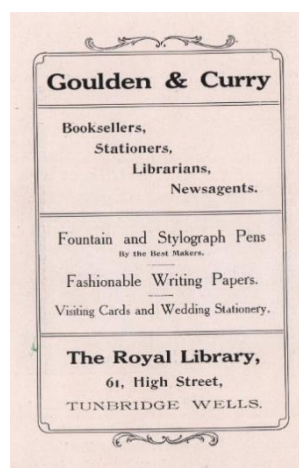


Goulden & Currey and The Royal Library



Public lending libraries were very popular before an effective library service was developed. In 1841 John Colbran, famous for publishing the Tunbridge Wells Gazette and local guides, established his Royal Library in the High Street, patronised by the Duchess of Kent.

In 1887, his son, St John Colbran sold the library to Henry Goulden, who went into partnership with Edward Nye, and from 1894 Stanley Curry to make Goulden & Curry. The shop remained primarily a stationers and library until WWI when Thomas Rayward and Elizabeth Woodhams developed the book selling side of the business. Virginia Woolf is said to have visited the shop on a regular basis. Initially the shop only occupied number 61 High Street, number 59 being occupied by first Russell Davison, shirtmaker/hosier, and then the Misses Harrington, Confectioners.

In 1925, Goulden & Curry occupied both premises. John S. Goulden, grandson of the founder, took over in 1955, building up the hi-fi and vinyl record side of the business, so that in the 1970s the shop incorporated number 63 to house this department. The much loved business closed in 1986. Gerald Dickens remembers the ground floor of the shop full of glass-topped counters and dark wood cabinets containing pens, nibs, compasses, slide rules. On the first floor was the book department that was spread over several rooms, as well as the record department – John Goulden loved music.

When Goulden and Curry closed, the building was home to a Cath Kidston store, and is now and Anthropologie store.

To access details of other Tunbridge Wells shops, click [here](#):