When the scheme was revived we resolved to spread the net more widely: we approved George Dutch from Hawkenbury, wartime conscientious objector, Quaker and Co-operative leader,



Rachel Beer.
Chancellor
House.

and from another part of the wood M a d a m e Caballero (see below), who built up a property empire from a career as *une grande horizontale*, and lived latterly at Claremont Lodge.

We aimed to record real connections with the town through features which those who are commemorated would have known. This sometimes proved a hard line to follow exactly. Rachel Beer (above), aunt of Siegfried Sassoon and editor of the *Sunday Times* and *Observer* at the turn of the twentieth century, earned a plaque on Chancellor House. The present building actually replaced the house where she lived for her last twenty-five years, but old photographs suggest that the garden is much as it was. Eliza Phillips scraped in because of her gatepost, even though her house has gone. The only physical relic of Charles Lucas seems to be a giant urn from his garden. The urn was salvaged by the builders of Royal Wells Park, who intend to reinstall it there on completion of the development, and Charles may get his plaque if it's possible to fix a plaque to an urn...

One whose connection with Tunbridge Wells we judged to be too slight was Sid

Vicious, the punk musician accused of murdering his girlfriend. When Sid was suggested by members of the public others equally vehemently said no. We didn't think getting a plaque implied a moral (or musical) judgment but Sid's connection was only that he lived in Grove Hill Road briefly as a child. The same applies to Shane McGowan of the Pogues.

Others not honoured for various reasons include Samuel Morton Peto, who built Nelson's Column and the Houses of Parliament and thousands of miles of railway before going bust, and spent his last years at Blackhurst Park off Pembury Road. And Sarah Grand, campaigner for women's rights and leader of Tunbridge Wells suffragists. Jacob Bell, founder of the Pharmaceutical Society, was a good candidate whose house survives in London Road; a friend of Landseer, his dogs were the models for the artist's *Dignity and Impudence*. He was agnostic if not atheist but on his deathbed a well-meaning friend arranged for him to be counselled by Canon Hoare. His memorial is in Woodbury Park but a plaque was

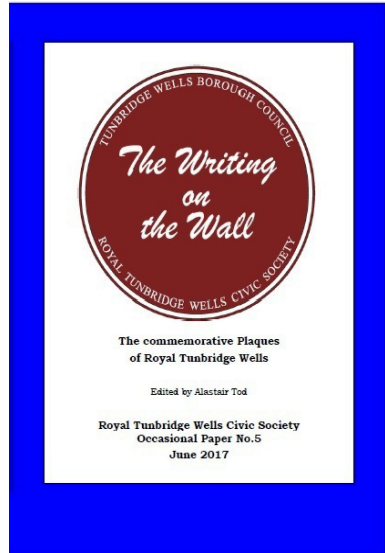


Madame
Caballero.
Claremont
Lodge.

not possible.

These are good candidates for a future programme. Meanwhile the 42 are recorded in a booklet 'The Writing on the Wall' to be published by the Local History Group. Rachel Beer's plaque will be unveiled by the Mayor at a ceremony in Rachel's garden in June, at which the booklet will also be launched. **AT**

'The Writing on the Wall'. Mini-biographies of the forty two individuals commemorated by the plaques. Edited by Alastair Tod. The booklet will be available at the unveiling event at an introductory price of £3.75. Eventual retail price to be confirmed.



Tunbridge Wells - but where?

James Teubler has sent me this drawing of Tunbridge Wells - possibly in the early nineteenth century. We have not been able to identify the setting - can you help? The roof of the house in the middle distance is distinctive. **CJ**



The Tunbridge Wells Helix

Michael Holman explains the background to the new station mural and celebrates its achievement

Royal Tunbridge Wells is not known as a town where things get done quickly. Every so often, however, circumstances conspire to confound this assumption. A case in point is the recently completed project to replace the murals at Tunbridge Wells Railway Station. Put together in under two months, the new display is something we can all be proud of. Something refreshingly new to discover and enjoy.

For nearly thirty years, the original murals enlivened the Hastings end of Platform 2. Painted by a team of artists working under Brian Barnes, one of the country's most distinguished mural artists, they were a unique feature on the Charing Cross to Hastings line. There was Lord North being offered a glass of chalybeate water by a long-haired maiden; bewigged Beau Nash with his anachronistically emblazoned banner 'Royal Tunbridge Wells'; pictures of the Pantiles in 1989; and Toad Rock complete with a gigantic natterjack toad. They demonstrated pride in our historical and geographical setting and our spa-town heritage. Then, suddenly, last July, they vanished, leaving an unsightly, pock-marked wall reminiscent of public toilets in the 1960s.

As Chairman of 'Refresh Tunbridge Wells' I was greatly concerned. One of our charity's declared aims is the refurbishment of public works of art in the town. I alerted colleagues on the Town Forum and the Borough Council. I also wrote to the 'Courier' which printed my letter and one from local artist Bryan

Senior, expressing our shock and dismay. It also printed two articles by Mary Harris, reporting '*Rail firm slammed after station artwork destroyed in mysterious circumstances*'.

The articles, however, also invited local art groups to contact Southeastern with a view to creating a new mural. Although we were adamant that Southeastern should be held to account for the earlier destruction, we welcomed this invitation. I sought to make contact. Easier said than done. Only after an intervention by Greg Clark did I get a response: from the firm's 'Community and Stakeholder Engagement Manager'.

In November they said that £10,000 would be provided for a replacement, but that it would have to be completed by 31 March 2017. I was not alone in considering both time-scale and budget to be unrealistic. We had hoped that 'Refresh' might manage the project and use this initial sum to attract further contributions. Southeastern, though, insisted that it was their project and they would set the financial and time parameters. They did, however, incorporate in their 'Project Brief' elements from an earlier brief which we had prepared. Central to both was a desire to involve the local community and for a high quality artwork, bright and welcoming and reflecting the historic past of Tunbridge Wells. Southeastern also wished to emphasise the significance of the railway to the town.

A selection panel was set up, comprising Steve Lewis (Southeastern), Nicky Blanchard (Royal Tunbridge Wells Together - RTWT), Bryan Senior (Civic Society), Linda Lewis (Town Forum), and me, from Refresh. The Project Brief was released on 20 December with a closing date of 13 January. To my surprise 21 artists applied, from as far afield as Bristol and Sunderland. From these, three local artists were selected for interview, and on 23 January, we chose Chris Burke (assisted by Elaine Gill). Unclear wording in the brief, however, meant that his submission came in over budget. Without additional funding, it would have to be rejected. Southeastern could not go above their £10,000, but hasty consultation brought contributions from RTWT (£1,000) and Refresh (£500).

Chris and Elaine were the dream team. Both were local artists who knew the town well. Chris has a national reputation as a caricaturist and Elaine, who specialises in architectural subjects, had recently co-founded the Tunbridge Wells Creative Artists Group. With their local connections

they were able to call upon help from other artists. Time, however, was short: they had just 57 days to deliver.

Thanks to Nicky Blanchard, they were able to use an empty shop in RVP as their studio. It was central, spacious, warm and well lit. It became their creative hub. Assisted by a team of local artists, they firmed up and coloured in their outline illustrations, painting to scale on three long boards. These were later photographed, enlarged by a ratio of 1:3 and transferred onto aluminium-backed vinyl panels, which were mounted on a framework attached to the platform wall. (These later stages were all carried out by local firms and all very high-tech!)

The team adhered closely to the brief to produce an artwork reflecting the historic past of Tunbridge Wells. The elongated shape invited the creation of a narrative timeline moving from left to right, matching the direction of the trains. Iron-bearing water droplets merge into a trail of iron horseshoes, transformed into pantiles after Queen Anne's intervention. These in turn

become columns in the Pantiles colonnade that then resolve into the railway sleepers bringing the train to Tunbridge Wells. One element merges naturally into the

Chris and Elaine with the third panel. The timelines flowing across all three panels give the impression of a DNA helix. Edward VII is central to this panel.





Queen Anne.

next and visually everything is connected horizontally in the form of an extended helix.

The artwork is lively, bright, witty and informative, with an invigorating lightness of touch, the work of an accomplished caricaturist worthy of the 18th century when Tunbridge Wells was in its heyday. It is unified thematically in a variety of ways: economically by its depiction of the natural riches of the Weald, not only our iron-bearing rocks and water, but also the fruit and vegetables of the Garden of England; socially it is unified by portraits of the rich enjoying themselves: Lord North, jug held high; prancing Beau Nash crowned by the words ‘SOMETHING IN THE WATER’; and a succession of crowned heads. Look closely at their headpieces: Queen Anne with a coronet fashioned from a diminutive pantile and a stonemason’s trowel, and dainty young Victoria with her garland of flowers topped by a Victoria plum.

Although the flowing helix precludes any single central portrait, it is to the figure of Edward VII that our attention is drawn. To the left, the 19th century and

Princess Victoria.



Stephenson’s Rocket; to the right, the 20th century with distinguished figures from our recent past: aviator Pauline

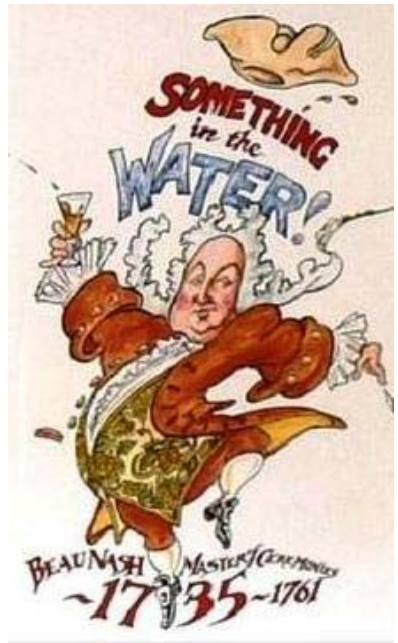
Gower, social reformer Amelia Scott and, each balancing on a subuteo base, Sid Vicious being berated by ‘Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells’. But firmly and majestically fixed between the centuries is Edward, the star. Garlanded with hops, in his right hand he holds a green Kentish apple, while in his left his sceptre takes the form of the Dunorlan fountain, water flowing and its drops providing a watery link to the next panel on the right. But look at HIS crown! Magnificent from afar, look closely and you will see that it is fashioned from the heraldic symbol for a well, topped by a bucket suspended above the motto ‘Do WELL doubt not’. Beat that for artistic inventiveness!

A separate panel to the left of the main mural was created at the very last minute by local graphic designer Anna-Marie Buss. With some explanatory text this provides continuity and an additional historical framework. Anna-Marie’s work incorporates digitally





The additional panel includes the earlier representation of Beau Nash (left), providing a comparison with the most exuberant style of the new (right).



enhanced images of some of Brian Barnes's originals cleverly married to two very appropriately chosen early images of Tunbridge Wells Station. The first, an 1845 engraving, shows the initial construction stages of the Tunbridge Wells line. The second, a photograph from July 1878, shows local dignitaries welcoming a special express train from Charing Cross to mark the opening of the Bishop's Down Grove Hydropathic

Establishment, our current Spa Hotel.

I greatly enjoyed working on this project. It was a first for 'Refresh Tunbridge Wells' and we learned much from it. The parameters set by Southeastern were initially unwelcome, but they obliged us to act quickly and decisively. It now remains to be seen whether the new murals produced in 57 days in 2017 will last as long as the originals painted by Brian Barnes and his team in the late spring of 1989. **MH**



Detail from the 1845 engraving showing the labour involved in creating this rather special place.

Refresh Tunbridge Wells was formed in 2015. Its objects are the support, provision, maintenance and refurbishment of public works of art in the town. It works alongside the **Water in the Wells** campaign. Both organisations seek to rejuvenate and 'refresh' the spa-town heritage of Tunbridge Wells for the benefit and enjoyment of residents and visitors alike. If you are interested in refreshing and rejuvenating Tunbridge Wells and could spend time and/or money to support our work please get in touch on 07799456524, or e-mail info@refreshtunbridgewells.org or michaeldekhoman@gmail.com.

Summer Quiz

How well do you know the Wells? A challenge from Sue Daniels.

These pictures were all taken within half a mile radius of the central station. Royal and civic pride is much in evidence along with sometimes deceptive dates and flights of fanciful decoration. Can you identify the location of each? All answers

to the Editor who will choose the first correct entry from his famous hat. The winner will receive a copy of the *Historical Atlas of Tunbridge Wells*. Deadline for entries 31st August. **SD**



1



2



4



5



3



6



7





The Story of Camster



Our garden party this year is to be held at Camster in Camden Park, the home of Alastair and Jenny Cook. It is a most attractive setting, with a particular significance for the Civic Society, as its architect, and early resident, Cecil Burns, was a founder member.

Cecil Burns was probably the most prominent architect working in Tunbridge Wells in the early to mid 20th century. His early work: Camster, and what is now the Bridge Club in London Road, reflected his training under Reginald Blomfield. He later turned to a more robust style for the Kent & Sussex Hospital (1934), and the Christian Scientist church in St Johns Road (1931), now offices for the FTA. His involvement with Camster is intriguing, and perhaps not entirely clear; in fact all the details below have come from a very brief study and must be considered tentative.

Burns was born in 1882 in Epsom, and attended Tonbridge School. After training under Blomfield, he set up practice in Grays Inn Square. His client for Camster was 26 year-old Clementina Strong. She had been born in Norwood in 1879 to Leonard and Dorothea Strong, but Leonard died soon afterwards and Dorothea moved with the young child to Tunbridge Wells. They lived in St James Road and later in Woodbury Hill, a large house at the corner of Queens Road and Dunstan Hill.

The plans for Camster are dated March 1906. In August 1907, the *Courier* reported a 'Fashionable Wedding' at St James. It was the marriage of Clementina and Cecil. Had she awarded the contract to her intended

husband? Or had she been swept off her feet by the dashing young architect she had hired to build her a house?

The newly-weds then lived with Mrs Strong (Dorothea) at Camster. The 1911 census also records a 'sick nurse' - perhaps Mrs Strong was an invalid. The house was named after Camster in the north of Scotland where Dorothea had been born, and where she had lived briefly with Leonard.

During the war Cecil served with the Royal Artillery in Flanders. Back at Camster Clementina collected socks and sweaters for the men in his battery. The war disrupted life in many ways. In 1917 a cook at Camster was accused of concealing a birth - the baby's body was found in a brown-paper parcel stuffed up a chimney. She said that 'a man would have to suffer' - a lance-corporal serving in France.

Mrs Strong died in 1926. The house and contents had been sold in 1924. Burns then operated from 5 Calverley Terrace, and then Vale Avenue (Calverley Terrace was acquired by the council for development). These may have just been offices, with the Burns living in Colemans Hatch, near Ashdown Forest where Cecil played golf. In 1935 they divorced, and Burns married again. His second wife, Lynette Tewson, was a well-known local dancer. As a girl she had been a guest at his first wedding.

From the 1940s, he operated from 11 Calverley Park which was home to the Burns, Guthrie partnership until very recently.

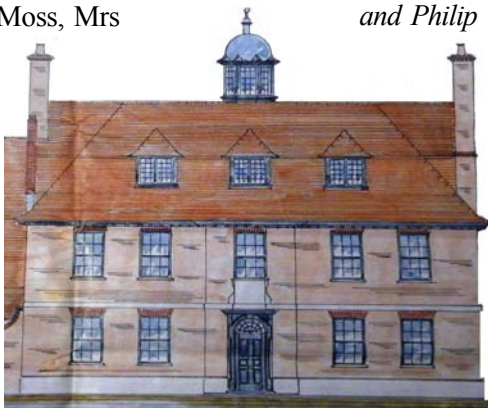
After Mrs Strong's death Camster was the home of James and Amy Henderson (and their Irish setter). His family were engineers and ship-builders on the Clyde (with connections to the House of Fraser family of retailers). They were followed by another couple - the Soutters - with similar manufacturing / retail backgrounds. His family were prominent makers of copper kettles in West Bromwich; her family had a department store in Natal. Then, a more unusual couple - the Hutchinsons. When they arrived in 1938 the *Courier* declared that there was no truth in the rumour that she was the popular novelist Ethel M. Dell. There may have been something to the story though - he was a writer of murder mysteries, including *Spectral Evidence* and *The Hand of the Chimpanzee*. They were originally from America and organised the American Eagle Club in Charing Cross Rd in the early years of the second war. After the war, Camster was the home of a Tonbridge solicitor, Maurice Drake-Lee, and then of Mr and Mrs Moss, Mrs Moss being the

daughter of the famous conductor Annuncio Mantovani. Our hosts have lived there since 1999 - he is a retired surgeon and at one time worked from his private surgery in what was formerly the gardener's cottage.

Camster is a fascinating house - Geoffrey Copus / Philip Whitbourn described it as being in the style of Christopher Wren. The point of a garden party, though, is the garden, and there is much to enjoy there too - see the pictures on p. 2. The approach is through ornamental gates and via a long straight drive. The main garden is behind the house, but there is also a view across what appears to be open countryside. It is actually the central space 'not to be built on' at the heart of Camden Park. The Park was created in the late 1840s by the 2nd Marquess Camden, on the model of Calverley Park. Some dozen or so houses were built at the western end - the first for the Marquess' sister, Georgiana, but there was little development at the eastern end until much later in the century - thus providing Clementina and Cecil with their opportunity. We look forward very much to the party.

CJ *My thanks to Geoff Copus, Ed Gilbert and Philip Whitbourn.*

Camster from the 1906 plans (TWBC). To the left was a single-storey service block, with a courtyard and 'motor-house'.



A conservatory was originally planned for the right-hand side, but this was replaced later in 1906 by a billiard-room.

Belgian Week 15 - 23 July

Tunbridge Wells is about to go a little bit Belgian - Alison Sandford Mackenzie explains why, and how you can get involved.

During the First World War, hundreds of refugees from Belgium came to Tunbridge Wells and were helped by the local people under the leadership of the Mayor, Charles Whitbourn Emson, and a Committee of local dignitaries. They were just a fraction of the estimated 250,000 refugees who were in the UK during the years 1914-1919.

Since January, with funding received from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, through 'Gateways to the First World War', and building on research mainly done by local resident Alison Sandford Mackenzie, local group CREATE has been working with Dr Anne Logan and Dr Kate Bradley from the University of Kent and Dr Christophe Declercq from University College London to uncover this self-styled *Belgian Colony's* story.

Volunteers have been blogging about their findings and are using these to create the background for a self-guided *Belgian Community Heritage Trail* around the town, which will be available to local people, school students and visitors to use, free of charge, from 22nd July 2017. It is intended that versions of the Heritage Trail will be available not only in English but also (through the blog) in Belgium's official languages, Dutch, French, and German.

The starting point for the project is the souvenir album which was presented to the Tunbridge Wells resident, feminist and social activist, Amelia Scott and her sister, Louisa, by the Belgian Refugees in July 1916. It is held in the Women's Library at the London School of Economics, together with press reports listing those who – like

the Scotts – formed committees and/or subscribed to the relief of refugees.

The Heritage Trail will be officially launched at a private reception in the Museum & Art Gallery on Belgian National Day, Friday 21st July; and leaflets will be available from the next morning at various points around the town.

Meanwhile, why not enjoy some of the other events arranged to celebrate Belgian Week - see opposite.



Visit the **Belgian Week Info Point** in the RVP (just inside the doors from Ely Court) for more information. Further information and tickets for events are also available by calling 07754 306763 or via the website

www.twbelgianweek2017.org.uk

MUSIC

Saturday 15th July - 7.30pm at St Paul's Church, Rusthall : a Choral concert by the Belgian Week Festival Choir with guest oboist Balder Dendievel from the Music Conservatorium in Antwerp. Among the items on the programme will be a piece composed by Belgian Frederic Bonzon, one of the refugees who came to the town; and local composer James Whitbourn's '*Son of God*' Mass for mixed voices, organ and soprano saxophone. Tickets £10/£5 in advance (£12/£6 on the door)

Sunday 23rd July - 12.30-10.30pm - a Belgian Takeover of the Unfest Sunday Session at the Tunbridge Wells Forum - live music, DJ, food. 5.30pm screening of Jozef Devillé's 2012 documentary *The Sound of Belgium* (18+) which explores the rich but untold story of Belgian dance music. *Free entry*.

FOOD & DRINK

All week - pubs, bars and restaurants around the town will be offering Belgian-themed items – from beer to waffles to moules-frites. Visit the website to find out more!

Sunday 16th July - 12.30am-10.30pm at Fuggles Beer Café, 28 Grosvenor Road. Full-on Belgian Takeover - featuring beers from the likes of Boon, De La Senne, Alvinne, De Ranke, St Feuillien and more...

CRICKET

Saturday 22nd July - from 11am at the Bayham Road Cricket Ground : a T20 Cricket match between the TW Royals and a team from the Royal Brussels Cricket Club. Bring a picnic and cheer on the home team! *Free*.

HERITAGE

Saturday 22nd July - 10.30am : Launch of a Belgian Heritage Trail around the town - costumed role-players will be on hand from 10.30am-1pm to enhance the experience. Leaflet pickup points include the Belgian Week Info Point in the Royal Victoria Place, and the Pantiles Tourist Information Office. *Free*.

In your own time - 'Picnic at Eridge Rocks'. In July 1917 the Belgian community celebrated their National Day with an outing to Eridge Rocks (A26 towards Crowborough). Why not do the same? You could even dress up in period costume! *Send us your photos and we'll put them on the website! belgiansrtw @camdenroad.org*

DRAMA

Saturday 22nd July - 8pm at King Charles the Martyr Church Hall, Warwick Park: *Multi-Cultural Mayhem* Impro Show featuring local group *Claquers Impro* and *Improfiel* from Leuven in Belgium. Tickets £8 in advance (£10 on the door)

CREATIVE WRITING

Keep an eye out for pop-up appearances by the *CREATE Imaginarium* - a creative-writing project with a difference! www.camdenroad.org/Imaginarium



Heritage Open Days

Every September, people from all over England join together for four days to celebrate what makes their neighbourhood special. Thousands of buildings of every age, style and function open their doors free of charge to the public. But the event is not just about opening buildings. The programme includes many other activities, such as walks and talks, which bring the past to life.

This year's event in the Borough of Tunbridge Wells, will take place between Thursday September 7th and Sunday September 10th, and anticipates increasing the number of visitors from approximately 7,000 in 2016, in what is becoming an increasingly popular event. We have an active Heritage Open Days programme across the Tunbridge Wells Borough. Typically, there are between 40-50 venues and events. The Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society provides



مسجد النور
Masjid Al-Noor

Sept 7th - 10th 2017

overall co-ordination in collaboration with The National Trust, the Borough Council and numerous individuals and organisations.

At the time of writing, participants and events include an archaeological dig, bell-ringing, Mabledon House, Salomons, The High Rocks, The Masjid-Al-Noor Mosque, Trinity Arts Centre, Cranbrook Museum, The Town Hall, The Opera House, The Spa Valley Railway, a talk and guided walk on the Tunbridge Wells of Decimus Burton, and a talk on Tunbridge Ware to mention but a few. Many churches in the Borough will also be opening their doors for the event.

It is an ideal opportunity for residents and visitors to experience and learn about their town in a unique and exciting way, so we would urge everyone to look out for further information and details in the local press in the months and weeks leading up to the event.

Paul Avis.





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.

July 8th (Sat)	Annual Garden Party At 'Camster' in Camden Park, by kind permission of Jenny and Alastair Cook. See page 2 for details.
July 11th (Tues)	Visit to the 'Cathedral on the Marsh' Visit to the Crossness pumping station and other technological marvels. See page 2 for details.
Sept 7-10th (Thu-Sun)	Heritage Open Days See pages 22-23.
Sept 14th	A presentation by a member of the Local History Group . Royal Wells Hotel

The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of the named author or of the editor and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Society.

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www.thecivicsociety.org