

## ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS - Past and Present - July 1946

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*Many thanks to Kevin Wilkinson, who provided us with this concise history of Tunbridge Wells*

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### THE HISTORY OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS. CHARLES HILBERT STRANGE, F.R.I.B.A.

For our knowledge of the early days of Tunbridge Wells we are dependent upon scrappy, often unreliable material gleaned from various sources - from the note-books of visitors (in prose and verse); from chance references in memoirs, diaries and letters; the recollections of old inhabitants; the puffs of quack physicians; old play-bills and sale notices. There are no official archives (apart from Acts of Parliament) to be consulted and we must be grateful to those who, like the late Radford Thomson (the author of Pelton's Guide), the late Henry Robert Knipe (the compiler of the Chronicles which formed the main feature of the Handbook prepared for the Congress of 1916) have ransacked and collated these miscellaneous facts. Amongst more recent writers should be mentioned Miss Margaret Barton, whose diligent researches have enabled her to present us with a fascinating picture of Tunbridge Wells and the distinguished people who favoured it with their patronage. There is also a good short summary of early history in a Report recently prepared by the Civic Association entitled "Tunbridge Wells - Traditions and Future of the Town."

It is no part of the present writer's ambition to rival these histories and guide books. Rather is it his desire to trace the various stages through which Tunbridge Wells advanced from a rustic hamlet to the status of a full-grown town.

For it must be borne in mind that during the two centuries following Lord North's accidental discovery (in 1606) of the chalybeate waters the place could not be called a town, though it often was. The place consisted of small clusters of dwellings, with nothing to link them together but the common participation of their occupants in the artificial life of society leaders playing at rusticity, and that but for a few months in summer. Indeed it was not until the nineteenth century was well started that the inhabitants lived here all the year round.

The writer's grandmother (1802-1883) who as a girl was employed in her father's millinery shop on the Parade, told him that during the winter months their shop was shut and she returned to London. As Paul Amsinck (1810) wrote .... "the season was limited to the short period between Midsummer and Michaelmas. After that time the trades-people themselves migrated, the taverns were closed, the chapel service was discontinued and the place remained a desert till the following spring."

Under these circumstances houses of the flimsiest construction were all that were demanded and the first to be erected were the primitive shops and dwellings along the "Walks," the levelled terrace where the aristocratic visitors promenaded after drinking the mineral water. These were constructed in 1638; they lasted less than 50 years, for in 1687 a fire destroyed them all. Benge Burr, who published a history of Tunbridge Wells in 1766, describes the event and adds "upon which since this accident, an assembly room, coffee houses, shops and dwelling-houses, have been erected in one

continued line, and a convenient portico placed in front, and carried on from the upper end of the Parade quite down to the well." Even these were mostly of timber framing, plastered with poor mortar made of lime and chopped straw and covered with tiles, plain square tiles or the curved ones called pantiles. There is no evidence that the earliest houses on the Walks were roofed with slates although several writers have fallen into the error of so stating, including the late Mr. Knipe whose researches were very thorough. There is a plaque on one of the Pantiles columns making the same incorrect statement.

We have referred above to the first buildings, but it must not be overlooked that in 1630, when Henrietta Maria consort of Charles I came on a six weeks' visit, she resided with her suite in tents pitched upon the Common. Again when Charles II and Queen Catherine stopped here in 1663 although they occupied a house on Mount Ephraim which had been built by Sir Edmund King, his Majesty's physician, the Royal retinue had to be accommodated in tents.

Two buildings of the earliest time were known respectively as the Ladies' and Gentlemen's Coffee-houses. The latter was also called the Pipe Office, because here men might hire a pipe and indulge the newly introduced habit of tobacco smoking. One of these was later the residence of Mrs. Humphreys, the original water-dipper, who lived to be 102.

During the 17th century one may say there were four centres of population, Southborough, Rusthall, Mount Ephraim and Mount Sion, but gradually the last-named became the more popular. A reference to John Bowra's map of 1738 shows that the whole of that area was occupied by substantial properties, many of which were lodging houses. For instance, two houses are marked Wid. Fry and no fewer than 12 bear the name Mr. Brett. " In the course of a few years, we find Tunbridge forsaken, Southborough and Rusthall raised and ruined; Mount Ephraim drooping; and Mount Sion in the full bloom of prosperity." (Benge Burr.)

Its proximity to the Walks, the rendezvous of the company, was an advantage. Lord North (the statesman who had so much to do with the loss of our American colonies) became blind in his old age and told Richard Cumberland, who was his near neighbour on Mount Sion, " I have a general recollection of the way (to the Walks) and if you will make me understand the posts upon the footpath, and the steps about the Chapel, I shall remember them in future."

Another reference to Mount Sion may be inserted here. Edward Ward, writing in 1714, remarks on the inadequate accommodation for visitors: "A beau is sometimes glad of a barn, and a Lady of Honour content to be in a garret." He refers to Mount Sion Grove as a favourite haunt for lovers, who found an echo to their sentiments in the cooing of ring-doves in the trees.

The history of Mount Sion Grove may be shortly told. By a deed dated the 20th April 1703 (which is quoted in full by Arthur Brackett in "Tunbridge Wells through the Centuries ") four acres of land were conveyed by the Right Hon. John Earl of Buckingham to "be continually preserved for a grove and shade, and walks, for the use of all the inhabitants."

Samuel Cripps writing to "dear Fannikin" (Fanny Burney) in 1779 says: "Tunbridge Wells is a place that to me appeared very singular. The country is all rock, and every part of it is either up or down hill .... the houses, too, are scattered about it in a strange, wild manner, as if they had been dropped by accident, for they form neither streets nor squares." The same writer also says that there were two or three dirty little lanes where the shopkeepers live. These may survive in Murray Road, Little Mount Sion and Warwick Road.

Bowra's map has an interesting feature not depicted elsewhere: it shows the tile paving of the Walks, laid down in 1702, to have been laid to a diagonal pattern.

There is a well-known engraving of a drawing dedicated to Thomas Pellet, M.D., by J. Badslade, which is called " A Bird's Eye View of Tunbridge Wells in 1718." It is an excellent delineation of the various buildings then existing. There are the Wells in their original triangular enclosure, the Upper Walk, where the quality hobnob or dispute (one little crowd is being harangued by a military

looking gentleman while numerous other groups are exchanging courtesies), divided by a row of trees and a palisading from the Lower Walk, to which commoners were restricted, and where a fight appears to be in progress. The Gloster Tavern (opened in 1708) is in full swing, with a chaise and six driving away from it, while a very small equipage, also drawn by six horses, enters the yard.

Behind the Gloster Tavern can be seen the roof of the house now the Duke of York. The brook parting the parishes and the counties ran openly through the ground between the Walks and Frant Road (for some time called Todd's Folly), first flowing under a bridge in front of the Chapel. A large part of Mount Sion is also shown.

In 1728 the Lower Walk was levelled and gates put up to prevent the entry of horses.

Another document from which we can get information as to what Tunbridge Wells comprised at the end of the 18th century is a map published in 1806; In addition to the brook referred to above it shows a stream running across land now known as Calverley Grounds. Both of these now flow in underground conduits. Up to sixty years ago the brook dividing the counties was open to within 100 yards of the Pantiles. Cumberland Walk was then called Patty Moon's Walk and ran by the side of the stream from meadows where now is the Nevill Ground.

On Mount Sion was a bowling green and near by it a plot of ground marked "Site of Old Assembly Room." At the foot of Mount Sion (now the High Street) is the Angel Inn, afterwards the Royal Kentish Hotel, and the White Bear are shown, with a new inn on the site of the present Castle Hotel.

There were a few detached residences and lodging-houses by the side of the Common and along the Mount Ephraim ridge. Among the latter are to be noted Boyne House, long since swamped by Boyne Park, and the Hare and Hounds, now the Mount Ephraim Hotel. The magistrates acting for the Tunbridge Wells division used to hold a petty Sessions at the Hare and Hounds the first and third Wednesday in the month. Mr. John Stone, the founder of the legal firm of Stone, Simpson and Mason, was their clerk.

At the Bishop's Down end of Mount Ephraim may be seen Mount Ephraim House, with the old Baptist Chapel behind it; Chancellor House and Bishop's Down Grove, the latter the residence of Major Yorke, now the Spa Hotel. On the London Road are marked the George and the Rose and Crown, the first hostelries to challenge the incoming visitor.

This interesting map shows the complete race-course, now only traceable in parts, the position of the ill-fated Queen's Grove planted in honour of Queen Anne. It also indicates the establishments making Tunbridge Ware, no fewer than four of them. The trade in those little pin foxes, tea caddies, ink stands and other knicknacks must have been very extensive to have employed so many makers.

Attached to the Rusthall Manor Act of 1739 was a Plan of Tunbridge Wells with the Buildings, Walks and Passages near adjoining thereto. It is valuable as it gives the names of the various houses, with the main dimensions, and a table of reference giving the names of the owners of the several properties. Thus 82 feet of the Upper Walk was taken up by the "great Room," obviously the Assembly Room referred to by many writers, and adjoining it was Smith's Coffee House and on the other side Bond's Long Room. Flat House, rebuilt by the late Mr. Nicholson in 1883, is clearly shown, but with a space 62 feet long to the west marked "ground to be improved by building" which left buildings facing the Pantiles only 14 feet in depth, indicating that some of the original buildings were very small affairs. Several small buildings occupied places since given up to the Walks, including a hut about 14 feet by 8 feet at the extreme S.W. end of the Walks occupied by the eccentric little artist Loggan, a painter of fans.

Apart from the social life of the place, which continued its placid existence under successive "Masters of Ceremony" during Hanoverian days, there is little to record. A few facts may be noted.

In 1760, owing to the great consumption of wood in the local ironworks, there was considerable scarcity of fuel, and arrangements were made to bring coal by barge to Tunbridge and thence by

road to Tunbridge Wells. In 1762 the Earl of Egmont built Mount Pleasant House; afterwards it was much improved by the Duke of Leeds, who purchased it in 1779. Subsequently it was called Calverley House; it now forms the older part of the Calverley Hotel. In 1765, Sir George Kelly, Lord of the Manor, built Bishop's Down Grove (now the Spa Hotel). It was owned in 1772 by Major Martin Yorke, R.A., who resided there 25 years. The road from the Spa to the Pantiles was named after Major Yorke.

In 1793 the inhabitants having raised the necessary funds (to which the writer's great-great-grandfather was a contributor) the old Queen Anne tile paving was removed from the Pantiles and Purbeck stone flagging substituted. The promenade then became known as "The Parade," later "The Royal Parade." The old name of "Pantiles" was revived in 1887. In 1936 the whole of the stone paving, which had become very uneven and broken, was taken up by the Corporation, repaired and re-laid.

In 1801 the Gloster Tavern (1706) became a private hotel or boarding house and the old Sussex Tavern was considerably enlarged, and a handsome set of rooms, known as "The Lower Assembly Rooms," added. Now known as the Sussex Inn, this became the principal hostelry of the place, the other first-class inn being the Angel, afterwards called the Kentish. In 1804 the buildings adjacent to the Wells, now largely occupied by Boots the Chemists, and known as Bath House, were erected. The portico over the Spring, however, was not added until 1847.

Such was the "town" of Tunbridge Wells after two-centuries of existence. Its permanent population could not have reached a thousand and, apart from the illustrious persons who came to drink of its famous water and pace its checkered promenade, whose characters have been described by many able writers, the facts outlined above sufficiently tell its story.

The character of the town changed fundamentally in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Its quaint porticoed promenade; its curious little shops selling knick-knacks of tesselated woods; its famous chalybeate water; its shady groves and furzy commons with the beauty and interest of the surrounding scenery, could not hold their own with pleasure-seekers and were giving place to the novel charms of Brighton and Hastings. Its royal patronage was limited to the infrequent visits of the young Princess Victoria and her mother, the Duchess of Kent. In short, it ceased to be a place to be visited for a circumscribed season and started on its career as a highly respectable residential town.

This movement began with the purchase by John Ward, of Holwood Park, Bromley, of the Calverley Estate, so named after Matthew Calverley, its previous owner. At this time (about 1820) there was living on Quarry Hill, south of Tonbridge, a successful building speculator, James Burton. His son Decimus was being trained as an architect and John Ward employed him to design the buildings intended to form a new town adjacent to the old "Wells." The scheme was a bold one, for not only were residences for a new settled population of well-to-do people to be built, but a large church, a market hall, shops, mews, and even a crescent of shops with covered promenade and bandstand to rival, perhaps to displace, the celebrated seventeenth century Parade.

These ambitions were not realized. The shops and baths and band of the new Parade soon failed to find patrons, and the elegant Greek market hall, as a market, became derelict within a few years. The venerable Parade and its piazza, retained its reputation and remained the centre and core of the place. But what was of far greater importance in the development of the town was that Decimus Burton had introduced a class of dwelling which found great acceptance amongst the would-be inhabitants of this lovely district.

Beginning with Calverley Park, building development took place in all directions and the town's population, which was about 1,600 in 1810, increased to 5,000 in 1821 and 8,300 in 1841. This expansion continued steadily all through Victorian days, Broadwater Down, Camden Park, Hungershall Park, Nevill Park and other districts being opened up by enterprising landowners and builders. At Rusthall, in Bishop's Down, in Frant Road and Pembury Road, and along the roads

bordering the Commons, detached houses of a generous type were built and found ready occupiers, while large areas of land to the north-east of the Calverley Estate were gradually covered with streets and houses of a humbler character.

In 1835 a triple row of trees was planted on the Common, close to where the so-called "Queen's Grove," planted in honour of Queen Anne, had existed. The best part of three very wet days were occupied in the planting: a list is preserved of the names of those taking part, including 25 boys of Chapel School (now King Charles').

In connection with the Calverley Estate, Tunbridge Wells got its first public water supply. To supply the new houses it was decided to use the water of Jack's Wood spring, close to where the Grosvenor Bridge now stands. A pumping house was set up and reservoirs constructed (the larger of which is now the Open-air Swimming Pool) at the northern boundary of the estate. The water was pumped up to a reservoir in Carlton Road, whence it ran by gravitation to the houses. The same reservoir was scheduled as an Emergency Water Supply during the late war. The name of the local engineer was William Hilbert, whose name is perpetuated in the Hilbert Recreation Ground, etc.

Up to Burton's time the local building materials were red brick and tile. All the houses of the old Wells, whether church, mansion, villa or cottage, were built of brick (or timber) and roofed with tiles. For his new Tunbridge Wells he must have stone (for was he not one of the exponents of the Greek Revival ?.) and this also was found on the estate. The name Quarry Road gives a clue to its whereabouts, although the excavation was long ago filled up with the town's refuse. The stone, which was one of the stones examined by the Commissioners appointed to select a stone for the new Houses of Parliament, was thus officially described: "It is a sandstone formed of fine silicious grains with a slightly calcareous cement. The colours are variegated browns ..." It looks attractive when first quarried, but does not weather well and, moreover, goes an ugly dark colour in course of time.

Means of approach to the new town were rapidly improved. Previous to 1842 travellers could only arrive and depart by coach or private carriage. The public coach made nine journeys each way between Tunbridge Wells and London on week-days ; on Sundays one journey only was made in each direction. The mail arrived from London every morning except Monday and left every evening except Saturday. In 1842 an omnibus service was set up between Tunbridge and the Wells, enabling passengers by train to reach the town from London in 2½ hours and incidentally to avoid the extortionate road tolls. Later on a branch of the South-Eastern Railway from Redhill was opened to the Wells, though the terminus for several years was at what is now the Goods Station. By 1845, however, the Mount Pleasant tunnel had been cut and trains arrived at what is now our Central Station, a convenient spot between the old and new towns. On the land it occupies there stood a brewery and over against it was a large pond.

Further evidence of the extent to which the place was growing and becoming a settled community may be seen in the fact that in 1835 an Act of Parliament was passed setting up a body of Commissioners to manage the town. The franchise was limited to owners of property valued at £50 a year, and only men could vote. These early Commissioners used to meet once a month at Vale Cottage, a little house facing the Common near the Castle Hotel. It was not until 1860 (under the Local Government Act of 1858) that this arrangement was altered, when all persons, women as well as men, owning or occupying property valued at £30 per annum could vote for a commissioner.

Such authority as existed in the place prior to the appointment of Commissioners was exercised by the Vestry appointed by contributors to the support of the Chapel of Ease (King Charles' Church) "There are charges in the old accounts for planting and cutting trees on The Walks, and providing lamps and benches, for paving the Fish Market, for purchasing a great coat for the sweeper, for erecting gates to keep stray horses out of the Lower Walk, and there was an annual contract for watering the roads as the company complained of the dust. In 1729 there is this quaint entry: ' It is hereby ordered . . . that upon the account of many Disorders which are daily committed about this place by Vagrants and Sturdy Beggars, and also by many Drunken Fellows belonging thereunto,

that a cage be built upon some convenient Spott of Ground, for to put such persons in' . . ." (Col. Waring's Story of the Church of King Charles the Martyr.)

The magistrates met twice a month at the Clarence Tavern and the Police Station House was at No. 3, Grove Hill Road.

Another piece of evidence of the extraordinary rapidity of the new town's progress and, at the same time, an indication of the highly religious character of the new inhabitants, may be found in the number of churches erected. Decimus Burton's Holy Trinity, consecrated in 1829, was followed by the Hanover Baptist Church in 1834, the Roman Catholic Church in 1838, Christ Church in 1841, the Congregational Church in 1848, St. Paul's, Rusthall, in 1850, Rehoboth Baptist Church in 1851, St. John's Church in 1858, St. James' Church in 1862, and St. Mark's, Broadwater, in 1865. More detailed references to the religious life of Tunbridge Wells will be found in a later chapter.

There persisted, however, for many years a distinct separation between the old and new towns. A country lane, 250 yards long, bordered by ancient elms and known as the Wells Hill, was the division (and also the link) between the two until, about 1870, when the trees were cut down, the road widened and the present shops and houses built. It will be seen, therefore, that notwithstanding the fact that the head post office and the principal shops remained on or near the Parade, the town was gradually spreading and becoming consolidated northwards.

This movement towards a new focal point was strengthened by the adoption by the Town Commissioners of Burton's market hall as their headquarters. As such it became the Town Hall, and its premises—enlarged from time to time—grew to comprise, in addition to administrative offices, a meeting room which was used by turn as police court and county court and all sorts of public assemblies, a police station and a fire brigade station.

A few other important events may be noted. In 1843 the Gas Company was formed; in 1842 the "Tunbridge Wells Dispensary," the forerunner of the present Kent and Sussex Hospital, was established in Grosvenor Road; in 1845 the first cricket match between Kent and Sussex took place on the Common ; in 1847 the present portico over the Chalybeate Spring was erected; in 1852 the railway to Hastings and in 1866 the line to East Grinstead were opened ; in 1877 the Pump Room was built; in the same year H.R.H. Princess Louise, who was then living at Dornden, Rusthall, laid the foundation stone of the Friendly Societies' Hall in Camden Road; in 1880 the direct line to Eastbourne via Mayfield was opened; in 1885 the Lower Cricket Ground was levelled and railed in; in 1887 the Skinners' School on "The Lew," as it was then called, was founded.

In 1888 a critical moment in the history of Tunbridge Wells was reached. It appeared to many of its inhabitants that it should become an incorporated borough. For six years an Incorporation League had been at work, but the movement was strongly resisted by influential residents such as John Stone Wigg, chairman of the Local Board (as the Town Commissioners were called). However, the introduction into the House of Commons of a Local Government Act brought about a quick change of opinion. It became clear that if the town were not a municipal borough it would perforce take the inferior rank of an urban district council.

So it was that in April, 1888, Mr. Stone Wigg himself called a special meeting of the Local Board and proposed that a petition to the Privy Council for the grant of a Charter should forthwith be prepared. The petition was granted and the Charter, dated 16th January, 1889, created Tunbridge Wells a Municipal Borough; the inhabitants and their successors were declared to be one body politic and incorporate, by the name of the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough, with perpetual succession and a Common Seal; they were authorised to assume armorial bearings, and to take and hold such lands, tenements and hereditaments as well without as within the Borough as might be necessary for the site and premises required for the official purposes of the Municipal Corporations Acts, not exceeding the value of £1,500 per annum ; John Stone Wigg was appointed Charter Mayor and William Charles Cripps Charter Town Clerk.

The first Town Council contained many members of the old Board of Commissioners. John Stone

Wigg, the Charter Mayor, had been known as Perpetual Chairman of the Board, and he carried his popularity into the new body, being re-elected to office for two succeeding years. The mayoral chain was his gift. He not only served the town well as its chief magistrates for three years, but left a worthy memorial of himself in the Grosvenor Recreation Ground, four acres of which he presented to the town to add to the four acres acquired by the Commissioners when they purchased the Calverley Waterworks. After his decease in 1899 his family contributed £1,750 towards the purchase of five acres of land near St. John's Road as a Recreation Ground for that district. It was at his cost that the Art Room (the present Newspaper Room of the Public Library) of the Mechanics' Institute was built.

A brief mention must be made of the magistracy. In 1893 the Borough was granted a separate Commission of the Peace, and magistrates have been chosen from all classes of society. Thomas Fox Simpson was the first Magistrates' Clerk, a man of fine presence who exercised considerable influence in the young borough. He was president of a very successful debating society which met weekly at the Pump Room. His portrait hangs in the Town Hall. He was succeeded in office by his son, the late Colonel A. T. Simpson.

The first task to which the new Corporation set itself was the promotion of an Improvement Act. This important measure received the Royal Assent 14th August, 1890. By it the Town became the owners of the Mount Sion Grove and the recipients of some £700 in funds which had been accumulated by its Trustees; the respective rights and privileges of the Corporation and of the Lord of the Manor in respect to the Commons were defined; miscellaneous powers and responsibilities were conferred upon the Corporation as to the supply of water, the regulation of new buildings and streets, and other public health matters; the issue of Corporation Stock, and so on. There are 291 sections covering 149 pages, and its passage into law is a splendid memorial to the legal knowledge and persevering determination of our young Town Clerk, William Charles Cripps, then only 34 years of age. The provision of which Mr. Cripps is most proud was the section under which the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood were given free access to the Commons "for all time." The opposition on the part of certain property owners had been so fierce that a previous Bill, drafted in 1889, had been thrown out by the House of Commons.

Mr. Cripps continued to serve the town with distinction until 1925. In 1914 the Corporation presented him with his portrait (painted in oils by Alexander Kirk), and on his retirement elected him an Honorary Freeman of the Borough. Happily he remains a resident amongst us and, although no longer a borough official, his public service is not ended, for in certain offices, as a county magistrate and as a member of the Kent County Council, his vigour is unabated.

In 1896 the head Post Office was removed from the Pantiles to its present position, the site of Cramp's Riding School.

The need for a Technical School had become very pressing. Dr. George Abbott, a retired oculist, took great interest in the subject, and he and other voluntary workers started to organise classes, which were held at first in a basement room at the Eye and Ear Hospital and afterwards at Walmer House. This move to better quarters took place five days before the reception of the Charter. Sir David Salomons was president; Sir John Lubbock (afterwards Lord Avebury) also took an interest in the movement, and when in 1902 the Technical Institute was completed he performed the official opening. The teaching of Art was very imperfectly carried on by a weekly class held at the Mechanics' Institute under the Department of Science and Art, South Kensington. A fine Art School was part of the new Technical Institute. The acquirement of such a valuable educational centre, housed in so handsome a structure, was largely due to the zest and energy of Charles R. Fletcher Lutwidge, mayor of the borough 1895-1898, and again 1901-1902. This old resident had long been foremost in every movement for promoting the interests of the town. He was honorary captain of the Fire Brigade and there was hardly an institution of which he was not president or vice-president. He took great interest in art and was himself an artist of some merit. Two of his paintings of Italian scenes are hanging in the Town Hall. He presented to the Technical Institute the stained glass

window (by Forsyth) representing Science, Industry, Art and Commerce. The building is also adorned with two copper panels in the vestibule executed and presented by Mr. C. Tattershall Dodd. The architect was the late Henry T. Hare.

Dr. Abbott and his friends, the pioneers in promoting technical education locally, were naturally delighted with the new premises, but this delight was considerably diminished when it appeared that under the Education Act of that year the management of the institute passed to the Kent County Council. Further reference to the schools of the town will be found under the chapter, Educational Establishments.

The inefficiency of the local telephone service for years had exercised the minds of the townspeople, particularly business and professional men. The original South of England Company was absorbed by the National Telephone Company, the number of subscribers was small and the charges high. Members of the Tradesmen's Association discussed the subject from time to time. Prominent among these were two men, R. A. Robinson {afterwards Sir Ralph Robinson, Chairman L.C.C.) and Alfred Nicholson, both chemists, one on Mount Ephraim and the other on The Pantiles.

Under the Telegraph Act, 1899, the Post Office took over all the trunk lines of the country, and it was possible for a municipality to obtain a licence from the Postmaster General to set up a local exchange. Robinson joined the Council in 1898 and Nicholson a year later, and largely owing to their advocacy of the matter the Corporation obtained a licence in April, 1900. Nicholson became Chairman of the Telephone Committee, and the best part of a year was spent in laying down a system for the district. The enterprise attracted wide notice, and the opening of this, the first English Corporation Telephone Exchange, -was made a great occasion. The Lord Mayor of London (Alderman Frank Green) attended to inaugurate the system on the 27th July, 1901.

The Corporation Telephone was an unqualified success. It had the immediate effect of increasing the number of telephone-users, until Tunbridge Wells was more saturated -with telephones than any other town in the country and its charges the lowest. There was the further advantage that all the surrounding villages became linked up with the town. The National Telephone Company at once installed better instruments and lowered their tariff.

Eventually the National Company took over the undertaking, reimbursed the Corporation the capital sum expended and agreed to maintain the service without increase of charge. In 1912 the Government bought out the Company for £12,500,000 and established the Post Office Telephone system. Hull is now the only English borough running a municipal telephone service.

The disposal of the telephone undertaking aroused fears in the town that another highly successful venture of the Corporation might pass into private hands, namely, the Electric Light Undertaking. There were those on the Town Council who were against municipal trading in any form: they would have been quite prepared to sell, and it was even rumoured that there had been a firm offer by a private company to purchase the concern. Fortunately, nothing of the kind occurred, and the undertaking remains one of the great successes of the Corporation's early days. The electricity works were opened in 1895 and the number of consumers has grown continuously ever since. Under certain Provisional Orders, power has been granted to the Corporation to supply electricity to surrounding districts t both to private consumers and local authorities. The total area covers approximately 650 square miles.

Another great event in the incorporated life of the Borough was the acquisition in 1895 of the Calverley Parade property as a site for the erection of a civic centre. The erection of the bulk of the buildings was postponed until 1939, but two portions were taken in hand at once and have proved of immense benefit, the Technical Institute and the Indoor Baths. The former has already been referred to: of the latter, it is only necessary to say it was opened on 5th October, 1898, during the mayoralty of Major Fletcher Lutwidge. A further object of the 1895 purchase was the widening of Mount Pleasant, and this was done at once, a street improvement more and more appreciated as time goes on.

1895 was a great year for tree-planting on the Common. The late Ernest Charlton was president of the Tradesmen's Association, and he initiated a scheme whereby any citizen willing to pay the cost should be allowed to plant a tree. Upwards of a hundred persons availed themselves of this arrangement, and on the 8th November, 1895, a week of tree-planting began. The outgoing mayor (Sir David Salomons), the incoming mayor (Major C. R. Fletcher Lutwidge) and many prominent citizens, whose names are given in newspaper reports of the proceedings, planted trees. A week later the late Marquess of Abergavenny planted a tree and presented to the Conservators several Scotch firs, including two brought from Balmoral. Unfortunately, the group of limes planted by Sir David Salomons and members of his family was some years later destroyed in a gorse fire.

During the period under review movements were initiated to increase the facilities for sports and pastimes of all kinds. In 1895 the Tunbridge Wells Cricket, Football and Athletic Club (incorporated) was formed with a capital of £10,000. It obtained a 99 years lease of land belonging to the Bridge Estates and formed the Nevill Ground, which was formally opened by the Marquess of Abergavenny on Whit-Monday, 1898. Since 1901 (except in 1915) there has been an annual Cricket Week with matches on this ground. Its pavilion was burnt down by the Suffragettes and afterwards re-built.

The history of golf in Tunbridge Wells also begins at this time. In 1890 a nine-hole course was opened at the Spa, and six years later the Culverden Club was founded. Both these clubs had a somewhat restricted membership, and it was not until 1914, when the Nevill Golf Club was formed, that the game could be indulged in by inhabitants of all classes. This Club possesses one of the best-kept courses in the South of England and has lately erected a commodious club house.

The early stages of two inventions which have revolutionised modern life—the motor car and the aeroplane—have local associations. The late Sir David Lionel Salomons (Mayor 1894-5) drove a motor car on the highway long before the stupid restriction on road locomotives was repealed. During his mayoralty he organised an exhibition of horseless carriages which was held on the Agricultural Show Ground. This was on the 15th October, 1895, and was the first Motor Show to be held in England. Frank McClean (now Lieut.-Col. Sir Francis McClean), of Rusthall House, was a pioneer in aviation. His career is well told in "The Old Flying Days" by Major C. C. Turner. He owned the first twin-engine machine that ever flew. In 1912 he flew up the Thames in his seaplane, passing under the Tower and London bridges. He was knighted in 1926.

Tunbridge Wells at the opening of the twentieth century was doing very well. In 1900 St. John's Recreation Ground was opened, a new bandstand erected on the Pantiles by public subscription, and Rusthall was incorporated in the Borough. In 1902 the Opera House was opened and warmly welcomed by the inhabitants as a whole. The foundation stone was laid by Herbert Beerbohm Tree (afterwards knighted) in October, 1901. It was explained at the time that it was to be called an opera house rather than a theatre "as a concession to parochial propriety." Many of the good people of Tunbridge Wells looked askance at any sort of theatrical performance, but their prejudices gradually died away and for a long time the public enjoyed the performances of travelling companies, with occasional "flying matinees" from London theatres, Shakespearean courses by Benson or Ben Greet and original Christmas pantomimes. It is a small but comfortable play-house with every facility for stage productions. It is a matter for regret that, like so many other similar provincial houses, it failed in mid-War days to obtain sufficient public support and is now a cinema.

The Opera House has been the scene of many memorable occasions—political meetings of national moment, concerts at which the greatest artistes of the musical world have appeared and the finest choral work has been performed.

On the stage of our eighteenth century theatre, over against the Pantiles (Mrs. Baker's "Temple of the Muses") Edmund Kean and Charles Kemble once appeared. On that of our twentieth century theatre we have seen Frank Benson, Fred Terry, Julia Neilson and Viola Tree, Paderewski, Pachmann, Kubelik, Mark Hambourg, Backhaus, Nellie Melba, Rosina Buckman, and many another artiste of world-wide reputation. In the realm of politics, among the outstanding figures who

have spoken from its stage are the late Lord Oxford and Asquith, the late Lord Birkenhead, the late Lord Salisbury.

In 1900 the Eye and Ear Hospital acquired new premises on Mount Sion. In 1903 the other two hospitals took important steps forward. On June 30th Miss Ethel Salomons (later Lady Blunt) laid the foundation stone of the new buildings of the General Hospital in Grosvenor Road and later in the year the Homoeopathic Hospital established itself in Church Road. In 1907 one of the best-planned improvements in the town was carried out, namely, the removal of the narrow bridge which connected High Street with Mount Pleasant and the construction of a wide roadway in its place. It was carried out by the Railway Company but the bulk of the cost was borne by the ratepayers. In 1909, in a flush of prosperity and pride, the Corporation sought and obtained permission from King Edward VII to call the Borough "Royal."

From a variety of causes, some local, some national, a reaction gradually set in. Trade began to be difficult, building development to slow down, the older and larger houses to become empty and unlettable. Economy was the policy of the Corporation and William Henry Delves its prophet. This remarkable man, almost the last member of an old local family, served the town continuously from 1882, when he was elected to the Local Board, until his death 40 years later, at the age of 92. He was chairman of the Finance Committee all that time and kept a vigilant watch on public expenditure in every direction. In his careful supervision of the town's finances he was ably assisted by J. C. Greatrex and John Walter Forster, successive borough accountants. The latter was a financial expert of some eminence in the country generally; he was Borough Accountant from 1902 until his retirement a few years ago. It is largely owing to the astuteness of these two men that the finances of the town were regulated during the period of national stress and are now in so sound a state.

The volume of indebtedness incurred and expenditure embarked on by local authorities was and is still a matter of concern to economists. When the Corporation levied its General District Rate for the first time it was for 3d. in the pound, the total rates payable being 45. 5d. They are now (1945) 13s. 6d. in the pound. It need hardly be pointed out that the increase is largely accounted for by the enormous development of social services. The Imperial Government is continually placing more and more duties and responsibilities on local authorities, involving the setting up of new departments and the appointment of new officials. Take one direction only. In 1889 the only thing the governing body had to do with elementary education was to see that the children went to school, and, if they did not, to hail the parents before the magistrates to be fined.\* \* The schools were all carried on by voluntary subscriptions with the aid of direct Government grants. Now, the actual education is but a small part of what is done for the welfare of children. It begins in prenatal days, goes all through their school life and beyond.

Tunbridge Wells was not greatly disturbed by the South African War, which began in October, 1899, although, of course, the chequered struggle was anxiously watched by those who had relatives and friends in the fighting line. Some thirty men went from here, and a warm welcome was given to them on their return at the close of the war in the summer of 1902. As the result of a public subscription each man was presented with a silver watch suitably engraved.

The Great War of 1914-18 affected the life of the town in manifold ways. Being so near the south-eastern corner of England, it was made the headquarters of one of the new Armies; soldiers were collected here from all parts of England to be drafted across to France; our local volunteers—Territorials and Yeomanry—were mobilised and sent to all sections of the battle front; our empty houses became billets; imitation enemies were strung on lines on the Common and in Calverley Park for the recruits to stab with their bayonets; the churches opened canteens; the streets were darkened at night and evening services in the churches were given up; businesses were closed; professional men found themselves with nothing to do. The impression of a military centre was increased by the proximity of a large camp on Ashdown Forest, the men coming into the town for evening recreation; by a camp of Canadian foresters who cut down thousands of the fir trees to the

south of the town for pit-props and sleepers; and by the aerodrome at Penshurst. As the war progressed many wounded men were brought to our hospitals and V.A.D. centres were opened. And news of the fallen came day by day until the number of Tunbridge Wells men and women who had lost their lives reached the total of 776.

Tunbridge Wells gave thus freely of its younger citizens; the middle aged became special constables and members of the Civil Guard. In addition, it held out hands of hospitality to some 150 Belgian refugees, housed and cared for them until their repatriation in 1919. These Belgian exiles, in grateful recognition of the kindness of the inhabitants, presented to the Borough a bronze bust of the Mayor, the late Charles W. Emson. Actually, Tunbridge Wells had one slight experience of warfare, for a Zeppelin, wandering out of its way to London, dropped three bombs in Calverley Park, which broke all the windows in the vicinity but otherwise did no harm.

Every church and institution set up its memorial tablet to commemorate the names of those connected with, it who had paid the supreme price. All these names are gathered into one group of bronze panels forming part of the War Memorial erected on Mount Pleasant in 1923 bearing the general inscription, "Our Glorious Dead Honour, Gratitude, Praise."

After the War one of the first problems to be faced was the shortage of dwellings. The old houses occupied as billets were gradually reinstated and sold or turned into flats: new houses of moderate size were being put up here and there: there was a desperate need for working class houses. The Corporation had many years before purchased land for the purpose of building small houses, but the opposition to the scheme was such that the land was sold. In 1920, 30 houses of the Hawkenbury Estate were built by the Corporation, but so very high was the price of materials (mostly Government controlled) at the time that the cost was enormous and nothing like an economic rent could be asked. In 1920 an estate was laid out at Rusthall, and in subsequent years additional groups of dwellings have been built to the number of over three hundred houses.

Private benevolence, organised by the Council of Service, has provided an attractive group of 32 small semidetached flats at Hawkenbury called Sherborne Close, let to aged persons at moderate rents. These were declared open by H.R.H. the Duke of Kent in 1938.

Tunbridge Wells is singularly fortunate in possessing so many open spaces. As though its 249 acres of Common were not enough, each district has its recreation ground. The Grove, the Grosvenor and St. John's Recreation Grounds have been referred to. The Corporation acquired in 1920 the 15 1/2 acres of Calverley Park, now known as the Calverley Grounds, and have laid them out with walks, tennis courts and bowling greens, with a pavilion and bandstand. In 1928 Edward Jeffery Strange (Mayor, 1936-1937) presented 4 acres of land on St. John's Road for a playing field for boys and girls of school age, which was opened by the Prince of Wales (afterwards Edward VIII). He also gave two years later about 18 1/2 acres of land (subsequently increased to 23 acres) adjoining and now forming part of the Grosvenor Recreation Ground. This portion is named the Hilbert Recreation Ground in memory of his mother, Lydia Hilbert. An approach from Upper Grosvenor Road by a bridge over the Southern Railway affords the residents of High Brooms a share in the use of these grounds. Rusthall enjoys a small plot of ground reserved for rest and recreation in the midst of a somewhat crowded district, which was opened to the public in July, 1932. This was made possible by a generous donation by the late Alderman Caley (Mayor 1908-1909) and is named after his wife, Mary Caley. Lastly, in 1936, the Corporation provided a recreation ground for the residents of Hawkenbury by purchasing a field of rather more than 8 acres and laying it out with paths and seats and a children's playground.

In addition to these pleasure gardens and parks, the Corporation has provided some 70 acres of allotment ground. There can hardly be a town with so large a proportion of open space within its area, and beyond its borders is, at least on three sides, open unspoilt country of great extent, undulating and wooded.

The history of the General Hospital up to its establishment in Grosvenor Road has been well written

by the man who served it so long as its hon. treasurer, the late F. W. Elers (Mayor 1909-10). How it outgrew its quarters; how many and varied were the efforts to raise funds to enable it to be re-built; how at last it became possible to purchase a new site; how the Eye and Ear Hospital was conjoined with it; how a larger building, or series of buildings, were erected where formerly stood the mansion of Great Culverden, one of Decimus Burton's designs (the present Queen (then Duchess of York) laying the foundation stone) are matters of recent history and do not call for further notice here. Suffice it to say that the Kent and Sussex Hospital is regarded as a model hospital which serves not only the town but the population within a very wide radius. Its inception and completion is an achievement of which the town is justly proud.

Freemasonry was first established here in 1862 when Frederick Wadham Elers (Mayor 1909-1910) founded the Holmesdale Lodge. In 1887 the Pantiles Lodge was consecrated and in 1928 the Wells Lodge.

Rotary (Rotary International of the British Isles) was established here in 1921, William Wearing being the Founder-President.

The Friendly and Benefit Societies have greatly flourished in Tunbridge Wells. Possessed of fine club premises, the branches of the various "Orders" and trade-unions have been uniformly successful. The Tunbridge Wells Equitable Friendly Society, an "order" in itself, has recently celebrated its jubilee, with a total membership of over 11,000 and invested funds of one-and-a-half millions. For many years the Friendly Societies united in holding what was called the Amalgamation, a day of country sports and merry-making.

How Tunbridge Wells got its Public Library is a sad story of endeavours thwarted and hopes deferred. On January 31st, 1888, a public meeting was held, presided over by Lord Avebury (then Sir John Lubbock) to advocate the provision of a free library, and a few weeks later a petition was presented to the Local Board, begging the Commissioners to adopt the Public Libraries Act. The Commissioners did not consent: it was not until 23rd December, 1895, that the Corporation adopted the Act, and not until 21st May, 1921 (thirty-three years after the movement was initiated) that the town became possessed of a public library.

Even so, this widely appreciated public service might not yet have been available but for the following circumstances. After the building of the Friendly Societies Hall the membership of the older institution in Dudley Road, known as the Mechanics' Institute, gradually fell away, until the premises (re-named the Dudley Institute) were almost deserted. A lending library and reading room were maintained, for which a small subscription was charged. The ownership of the property was vested in trustees who dwindled in number until but three were left, Edward Catchpole, Edward Skillen and the present writer. An offer was made by these trustees to hand over the premises to the Corporation for the purpose of establishing a free library. The Charity Commissioners, having taken fifteen months to consider the proposal for the transfer, at length gave their consent and the premises were formally taken over by the Corporation, the late Professor R. G. Moulton, the well-known author and lecturer, performing the opening ceremony.

There had been greater success with the attempts to establish a municipal museum. Owing to the indomitable determination of the late Dr. George Abbott, already referred to, a shop was taken in Crescent Road in 1918 and used as an educational museum. Later a transfer to a larger house in Upper Grosvenor Road was made and more recently to a commodious house on Mount Ephraim, where the devoted labours of the hon. curator, Dr. J. C. M. Given, have resulted in a well selected, accurately classified and locally interesting collection, of great value to students and an attraction to visitors.

In musical matters Tunbridge Wells may claim to have done much to foster the taste for good music and to encourage its pursuit. The first choral society was founded in 1863. Under the late W. W. Starmer it continued as the Vocal Association and had many successful seasons. The late F. C. W. Hunnibell, the gifted organist of St. James' Church, also conducted a choral society and was the first

to get together a band of amateur instrumentalists to give orchestral concerts. The latter finds its counterpart in the Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra which arranges monthly concerts at the Assembly Hall. In 1903 Mr. Francis J. Foote founded yet another choral society which scored some notable successes.

During the inter-war years there was no choral society of any size in the town, but interest in choral singing was transferred to the annual Musical Festival, founded by Mrs. Wace in 1912. This Festival had come to draw on a wide area of Kent and Sussex for competitors and those taking part in its concerts, at each of which there were some 250 to 300 performers. After the Hitler war began the Festival had to be dropped, on account of the black-out, Civil Defence activities, &c.

The Music Club is another medium by which front-rank performers, vocalists and instrumentalists, are often heard in Tunbridge Wells. This was founded by Mrs. Oswald Smith in 1929. There has been no break in its valuable work.

The Corporation has for many years provided bands of music to play on the Pantiles and in the Calverley Grounds.

In what a feeble tentative way the cinematograph came to Tunbridge Wells! In 1910 there were two vacant properties a few yards down on the right hand side of Camden Road. By great ingenuity the ground floor of the two was thrown into one and the united premises became the first picture house of Tunbridge Wells. Later, after a fire of some magnitude on the premises of the Constitutional Club in Calverley Road, the Kosmos Kinema was constructed and opened. Following the first world war the Great Hall and Opera House were converted into picture houses, but it was not until 1934, when the Ritz was opened, that the town possessed a cinema built expressly for the purpose.

The game of Bowls has become very popular in the Borough. The Grove Bowling Club was founded in 1908 and clubs in other parts of the town have been formed from time to time. Clubs for football (of both varieties), tennis, archery, squash racquets, badminton, hockey, swimming, cycling and other forms of recreation have been started during the inter-war years and appear to have no difficulty in finding devotees. Scouts and Girl Guides are to be found in great abundance.

Civic pride has been badly shocked by some of the public and semi-public buildings erected during the past fifty years ; on the other hand, others have added to the dignity of the locality. For new ecclesiastical buildings there has been little need, the only new church for the Church of England being St. Luke's, designed by the late Henry H. Cronk and consecrated in 1910. For the Congregationalists a chapel was built at Hawkenbury in 1889; for the Methodists chapels at Hill Street and Rusthall were built in 1903 ; for the Friends a meeting house was built in Grosvenor Park in 1894 ; for the late Rev. James Mountain St. John's Free Church (H. M. Caley, architect) was built in 1901. Two Christian Science Churches have been more recently erected, one on St. John's Road (Cecil Burns, architect) and one in Linden Park, also a meeting room for the Plymouth Brethren. A new church for the Baptists, in Upper Grosvenor Road (Strange and Grant, architects) was completed in 1938.

Among a number of parish rooms and recreational halls erected two may be referred to: that of St. John's known as the Byng Hall in memory of the late J. M. O. Byng, and that of Trinity, known as the Crabb Memorial Institute in memory of the late Richard Hatley Crabb, built in 1901.

New schools have been erected in connection with Holy Trinity, St. Barnabas's, St. Luke's and St. Paul's parishes, and in 1929 the Corporation took over the work for defective children carried on by Miss Robbins and other ladies, and built the fine open-air school at Rusthall designed by the late Stanley Philpot. The County School for Girls, designed by the County Architect, was opened 24th October, 1913. In 1936 the Corporation decided to subsidise the Girls' High School for a period of years to avoid it being closed. This school was first opened in 1882.

The several Banks have built or adapted premises, the two at the bottom of High Street and one in St. John's Road being the only ones built specially for the purpose. The " Old Bank " at the top of

Mount Pleasant, designed by the late H. H. Cronk and built some sixty years ago, remains the most striking of all our banking establishments. Of other public buildings mention should be made of the Counties Club, designed by Cecil Burns and opened in 1909, and the extensive buildings of the new Civic Centre, only partly completed.

The establishment of an adequate Civic Centre was a long-cherished desire of the townspeople. In 1934 an architectural competition open to the whole country was promoted, Mr. Berry Webber being the assessor. Architects of great eminence took part in the competition, first place being given to the design of Messrs. Percy Thomas and Ernest Prestwich.

The Police Court was first used in April, 1939. The Assembly Hall was opened in the following month. The Corporation officials moved into their new offices in 1941 and found much advantage in the ampler space and greater facilities provided. Unfortunately the new Library and Museum, which were part of the scheme, were only in the shell state when war came and their completion, together with the new Fire Station, must await more propitious times.

The effect of the late war on Tunbridge Wells was vastly different from that of world war No. 1. The most striking difference was the increase of population. Refugees and evacuees from London and the south coast towns swarmed into the town. Soldiers we had, it is true, and hundreds of civil servants, but it was the evacuees who strained our housing accommodation to the limit.

The Civil Defence Services were well organised with Full and Part Time Wardens. The Women's Voluntary Service rendered great help with canteens, rest centres, clothing depots, etc. The Home Guard were drilled and trained and towards the end of the war were properly armed.

153 high explosives, 15 oil bombs and 14 flying bombs came down in the Borough, 3,821 properties were partially damaged or demolished, but only 15 lives were lost. 970 alerts were sounded. But so well have repairs been carried out that few war scars are visible to a stranger.

Tunbridge Wells also became a Regional Centre and all the Ministries had offices here, as well as a large establishment to deal with War Damage claims. A large building to permanently house officials of the Ministries of Works and Pensions was erected at Hawkenbury and existing premises have been taken over by other official bodies. Thus, the Petroleum Controller occupies the whole ground floor of the Pump Room, Defence is dealt with from Bredbury, Mount Ephraim, etc.

The Mayor through all the recent difficult years has been Alderman Charles Edward Westbrook. He and Mrs. Westbrook end their seven strenuous years of office this year (1945), having earned the gratitude of all sections of the community for their efficient and self-sacrificing services.

## **THE COMMONS.**

These vital lungs of Tunbridge Wells, comprising 249 acres of varied woodland, gorse and bracken, open spaces and cricket and football grounds, were formerly part of the Manor of Rusthall. The Rusthall Manor Act, 1863, enabled bye-laws to be passed determining certain matters, but the principal Act of Parliament governing the Commons is the Tunbridge Wells Improvement Act, 1890. Under it the management is in the hands of a body of Conservators, twelve in number, appointed as to one-third each by the Lord of the Manor, the Freeholders Committee and the Town Council.

## **RELIGIOUS LIFE IN TUNBRIDGE WELLS.**

It used to be said that one could find in the town a representative of every known religious cult. If one excludes those of the Eastern world it is probably true to-day. There are within the Borough nine Anglican, three Congregational, two Methodist, one General Baptist and two Particular Baptist churches; the church founded by the Countess of Huntingdon and the Roman Catholic Church ; two

Christian Science Churches ; a Society of Friends ; at least three separate communions of Brethren, and the Salvation Army.

It will be of interest to record a few of the outstanding facts about the principal places of worship.

#### KING CHARLES.

The early inhabitants of the Wells, being at a great distance from any parish church (Tonbridge, Frant and Speldhurst being almost equally distant) were served by a " Chapel of Ease " dedicated to King Charles the Martyr. It is a building of local brick of little architectural interest except for its well-proportioned cupola and its elaborate coffered and enriched ceiling, the work of Henry Doogood, the best known of the plasterers employed by Sir Christopher Wren at St. Paul's. " The Story of the Church of King Charles the Martyr," by Col. L. H. Waring, published in 1937, gives all the salient points in its history, and is particularly interesting for the account it gives of happenings prior to the year 1800. A notable ministry was that of the Rev. W. L. Pope who, as he himself wrote to Lord Abergavenny, "had carried on with this voluntary and unpaid work throughout the town for nearly 50 years, and of how, since new parishes had now been formed, it would be quite impossible for a newcomer to follow him in this general ministry." After urging the creation of a parish, Mr. Pope concludes: " You will thus see, my Lord, are not in a future appointment attached to the chapel, you may have a non-resident incumbent—ritualistic, semi-popish, fanatical, controversial, political, radical or any kind of turbulent candidate for notoriety . . . . "

The upshot was the mapping out of a district and the consecration by the Bishop of Dover on July 18th, 1887, the Rev. W. L. Tugwell becoming the first vicar. The present vicar is Rev. R. W. Thornhill, M.C., M.A.

#### HOLY TRINITY CHURCH.

This church, already referred to as an example of Decimus Burton's work, is regarded as the parish church of the town. It was consecrated in September, 1829, and thereafter the road to the Common, which passes its doors, was called Church Road, the older and more picturesque name being Jordan Lane.

Its most notable vicar was the Rev. Edward Hoare, M.A., Canon of Canterbury and Rural Dean, who was appointed in 1853 and served for 40 years. He exercised during his pastorate a dominating influence in the social life of the town and it is no exaggeration to say that hundreds of persons came and settled here in order to be under his ministry.

In 1858 a church rate of 1d. in the £ was levied for the maintenance of the church, but it was discontinued after a short time. The list of assessments is preserved.

The boys' school in Calverley Street (Victoria School) was coeval with the Church, but the present premises date from 1901; a girls' school was established in York Road, and an Infants' School in Basinghall. The latter has ceased to exist. The original vicarage was between Calverley and Crescent Roads, a house now known as Cadogan House. It was sold in 1906 and a new vicarage built on the site of Baston Lodge in Calverley Park Gardens. The present vicar is Rev. Hedley Thomas, M. A.

#### CHRIST CHURCH.

This church, which is of white brick and stone in a pseudo-Norman style, was designed by R. P. Brown, of Greenwich, and the foundation stone was laid so far back as September, 1835. It was consecrated in 1841 but a parish was not assigned to it until 1856. One of its vicars was the Rev. J. Ridgeway, father of the late Bishop of Salisbury.

#### ST. BARNABAS' CHURCH.

The parish of St. Barnabas was constituted in 1881 -and the church, a handsome Gothic edifice in

red brick and stone, designed by J. E. K. and J. P. Cutts, was erected in 1887 and dedicated the following- year. The chapel to the north of the chancel is furnished in memory of parishioners who fell in the 1914-18 war. The present vicar is Rev. F. Steel, M.A.

Its parish hall was erected in 1895 and the day schools in 1896.

#### ST. JAMES'S CHURCH.

erected in 1861-2, of local sandstone (but of superior quality to that dug on the Calverley estate), is one of the most pleasing architectural compositions in the town. It was designed by Ewan Christian, the eminent church architect, and has been subsequently added to and embellished with good taste. The new choir stalls and screen erected in 1927 are a memorial to the Ven. Archdeacon Scott, the popular vicar of the parish for many years. The elegant lych-gate on the south side was the work of J. Oldrid Scott, the architect who designed the Canon Hoare memorial in St. John's Road. The Rev. E. J. He-plans, now retiring, has been vicar since 1930.

#### ST. JOHN'S CHURCH.

This church, designed by a London architect named Gough, was opened in 1858. Its tower and cloistered porch were added later from the designs of Henry H. Cronk, a local architect. It resembles Emmanuel Church in being constructed of Kentish-rag stone. The present vicar is Rev. G. M. Guinness, M.A. Its boys' school dates back to 1860.

#### ST. PETER'S CHURCH.

This parish was formed in 1876. The church, of local sandstone, was also the work of the local architects, H. H. and E. Cronk. Its well-proportioned tower contains a peal of bells. The present vicar is Rev. R.\*H. Walker, M.A. Previous to 1876 this district was known as Windmill Fields.

#### ST. MARK'S CHURCH.

This parish comprises the district of Broadwater Down, Warwick Park, etc. It was formerly part of the parish of Frant, but became a separate parish under the Local Government Act, 1894.

Architecturally the most interesting church in the town, St. Mark's, was built at the time Mansfield was developing Broadwater Down, and was the gift of the Rev. William, 4th Earl of Abergavenny. It was designed by R. L. Roumieu and opened for worship in 1866. Its graceful spire is visible from every eminence within many miles. The present vicar is Rev. M. L. Couchman, M.A

#### ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, RUSTHALL.

A rather sombre type of Early English was adopted for this church but its surroundings are so rural and picturesque, situated as it is on the brink of the Happy Valley, that it forms a most attractive feature of the landscape. It was built in 1850 with additions made in 1864 and 1928-30. Its boys' school is in the graveyard surrounding the church, but girls' and infants' schools are in Rust-hall village. The present vicar is Rev. J. Martin Griffiths, M.A.

#### ST. LUKE'S CHURCH.

This parish, formed in 1911, out of portions of St. John's, St. James's, and St. Barnabas's parishes, is the latest and most northerly in the town. Its church was built in 1910 from the designs of local architects, H. H. and E. Cronk. Its tower contains a peal of eight bells. The present vicar is Rev. Cecil Rhodes, M.A.

#### NONCONFORMIST CHURCHES.

The history of Nonconformity in Tunbridge Wells dates from Cromwellian times. In 1646 there was a Baptist Society at Speldhurst and Pembury which erected a meeting house on Mount Ephraim in 1733. Afterwards the Presbyterians assembled on Mount Sion. Remains of the meeting house built in 1720 are still to be seen. The Independents held meetings during the second half of the 18th century at Durham House, in London Road. Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, came to live at

Tunbridge Wells in 1763 and built here one of her churches. In 1762 John Wesley visited Sir Thomas l'Anson at New Bounds, and "preached in his large parlour."

In 1830 the chapel on Little Mount Sion was bought by two prominent Congregationalists from London, who renovated and enlarged it. Here was formed the Congregational Church under its minister, Rev. Benjamin Slight. The church followed the northward trend of the population and built for itself a handsome structure on Mount Pleasant, opened in 1848. Other Congregational Churches have been founded from time to time, offshoots of Mount Pleasant : Hawkenbury in 1867, Rusthall shortly after, etc.

The Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel, now called Emmanuel Church, may be dated by the following inscription from a monument in the churchyard: " Upon this mount stood and preached that eminent servant of God, George Whitefield, at the opening of the adjoining Chapel, July 23rd, 1769." This quaint chapel of timber and tiles was replaced by the present structure, designed by Wimble, of London, and built in 1867.

#### THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHAPEL.

Public subscriptions paid for the erection of the well-proportioned stone building in Italian Renaissance style designed by Ireland, standing at the corner of Grosvenor and Hanover Roads. It was opened in 1838. The clock tower, designed by Elphick, was added in 1889.

#### THE METHODISTS.

The first building for the Wesleyan Methodists was erected in 1812. It was replaced by the present commodious structure in London Road in 1878. The church, which is the central church of a considerable circuit, has flourished greatly. Offshoots have been built at Hill Street and Rusthall.

The Primitive Methodists established themselves in Camden Road in 1857. Their original chapel becoming dilapidated, a new building was erected in 1878 from the designs of Weeks & Hughes, local architects.

The two bodies are now combined and form the Methodist Church.

#### THE BAPTISTS.

There are two companies known as Baptists, the larger body being the "General," the other the "Strict" or "Particular." The latter (sometimes described as Calvinists) were the earlier in their settlement in Tunbridge Wells. As early as 1834 the chapel in Hanover Road was built, to be followed by " Rehoboth," in Chapel Place.

The general body of Baptists, after holding services in the Town Hall for some years, built their Tabernacle in Calverley Road, about 1883. In 1938 they were able to dispose of the site to some advantage and built a new Tabernacle in the Upper Grosvenor Road, designed by Strange & Grant. It is an interesting attempt to adapt for religious purposes architectural ideas not heretofore attempted in Tunbridge Wells.

The Society of Friends have a meeting house, with hall and ancillary rooms, in Grosvenor Park.

#### BURIAL GROUNDS.

Up to very recent times burials were allowed in the yards of many of the churches, both Anglican and Free. Thus, Trinity, St. Paul's, Emmanuel, Hanover and Rehoboth all have tombstones in the ground surrounding the places of worship, but no interments are now allowed. Trinity churchyard becoming filled, three acres of ground in Woodbury Park were acquired and laid out as a cemetery with a mortuary chapel and lodge, built in 1849. Some illustrious persons were buried there, a list of whom are given in Mr. Elwig's history of Trinity.

The Local Board of Commissioners opened a cemetery on Frant Forest in 1873, and thereafter the Trinity cemetery became known as the Old Cemetery ; it is now the property of the Corporation. The Frant Forest Cemetery has been twice enlarged and is now 28 acres in extent. It has been

regarded as one of the most beautiful in the country.

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## **TUNBRIDGE WARE.**

There has been much confusion and controversy over the early history and invention of this special form of decorative woodwork. Macauley in his History of England, Vol. II, chapter 3, referring to the visit of the Court of Charles II to Tunbridge Wells says "during the season a kind of fair was daily held near the fountain ..... that milliners, toymen, and jewellers came down from London and opened a bazaar under the trees."

Again, Thomas Benge Burr in his history of Tunbridge Wells dated 1766, under the heading of Trade, relates " The trade of Tunbridge Wells is similar to that of Spa in Germany and chiefly consists in a variety of toys in wood, such as tea-chests, dressing boxes, punch ladles, and numerous other little articles of the same kind. Of these great quantities are sold to the company in the summer, especially at their leaving the place, when it is customary for them to take fairings to their friends at home. This Ware takes its name from the place, on account of its employing a great number of hands and being made there in a much neater manner than anywhere else in England."

It was evidently from these beginnings and to compete with the foreign made articles, that the industry grew up, and the special process of making real Tunbridge Ware was evolved. Probably the best description of the method of its manufacture is to be found in the " History of the Parish of Tonbridge," by Mr. Beauchamp Wadmore, published in 1906. This process, which differs essentially from "Inlay," "Mosaic" or " Marqueterie," consists of assembling strips of different coloured woods into a block in such a way that the ends of the strips of wood displayed the pattern required ; these pieces of wood were bound and glued together under pressure, and when set firm into a solid block thin slices were cut across the block by a circular saw, these displayed the same pattern, and were used as veneers, and glued on to the objects to be decorated, they were then carefully smoothed off and polished. Great skill and practice were required in assembling the blocks and producing the pictures of well known buildings which were manufactured during the nineteenth century, in the early part of which the industry seems to have reached its zenith in beauty and skill.

The different woods which are used are mostly local in origin and their colours are natural. The green wood, which was fairly frequently employed was oak, or occasionally beech infected with the fungus *Chlorosplenium aeruginosum*, the colour being produced by the mycelium of the fungus, which does not seem to interfere with the strength or structure of the wood.

At one time the process was employed to imitate Berlin wool work, which was then fashionable. Sometimes blocks of suitable size and shape, instead of being cut into thin veneers, were turned on a lathe to make candlesticks, ring stands, etc., the pattern varying according to the depth to which it was cut. This was called " stick work."

One technical difference which is most noticeable between the good work of the best period, and that of later years, before it finally became extinct, was the great care that was taken to obtain a high polish by hand, resulting in a smooth fine surface, while later on a spirit varnish was used, which scratched easily and was not nearly so effective.

Mr. Beauchamp Wadmore in his book seems to ascribe the invention of this process to the Wise family of Tonbridge who were turners and cabinet makers on a large scale, and who certainly manufactured the Ware in great quantities during the 18th century, though in earlier times they decorated their productions by more simple methods, as hand painting, inlaying, etc. At one time Mr. George Wise called his work." English Mosaics."

On the other hand, claims have been made that the Burrows family who manufactured and sold the Ware at Jordan House at the corner of Church Road, Tunbridge Wells, invented the real process of setting up blocks and cutting off veneers, and that an apprentice of theirs joined the Wise firm in Tonbridge and taught them the method. This is rather borne out by an interview which the writer had in August, 1934, with George William Burrows, then aged 85, and living at 9, Culverden Road, Tunbridge Wells, he claimed that his grandfather, William Burrows, invented the process and began its manufacture at Gibraltar Cottage, his brother, Humphrey Burrows, also made the Ware and sold it at Jordan House, which still stands at the corner of Church Road and the London Road, it had then double fronted windows as shown in the well known coloured print by W. Day, of-17, Gate Street, London, published about 1882, called "H.R.H. Princess Victoria returning from a morning ride."

Another maker of the Ware was the Firm of Fenner and Nye at what was called " The Repository " on Mount Ephraim, the house still stands now called " The Chalet." The business of this firm was later carried on very successfully by Thomas Barton who was on the Local Board, and became an Alderman of the Town Council at the Incorporation of the Borough in 1889.

The Hollamby brothers, one of whom had been apprenticed with the Burrows at Jordan House started to make the Ware at a place in the Frant Road. Messrs. Boyce, Brown and Kemp at 108, Camden Road were probably the last manufacturers of Tunbridge Ware

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