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The Journal of The Decimus Burton Society

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The Decimus Burton Society was set up to
encourage the study and appreciation of the life
and work of this eminent architect.

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The Journal of

The Decimus Burton Society

Since writing in our last issue of DECIMUS in Winter 2020, I am pleased to say that the Society has received many favourable comments from members, individuals and organisations alike as to the quality of the publication and its content. I would like to thank everyone who helped make this possible and look forward to continuing in the same vein as we move forwards.

Needless to say, the restrictions imposed by the pandemic have had an impact on the talks and events that the Society has been able to offer, which is partly the reason why we decided to expand the content of the journal. I am, however, able to confirm that we will be offering our second talk for this membership year in September, and already have plans for some exciting live events for members for 2022 onwards. Those events being developed include: a visit to Grimston Park and Fleetwood, a tour of Decimus Burton's work at Kew Gardens, including a view of Kew's Burton archives; and a tour of The Wellington Arch and Ionic Screen in London. We have also been in discussion with the Sir John Soane Museum, the V&A and the RIBA, all who have collections highly relevant to Burton's life and work, about other events.

As part of our commitment to education, the Society has been pursuing links with schools of architecture with the aim of encouraging students to study,

appreciate and learn from Burton's work – it should also give us the opportunity to discover how the study of architecture today compares with that of the past, and how, working together, we can learn valuable lessons from both the past as well as the present. Decimus Burton's developments in town planning are arguably highly relevant today at a time when proposed changes in the current planning policies are under close public scrutiny.

The Society continues to receive enquiries from members and individuals researching the life and work of Decimus Burton, and have received thanks from those we have been able to help. We have also been contacted by individuals and organisations looking to preserve the Burton legacy, by either drawing attention to some of his works that are in need of restoration or repair, or in other instances by looking to have buildings by Burton listed where they are not already protected. We hope to be able to include features on some of the projects in future editions of the journal.

The proposal to establish a Decimus Burton Museum, Archive and Society headquarters located in two of his buildings within his Calverley Estate Development is still in progress. The site, which forms part of the town's Civic Complex, is highly topical at present, as the council looks to re-purpose and redevelop it. The idea has sparked interest within the local community, not least because the area contains one of Burton's childhood homes, but also because it contains one of the highest concentrations of his work in the country, and is within a short travelling distance of many of his other works.

As always, our members continue to offer valuable suggestions, and again I would like to thank you all for sending them in. In response to some, we are including in the journal a section on Burton items of interest that are currently in the news, and comments on past articles or features. Please continue to forward your suggestions. We might not be able to include them all, but we will consider them, and we certainly value your thoughts and comments.

I think it only remains for me to say that I hope you enjoy reading this issue, and I look forward to another successful year for the Society.

All the best.

Paul Avis, Chairman

June 2021

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ARCHITECTURE AND GENTILITY:

The Cult of the Villa

By Rosemary Yallop

Figure 1: Villa at Herne Hill, c. 1848. (Reproduced by kind permission of London Borough of Lambeth, Archives Department, Image no. 02278)

'Nothing can more distinctly mark the character and taste of a man, than the kind of dwelling he shall chuse to erect for the place of his particular residence. In that will indisputably be seen whether his taste, his judgement, or his wealth, was predominant; or how far all together were called into action.'

(James Malton, *A Collection of designs for rural retreats, as villas*, London, 1802, p. 5.)

James Malton's counsel to readers of his architectural pattern book of 1802 encapsulates the theme of this essay, which explores how from the late Georgian period and into the nineteenth century domestic architecture was enlisted to express the concept of Gentility. In particular the idea of the villa as the locus of an idealised life was enthusiastically embraced by the 'middling sort', newly wealthy and conscious of status, who seized the opportunity to use their homes as both mirror and celebration of self.

Two types of published medium are especially helpful in illustrating the evolution of the concept of the villa during the first half of the nineteenth century. First, the new genre of architectural pattern book, which began to appear in more affordable form and increasing numbers from the last decade of the eighteenth century; and second, the regional and national press of the time which carried a plethora of advertisements offering villas for sale or to let. Both types of publication employed specific vocabulary to present their wares in the most appealing light, and both reveal the aspirations as well as the functional requirements of the potential client. As a result they tell us a great deal about the role and significance of the villa beyond its purely architectural context.

'Villeggiatura'

Across the centuries, from Pliny in Ancient Rome, to the Medici in Renaissance Italy, to the Palladian enthusiasm of Lord Burlington whose Chiswick villa emulated Palladio's Villa Capra, the concept of villeggiatura – temporary retreat from the discomforts and responsibilities of town life to a secondary, less formal house in the countryside – was an established practice of the élite. But it was a habit which, in eighteenth-century Britain, was increasingly being copied by the mercantile and professional cadres. They had traditionally lived over-the-shop, so to speak, in the centres of the cities and towns where they generated their wealth, but began to build or lease houses out of town, for family recreation and entertaining; the word 'villa' and even 'suburb villa' begins to appear as a functional description of these houses early in the century.

Daniel Defoe's description of villa life in Surrey in the 1720s points up some social nuances:

> *'These fine houses are not .... the mansion houses of families, the antient residences of ancestors, with lands to a considerable value about them; but houses of retreat, gentleman's summer-houses, or citizens' country-houses; whither they retire from the hurries of*

business, and from getting money, to draw their breath in a clear air, and to divert themselves and their families.' [1]

We note the distinction between gentlemen and citizens, and the use of the word mansion – from the Latin manere, to stay, to endure - to denote a permanent or primary house, in contrast to the implied secondary nature of the villa. The social aspirations of the new class of villa-builders attracted some disdain and even ridicule. A vicious satire was penned by the pseudonymous Adam Fitz-Adam in April 1753:

'Finding himself in possession of a considerable fortune, Squire Mushroom of Block Hill grew ambitious of introducing himself to the world as a man of taste and pleasure; for which purpose he put an edging of silver lace on his servants' waistcoats, took into keeping a brace of whores, and resolved to have a Villa.'

'If one wished to see a coxcomb expose himself in the most effectual manner, one would advise him to build a Villa; which is the chef d'oeuvre of modern impertinence, and the most conspicuous stage which Folly can possibly mount to display herself to the world.' [2]

Defoe is not alone in making the significant distinction between a Villa and a Mansion. The word mansion bespeaks provenance, longevity, and therefore status: in short, it represented old money; by contrast the new type of villa-dweller was not always quite *comme il faut*. Writing rather later, in 1803, Humphry Repton contrasts the *'established mansion of an English nobleman's family'* with the *'small villa, liable to change its proprietor as good or ill success prevails'*.[3] And indeed they did change hands frequently, as evidenced by the contemporary press, reflecting in part the fact that leasehold was the prevalent mode of tenure even among the more affluent middle classes.

A driving force for the expansion of the suburb in the early nineteenth century was the detrimental impact of the Industrial Revolution on the quality of life in towns and cities - noise, pollution, cholera – in combination with a less tangible but potent middle-class unease about living amidst the labouring masses, and perceptions of attendant moral decline. The wealth generated into the hands of the rising professional and entrepreneurial classes afforded many of them the opportunity to move out of towns and cities, fleeing from the problems which they had helped to create; this accelerated the process of the separation of Home from Work, in itself a major change in middle-class life. As a result, architects found themselves addressing a new and promising market, producing designs for the smaller house, not in the form of

terraces in the town but, for the most part, individual houses to be constructed on the town fringes in what emerged as proto-rural unplanned colonies.

Villa books

But what form should the Architecture of Gentility take? In contrast to the folio volumes produced for aristocratic clients by the leading architects of the previous century, the new wave of architectural pattern books which emerged from around 1800 was more affordable and less exclusive. These 'villa books' acted both as portfolio of executed projects and catalogue of templates, embracing new reprographic techniques and often presenting elevations not in the form of traditional measured drawings but of impressionistic representations of villas in garden settings.

In his 1793 pattern book, architect Charles Middleton had identified the quintessential qualities of the villa as *'Elegance, compactness and convenience'*.[4] The villa was defined by what it was not: sitting between the grandiloquence and ostentation of the mansion, and the simplicity, with the risk of unwelcome connotations of poverty, of the cottage. And the word 'convenience' hinted at a degree of domestic practicality which was more appropriate to the life led by the intended occupants.

Architect J. B. Papworth offered his thoughts on villa design in 1818:

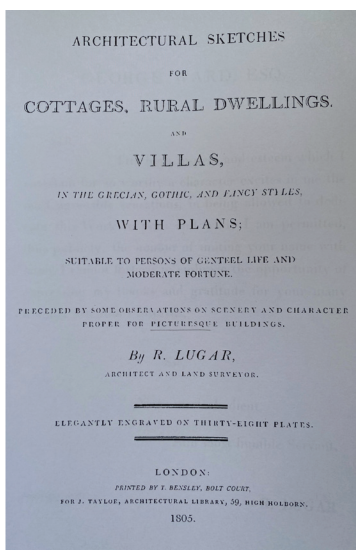
'A small villa residence must be considered first in terms of its fitness to house a family, but it must also provide external claims to respectability, including whatever tends to produce those impressions which are recommendatory to the tasteful and judicious. Cheerfulness, comfort and a due proportion of elegance are the prevailing features desirable to the exterior.' [5]

Pattern books offered examples in a variety of styles, from the classical 'box' to the Picturesque, for even from its Roman origins, the word denoted function rather than form. Architect David Laing summed up the challenge to the architect as that of: *'uniting convenience and elegance with economy'*, although he conceded that, as distinct from cottage forms,

'In the designs for <u>Villas</u> I have indulged in more Ornament and variety as allowable to such Buildings, whose inhabitants may be considered of some <u>Rank</u> in Life, and <u>entitled</u> to more <u>Show</u>, as well as more Conveniences'.[6]

The architects were well aware, as Malton pointed out, that a villa would be under scrutiny from bystanders and visitors as an

expression of taste and restraint just as much as for its immediate aesthetic appeal. Fitness for purpose was important, but so was fitness for the station of its occupant, and both undue modesty and over-ostentation were likely to meet with censure. The qualities sought in the 'character' of a villa were not unlike those required of a gentleman.



ARCHITECTURAL SKETCHES
FOR
COTTAGES, RURAL DWELLINGS,
AND
VILLAS,
IN THE GRECIAN, GOTHIC, AND FANCY STYLES,
WITH PLANS;
SUITABLE TO PERSONS OF GENTEEL LIFE AND
MODERATE FORTUNE.
PRECEDED BY SOME OBSERVATIONS ON SCENERY AND CHARACTER
PROPER FOR PICTURESQUE BUILDINGS.
By R. LUGAR,
ARCHITECT AND LAND SURVEYOR.
ELEGANTLY ENGRAVED ON THIRTY-EIGHT PLATES.
LONDON:
PRINTED BY T. BENSLEY, BOLT COURT,
FOR J. TAYLOR, ARCHITECTURAL LIBRARY, 59, HIGH HOLBORN.
1805.

Figure 2: Robert Lugar: Architectural Sketches (London, 1805), title page (author's collection).

Architect Robert Lugar, former pupil of John Nash, published four pattern books, all of which ran to a number of editions. His first, in 1805, was *Architectural Sketches for Cottages, Rural Dwellings, and Villas in the Grecian, Gothic, and Fancy Styles; Suitable to persons of Genteel Life and Moderate Fortune*. He imbues the villa with abstract qualities: it is an agent which speaks for its occupant:

'The style of the VILLA should at once declare it to be the residence of the Gentleman. Harmony, delicacy and simple ornamental appearance constitute the true character of the villa.'

His tone is discursive rather than technical; he presents a gamut of 'fancy' styles, suggesting suitability for particular occupants. He proposes: *'A house in the gothic style, in the true character of an ancient English mansion, suited to the residence of a clergyman'* - a parsonage could also be a villa. He also puts forward: *'A comfortable house suitable for a gentleman's residence, or an occasional retreat for a merchant', and: 'a design in the fancy style with conveniences for a genteel family'*. For the more adventurous there is also *'a gothic house in the fancy, broken or varied character, for a gentleman's residence. ... The parts are large and the style bold.'* As an alternative, *'A house in the style of true house-Gothic, very suitable for the residence of a private gentleman, affording conveniences proper for a family of respectability.'* A degree of anthropomorphism is discernible: *'the elevation shows a character becoming an English gentleman: plain and unaffected'*, adding, *'This should be stuccoed.'* Of another design, he

comments: *'There is an agreeable neatness in this elevation suitable to many situations, and to the mind of many persons.'*

Outward physical appearance is therefore acknowledged as a signifier of the occupant's taste and standing. But the villa books also hint that the supposed simplicity of villa life was itself imbued with improving moral qualities. Many architects emphasized the role of the villa in establishing a connection to nature and its virtues. Malton, for example, commended the country villa:

'The wise, the virtuously independent, who prefer the pure and tranquil retirement of the country to the foetid joys of the tumultuous city, are they who take the most likely means to enjoy that blessing of life, happiness.' [7]

At its simplest level the design of the villa could foster virtuous pastimes. A Lugar villa design 'in the fancy style' included: *'A conservatory adjoining the drawing room with which it may communicate or shut off at will. The fragrance of the flowers and the study of botany may thus afford pleasure and amusement.'* [8]

The villa books were as much about the villa as a vessel for an idealised life as they were about 'correctness' of design. They also record the moment of transition of the villa from an élite into a democratic model. Architect Edward Trendall published a pattern book in 1831 which was addressed to the building of *'villas uniting convenience and elegance with economy, the designs adapted to the environs of the metropolis and large towns'* [9]. In 1839 architect Samuel Brooks states boldly that *'par eminence, England becomes the country of suburban villas'*.[10]

As a home, the villa was a forum for companionship, social and familial. Malton recommended that *'A villa should be capable of accommodating a few chosen friends with ease and comfort, and should possess every requisite convenience for domestic felicity.'* [11] John Claudius Loudon, tastemaker and standard-bearer for suburban villa life, was to later to declare in his innovative guide to villa life, *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* of 1838, perhaps the ultimate villa credo: that *'a suburban residence with a very small portion of land attached will contain all that is essential to happiness'*.[12] In the words of architectural historian John Archer, the suburban villa was *'a place for the performance of self'*.[13]

Selling the villa ideal

We have seen that the discourse revealed by the villa books coalesces around ideas of 'appropriateness', 'elegance' and 'gentility', as well as 'comfort', 'retirement' and 'utility',

in a judicious mixture of practicality and aspiration. The late Georgian surveyor and auctioneer, well acquainted with the requirements of their market, seized on these themes.

An early example comes from *The Times* on 12th June 1786:

'A neat, genteel, compact villa in complete repair, with pleasure and kitchen gardens, enclosed in part within a lofty brick wall, with a rich meadow adjoining. Desirably situated. Late in the occupation of Captain Mears.' Also available was his 'neat and genteel Household furniture including a harpsichord.'

To a potential purchaser these brief descriptions are replete with satisfactory coded messages: the house is attractive but not ostentatious; the house and location are given provenance by the mention of Captain Mears as predecessor; the walled pleasure garden offers secluded space for solitary contemplation or social interaction; the productive garden offers domestic economy and the meadow promises rural charm. And by acquiring Captain Mears's harpsichord we may also in due course secure his visitors' book.

The vocabulary of advertising copy changed little in succeeding decades. On the occasion of Mr. John Derisley 'quitting his residence' in 1813, his *'Genteel villa, recently fitted up in the neatest stile'* was offered for sale together with his *'Capital Furniture; elegant, neat and modern, comprising the Requisites of a Genteel Residence'.* [14] *The Morning Chronicle* of 5th July 1817 offered an Italianate villa in Kent designed by Robert Lugar: *'An elegant villa adapted for an economical establishment and possessing at the same time ample scope for the indulgence of picturesque embellishments, finished in a very tasty manner. … Altogether a most desirable residence, peculiarly adapted for a genteel family'*. In *Burrow's Worcester Journal* of 5th October 1837, *'A Genteel villa, replete with every convenience, exceeding desirable for the residence of a genteel family, having been built in a tasteful style'*. From the Morning Post, 10th July 1830, near Windsor: *'A genteel and commodious villa with gardens and pleasure grounds. A most complete and comfortable retreat.'*

The ability to 'retreat' remained valued, but for those still engaged in commerce or the professional life, proximity to town was important, and the journey should be short, and comfortable. It was desirable to be:

'in a genteel neighbourhood a small distance from Town. The roads are watched and lighted in winter and watered in summer, which renders it perfectly secure, safe and agreeable, and the stage coaches go and return every hour.'[15]

The language of the advertisements reinforce the idea that the villa was not just a reward for diligence and financial or professional acuity but could bestow status upon its occupants; they hint at how villas could accrue social capital. New occupants could benefit from the status of their predecessors: the phrase *'lately in the occupation of'* followed by a name of rank or distinction was extremely common; occasionally the names of neighbours are pleaded in aid too. Occasionally a villa brought with it a literal place in local society. The 'desirable' Epping villa in the *Morning Post* of July 1805 laid claim to a *'commodious pew in Woodford church*; that advertised in *The Times* of July 31st 1810 brought with it: *'a good pew in Cobham church'*. This was trumped by a villa in Surrey boasting in the *Morning Post* of 17th March 1834 of being: *'Within a convenient distance of two parish churches, with accommodation secured in both'*. There were 'Sporting Villas' with access to several packs of hounds, and 'Marine Villas' boasting private bathing-houses and sea air, but the language and the pre-requisites are constant. Often their names were deliberately evocative: The Hermitage, Belmont, The Retreat. Viewing of these houses for sale or to let was generally by appointment ('ticket'), in itself an instructive activity for those who wished to educate and refine their own aspirations.

These advertisements and the villa books reveal the preoccupations of middle-class home-making: the paramount aspiration being the attainment of Gentility. To be Genteel was to be socially impeccable, regardless of birth, for nineteenth-century society offered a large degree of social mobility; indeed the middling sort of this period have been described as 'Rich men graduating into gentility'.[16] As already noted, the word 'Genteel' was applied not only to the villas themselves but to the localities in which they were situated, the families which inhabited them, and the furniture which they contained.[17] And alongside the villa advertisements it was even possible to purchase 'genteel' carriage-horses, a signifier, one can only assume, for a presentable horse which knew how to behave.

Rus in urbe: the planned villa colony

A significant evolution in the history of the villa was the transition from the uncoordinated construction of individual villas in favoured areas out of town, to the speculative development of entire villa estates. John Nash's 1823 design for the speculative development of the Park Villages, in Regent's Park, was a novel vision in a number

of ways.[18] It took the Picturesque principle of harmony between house and setting, in which he had led the way in the design of country houses, and applied it to the more modest requirements of the middling sort: it regulated the relationship of one house to another in a more imaginative way than the set-piece squares and crescents of conventional Georgian urban development. His layout of villas of varying Picturesque designs, disposed on either side of the Regent's Canal along thickly-planted serpentine roads, created a contrived rurality and the diverse visual impact to be found in a settlement which had grown organically over time: a fictitious naturalism which was a central tenet of the Picturesque architectural aesthetic. This, however, was not to be a new town (markets and tradesmen were to be accommodated nearby but outside the bounds), but a homogeneous community inhabited by those of equivalent status and coalescent values.

Decimus Burton's Picturesque design for Calverley Park was a clear response to the aspirations of the time and no doubt drew on his experience as Nash's pupil. As the Sussex Advertiser reminded its readers on 20th August 1838 with unsubtle emphasis:

'The public are aware that CALVERLEY PARK, which skirts the town of Tunbridge Wells, has been selected as the favoured spot to erect a number of elegant Modern Villas, of a character to suit the present enlightened age, and meet the GREAT MARCH OF IMPROVEMENT. THE ELITE FROM THE METROPOLIS needed something more distingué wherein to repose during the Summer and Autumnal Season. This Park presented itself with all its glowing beauties, adorned by WOODLAND SCENERY OF SURPASSING BEAUTY, and left no room to hesitate.' (see figure 3)

That same vision of a quietly affluent villa colony discreetly disposed in a bucolic setting can also be seen in Decimus's proposed plans for the Furze Hill estate, for Sir Isaac Goldsmid at Hove. He had designed a villa for Goldsmid in 1833, known as Furze Hill and later Wick Hall. The Furze Hill speculation was never built, but the surviving *'View of the Rustic Village now being formed at Furze Hill'*,[19] together with an estate plan, shown above, shows 18 villas in their own grounds, of diverse designs. The Italianate, neo-classical, cottage orné and castellated villas are laid out along both sides of a serpentine road, its entrances guarded by a gate and lodge, adjoining on one side a pleasure garden with a spa room, close to a chalybeate spring.

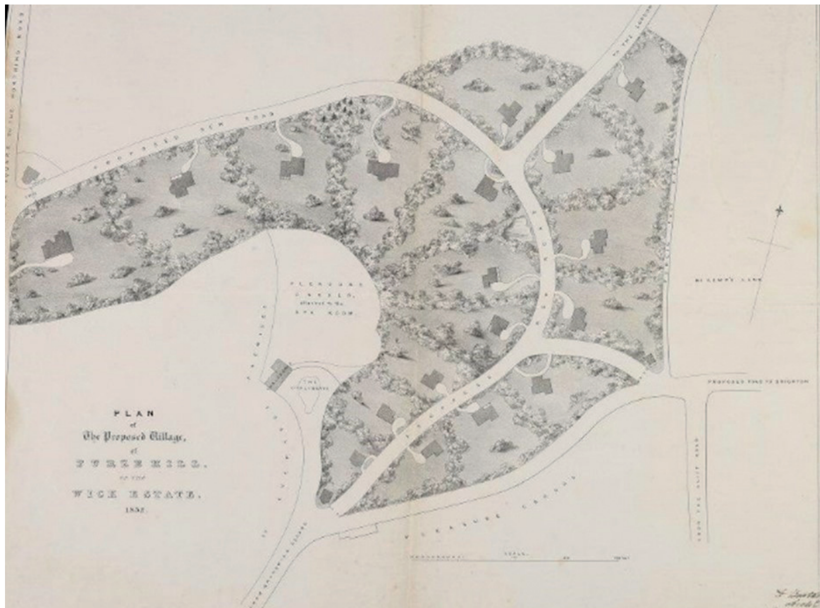


Figure 3: Plan of the proposed village at Furzehill, on the Wick Estate, 1832. RIBA Collections, SC 49/14; RIBApix69230. (Reproduced with permission.)

The villa ideal

Architect J. B. Papworth saw an intrinsic connection between the idea of the Villa and the evolving concept of 'Home' as sanctum and repository of domestic values.

'The desire to congregate about him in his dwelling and domain all the means of domestic comfort is a prominent feature in the character of an Englishman; there he lays up his chief resources against the cares of life. His home is the depository of his most interesting pleasures; ... he eagerly embraces its pleasure and repose ... and flies to it as a welcome retreat from the bustle and toils of life. Thus the suitableness of his dwelling becomes the measure of the Englishman's enjoyments; he prefers to abridge the appearances of show and splendour rather than yield domestic pleasure and social accommodation, which he enjoys under the sacred appellation of 'his fireside'. Every thing that can add to the fulfilment of this object is cultivated and the result is that the English villa has become an universal pattern for such buildings, in which simple elegance and usefulness are intended to be combined.'[20]

A guidebook to the Liverpool suburb of Everton of 1830 epitomised villa life as one of *'genteel-rurality of character'*, and assures the reader

that: *'A walk of twenty minutes would take a merchant from the Rialto to these regions of Arcadia'.*[21] Herne Hill, in south London, was compared to: *'Olympus – the Elysium of many of our merchants and traders, whose dwellings look the abode of happy mortals'.*[22] The innate pretension is evident, but the word suburb – as opposed to the later coinage of 'suburbia' – was not yet tainted. Loudon's philosophy of villa life was simpler: *'The suburbs of towns are alone calculated to afford a maximum of comfort and enjoyment at a minimum of expense.'*[23]

The individual villas commissioned by intended occupants who had some measure of choice in their design and style began to give way from the 1830s to speculative building *en masse* where style was driven by the economics of the scheme and the builder's instinct for marketability. Builder-speculators rushed to feed the middle-class appetite for the suburbs, drawing on a wave of new middle-class wealth to fund their projects. The frenzy of building work on the fringes of every town became notorious: *The Builder* Magazine complained in 1848 that *'the villa mania is everywhere most obtrusive'.*[24] Controlling the tone of the leafy, respectable socially homogeneous milieu was important, and lease covenants enforced behavioural codes, usually forbidding almost all trade; gates and sometimes lodges (as at Calverley Park) not only physically prevented access by others but were a symbol of literal exclusivity. *Rus in urbe* became a defining characteristic of the new villa suburb and many were named 'Park' to preserve the fiction of rurality.

The decline of the villa

There were contradictions inherent in suburban villa life: occupants desired individuality while acknowledging the role of conformity; valued privacy yet appreciated display; enjoyed seclusion but craved proximity to society, and while the architects and the advertisers persuaded that the word 'Villa' spoke of refinement and restraint, later in the century villa culture's detractors saw instead sentimentalism, naiveté of taste and petty snobbery. Usage of the term 'villa' moved down the social scale, for yet smaller houses and even terraces and streets, on the face of it somewhat perverse. Charles Dickens was moved to exasperation by villa hyperbole:

' 'An Italian Villa to Let': *pretty, plausible but deceptive. The house-agent who devised the Italian prefix was a humbug. …The Italian prefix is a shabby little domicile, only Italian insofar as it possesses Venetian blinds. I know it, for I have been egregiously sold, lamentably taken in, by this mendacious villa.'*[25]

Of the villa's architectural evolution, historian Sir John Summerson, writing in the 1950s, was scathing:

'Long before the end of the century, the degradation of the word 'villa' was complete: it had begun to signify contempt, something small, cheap, remote and ugly. 'Home' and 'cottage' were preferred as verbal symbols and 'villa' relegated to a level of commonness from which it has never since ascended.'[26]

So, over a century and a half, the villa in Britain traced a trajectory from classically-inspired aristocratic plaything, through its apogee as repository of middle-class ideals, downward to a stylistically barren symbol of suburban malaise.

The Cult of the Villa

In its heyday the suburban villa was prized, idealised, idolised: those who observed the rites of the cult would be rewarded for their devotion. The villa had agency: it would not only reflect your personal qualities and status, but could both enrich and advance them. For this stratum of society with its unshakeable belief in self-improvement, this concept held seductive appeal. As Cosimo de' Medici wrote in the 1450s to scholar Marsilio Ficino: 'Yesterday, I came to the villa at Careggi, not to cultivate my fields but my soul.'

<u>Notes</u>

1. Daniel Defoe, A Tour through the whole island of Great Britain, divided

Figure 4: John Gilbert, Catford Hill House,
(Lewisham Local History and Archives Centre, reproduced with permission).

into Circuits, (London, 1724-7), Volume I, Letter 2, Part 3. Accessible at: https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/travellers/Defoe/8

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3. Humphry Repton, Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (London, 1803), p. 204.
4. Charles Middleton, Picturesque and Architectural Views for cottages, farm houses and country villas, (London, 1793), p. 9.
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6. David Laing, Hints for Dwellings, (London, 1800), pp. iv-v.
7. Malton, op. cit., p. ii.
8. Lugar, op. cit., p. 23.
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12. John Claudius Loudon, The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion, (London, 1838), p. 8.
13. John Archer, Architecture and Suburbia, (Minnesota, 2005), Chapter 1.
14. Norfolk Chronicle, 22nd May 1813.
15. Morning Post, 7th July 1806.
16. G. Kitson Clark, The Critical Historian, (London, 1967), p. 154.
17. Advertisements for 'Genteel Villa Residences' can be found at least as late as 1896.
18. The National Archives, London: MPE 1/911.
19. RIBA Collections, SC182/118; may be viewed at https://www.architecture.com/image-library/RIBApix/image-information/poster/view-of-proposed-development-of-villas-at-furze-hill-brighton-for-sir-isaac-goldsmid/posterid/RIBA83088.html.
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22. William Hone, The Every-Day Book and Table Book, Vol. 2, (London, 1830), p. 557.
23. John Claudius Loudon, op. cit., p. 10.
24. The Builder, 14th October 1848, Vol. VI, No. 297, pp. 500-501.
25. Charles Dickens, 'Houses to Let', in Household Words, (copyright edition, Leipzig, 1852), p. 19.
26. John Summerson, 'The London Suburban Villa' in The Unromantic Castle, (London, 1990) p. 234.
27. Quoted in James Ackerman, The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses, (London, 1995), p. 73.

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DECIMUS BURTON AND... THE BEULAH SPA

By Chris Shields

In Upper Norwood, South London, just a stone's throw from the site of the once famous Crystal Palace, stands a semicircle of trees embracing a bowl-like contour, around a grassy lawn, facing south west and catching the sunset. In the 1830s, a trip to this place - 'The Royal Beulah Spa and Gardens', with its clean air and dramatic views, was of great contrast to the overcrowding and unsanitary conditions of Central London. For on these grassy slopes a natural spring of chalybeate water bubbled, which had been well known to the locals and Norwood gypsies for its healing properties, a long time before the Spa gardens were ever imagined.

The land once belonged to Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury and was part of what the Anglo-Saxons had named 'The Great North Wood' - which stretched from Croydon and included this area called Bewlye Farm and Coppice, continuing north to the Thames. There had been no permanent settlement here until the 18th century as the area's ridge was formed of heavy clay and was a poor environment for agriculture and building, though it was ideally suited to the growth of deep-rooted oak trees. These oaks were the source for timbers for the building of ships - Sir Frances Drake's 'Golden Hind' was built with the wood from these trees. Since the time of Elizabeth I these slopes had been used by colliers who

supplied the fuel needs of the City of London which heavily depended on charcoal, much of which was manufactured here on the Beulah slopes. There were natural springs like those at Dulwich, Streatham and Sydenham all around the area, which were the source of the River Effra which journeyed all the way to the Thames.

Bewlye Farm and Coppice stood in the Manor of Whitehorse and had been owned by various people over the years (the Morton, Borrett and Cator families) but it wasn't until enclosure and a new owner - John Davidson Smith, that the natural spring's properties were turned into a business venture.

A popular feature of social life at that time was the pleasure garden, although by this time the famous Vauxhall Gardens had already been open for 45 years and such establishments were in decline. If John Davidson Smith's plan was to be successful, he'd need to prove the worth of his Spa spring. He did this by sending a pint sample to professor of the day Michael Faraday who after his analysis concluded that "this water is equal to, if not superior to, the waters of Bath and Wells". Physicians of the day established that the water contained more salts than that of Cheltenham Spa.

John Davidson Smith demolished Bewlye Farm and combined the land with his Bewlye Coppice, thus making up a site covering 30 acres. He employed Decimus Burton to design the grounds and buildings for this 'Royal Beulah Spa and Gardens'. Burton was to design the pumproom (located in the entrance lodge) and landscape the acres around the well. This all took place between 1828 and 1831 – when the Beulah Spa had its grand opening.

I had always been puzzled as to why Decimus Burton was involved with this project, being familiar with the style of his grand projects like the Hyde Park Corner Arch and Palm House at Kew, so it wasn't until I read that Burton was a specialist in the 'Cottage Orne' style (French for decorated cottage – a movement of 'rustic' stylised cottages of the late

Plan of Beulah Spa in 1831

18th and early 19th centuries during the Romantic movement), which English Heritage define as 'A rustic building of picturesque design', that it all made sense and clicked into place. Beulah Spa was full of rustic buildings, all designed by Burton.

Smith also commissioned Burton to create a picturesque route through Whitehorse Wood which would give access to the Beulah Spa for people on the South of the grounds (Croydon). This route is now called Grange Road, but the lower part was long known as 'Decimus Burton Road'.

The Beulah Spa Gardens were opened by the Countess of Essex on 1st August 1831. The resort received illustrious visitors and fashionable society. Visiting Queens, (both Queen Adelaide – consort of William IV and Queen Victoria (on four occasions) and King Edward VII (as a young Prince). There were Princesses (a young Vicky who was to become the German Empress), Emperors (Kaiser Wilhelm I), Dukes and Duchesses, Earls and Countesses and Lords and Ladies. Marshal Soult – the French hero of the Napoleonic Wars visited for one of the Beulah Spa's famous Fetes. Johann Strauss Snr even conducted his band on the Beulah Spa lawns.

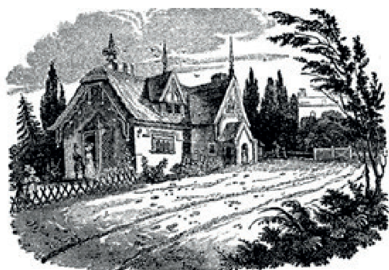
Beulah Saline Spa, Norwood, the Estate of J.D. Smith Esq

Tivoli Lodge drawn by John Preston Neale - engraved by R Martin 1831

By May 1833 it was averaging at 500 visitors per day – 'The place, by nature delightfully laid out, has been highly adorned, by Mr. D Burton's ingenuity, with rustic embellishments, many of which were last season only designed, arbours, heath-sheds and benches over-canopied by trees in luxuriant foliage are in abundance'.

On arrival to the Beulah Spa grounds you'd be met by the 'Rustic Lodge', originally known as 'Burton Lodge', but later to be called 'Tivoli Lodge'. It served as the entrance gate to the Spa grounds and was said to 'combine the Gothic and Elizabethan styles of cottage architecture'.

It had dormer windows, barge boards, spiky finials, hood moulds and elaborate chimneys. At this lodge the visitor would be provided with a bottle of Spa water. Then, stepping out, there were bright grassy fields, divided by dark green hedges, feeding cattle, and the landscape stretching itself to the distant horizon. Entertainments were controlled from this lodge by the clerk. It was also the Spa's bottling plant - a separate spring rose in its immediate garden area which was piped into the ground floor rooms. There were huge fireplaces for sterilising bottles in clouds of steam from boiling vats.



The ‘Rustic Lodge’ or ‘Burton Lodge’
later known as Tivoli Lodge

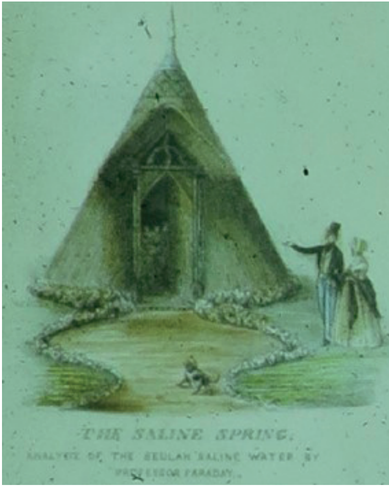
Passing the lodge was a carriageway which ran a mile and a half, winding around the flank of the hill - called Sylvan Road described as ‘a delightful ride for invalids taking horse or carriage exercise’. Fine views were to be had from the grounds and many ‘rustic edifices’ were constructed. An octagon-shaped thatched-roofed building,

Beulah Spa 1837 engraved by Henry Wallis after a picture by J Salmon

later with added external rustic columns, occupied a central position at the Beulah Spa and was called the ‘Refreshment room’, ‘Reading room’ or ‘Swiss confectionery’. There were also various booths, alcoves and grottoes where visitors could take rest and refreshment.

The Octagonal Reading Room
at Beulah Spa

In 1832 George Hume Weatherhead published ‘An Account of the Beulah Saline Spa’. In it he mentions that



The Saline Spring at Beulah Spa

the actual Spa spring was shrouded in a protective thatched cover in what looked a bit like an Indian wigwam. The water rose about fourteen feet from the spring and was 'within a circular rockwork enclosure' with a narrow orifice at the top which was two feet across. The water was 'drawn by a contrivance at once ingenious and novel' - raised in an urn-shaped glass vessel 'terminating with a cock of the same material', having a 'stout rim and a cross-handle of silver'. To this handle was attached a 'thick worsted rope', passing over a pulley, and the vessel would be lowered into the well and when 'taken up full' the water was drawn off by means of the cock. Described as being beautifully transparent with sparkling bubbles of air rising to the surface when allowed to stand. Its taste was bitter, without being at all disagreeable, leaving a flavour of a saline ingredient, the sulphur of magnesia.

A typical thatched hut used by Norwood Collier

Decimus Burton's thatched wigwam which covered the Spa well can only have been inspired by the huts built and used by the Norwood colliers when they used the Beulah slopes for their charcoal burning – possibly an inspiration for all the Spa's rustic booths, alcoves and grottoes. Also at the Spa was a rosary, dancing lawn, camera obscura, maze, archery ground with hut and later on two lakes (improvements were made to the grounds by Thomas Whitlam Atkinson in 1836).

In its last two years of operating, the Royal Beulah Spa and Gardens had major competition from the Crystal Palace which was by then located just around the corner. This was just

too much for the old-fashioned Spa grounds which closed in 1856. The Beulah Spa Gardens were sold off in 1858 – purchased by a Mr. Frederick Horne who in 1864 built himself a large mansion on the grounds with its own entrance lodge (still standing opposite Tivoli Lodge). He also built and sold many grand houses on the top ridge of the Spa site.

An early 1900s photo of
the Octagonal Reading Room
and below the author's photo of
the same location in 2017

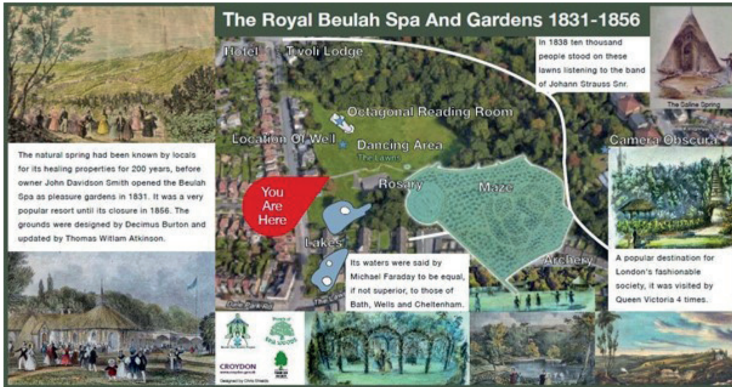
By 1903 the grounds had been reduced from 30 acres to 6.5 acres and had been renamed 'The Lawns'. The Croydon Corporation acquired the land, and by 1940 a Deed of Covenant was made to ensure that the area would remain as open space and that it would not be built upon. Burton's Octagonal Reading Room still stood, but by the 1940s it was in ruins and was eventually demolished.

The Beulah Spa seemed to be forgotten for the next seventy years but in 2018 the Beulah Spa History Project was founded to get funding for a pictorial history lectern and a granite floor plaque, both achieved in September 2018.

This marks the exact location of
THE BEULAH SPA
natural chalybeate and saline spring
A popular well (14 feet deep) stood here
between 1831-1856, said by M. Faraday
to be one of the purest in the country
Spa Grounds designed by D. Burton & T. W. Atkinson
Visited by Queen Victoria 1835/38/43/46

Presented to the people of Norwood by
The Beulah Spa History Project,
Friends Of Spa Woods,
The Norwood Society &
Councillor Pat Ryan 2018
London Borough Of Croydon

The author with the Mayor of Croydon
at the unveiling of the Beulah Spa
Memorial on 29 September 2018



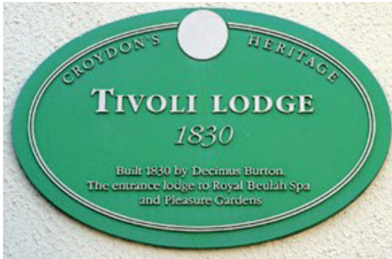
The pictorial history lectern installed at the site of Beulah Spa

All that remains today is Decimus Burton's Beulah Spa entrance lodge 'Tivoli Lodge' which stands at 39 Beulah Hill although a second storey was added so it doesn't quite look as Burton's design. It was Grade II listed in 1976, and is now a private dwelling, not open to the public. It has a slate roof with fretted barge and eaves boards, and pendants.

Tivoli Lodge in 2018

A contemporary illustration of Tivoli Lodge, which served as the spa's bottling plant as well as the official entrance to the grounds

The lower lake - c 1836 -
one of the additions and improvements made to the spa's facilities



This magical place, once the haunt of writers, artists, poets, singers, composers, musicians, magicians, tightrope-walkers, balloonists, gymnasts, dancers, archers, acrobats, clowns, jesters, jugglers, sword-swallowers, singing minstrels, gypsy fortune tellers and many more, all seems strangely quiet now, almost with an eerie feeling. A new generation play on the basketball court and on the children's play frames. They have no hint of knowing its amazing history, or the wonderful tales and secrets that these slopes hold.

Chris Shields is the founder of The Beulah Spa History Project. He worked for Croydon's libraries for thirty years and recently wrote "The Beulah Spa 1831-1856 A New Pictorial History."

THE FOUNDING OF FLEETWOOD

(Part 1)

Bringing the Railway to Fleetwood

By Richard Gillingham

Decimus Burton, the architect of Fleetwood, was born on 30th September 1800 in Bloomsbury London. His father, James Burton, was a successful developer credited with the creation of a large part of late Georgian London. As a result of his father's successes, Decimus benefited from his influential social circles, which included such personalities as Sir John Soane and John Nash, two of the leading architects of the day, as well as important members of the aristocracy, and some of the most influential minds of the day.

Two hundred and fifty miles away, on 9th May 1801, in North Lancashire, Peter Hesketh, was born at Wennington Hall in the Lune Valley to a well-established land-owning family. Initially residing in a large house at Heysham on the shore of Morecambe Bay, upon the death of Peter's uncle, Bold Hesketh in 1819, Peter's father, Robert, inherited the vast Rossall estate. Uncle Bold had been a powerful and influential landlord, known and respected by his many tenant farmers and staff. He owned many properties, and to facilitate Robert,

his wife Maria, sons Edward, Peter and Charles and daughter Anna to move into Rossall Hall, Bold's maiden sister, Maria, moved out and into Tulketh Hall, another family property on the outskirts of the rapidly expanding mill town of Preston. {1}

The Rossall Estate lands were essentially remote coastal pastures. Strong winds battered the coast in winter and flooding was a common occurrence. A small fleet of fishing boats served the needs of the estate and nearby villages. Near to the sea, where drift sand was a problem, oats and potatoes were grown. A few miles inland, however, where tree shelter could break the force of the wind, wheat was more common. In 1794, Bold Hesketh had erected the impressive Marsh Mill at Thornton, two miles from Rossall Hall. The mill, still standing with one of the tallest towers in the country, was able to harness the power of the sea winds and to handle huge quantities of grain from both estate lands and private farmers. {2}

Within twelve months of moving to Rossall Hall in 1820, tragedy struck the family. Robert's eldest son Edward died. Edward had been interested in farming and the operations of large country estates. In contrast, his brother

{1} - Rossall Hall 1820 1820 (B. Curtis)

{2} - Marsh Mill 1794

Peter had academic ambitions and had already been accepted to study at Trinity College, Oxford, while sixteen-year old Charles had ambitions to enter the Church. Robert, without the support of Edward, was faced with a dilemma – how to successfully manage the estate and its tenanted farms while engaging in the social activity expected of the landed classes. (Just a year after arriving at Rossall, for example, Robert was serving as High Sheriff of Lancashire.) With Peter away at Oxford, Robert attempted to deal with the complexities of estate management, ably supported for the time being by Charles.

Robert and his sons showed great interest in new technology. In 1824, this was to have unfortunate and unforeseen consequences. The sound of the bell in a newly installed burglar alarm system prompted Robert to venture out one night into the cold, wearing only nightclothes. His resulting chest cold developed into pneumonia and his condition quickly deteriorated. Charles wrote to Peter with the news, but the five-day journey back from Oxford, meant that Peter arrived at Rossall after Robert had died.

Long discussions followed regarding the future of the estate.

Family members and estate staff rallied round in support. Peter and Charles, meanwhile, decided to take their widowed mother on a holiday to London. Despite their best efforts, Maria showed little interest in the sights of the capital, and before the family could make arrangements to return to Rossall, her health deteriorated, and she died. She was buried, less than four months after the death of her husband, alongside him in the family vault at St. Chad's Church in Poulton, four miles from Rossall Hall.

Peter, who had received his BA degree at Oxford in the summer of 1823, was joined at Oxford by his brother Charles following the death of his parents. Peter remained at Oxford to complete a Masters degree, leaving the management of the Rossall estate to a manager and staff. While studying at Oxford, Peter also spent time mixing with the social elite in nearby London. James and Decimus Burton were two of the people that Peter was to become friends with, Decimus being just a year older than Peter. By 1824, the three were amongst the founder members of the Athenaeum Club, a haven for intellectuals and forward-thinkers. James Burton had built a large house in Waterloo Place which was initially used as the Club's headquarters prior to the members appointing Decimus as their architect and inviting him to submit plans for a new clubhouse. The new clubhouse, on the corner of Waterloo Place and Pall Mall, opened in 1830.

Peter Hesketh's friendship with Decimus and James Burton led him to visit James' development of the coastal resort of St. Leonards on Sea in Sussex, which was then being built. The visit undoubtedly stimulated discussions relating to the potential development of Peter's own estate in Lancashire. St. Leonards, with its classical facades, growing elegance and social life, impressed Peter and no doubt provided him with much room for thought. Undoubtedly, he wondered if the benefits of taking a holiday in a wealthy resort such as St Leonards could be transferred to his own working-class estate in Lancashire. Equally so, Decimus, who was a practical man, undoubtedly considered the potential difficulties in making such a dream a reality.

Having received his MA in 1826, Peter married Debonaire Metcalfe, only daughter of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe of Fernhill in Buckinghamshire. The couple settled down in Dover which provided a suitable base for their social life in the south. Peter, however, was keen for his new

bride to become known and liked on his Lancashire estate, and by 1829 they had returned to Rossall, where Peter's sister Anna (a year younger than Debonaire) struck up a friendship with his wife.

Peter's brother Charles, meanwhile, had also graduated and was becoming more involved with the Church. In July 1828 he had been ordained, becoming Vicar of St Chad's, Poulton. From 1831, he also had the living of the Parish of All Hallows, Bisham, a village just a few miles south of Rossall, where he rented a large house, Bispham Lodge, to be nearer to the church, leaving Rossall Hall vacant for Peter and his wife to occupy. While renovations were taking place at Rossall, Peter and his wife, used their home in Dover, where their daughter Anna Maria was to be born.

1830 was to prove a momentous year for Peter Hesketh. Firstly, he was made High Sheriff of Lancashire. His appointment was accompanied by a grand procession with participants in ceremonial attire, Charles acting as Peter's Chaplain and Peter's loyal brother- in- law, Thomas Knowlys, as his Chief Juror. That same month, Peter's son, Metcalfe, was born. Later, Lancashire witnessed the railway fever that was gripping the North West. Robert Stephenson's Lancashire Witch had been operating a trial rail service between Bolton and Leigh in 1828. Later, on September 5th 1830 a passenger train ran between Manchester and Liverpool. Peter attended the event in his capacity as High Sheriff along with many other establishment figures from the County. Sadness marked the occasion, though, when William Huskinson, MP for Liverpool, died following a collision with a locomotive. Major civil disorder also marred the day with public protests against the Corn Laws and poor conditions suffered by millworkers. The whole event had a dramatic effect upon Peter. His conscience was pricked by witnessing many poor people angered by what they believed was social injustice, and he felt the need to do something to improve their lot. Despite the tragedy, he was hugely excited by travelling at twenty-four miles an hour and the possible impact that rail travel could have on ordinary peoples' lives. The fascination with all he had seen that day, was to remain with him.

The problem of managing Rossall effectively, meanwhile, still weighed heavily on Peter's mind. Charles, all too aware of the situation, suggested a possible solution. Amongst the congregation at Poulton, he had been introduced

to Frederick Kemp, newly resident in the district, having moved there from Rochford in Essex. Charles was impressed by Kemp's confident manner and stylish appearance. He discovered that Kemp had some experience of estate management in Britain and Germany, and was already developing business links in the Fylde through his construction firm. Peter agreed to appoint Frederick Kemp as Estate Manager, a decision that was to have long term effects on Peter's life, and

{3} - Early Map of the Fylde (Fleetwood Museum)

eventually on the long-term development of Fleetwood.

Having appointed Frederick Kemp to manage Rossall, Peter's attention turned to the proposed development of the Rossall Estate, and a potential railway to service it. Discussions with brother Charles, a level-headed and practical man, prompted caution. The northern extremity of the Fylde Coast, the peninsula at the mouth of the Wyre, was at the forefront of the discussions. Seven farms occupied some of the area, isolated and linked by unmade farm tracks. Closer to the sea, sand dunes provided a nesting habitat for countless seabirds. There were also rabbits by the thousand. Charles suggested that any potential development of the area, if it was to attract visitors, would require the introduction of refreshment and toilet facilities. Peter's friend, Decimus Burton, was himself not overly enthusiastic about 'Peter's Dreams', for a stylish new resort town in such a remote location. Other friends, such as industrialists Benjamin Whitworth and Samuel Fielden, felt that a resort, similar to St. Leonards would struggle during inclement winter months. Whitworth and Fielden, however, eventually agreed to support the venture provided it included a port that would help to sustain residents in winter - there were already examples of small but relatively successful commercial ports at Wardleys and Skippool further up-river. {3}

Competitors for a railway network to service the area were quick to show themselves. Lytham and Preston, an emerging industrial centre, were amongst them. Preston became a fierce rival, and for a while it was thought that Lytham would be the better location for a new resort and port, being located just a few miles from Preston.
In a meeting at the Bull Hotel in Preston, those interested in a railway development aired their views. Many were in favour of a line from Preston to Lytham, arguing that the town of Lytham already existed and the connecting line with Preston would be short. Many were furious when Peter argued in favour of a site on the Wyre. In an attempt to convince Preston businessmen about the desirability of the Wyre estuary location, Peter hired a vessel and took a party of prospective railway shareholders for a trip on the Wyre from Thornton to the river mouth. Some of the party were friends and business acquaintances but some were prospective opponents of Peter's scheme. The party enjoyed the views of the river and coast in the warm autumn sunshine. The final few miles of the prospective rail route to the coast were explored

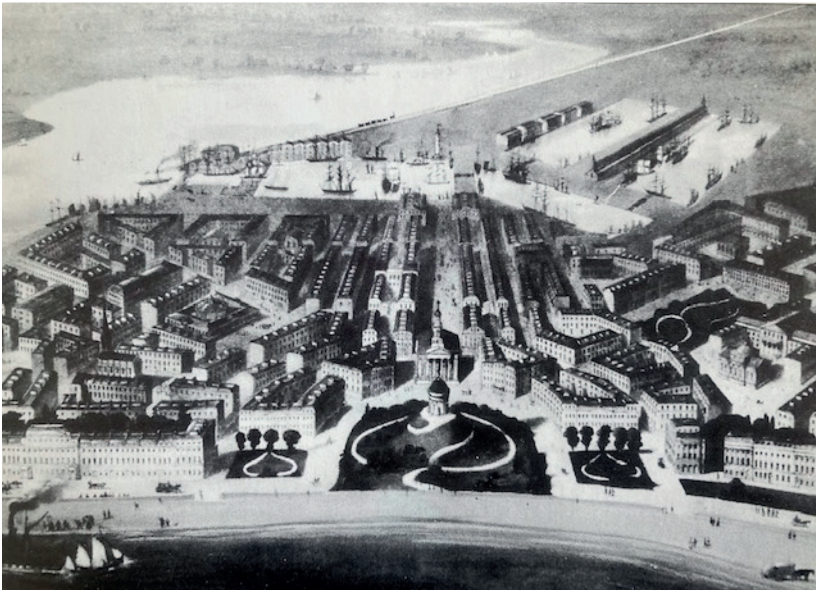
before they enjoyed a grand dinner at Rossall Hall. Mr Park, a surveyor travelling with the party, declared the Wyre location as completely suitable, and acceptance was recommended to the committee of the prospective Railway and Port Company. Without delay, Colonel George Landmann, who had already surveyed railway routes in London, was commissioned to travel over the proposed route. He declared that the route was ideal, with few inclines. His only concern was bringing the track over a proposed embankment at a tidal inlet at Jameson Hole, just three miles from the proposed terminus and close to the mouth of the river. The company's own surveyor, Jonathan Binns, President of the Lancashire Agricultural Society, had already met with Landmann and estate manager Frederick Kemp. There were some differences of opinion, but there was a pressing need to make progress with the railway scheme. Without the railway connection, grand plans for a stylish new resort, to attract Lancashire residents to the seaside, would be impossible. Lytham, to the south, and Blackpool, just nine miles away, were already attracting select groups of visitors, who arrived by horse-drawn coach services from the Red Lion in Preston. Peter envisaged a very different pattern of visitor movement with mass appeal and visitors travelling in large groups of several hundred at a time.

The question over what to name the new town soon came up. Some months earlier, Peter Hesketh had applied for a Royal Warrant to add the name of his maternal forebears to his surname. Permission was duly granted and he became Peter Hesketh-Fleetwood. After some deliberation, he declared that his proposed new town would be named Fleetwood.

Change appeared to be on the horizon. Peter Hesketh-Fleetwood was by this time a father to two children, with wife, Debonnaire, expecting a third. The coronation of King William IV in 1831 brought fresh optimism and prospective new ideas. As one of Lancashire's major landowners, peter was approached by the Tory party as a prospective Parliamentary candidate for Preston, and he accepted the nomination enthusiastically, believing that election would give him the opportunity to improve life for Lancashire folk. As MP for Preston, however, he would undoubtedly encounter some opposition to his plan to build a port and resort on his land at the mouth of the River Wyre. On polling day Peter headed the poll with his friend the Hon. Thomas Stanley and they were elected MPs for Preston. Tragically,

shortly after his election triumph, Peter suffered the deaths of his two youngest children, Debonnaire and Metcalfe, in quick succession. During the following autumn, Peter's wife Debonnaire fell pregnant as well as ill. He decided to move the family south for the winter. Debonnaire's condition continued to deteriorate, and after some weeks she sadly passed away. Soon, Peter's own health began to deteriorate, and he developed scarlet fever. Shortly after, Peter's youngest daughter, Francis, developed measles, and died. Peter's fever was slow to pass, and a complication led to the removal of one of his eyes. It was six weeks before the family arrived back at Rossall, the funerals of those who had died taking place at Poulton Church.

Terrible storms around Christmas time caused major damage to Peter's estate farms as well as Rossall Hall itself. He now had both family and parliamentary duties to attend to, spending increasing amounts of time in London, where his surviving daughter, Maria, was keen to be with her father, despite spending holidays with her aunts in Heysham and Meols. With Peter in London, away from his estate, more responsibility was given to Frederick Kemp, the estate manager, who was instructed to purchase the land through which



{4} - Aerial perspective of the new town at Fleetwood

the proposed rail route would pass. Kemp was also made responsible for overseeing matters relating to the prospective new town.{4]

Eventually, the prospectus for the Preston and Wyre Railway was issued in 1834, with illustrations by Decimus Burton. Peter Hesketh-Fleetwood, meanwhile, successfully rallied friends and businessmen to support the speculative venture, and in July 1835 the Preston and Wyre Railway Act authorised a share capital of £130,000. This figure later proved to be totally inadequate, leading to serious financial consequences for Hesketh-Fleetwood. Parliamentary work continued to absorb much of his time, but with the death of William IV at Windsor in June 1837, Parliament was dissolved, and he decided to take a short holiday abroad, in Belgium, before returning to Rossall. While holidaying, he wrote to his family, who were astonished to find out that he had remarried to Virginie Maria Garcia, the daughter of a Spanish nobleman. His brother Charles was outraged. Soon, the newly-wed couple were back at Rossall, where Virginie understandably experienced a mixed reception.

In late autumn 1837, severe weather brought progress on developments at the new town to a halt. Added to this, after months away from Rossall, Peter was shocked to find numerous bills awaiting payment. Frederick Kemp was not acting in Peter Hesketh-Fleetwood's best interests.

The bad news, however, was tempered by news that Virginie was pregnant, followed by Peter being informed that he was to be knighted in Queen Victoria's coronation honours list. Back in London, his daughter Maria was diagnosed with tuberculosis, and died on August 1st. She was buried at Poulton. Although devastated by the loss of Maria, Peter could take some consolation from the birth of a son the following summer.

Work on the level, easily-laid parts of the railway route, had been underway since 1836, but three years later the line had still not been completed. At the Fleetwood end, the embankment over the tidal inlet and the wooden trestle over the Cold Dubbs, were proving to be problematic. At one stage 300 men worked night and day on the embankment, with fifteen sailing ships delivering thousands of tons of stone each month from Heysham and Arnside across Morecambe Bay. Further expertise was sought from Joseph Locke, who had masterminded much of the Grand Union Railway. He estimated that over £300,000 was needed

to complete the embankment alone. This was more than twice the original estimate for laying the whole nineteen miles of track from Preston. The final half mile into the Fleetwood terminus was carried on a wooden structure above the marshy Cold Dubbs inlet. This replaced the intended stone causeway. Another major problem occurred on the outskirts of Preston, when a viaduct carrying the single track at Tulketh collapsed killing several workmen. {5}

Eventually, by July 1840, the track and stations were complete, and on the 15th July, the official opening of the Preston and Wyre Railway took place. The first train left the Maudland terminus at Preston at 11.50, heading for the new terminus at Fleetwood Dock Street. Two hours earlier four carriages had left Fleetwood with Sir Peter making his way to Preston to greet official guests. His enthusiasm and excitement spurred him to ride on the locomotive footplate for part of the journey. The planned service was for three trains a day in each direction, with passengers paying four shillings return, first class. The opening day was filled with special events, steamer excursions and music. Sadly the day concluded with a fatality – William Dean, a young tailor from Preston, attempted to jump from one carriage to another and was killed. In the inquest that followed, the railway company was cleared of any neglect or fault.

The railway, it was hoped, would prove to be the catalyst for rapid development in Fleetwood and a means of attracting greater volumes of trade to the port and visitors to the resort. The route to Fleetwood has been accepted by railway historians as the first in Britain to link a purpose-built seaside resort with the industrial heartland.
By the time the railway opened, Decimus Burton had been visiting and working in the 'new' town for more than four years. He had knowledge of the location and site back in 1834-5, and at the time had completed some initial plans and illustrations for Peter. His visit in April 1836, when he stayed with his friend, at Rossall Hall, gave him a more realistic view of the challenge facing him. Early in that visit he accompanied Peter by carriage to view the site of the proposed town from the elevation of the Tup Hill. Notes and sketches were made to add vital detail to maps in circulation at the time. The 'blank canvas' for Decimus's grand design was fully visible from the hilltop but the surrounding land also revealed variations and undulations of surface, and the considerable work that would be needed to level the ground. A local tenant, Robert Banton of East Warren Farm, the

{5} - Building of the Railway Embankment 1839
by W.G. Herdman (Fleetwood Museum)

closest to Tup Hill, was asked to assist in some initial surveying and the marking of planned thoroughfares (a horse and plough are believed to have been used for some of this work). To the east of the hill, wind-blown softer sand would have made this work difficult, with great variations in surface levels. To the north high tides reached the foot of the hill, with a gently sloping pebble and sand beach dipping into Morecambe Bay. Across the Bay, however, Decimus would have observed for the first time, one of the finest views in England. Here the panorama of the Lake District mountains blends into the Pennine Hills and the high peaks of Yorkshire.

Part 2 of the story will be told in the next issue of Decimus

Richard Gillingham is the current Vice-Chairman of the Fleetwood Museum Trust.

DECIMUS BURTON'S HOLWOOD HOUSE

By Simon Gooch

Holwood House in Keston, Kent, though now within the London Borough of Bromley and on the last page of the A to Z, was Decimus Burton's first work outside the capital. The precocious young architect was working at his father James's side, designing terraces and detached villas in Regent's Park when he was still a minor. The first of these, The Holme of 1818, which became the Burton family's home, had been criticised by the Commissioners of the Crown Estates and John Nash concurred. But by the time that John Ward, a multiple leaseholder in the new buildings around the park, commissioned him to create a small country house on Holwood Hill, Burton had already acquired a confident architectural manner. This was achieved through a series of detached, comfortable houses set around the park, using a variety of eye-catching but not overblown classical features – a look in part inspired by Nash but also his professor at the Royal Academy, John Soane.

Holwood, begun in 1823, would be his most sophisticated design to date. Perhaps more importantly the job had great significance for Burton's future as it began a fruitful relationship with Ward, who went on to employ him on the design of a complete residential "garden suburb"

at Calverley Park in Tunbridge Wells.

In order to construct the new Holwood, the old Holwood had to go. This modest 17th century "hunting box" was celebrated for its associations with William Pitt the Younger, born in nearby Hayes, who for almost twenty years during his long premiership used it as a weekend retreat from politics. At his self-contained "Holl Wood" estate Pitt could escape the stress and strain of managing the wars against Revolutionary France and Napoleon, his public role at 10 Downing Street and the cockpit of the Commons. While there Pitt busied himself with levelling a section of the Iron Age earthworks fringing Holwood Hill known as Caesar's Camp (thankfully the long western "bulwarks" were left in peace), clearing vistas or planting trees wholesale. His always precarious finances suffered from this obsessive "improving" of the estate, a task which was eventually taken in hand by Humphry Repton.

Pitt also toyed with the idea of rebuilding the house. The young John Soane was employed to carry out various alterations and improvements – detailed in accounts and drawings in Sir John Soane's Museum archive. More ambitious

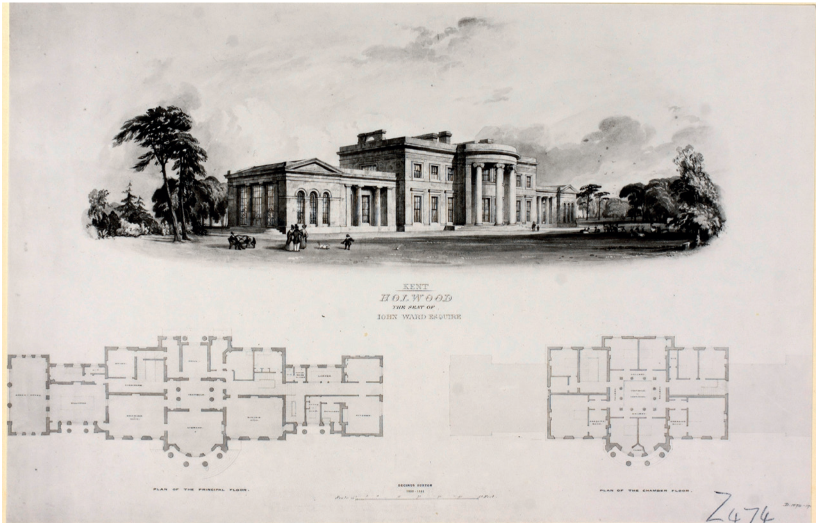
Holwood House Watercolour by Joseph Gandy
copyright Sir John Soane's Museum photographed by Ardon Bar Hama

plans by Soane for a refashioning of the entire house never got further than some fine Joseph Gandy watercolours. Pitt never had the resources to carry them out – or if he did, or imagined that he did, worries about public reaction to such indulgence in wartime stayed his hand. Soane became philosophical about delay: indulging Mr Pitt's architectural daydreams was lucrative in other ways, as prime ministerial influence helped him get the job of Surveyor to the Bank of England, which became a lifetime's work, as well as the possibility (never realised) of redesigning the entire Houses of Parliament.

Holwood House had been sold after Pitt stepped down in 1802, due to poor health. This had precipitated a personal financial crisis, as he depended on his government salary and had no private means. He left a mountain of debt that was mostly cleared by a grateful nation. Soane waived his fees, though he made sure that his contractors got paid in the end. In the Chatham Papers at the National Archives in Kew are folders full of Pitt's unpaid bills, including one to his rat catcher. The Holwood Estate was bought by Sir George Pocock MP, a loyal Pittite, whose own later financial problems led to its sale to John Ward in 1823.

Decimus Burton had studied under Soane at the Royal Academy from 1817, so there may have been some embarrassment when the pupil demolished the master's work at Holwood. Before doing so the old house was sketched by Ward's elder brother Samuel Nevill Ward, who lived nearby, and Burton drew up a rough survey that was published with a view of the old house as a print. His own design for John Ward, a plan and elevation with an artist's perspective of the villa in its park setting, is in the V&A's RIBA Heinz Collection. Two mahogany doors from Soane's Holwood are said to have been salvaged and reused by Burton, though their present whereabouts are unknown. Some of Pitt's furnishings are preserved at Walter Castle, where the Prime Minister had rooms as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.

Completed in 1827 Holwood House was described at the time as "very chaste in the Grecian style, adopted by the Romans on the erection of their country villas, and in excellent keeping with the old fortifications in the park [assumed to be Roman], while the interior is commodious and furnished throughout in the most perfect taste". Placed dramatically on the brow of Holwood Hill, the house is open to boxy panoramic views. From the valley below – which, unfortunately, is the closest most people can get to this private house – Burton's centrepiece, which appears from afar to be a double-height portico, is striking,



Decimus Burton's Royal Academy presentation drawings exhibited in 1824
Reproduced by kind permission of the V&A, copyright Victoria & Albert Museum

flanked by decayed cedars on the slope below. On closer inspection, which a previous owner kindly allowed as part of research for a book on Holwood, the portico is revealed as a colonnade, running around a two-storey bow front and set on a curved fight of steps. The columns are fluted Ionic, in Portland stone, for which Southampton brickwork creates a subtle pale yellow backdrop.

Burton's design is symmetrical, with pavilions linked to the body of the house by what were once single storey bays with recessed Doric columns. The westernmost pavilion was originally an iron and glass conservatory. The main entrance to the house is at the rear, on the London side, with a shallow pediment and recessed Doric columns flanking a large doorway. This leads into a square saloon rising all the way up through the house, via a colonnaded gallery, to a lantern. Soane's Tyringham in Buckinghamshire and Nash's nearby Sundridge Park may have influenced elements of the design, but nevertheless, with a certain characteristic solidity, it is very much Burton's own.

A mid-19th century occupant of Holwood added an extra floor to the single-story linking rooms flanking the central block, thus altering the composition's overall balance; the eastern end of the building was

Holwood viewed from below with cedars, copyright Simon Gooch

also extended to provide offices, servants quarters etc, so the original symmetry was obscured. Regency villas did not have the capacity for the required comforts of Victorian life. The stock bricks used for these additions were not a precise colour match for the original yellow, but despite these accretions, Burton's Holwood remains more or less intact.

John Ward was a wealthy man, which is why the craftsmanship at Holwood was of the very best. He was a partner in the family wool mercers business, but it was probably his marriage to Jane Lambert – the daughter of a well-to-do Lancashire calico manufacturer – that brought the extra capital needed to set up as a country gent (JP, Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, High Sheriff, and very briefly MP for Leominster). Having bought the Holwood Estate and paid for Burton's new house, even larger sums of money were invested in Tunbridge Wells where Ward bought land on the edge of the spa town that became Calverley Park. Its ample houses were designed by Burton – some for Ward, others for John Joseph Bramah of the locksmith family. Ward family descendants were living there until relatively recently.

Stylistically the strongest link between Holwood and Calverley is the rustic lodges with their fancy bargeboards and Tudor chimneys.

The first to be built at Holwood, on the former driveway from Keston Common, established the template for similar lodges on the other routes in and out of the estate – current access to the house is beside Bowen's Lodge, on Westerham Road; Orpington Lodge guards a former driveway, now part of the private Keston Park garden suburb at the Locksbottom end of Holwood's Lake Woods. Calverley Park's rustic Farnborough Lodge is very similar in style.

In effect by these commissions John Ward had drawn Decimus Burton out of London, and from this time he seemed to prefer rural surroundings to live and work in.

Though Burton was also engaged on some of his major buildings in the capital in the 1820s, such as the Colosseum and the Athenaeum, the decision of the Commissioners for Woods and Forests to halt further building within Regent's Park in 1826 perhaps lay behind his increasing commitment to Calverley Park. Burton's later career and his private life increasingly gravitated towards quieter parts, and ultimately to his father's seaside development at St Leonards.

After the death of his wife in 1851 John Ward moved back to town and sold Holwood. The whole Estate was parcelled up into six lots and it seemed that its rural seclusion would

Holwood garden front, copyright Simon Gooch

be lost to suburban developments (however genteel they might be). The various buyers were subsequently approached by Tomas Brassey, who had made a fortune from building railways all over Europe, and he set about reuniting five of the six lots (the exception being Keston Lodge) and thus preserved the Estate. Brassey was not able to enjoy his prize for long. He was short of capital to finance his biggest contract to date, to lay the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada from Quebec to Toronto and manufacture all the rolling stock. He therefore sold the Estate in 1853 to the Chancellor, Lord Cranworth, who was visited from time to time by his neighbour at Downe, Charles Darwin, who also botanised there. Holwood's role as a rural retreat for overstressed politicians thus resumed, and several generations of Earls of Derby – including the 15th, Edward Henry Stanley, Foreign Secretary to Disraeli – occupied the house; most of the surviving legal documents concerning the house in the 19th century are preserved in the muniment room at Knowsley Park, the Stanley family's home outside Liverpool.

Lady Stanley was the last member of the family to live at Holwood, staying put during the Battle of Britain despite German bombs (aimed at RAF Biggin Hill) falling all around. After she sold up in 1950 Seismograph Limited, a geophysical exploration company, set up their headquarters in the house. Though they subdivided the interiors the fabric was well looked after and

Ironwork at the entrance front, copyright Simon Gooch

restored after a fire in 1983. Annual open days allowed locals to see the treasure on their doorstep.

The house lay empty for most of the 1990s, and after being bought in 1996 was subject of a planning battle to prevent the creation of what was planned to be the largest leisure centre in Europe, with hotel, spa, conference centre, golf course etc. Finally, after a decade of uncertainty and neglect, it became a private home once more in the early 21st century and was conscientiously restored. A residential estate was created on the footprint of Seismograph's circular laboratory building and in Sir George Pocock's former coachhouses and stables, now The Courtyard. The estate farm – Holwood Farm – is now a farm shop, and it is from there and nearby Shire Lane that one gets the grand view back to Decimus Burton's Holwood.

Detail of central colonnade on garden front, copyright Simon Gooch

Simon Gooch is a genealogist and author of the self-published Holwood – A Stroll Round the Estate, 2010

‘MITCHELLS, TUNBRIDGE WELLS, VILLA’

- but what did it look like?

By Chris Jones

Fans of the television programme ‘Fake or Fortune’ will be familiar with the term ‘catalogue raisonné’ - an authoritative list of the works of a particular artist. In the case of Decimus Burton, we look to Howard Colvin (his ‘Biographical Dictionary of British Architects’) and to Philip Miller (his ‘Guide’ to the 1981 Decimus Burton Exhibition) for this. Underpinning them both is the list of buildings printed as part of Burton’s obituary in ‘The Builder’ of December 24th 1881.

One of the buildings named there is ‘Mitchells, Tunbridge Wells, villa’. The date is given as 1827 and the clients as Mr CH Okey and Mr John Carruthers. Miller adds that it was rebuilt in 1837 as Holmwood, by the local architects Dunks and Stevens, but ‘presumably to Burton’s original design ... A classical design with central bow to the garden front’.

Holmwood (the present Holmewood House School) is certainly classical. Its entrance front, in Tunbridge Wells

sandstone, stands four-square: two-storey, seven-bay, with parapet and a central portico with paired Tuscan columns. The south-facing garden front, see below, is similar but with that central bow.

Later editions of Colvin, though, suggest that this rebuilding may have been to a different design, not copied from Burton's original. A recently-discovered illustration – the subject of this article - confirms this to be true, and shows what the original house looked like.

But first, a little bit of background. Mitchells was about two miles from Tunbridge Wells, on a low ridge overlooking the valley of the River Grom. It was in the parish of Speldhurst and the manor of Rusthall. The manorial records provide occasional references. In 1716 Richard Fry made his fealty for 80 acres including a piece of land called Mitchells. The Frys were a local family: farmers, butchers and lodging house keepers in Tunbridge Wells. In 1758 it passed to his son Thomas, the description then being: 'one messuage one barn and certain lands thereto adjoining'. It was probably never more than a farm, and that is how it was identified on Hasted's map of 1778 , and on the early 1801 OS map, below. That it was named at all, though, indicates that it must have been of reasonable size and standing.

The OS map demonstrates the position of Mitchells on the edge

Figure 1. Holmewood House School - south front.
The main block, to the right, with the central bow.
Probably not the original design. Picture: mid to late 20th century.

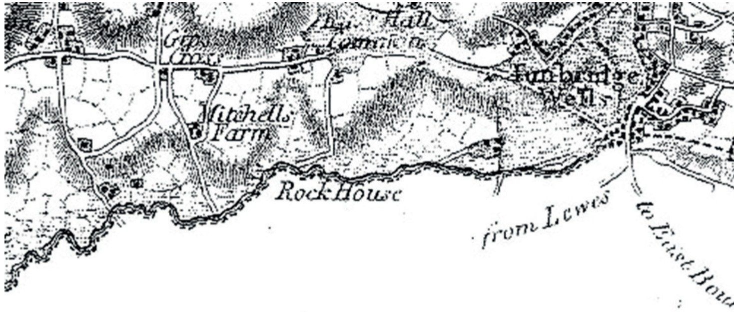


Figure 2. Mitchells Farm on the 1801 OS map, overlooking the valley of the River Grom (the boundary between Kent and Sussex).

of the ridge with a prospect south-westwards - towards Eridge Park and Waterdown Forest in Sussex. Views like this were popular in the early years of the 19th century. Its potential as a site for a country villa was perhaps especially obvious in the property boom of the early 1820s. There is a reference in 1824 to the sale of 195 oak and beech trees at Mitchells; this may have just been standard estate management practice, or they may have been cleared to create ornamental parkland. By 1827 the farm had been bought by John Carruthers, an attorney working for the East India Company. He and his wife, Mary Anne, had lived in Madras for most of the 1810s, returned to England (Bathwick) in 1818, but were back in Madras in 1821. Perhaps, in their late forties, they felt the need to return to England and settle down. They enrolled their four sons at Tonbridge School, and employed Burton to build them a house.

The newly-found illustration (below) seems to be that house – the original 1827 building designed by Burton. It is one of eight on a page entitled ‘Sketches from Nature at Tonbridge Wells and its vicinity’, after GE Brookes of Old Bond St., which is held in the Wellcome Collection. The sketches are annotated ‘Adapted for transferring on White Wood’ - perhaps for use on Tunbridge Ware. There is no date, though the early 1830s would seem likely. The other pictures are of houses on the Great Culverden estate, most of them newly-built and designed by Burton. Mitchells was a couple of miles distant from the others so its inclusion is a little odd, but there seems little doubt

about its identification - the house corresponds quite closely to the footprint of Mitchells shown on the 1833 map of the Manor of Rusthall, below.

The design is perhaps a little unexpected for Burton at this point in his career: that row of gables (the north front) seems more Tudor than Old English (more Burrswood than The Grove, Penshurst). The east front (to the left), appears to have two rather urban-looking bows or maybe they are large Tudor windows, and is that a corner turret between the two fronts? (Probably not.) The position of the main entrance is not clear, possibly on the east or south front. There was a saloon, 100 ft long, linked to a 32 ft conservatory on the garden front; with dining-room (30'x16'), library (27'x17'), steward's and housekeeper's rooms, presumably on the north; and 'an infinity of offices' (including two water-closets). A striking feature was the 'virandah and colonnade to the principal fronts' – possibly reflecting the Carruthers' life in India, though common enough later in Calverley Park.

In January 1829 the Brighton Gazette recorded an evening party held by Mr & Mrs Carruthers at

Figure 3. Mitchells, Burton's original design, north and east fronts.
A lithographic sketch after G.E. Brooks.
Wellcome Library ref. 22929i. Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

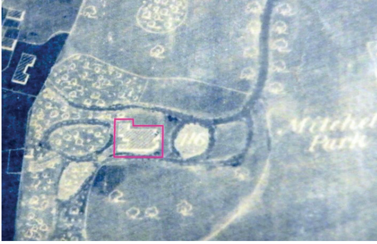


Figure 4. Detail from 1833 map of the Manor of Rusthall.
Footprint of Mitchells highlighted.
Tunbridge Wells Reference Library.

Mitchells. Mr and Mrs Akers also had a party that night at Bellevue on Mt Sion. It was obviously a gay old time in Tunbridge Wells. The previous Friday Lady Anstruther had held a 'rout' at her house in Blenheim Place (also on Mt Sion). Not so gay for some, though. There were poor harvests in 1828 and 1829, and considerable distress amongst working people. It led to the 'Swing' protests in 1830, with dragoon-guards stationed in Tunbridge Wells in case of trouble. It was an uncomfortable time for those living out in the countryside, with threats of arson. Perhaps this is why Carruthers advertised the house for sale in 1833: 'an elegant and most substantial residence, of beautiful elevation, placed upon a fine eminence' and set amongst 150 acres of 'parklike appearance, ornamented with groves, coppices and fine timber'. Carruthers, it was said, was removing to Harley-street.

The house didn't sell, but Carruthers' preference for Harley Street meant that Mitchells was available to visitors. In 1835 it was taken for the autumn by Count Pozzo di Borgo, the Russian ambassador. It was apparently also considered as a possible residence for the Duchess of Kent and Princess Victoria when they visited Tunbridge Wells in 1834/5. Then, on a Saturday evening in October 1836, it caught fire. Mrs Carruthers was at home, with one of the children. She attempted to organise the removal of the furniture, but, in the words of the Brighton Patriot, ' never was destruction more complete'. The nearest fire engines were at Buckhurst or Tonbridge, and could not have got there in time, though a crowd of several hundred had arrived within an hour, to watch. The damage was estimated at £5,000, though it was insured.

Miller suggests that work on rebuilding Mitchells started in 1837. It was not mentioned by Christopher Greenwood in his 'Epitome of the County of Kent', published in 1838. He described other houses along the ridge: Hollands, for example, another Burton house (1835), less than a mile away. 'Nothing can exceed the beauty of this well-selected spot ... the view southward ... over the glen below, is particularly

fine.' The Speldhurst tithe map of 1840 shows approach roads winding picturesquely through the Mitchells parkland, stables, ponds and shrubberies, but nothing of the house itself.

By then things were getting a little complicated. In 1837 Carruthers had borrowed £10,000, using Mitchells as security. He used it to set up a distillery in Manchester for his son, but it doesn't seem to have been a success. In early 1840 he paid off the loan and retrieved the deeds, but there were problems with the payment and he was threatened with bankruptcy (there were clear suspicions that he had acted dishonestly). In June he attempted to sell the new house, advertised as a 'capital brick and stone-built Mansion' in 'a forward state of completion'. There were no takers, perhaps because he also seems to have used it as security for other creditors, including William Dunk and Edward Stevens, the local builders/architects who had worked on it.

It has not been easy identifying these two, especially Stevens. There was a William Dunk, architect, active in Tunbridge Wells at the time - he designed the Dispensary in Grosvenor Road in 1842, stone-fronted with parapet and portico, not unlike Holmewood. Perhaps it was the William Dunk, architect, who lived in Bedford Terrace, just off Chapel Place. He was in his early twenties, but then Decimus had only been in his mid twenties when he designed the original Mitchells. Perhaps the bigger question is why the replacement design was so different. Was it the choice of the architect or the client? Would a classical design have been easier to sell? Perhaps Carruthers was thinking of the fire - one report suggested that the amount of wood in the original design had contributed to its spread.

Carruthers returned to India in 1842 following protracted bankruptcy hearings, and died there in 1843. His wife, who had remained in London, also died in 1843. The house was advertised for sale in 1844 with that same description 'in a forward state of completion'. Little work seems to have been done on it in the meantime. It was possibly at that point that it was bought by Dr Locock, accoucheur to Queen Victoria. There is another, rather intriguing, story linked to Dr Locock's residence at Holmwood, but that's perhaps best left to another occasion.

Notes

1. There have been four editions since its original publication in 1954.
2. In later editions, Colvin dropped

the reference to 'Okey'. There is no explanation for this, but no reference has been found to a Mr Okey in the research for this article.

3. Edward Hasted, 'The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent'.
4. Burton worked on that house too, in 1845.
5. There is a report from 1834 of a Mr Carruthers of Harley Street having problems with his butler. Having been reprimanded for being inattentive during dinner and squirting Mrs Carruthers with sauce from the fruit pudding, the butler complained 'I'm a freeborn Englishman; I'm no slave; you've been used to govern slaves. I've a soul; you've a fleshy carcase, and no soul'. Carruthers called in the police. (There was also a David Carruthers living in Harley St., so this may not have been 'our' Carruthers.)
6. There was an architect called Nehemiah Edward Stevens who lived in Tunbridge Wells a little later, but there is no record of him being around in 1840, or involved at all with Mitchells/Holmwood.
7. It later became the General Hospital.

Chris Jones is a historian and currently the Secretary of The Decimus Burton Society. He is also Archivist at the Salomons Museum and an active member of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society.

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

a conservation plan for its future

By Stuart Page, Architect, RIBA SCA

Holy Trinity Church, Tunbridge Wells

If you Google Farringdon Road Bookstalls, a selection of photographs by Libby Hall dated 1966 appears, which includes one with a stack of partly bound newspapers. At some date in the 1970's, I browsed the stalls and a near identical stack of Ipswich Journals and John Bull and found the account of the consecration of Holy Trinity Church Tunbridge Wells.

It was not an expensive purchase, if eccentric for a recently qualified architect, that was prompted by local news of the potential demolition of the church. I still have the newspaper, and the text is included in the Conservation Management Plan, completed in 2020, for Trinity Theatre and Arts.

The former Holy Trinity Church has had a remarkable history, from its design by Decimus Burton, in 1827, construction and consecration in a near open landscape, becoming the central place of worship and landmark in a fast-growing town, and then facing gradual decline and decommissioning.

The extraordinary rescue of the church by the local community, fundraising and conversion to a theatre, is part of a history of crisis and survival that is continuing through Covid-19 into 2021.

Theatre Auditorium looking west

Theatre Foyer beneath the Auditorium seating

Dr Philip Whitbourn's paper, presented to the Tunbridge Wells Civic Society in September 1975, records the importance of Burton's design for the Church Commissioners, as an early example of Gothick revival, designed and built within the Georgian period.

"The step of demolition would be irrevocable ……. we must in my view try both longer and harder to find ways and means of saving this irreplaceable part of our heritage, if not as a church, then for some other use".

He argued the case for retention of the church, decommissioned and apparently unfashionable and with a group of like-minded residents, the support of the Civic Society and the Council, Trinity was saved from demolition. Funds were raised largely within the community and the process to design and construct a theatre within the former church began. The redundant building became a thriving Theatre and Arts centre for Tunbridge Wells. The significance of Trinity, physically, emotionally and cultural cannot be disputed.

The continued survival of the building and its use are interdependent, and so maintenance, conservation and

adaptation to new uses continue, with a need to carefully assess the value of the existing building and the potential value or harm of any change.

Flashback to the 1970s – In the top picture volunteer Appeal Committee members Laurie Holliday (centre) and Philip Whitbourn (left) man-handle a delivery of brick from the car park into Trinity, to enable West Kent students (pictured below) to lear the craft of bricklaying by building up the side walls of the theatre's auditorium. On the right of the top picture, Trinity's first Manager, Herbert Story, shovels sand into a wheelbarrow and takes it inside to mix the necessary mortar.

Volunteers with Dr P Whitbourn

Conservation Management Plans are a means of managing this process by recording a building, park or garden, or archaeological site, by researching archives, examining physical evidence and placing values on what is significant and identifying what may be at risk.

The significance of the whole or of elements may be aesthetic, physical, historic or social, of local, national or international importance and community value, and the result is usually a mosaic of these ideas that inform the understanding of the "asset".

The value of the plan is the guidance it offers when changes are necessary, such as when maintenance is planned, or alterations considered to improve function or change of use.

A building such as Trinity enriches the history of the community and is of great importance, beyond its physical elements.

Holy Trinity Church was designed by Decimus Burton in 1827 and consecrated in 1829. The building is a fine example of a "Commissioners' Church", and as Burton completed plans for the town centre and the Calverley Estate it became a focal point within his overall composition. It remains a dominant building in the townscape, set close to the central east–west crossroads and the Civic Buildings, and in normal times is a thriving arts centre for theatre, cinema, and arts performance and outreach activities of all kinds for the community.

The architectural style of the church is striking, a simplified Gothick, from the Georgian

Map of Tunbridge Wells in the early years of the 19th century, showing the parts of Speldhurst, Tonbridge and Frant parishes, together with the hamlets of Mount Ephraim, Mount Pleasant and Mount Sion

period, that has not always found favour with critics, or the writers of the early editions of the Pevsner guides. This, despite Sir Nicholas Pevsner arguing in 1981 for the building to be cherished.

Looking back for earlier comment we found that Canon Edward Hoare, incumbent from 1853, wrote in his memoire that "I have had an excellent church, which, though I do not suppose it would satisfy the ecclesiologist, I have found to be most commodious for the worship of God. There are three things in it quite at variance with modern fashion: instead of an open roof to generate cold in winter, heat in summer, and echo at all times, we have had a flat ceiling to protect us from all changes of the climate."

The church was declared pastorally redundant in 1972 and following the successful community initiative was leased from the Diocese of Rochester and converted for use as an arts centre and theatre, opening in 1982.

The detailed story of the Church's rescue and conversion needs to be recorded and not forgotten.

The church is Listed Grade II* of Architectural and Historic Interest and remains a focal point within the Royal Tunbridge Wells Conservation Area. The original setting within the churchyard and the adjacent Trinity School survives, providing an open space in an urban setting.

Looking closely at the building fabric and the grounds highlighted how the building is connected to a wider history. Writing the CMP opened up new opportunities for research, and recommendations for future investigations are included.

The document is lengthy and contains an extensive Gazetteer but in the context of this article it is worth highlighting some features and noting how they are of value and significance.

The East Window

The interior of Trinity has inevitably changed but Burton's original design and detail are were

carefully respected and are still evident with the pew galleries providing the upper seating level and the east window visible when the stage is clear.

The east window is often seen as the most important artistic element of the building, important for its Gothick tracery and early Victorian stained glass. It is a rare survival of glass of 1839 by Joseph Hale Miller, (d.1842), one of the leading figures in the 19th century revival of the art of staining and painting glass. The attribution to Hale Miller is questioned, but that does not alter the importance of the window as a decorative element, a historic link to the past and a record of the religious belief that gave rise to Holy Trinity.

The East Window is also important because it uses an unusual system of thin glass (2mm or less) supported within small sub-sections of thin narrow-heart lead supported by integral lightweight 'T-bar' sections of zinc or tin.

The CMP provides more detail and a report, commissioned by Trinity, from specialist conservator, Holy Well Studio identifying a programme of repairs that are needed to conserve the window.

External railings

Perhaps not the most obvious part of the churchyard and grounds, but the railings not only provide security and define the boundaries, but also have an unexpected history. If you look closely at them the quality of the casting and detail become evident and the makers name survives.

Early engravings and illustrations show different patterns but surviving gates and most railings have the maker's name, Cottam & Hallen, cast into a vertical section of ironwork.

Cottam & Hallen were at the forefront of their craft and produced castings for horticulture and agriculture and cast entrance gates and railings for the south transept of the Crystal Palace, Great Exhibition, in 1851. They exhibited in the 1855 Paris Exhibition and designed a

prefabricated cast iron lighthouse for Bermuda.

The boundaries of the former churchyard are important markers within the townscape but have fallen into disrepair: the railings and gates are vulnerable to damage, and require specialist repair and conservation, identified by the CMP.

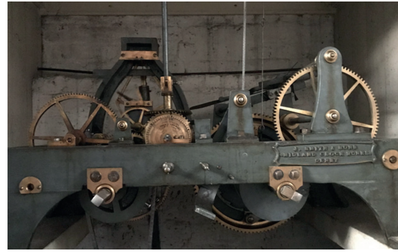
The bell and clock

Looking at any building in detail reveals new histories and links to the past, especially to old crafts and skills that survive. Hidden in the upper levels of the west tower, the clock and bell have their own stories.

We have been able to locate some records for the bell, but the original manufacturer of the clock mechanism has been able to provide a history of the clock and recommendations for its maintenance.

Taylors of Loughborough cast the first cast iron bell frame in 1850, although they were not commonly adopted until the 1880's. However, Trinity's bell appears to be early 20thC and therefore may replace an earlier bell (or bells?).

The existing mechanism is a fine example of an early 20th century



Detail of clock mechanism

mechanical pendulum action clock and it would not be possible to swing the bell to achieve a peal.

There is an opportunity to complete this research and discover when the first bell or peal of bells was installed.

Smith of Derby manufactured and have recently maintained the clock mechanism, which dates from 1914.

The clock has one or two unusual, if not unique features and is referred to as a flatbed hour strike, weight drive, pendulum action mechanism. It operates through a gravity escapement and drives up and out to 3 x 4ft 6in (1.4metres) diameter and 1 x 5ft (1.5metres) diameter glazed cast iron skeleton dials.

The clock is currently used as a timepiece only and the weight is automatically wound by a mechanism supplied and installed

by Smith of Derby some twenty years ago.

Clock Tower

At present there is no access to the Clock Tower, but funding has been approved for a new staircase linking the ground floor to the tower roof: this is moving forward and when complete will allow visitors to experience the interior space and the clock and bell mechanisms for the first time in the history of Trinity.

Using the Conservation Plan

As the design for the Clock Tower access was already in hand, the Plan was not immediately available for reference, but the research informed the project and will allow construction information and detailed design to consider how best to deal with the interior and structure.

The interior of the former church includes memorials, fittings, surface finishes and of course, the finely worked sandstone, all of which require understanding before alteration or maintenance.

The future use of the building and grounds will require change as well as conservation. The CMP will be used to inform decision making and provide an understanding of

The original nave and chancel from an 1870 postcard

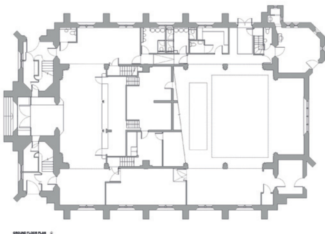
the site's significance.

The CMP will also be used to support future applications for grants and funding for instance to the Heritage Lottery Fund and applications for Listed Building and Planning consents.

The Conservation Plan as a developing document

Trinity's Conservation Plan refers to Historic England's guidance that 'the best way to conserve a building is to keep it in use or to find an appropriate new use which would see to its long-term conservation'.

The plan is accompanied by a Gazetteer, in which individual items such as memorials, windows, panelling or doorways are assessed, allowing the document to be a working document, to be a reference, to be updated and to assess the effects of cumulative change, neglect and maintenance.



Plan of Trinity

Managing change is – in the life of the building and its setting - a recent and important concept. The CMP covers Holy Trinity Church and the Churchyard including boundary walls. It also includes an outline assessment of Trinity School, now commercial offices.

Some documentary research has been carried out while preparing this report but there are more topics to be explored and opportunities for primary research. Future topics have been identified but the list will be extended: that is the nature of historic buildings and our understanding of them.

For example, few of Decimus Burton's drawings for Holy Trinity Church have been found, archival research into the building process and the Calverley Quarry would add depth to the understanding of the building process, the relationship between Trinity and other churches designed by Decimus Burton could be examined and biographies discovered for the memorials and burials.

Perhaps of equal importance would be the involvement of those who use, observe and appreciate Trinity Theatre and Arts and its home, in recording their view of

Extract of a design for Trinity by Decimus Burton
exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1829
(copyright courtesy of Dr P Whitbourn)

what is significant to them and the wider community.

That would add vitality to the Conservation Plan: perhaps as atmospheric as the description of the consecration of Holy Trinity Church, in the tattered copy of "John Bull, For God, the King and the People!" dated Monday September 21st, 1829, that I picked up in Farringdon Road.

This plan was prepared by Stuart Page, Chartered Architect RIBA SCA, and Samuel Farrow of Kaner Olette Architects, on behalf of Trinity Theatre and Arts Centre Ltd.

Information is drawn from several of Dr. Philip Whitbourn OBE's books and leaflets, as well as several other publications from the Tunbridge Wells Civic Society, Trinity Theatre's own archive and from various other historical sources.

Notes

These notes are drawn from the Plan, copies of which have been lodged with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council in the Decimus Burton Society's digital Archive.

Stuart Page is an architect specialising in the conservation and adaption of historic buildings to new uses. He is currently the Conservation Adviser to The Decimus Burton Society.

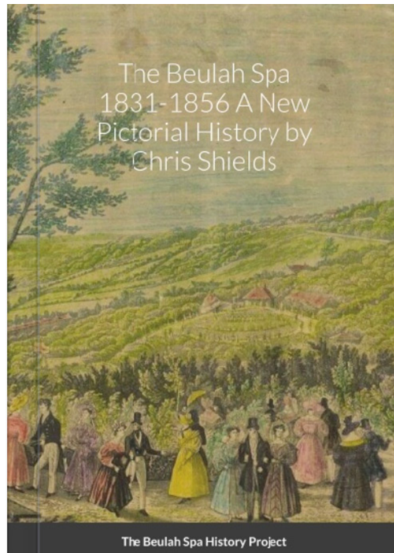
Book Review

“The Beulah Spa 1831 – 1856 A New Pictorial History”

By Chris Shields

Beulah Spa is one of Decimus Burton’s projects that is often forgotten, largely because little of the existing spa remains for visitors to see. Thanks to the research of Chris Shields, who worked for Croydon’s library service for over 30 years, the story has been revived and retold in his recently published book.

The new history, which is well-illustrated, takes the reader through the early history of the area, when it is mentioned in the Domesday Book as belonging to Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, through to John Davidson Smith, who commissioned Decimus Burton from 1828-1831 to design the layout of the spa resort, as well as many of its buildings and landscaped gardens. The story continues with a description of the patronage of what became known as ‘Beulah Saline Spa’ by the royalty, aristocracy, nobility and gentry of the day, who were drawn to the entertainments on offer and the magnesian salts in the waters that were considered



to be superior to the waters of its competitors at Cheltenham and Leamington.

Well-researched, with illustrations of period advertisements and images that describe some of the buildings and entertainments that were available to visitors, the book draws attention to the fever that was gripping the country over health resorts as places where the well off could escape from the city to the country or seaside to recuperate and enjoy themselves.

From 1845, the glory days of Beulah Spa were in decline and despite numerous attempts to revive it, various owners failed. The Great Exhibition of 1851 in Hyde Park was to sound its death knoll, once the exhibition building was dismantled and re-erected at Sydenham, within ten minutes' walk from Beulah Spa. The last of the grand fetes was held at Beulah Spa on 18th and 21st September 1854, complete with illuminations, fireworks, Giant Montgolfier Balloon, dancing in the 'Monster Pavilion' and a full Military Band. The spa land was sold off later in 1854 for development.

Chris continues the story of the site, its buildings, development and people, ending with the project he himself recently set up to preserve the memory of the place – The Beulah Spa History Project. The author's style of writing and presentation, at times mimicking a 'scrap book' approach, reflects his enthusiasm for the subject, such that the reader might be excused for feeling that they have shared in the discovery of a lost part of Decimus Burton's legacy.

A good read. I can highly recommend it.

Reviewed by Paul Avis

The Beulah Spa 1831-1856 - A New Pictorial History by Chris Shields
Published by Chris Shields
Date: 30/05/2020
ISBN: 978-1-7168-8073-5

News

Trinity Theatre Clock Tower Project

kaner olette
architects

Trinity Theatre occupies the former Holy Trinity Church in Church Road, Tunbridge Wells. The church was designed by Decimus Burton in 1827 and was consecrated in 1829. The Church Commissioners declared the church was redundant for pastoral needs in 1972 but the building was saved from threatened demolition by the community and was reopened as a theatre and arts centre in 1982. The building retains its basic form, structure and detail, although several alterations have been made to allow the building to operate as a theatre and arts centre, which it does to this day.

The theatre has received a Stage 2 National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £506,700 for development works to create public access and viewing platform for its clock tower, together with other fabric repairs and ecology improvements. The project will see the reworking of the existing building to include two new bridges providing access to the clock tower and the installation of a spiral staircase in the clock tower itself leading to a viewing platform on the roof of the tower. There will be new heritage interpretation using various methods.

The main works are planned to start on site in the autumn of 2021.

Mike Kaner, Kaner Olette Architects

Annual General Meeting of The Decimus Burton Society

This year's AGM of The Decimus Burton Society was held via zoom on Tuesday 22nd June. There were some absences, although the meeting was generally well attended.

The Chairman's and Treasurer's Reports showed the Society to be in a healthy position with regard to membership numbers and bank account. Many of the leading authorities on the life and work of Decimus Burton are already members of the society, along with several Burton home-owners, backed by a respectable number of members with a general interest in the architect.

Members voted unanimously in favour of the existing committee to stand for another year. Members also voted unanimously for the Society to proceed with its application to become a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). Thanks were given to Richard Holme, who was assisted by Guy Fearon, for all their hard work with respect to the formation of the CIO.

The potential list of future events and talks that were being developed, was put to members. This included visits to Fleetwood and Grimston Park, as well as visits to Kew, the Sir John Soane Museum, The Wellington Arch and Hyde Park, and the Decimus Burton archives at the RIBA/V&A. Talks included one by Rosemary Yallop in September, and another by the Southborough Society on one of Decimus' childhood Homes, Mabledon.

There was a question and answer session, where members were given the opportunity to air their views. This attracted several questions, with comments of a positive nature. One of the questions raised was an enquiry as to the status of the potential Decimus Burton Museum/Centre in Tunbridge Wells. The Chairman provided a brief update on the project, adding that further details will be provided in due course either via the journal or the website. With no other business matters raised, the meeting was drawn to a close. The minutes of the meeting will be made available for any members who were unable to attend, or who would like to see a copy.

Future Events 2021

30th September 2021 - An on-line talk by Rosemary Yallop.

(title to be confirmed)

A talk on an aspect of Decimus Burton's work to coincide with the anniversary of the architect's birth at 7.30pm via zoom.

Future Events 2022

As discussed at our recent AGM, there are a number of exciting live events that we are actively developing for the coming years. At present, it seems likely that we will initially be offering guided tours of Decimus Burton's work at Kew Gardens as well as The Wellington Arch and Hyde Park. We are also developing a programme for guided tours of Grimston Park and Fleetwood, either for 2022 or 2023. Members will be notified of full details of events as they become available.

Comments arising from DECIMUS Issue 1

In the article on St Leonard's New Town, it was suggested that Decimus Burton attended Tonbridge School in Kent prior to joining his father's practice in London. Although there is record of some of his brothers attending the school, to date there is no known written evidence that Decimus himself attended the school.

Trinity Theatre & Arts Centre

Trinity Church, in Tunbridge Wells, was designed by Decimus Burton in 1827 in what was described by architectural historian, Professor Mark Girouard, as the "creative Gothic" style. In Victorian times the church was well attended, but in 1974, the Church Commissioners considered the building "redundant to pastoral needs". It was largely through the efforts of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society that Trinity was saved and converted into a community and arts centre. It is an excellent example of one of Decimus Burton's buildings being adapted to meet changing needs.

For further information, visit www.trinitytheatre.net.

THE ESPLANADE