

DECIMUS

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The Journal of
The Decimus Burton Society



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"English Officers Passing Wellington Arch at Hyde Park" by Dickson & Co, 19th Century, Courtesy of P. Avis.

Back Cover

"The Great Wellington Statue and Arch" Illustrated London News, Nov. 21, 1846, Courtesy of P. Avis.

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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.

To join The Decimus Burton Society

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The Journal of The Decimus Burton Society

2021 has been an eventful year for the society. Since our last lecture by Rosemary Yallop, we have been planning our two live events for 2022. These will comprise a guided tour of Burton's work and archives at Kew Gardens in May, followed by a guided tour of the Wellington Arch in September. We continue to work on guided tours of Grimston Park, Fleetwood and Ven House for 2023.

Our work to develop an education programme for the society continues. Architects on our executive are pursuing discussions with architectural schools for a competition where students will be invited to submit measured drawings or other forms of medium for buildings or projects that Decimus Burton was

connected with. The successful winner would receive a prize and a medal. As an introduction to the competition, we are suggesting that entrants may want to focus on one of the architect's lost works, The Colosseum in Regent's Park, and with this in mind, the journal will be featuring a number of articles on this important building over the coming issues.

The Society continues to receive enquiries from individuals or organisations carrying out research into the architect's life and work.

In many cases we have been able to provide useful information, but in some cases, we have drawn a blank – which goes to show that there is still much work to be done on establishing a full and detailed archive. We have also

been fortunate to receive useful information relating to Decimus Burton from some of our members, so our thanks must go to those who have contributed such information. Ultimately, this will help to achieve one of our goals - that of building a central archive of the architect's life and work. We feature some of these enquiries in this issue.

As something of a coup, members of the Society have, with the kind help of the Sir John Soane Museum, been able to assist in getting some Decimus Burton's drawings for his work at Ven House returned to the property's owners.

The story is featured in this issue.

Finally in October, our members were invited to attend a talk by the Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society to present the case for a Decimus Burton Museum and Study Centre at 9 & 10 Crescent Rd, in Tunbridge Wells - details of this can be found in the News section at the end of the journal.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Paul Avis, Chairman

December 2021

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THE FOUNDING OF FLEETWOOD

(Part 2)

Completion and aftermath

By Richard Gillingham

The prospect that lay in front of Decimus Burton was soon accorded the name Temple View, and in less than twelve months, a ‘pagoda’ styled pavilion had been erected on the spot to the architect’s instructions. The land to the West was the flattest, with rough grazing and some marked farm boundaries visible. Beyond this, the gaunt wooden structure of the Landmark, a coastal navigation tower could be seen. Fig. 6

At first glance, the canvas’ on which Decimus was to plan the ‘new’ town,

was hard to fully distinguish, with thousands of nesting seabirds and rabbit burrows visible. However, his recent work at St. Leonard’s Calverley New Town in Tunbridge Wells, had given him valuable experience of planning townscapes. His work in the Royal Parks (eg Hyde Park and Regent’s Park) had also given him an appreciation of parkland and open space, around which stylish dwellings and iconic buildings might be placed. Tup Hill was chosen to be the focal point of his plan for Fleetwood, with a tree lined ‘boulevard’, later London



Fig. 6 - Early Fleetwood from Tup Hill 1842 (W.G. Herdman)
© Fleetwood Museum

Street, forming the centre line of a striking pattern of roads radiating from the Hill. This half wheel pattern is still very evident from the air or indeed from the viewing gallery of the present Mount Pavilion. The Hill and surrounding ground were to provide a focal point as the Subscription Gardens in the former Quarry were to do in St. Leonards. A grand entrance from London Street with cottage lodges, was designed by Decimus, similar to the entrance to the gardens in St. Leonards. The grounds with gravelled paths and modest

shrubberies were also planned by the architect, with the lodges and layout completed around 1842. The gardens were officially listed Grade II, thanks to the work of Elizabeth Stevens and Fleetwood Civic Society, in 2009. Fig. 7

Building the town began within weeks of Decimus Burton's arrival at Fleetwood in April 1836. The issuing of an illustrated Prospectus in 1837, was clearly designed to attract investors and new residents. The cover illustration showed Burton's clear intentions, wide



Fig. 7 - Mount Grounds and original Burton Pavilion
© Fleetwood Museum

streets converging on the Mount with classically influenced terraces, villas and landmark buildings. Fig. 8 The railway line, harbour and proposed enclosed docks are clearly visible, some distance from stylish seafront residences. In reality, early construction revolved around artisans' dwellings in the form of terraced cottages and functional essentials like the Customs House, Estate Office, Railway Station with offices and lighthouses. Although little has been fully documented it is reasonable to assume that as well as providing 'grand plans', Decimus Burton's role was partly supervisory in overseeing designs for speculative builders to erect

essential functional dwellings within the town plan. By 1838, the railway had reached Preston, making journeys from his central London office, easier. As the railway line to Fleetwood was nearing completion, the railway offices and terminus were erected and soon Decimus was occupying a large town house on Dock Street, close to both. The opening of the railway hastened the construction of the Victoria, Crown and North Euston Hotels as well as stylish dwellings for the wealthy on Queens Terrace. A major emphasis was on creating eye catching stylish buildings around the river frontage, which would be viewed by visitors arriving by train or steamer. Fig. 8a

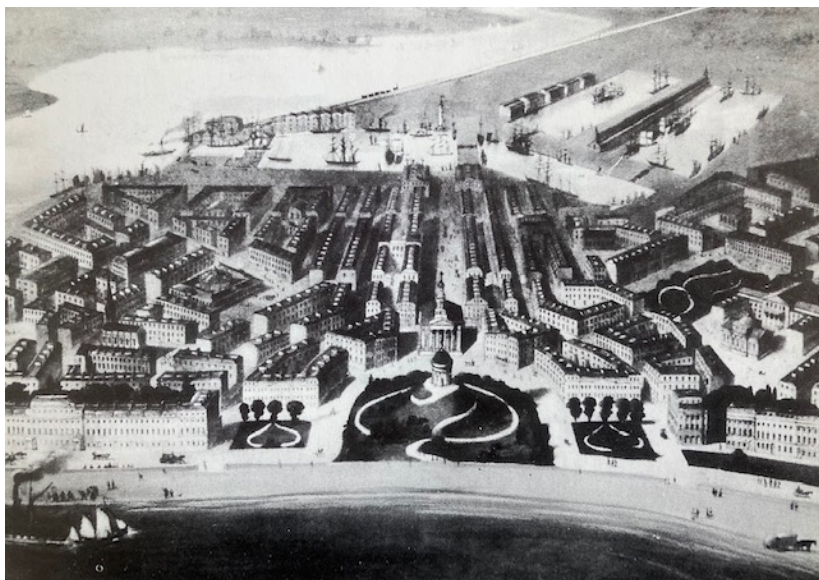


Fig. 8 - Prospectus Impression of Burton's Fleetwood 1837
© Fleetwood Museum



Fig. 8a - A View of Fleetwood 1842 (Francis English)
© Fleetwood Museum

With Sir Peter having to spend increasing amounts of time in London on Parliamentary business, Frederick Kemp the Estate Manager, was having an increasing role in the way the town was developing commercially. By 1840 a major timber yard on the river side of Dock Street had been opened and steamer services across the bay, to the Isle of Man, Scotland and Ireland had all been tried and the volume of coastal cargo traffic was increasing. Passenger numbers on the railway were also exceeding expectations. Frederick Kemp was a common factor in many of these ventures. There appeared to be cash flow problems within estate accounts with a lack of finance available to complete major prestigious building projects. High class residential properties on Queens Terrace were started, with some completed. Decimus Burton himself moved into one of these elegant ashlar fronted, four storey town houses. They enjoyed wonderful views over the river and towards the Pennine Hills. Sir Peter's solicitor Owen Alger and Frederick Kemp also took up residence here. It was, however, to be three years before the property was completed. The North Euston Hotel project slowed down, and a public appeal was launched to finance the building of the Parish Church. Rumours abounded about parts of the vast Hesketh Estate being sold off to raise

funds to complete these projects. Construction, however, continued and Burton's Pharos and Lower Lighthouses were eventually lit for use in December 1840. Both were erected by John Tomkinson at a cost of £1,480 and £1,375 respectively. The third light, approximately one and a half miles from the shore, was Alexander Mitchell's Wyre Light, with eight legs screw piled into the North Wharf Bank. This was the first lighthouse to be constructed by this method to be lit, anywhere in the World. Upon arrival at Wyre Light ships' officers would look for the two shore-based lights. With the Pharos high light directly above the Lower Light, they could steer a course safely into harbour. The navigation system was devised by hydrographer Captain Henry Mangles Denham. He resided in Fleetwood for some years, just three doors away from Decimus Burton. With projects in various parts of the country, when the architect was away from Fleetwood, his projects were put in the care of David Neeve, Clerk of Works and Sam Bidder, Engineer. Fig. 9

1841 proved to be a notable year for the town, marked by the completion of two major buildings designed by Burton. After some years of public appeals and donations from the Hesketh family and particularly Aunt Maria at Tulketh, the Anglican church of St. Peter was completed.



Fig. 9 - Queens Terrace & Pharos
Lighthouse
© R. Gillingham - 2021

Originally the church consisted of a nave seating 400 and surrounded by galleries seating 200 more. At the West end the square tower was surmounted by an octagonal spire. It is believed that Burton preferred a classically influenced design, but Aunt Maria insisted on a Gothic styled structure. The first Vicar was the Rev. St. Vincent Beechey whose brother was in command of the Royal Yacht Squadron which brought Queen Victoria to Fleetwood in September 1847. The North Euston Hotel, positioned on the most notable seafront site, was also completed the same year by the Webb brothers, a firm of

London based contractors. The cost of building was over £30,000 but with fittings, the figure is likely to have been far more. The building, with a curved 300-foot frontage and constructed from yellow sandstone, was soon the talk of the County. Titled customers from throughout the North, flocked to the hotel. They were greeted by the newly appointed manager, Xenon Vantini. Born on the island of Elba, he had as a young man been a courier to Napoleon Bonaparte. His hotel experience had latterly been at the Euston Hotel, alongside the rail terminus in London. He was responsible for opening a first railway buffet at Wolverton. Facilities at the North Euston Hotel included a beautiful ballroom with splendid sea views, indoor swimming and remedial baths alongside and initially a private steamer pier outside the covered main entrance. Some customers were able to stay overnight before boarding the steamer to Ardrossan the following morning. This was the West coast route to Scotland and many passengers passed through Fleetwood until the rail route over Shap summit was opened in 1847. The hotel was nearly half a mile from the railway terminus, requiring a carriage ride in order to avoid poor conditions underfoot, particularly in Winter. The ever watchful Frederick Kemp, had by this time, 'obtained' co ownership of the large Crown

Hotel, directly across the road from the railway station. The location of the hotel was popular with rail passengers and a bell was rung in the hotel to warn guests of train departures and arrivals. Kemp also arranged for coach and mail services to terminate here at the Crown. Fig. 10

Close to St. Peter's Church some rather grand town houses had been built in Warren Street and St. Peter's Place. A butcher's shop had opened nearby and building plots were marked in Albert Street. Surface water had proved to be a problem in this area and drainage was planned.

Due to the problems of blown sand, particularly in Winter, building plots were often marked with high wooden stakes with the plot itself 'slutched'. This process involved the rolling of building plots and laying farm slurry and gravel to stabilise the surface. By this time, the nearby Public Market in Adelaide Street was operating, Friday being market day. By 1842 the Town Commissioners had been established with elected members and attendance from all property owners encouraged. A first Fleetwood Improvement and Market Act was passed in 1842. It laid down democratic principles for local government, many of

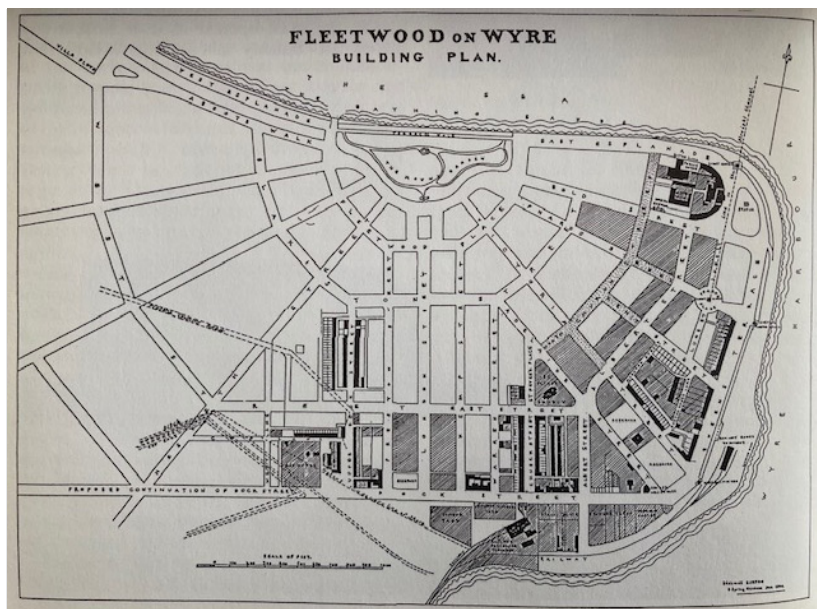


Fig. 10 - Plan of Fleetwood 1841 – Decimus Burton
© Fleetwood Museum

which were later adopted nationally. Their meetings were held in various locations but particularly in the newly opened hotels. Most meetings were concerned with roads, footpaths, drainage, sewage and lighting. Both Thomas Atkinson Drummond and Frederick Kemp were regular attendees at these meetings. In 1841 a steam dredger had been employed to keep the shipping channel clear, as high tides and storms had caused damage along the coast. The costs of sea defence were added to the rising development costs and the costs of administering the town. As these costs increased, the financial position became precarious and the Town Commissioners were forced to exert extreme care in all purchases and expenditure, with even the repair of a single gas light prompting lengthy debate!

By 1841 huge debts had been incurred, requiring a combination of re-mortgaging and family loans to ward off the project's numerous creditors. Part of Sir Peter's vast estate, in what is now Blackpool, were sold to Squire Clifton at Lytham Hall. The sale barely reduced the debt and Owen Alger, Sir Peter's Solicitor, negotiated a deal to sell the family estate at North Meols and Churchtown, near Southport. Since 1838, Meols Hall, had been the family home of Charles Hesketh, Peter's brother

and family and Charles was Rector there. When Charles heard about the suggested sale, he was furious. He had shown great loyalty to his brother, as had Thomas Knowlys, Peter's brother-in-law. Owen Alger had negotiated with Charles Scarisbrick, a wealthy landowner to purchase the Meols Estate and £75,000 of railway shares from Sir Peter. Most of Peter's financial worries could have been solved by the proposed sale, but Peter listened instead to Charles. North Meols was saved and remained in the family estate. Charles Scarisbrick, meanwhile, refused to purchase the railway shares, although he did purchase outlying parcels of Hesketh land.

Further construction progress, meanwhile, was made on the impressive stone dwellings of Queens Terrace. Any development taking place in the town was by private speculative builders but could not be financed by Sir Peter. Frederick Kemp had established the North Lancashire Steam Navigation Company in Queens Terrace and regular steamer services began to Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man. Rail excursions to Fleetwood were gaining in popularity and within five years trains were arriving with over 4,000 excursionists on board. Despite a seemingly optimistic outlook, little profit was coming to the Hesketh Estate.

Decimus Burton had left the town by the Autumn of 1843, receiving a little under £5,700 for his final designs and ground plans. Early in 1844 it was apparent that the financial position was not improving and by Spring Sir Peter reluctantly agreed to sell the contents of Rossall Hall by auction and to consider bids for the Hall itself. The auction lasted a fortnight with special trains bringing passengers in over the route that Sir Peter had struggled to finance. Fine art, sculpture, porcelain, silver and many historic furnishings were sold as well as the estate fire tender! The Hall was leased to become the Northern Church of England School, which opened in the Autumn of 1844. By 1857 it had become Rossall School. The school still operates on the site with the huge campus forming the southern coastal boundary of the present town of Fleetwood. Sir Peter and his family moved to live in the South of England, in Windsor Forest. He later occupied a property in Hove and owned an apartment in Piccadilly, London, where he died in 1866. His wife Virginie and Mrs Wicks, her friend and former servant at Rossall moved to stay with relatives at Wymering Manor near Portsmouth. They took with them a few treasured furnishings from Rossall Hall. Those items were later returned to Meols Hall in Churchtown, Southport, where they are still on view.

Decimus Burton never returned to Fleetwood, although he retained his directorship of the Fleetwood Gas Company for some years after, with Company meetings being held at his London Spring Gardens home until 1850. Burton's close friendship with Sir Peter continued, although his home in Queens Terrace was re-let. As for the construction work at Fleetwood, by late 1844 the magnificent Stone Terrace was complete with much of the northern end of the terrace used as summer holiday lets for wealthy families like the Birleys and Cliftons from South Fylde. Later in the nineteenth Century, parts were used as a hospital, a school, several hotels, railway company offices and later, consulates for European nations. A number of houses within the Stone Terrace still contain original features from the 1840s, including cooking ranges, stone flagged floors, pantries and fitted cupboards, coal stores and pantries, servants' bells and weather shutters on windows. Fig. 11, 11a and 11b)

Decimus Burton's legacy remains in Fleetwood. His unique street plan is still clearly visible, and some visitors comment as to how driving around Fleetwood is confusing! Several streets are very wide, with smaller side streets usually able to accommodate parked cars alongside the kerb, without hindering the flow of traffic. Back in 1973 Edward



Fig. 11 - Queens (Stone) Terrace 2021
© R. Gillingham



Fig. 11a - Original kitchen detail - Queens (Stone) Terrace 2021
© R. Gillingham

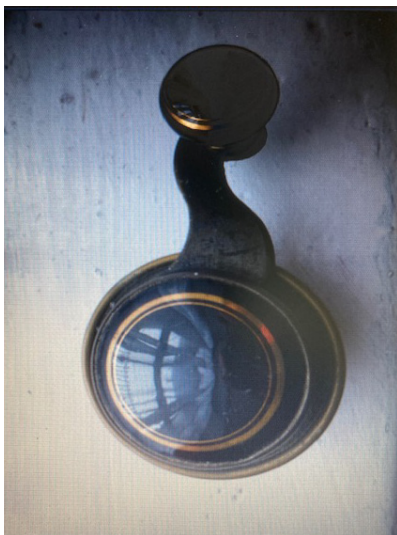


Fig. 11b - Servant's bell wind - Queens (Stone) Terrace 2021
© R. Gillingham

Heath's government released funds to clean historic buildings. The Stone Terrace and the Upper and Lower Lighthouses, for years coated in paint, were beneficiaries- being returned to their appearance when originally constructed. The North Euston Hotel exterior has stood the test of time despite its exposed position. During the 1980s and 1990s the interior of the hotel was expensively refurbished after the hotel was purchased by two local families. In recent years the private promenade railing above pavement level have been restored. The original stone flagged pavement and cobbling still surrounds the curved frontage. St Peter's Parish Church was also extensively refurbished into

the new millennium with exterior stone cleaning and the return of hundreds of yards of railings, cast to the original pattern. Some toned down exterior floodlighting was also installed. An anonymous gift made the work possible

Wyre Council, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Lofthouse Foundation, have this year completed a three-year programme to bring the landward side of the Mount grounds back to its former glory. Particularly impressive within that work is the refurbishment of the gate lodges, designed by Decimus Burton and completed by 1841. Fig. 12 During the last three years an extensive programme of refurbishment has taken place on the frontage of the original Customs House of 1838. Fleetwood Museum Trust now operate the Town Museum in the building. Restorative work has revealed original features, unseen for many years. For the past ten years the Museum has staged a Decimus Burton Commemorative event on the Wednesday closest to the architect's birthday on 30th September. The first gallery was redisplayed in 2020, with sculpted busts of Sir Peter and Decimus Burton along with artworks from the 1840s. The Trust regularly stage public heritage walks through the Old Town during the summer months. Trustees have visited local



Fig. 12 - Newly restored Mount Lodge Gates 2021
© R. Gillingham

primary schools to talk about the founding of Fleetwood and Decimus Burton's influence. Fleetwood Historical Society now meets in the Museum building.

Fleetwood Civic Society have also been active in promoting the influence of Decimus Burton. They staged a very well attended illustrated public lecture by Phillip Miller in the magnificent ballroom of the North Euston Hotel. They also mounted a season long exhibition relating to the architect's work, nationally, in the Marine Hall complex with another exhibition in the Museum. In 2018, the Society, along with other groups- including the Museum Trust,

Fleetwood Rotary Club. Lofthouse Foundation and other interested parties campaigned for a bronze statue to the town's founder. On May 6, 2021, a bronze by Lancaster sculptor, Alan Ward, was unveiled in the Euston Gardens. Sir Peter is depicted holding an architectural model of Decimus Burton's Lower Lighthouse and pointing to a town plan. At his feet, sits a wild rabbit from the warren. The park was originally planned to take a statue of the founder, back in 1840. Members of the Society, regularly open the Lower Lighthouse to public viewing, during Heritage Open Days. In past years they have opened and staffed the Mount Pavilion, to allow public access. They continue to be

vigilant regarding the town's historic buildings and major changes to the historic townscape. Fig. 12a

Fleetwood after Burton

Following Decimus Burton's departure from Fleetwood and the financial crisis facing Sir Peter in 1843-44, the town saw some progress, albeit slowly. By 1846 the Diogenes brought the first cargo of raw cotton, thanks to the efforts of John Laidley and Frederick Kemp. Railway passengers continued to increase in number and Thomas Cook brought his first tour to Scotland through Fleetwood in 1846. The best publicity for the infant town was an announcement that Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, with their children, would return from their Scottish holiday through Fleetwood. On September 20th, 1847, after a rough sea passage via the Isle of Man, the Royal Yacht and accompanying vessels, arrived in semi darkness. The following morning, a crowd of thousands saw the Queen step foot on Lancashire soil, the first reigning monarch to do so for over 200 years. The royal party walked through a gold draped, quayside pavilion, before boarding the Royal Train. Sir Peter Hesketh – Fleetwood had returned to Fleetwood for the occasion and met other dignitaries from throughout the County. The train, with consultant engineer John Hawkshaw



Fig. 12a - Statue of Sir Peter Hesketh
Fleetwood and North Euston Hotel
2021 - © R. Gillingham

on the footplate, pulled away bound for London Euston. The visit was featured in the Illustrated London News, bringing much positive publicity to the new port and resort of Fleetwood. Fig. 13

The opening of a branch railway to Blackpool in 1846, had seen some visitors deserting the quieter charms of Fleetwood for the livelier atmosphere along the coast. When the railway over Shap summit opened in 1847, the rail/steamer service to Scotland was effectively over. Sir Peter's debts were still considerable, and he was under constant pressure from creditors. He continued to live in the South on much reduced means and in



Fig. 13 - Queen Victoria's Departure from Fleetwood 1847
© Fleetwood Museum

1846 had a home in Hove. He had a time living in his wife's homeland, Spain. In 1854 he was living outside Naples in Italy. Upon his return to England Sir Peter and his family, increasingly longed for a return to the town he created. For years it was believed that Sir Peter paid a last visit to greet Queen Victoria in 1847. Family letters indicate clearly that he and his family paid regular visits to Fleetwood, staying in hotels or with friends, as late as 1864. Some visits were business related but others took place when the family were guests at annual events or met with former Rossall staff. They even enquired about renting a property with a sea view and Sir Peter

remained a popular figure in the town. Sir Peter Hesketh – Fleetwood, residing with his family in his Piccadilly apartment, continued a close friendship with Decimus Burton. As his health deteriorated, however, his weight increased, and his mobility became poor. He died in 1866 and was buried at Kensal Green Cemetery and not in the family vault at Poulton. Years later, Burton was interred in the same burial ground. Sir Peter's son, Peter Louis Hesketh – Fleetwood, who became a clergyman, died in the South of France in 1880. Sir Peter's widow Virginie, died near Portsmouth in 1900.

In the 1860s a plan to open an enclosed dock was proposed, even though Fleetwood by then had over 2,000 feet of quay wall. In 1875, the Fleetwood Estate Company purchased lands, buildings and manorial rights, from what remained of the Hesketh-Fleetwood Estate. They managed assets in and around the town until the 1970s, from their offices in the Stone Terrace. The Wyre Dock eventually opened in October 1877 and heralded a boom period for international trade. Four masted barques from California, brought huge quantities of wheat to a giant grain elevator, built by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway in 1882. The same company completed a first-class railway terminus in 1883, close to the Esplanade. Timber was transported from the Eastern USA and the Baltic lands. The boom years were brought to a close with the opening of the Manchester Ship canal in 1894.

Fleetwood was looking for a new direction and it came thanks to businessmen on the East Coast. Fleetwood, by 1890, had a large fleet of sailing trawlers as an attempt to exploit more distant fishing grounds, trawler owners from Hull and Grimsby decided to use Fleetwood as a base for steam vessels. By 1908, a second enclosed dock, the Fish Dock opened. The facilities were the finest in Britain and deep-sea fishing

gave Fleetwood its business purpose and essential character, for the next ninety years. The major investment in the railway facilitated an increase in holiday trade. A pleasure pier, the last to be constructed in England, was opened in 1910 and between the wars, facilities were developed on reclaimed land along the seafront. Bowling greens, miniature golf, an open-air championship swimming pool, boating lakes, a championship golf course and finally the Marine Hall, were all constructed by 1935. Fleetwood received its Charter of Incorporation and became a Borough in October 1933. In 1961 a major setback occurred when the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, stopped the daily summer sailings to the Isle of Man. Five years later, the main railway station adjoining the steamer pier, was closed and by 1970 passenger rail services to the town had ceased the first resort in England to be linked to the railway network, was now without a railway.

During the 1980s, large deep-sea trawlers were withdrawn from the port and work forces at the power station and ICI Thornton, other major sources of employment, were greatly reduced. For nearly 40 years a Ro Ro cargo service to Ireland kept the port functioning but in late 2010, that service closed. Major unemployment has had a major effect upon the town's retail and commercial sectors. One

continued presence is the Lofthouse Fisherman's Friend lozenge!

Established in the town by James Lofthouse in 1865, the company was and remains a major employer in the town, making the name of Fleetwood famous throughout the world. The Lofthouse Charitable Foundation has spent many millions of pounds on community facilities within the town. Sadly, in March 2021, the managing director of the company, Doreen Lofthouse OBE, passed away, following the death of her husband, Tony, in 2018. The port's heritage trawler, Jacinta, for nearly 25 years supported by the Lofthouse family, had to be dismantled in Summer 2020.

The hull of the ship, after years of ongoing repair, had finally become irreparable. Artefacts from the vessel have been donated to Fleetwood Museum, along with many other items from the Tony Lofthouse Collection.

Fleetwood has had to recreate itself. In 1995 a shopping outlet village, Freeport [now renamed Affinity], opened on disused dockland and other dockside areas became the Harbour Village. Around 500 people still work in fish processing and a new undercover facility is currently in the planning stage. Alongside the village a large nature reserve with linked riverside walks has been developed. Fleetwood Town Football Club entered the Football League

for the first time in 2012 thanks to a forward-thinking Chairman and businessman, Andrew Pilley. Highbury Stadium has been rebuilt with facilities far superior to those at many longer established clubs. Just four miles away, the club have developed one of the finest training bases in the region, much used by the community. Fleetwood Public Market, established and opened by Sir Peter in 1840 grew, until it was attracting over 20,000 visitors a day. In recent years major investment has taken place there. The tramway from Blackpool, brings many of the visitors to the market and in 2012 a new continental style operation opened. New trams and street platforms, with disabled access, became a feature of Fleetwood's main street. Fleetwood seafront has throughout the town's history been a major attraction and in the last ten years much investment has gone into parks and gardens and the Marine Hall Concert and Conference space.

Fishing craft, yachts and jet skiers share the bay and the historic ferry, established in 1840, still takes passengers to and from Knott End. The town's location at the end of a peninsula, has led to some isolation, but a very strong community identity. The town's history, although comparatively short has witnessed remarkable changes and economic fluctuations. Sir Peter's

'Golden Dream' fascinates residents and visitors alike. The sunsets and views over to the Lakeland Hills are still magnificent - just as they were back in 1835, when the whole story began.

Further Suggested Reading

Fleetwood – A Town is Born, Bill Curtis 1986

Fleetwood – A Pictorial History, Catherine Rothwell 2007

History of the Fylde of Lancashire – John Porter 1876

The Golden Dream – Bill Curtis

Further Information

www.visitlancashire.com

www.fleetwoodmuseum.co.uk

www.visitfyldecoast.info

www.discoverwyre.co.uk



Fig. 14 - Newly restored Customs House (now Museum)
2021 - © R. Gillingham



Fig. 14c - Original Weather shutters revealed during restoration 2020
© R. Gillingham



Fig. 14a - Early Fleetwood Gallery – Fleetwood Museum 2021
© R. Gillingham



Fig. 14b - Old Friends – Decimus Burton and Sir Peter in old age
© R. Gillingham

BATH AND BURTON'S CURVE

Bath's Tepid Bath

By Elizabeth Nathaniels

During the early years of the nineteenth century, novel developments were taking place in Bath, with leading Greek Revival architects from London invited to propose new ideas. These included William Wilkins, Michael Gandy and Decimus Burton. Here, Burton designed the first-known swimming pool and made alterations to the adjacent John Wood the Younger's Hot Bath of 1777. In doing so, he introduced a Hogarthian line of beauty to create a link between them. Howard Colvin, however, ascribes his work to the Bath City Architect, George P Manners

(1789-1866). Yet papers survive which show that Burton has been denied full credit for his design. Could his overall experience of Bath, including the great Royal Crescent, have influenced him in his development of Calverley Park in Tunbridge Wells, taking place at the same time?

In 1829, Decimus Burton designed the Tepid Bath, dubbed 'the City's first swimming pool'² in the heart of this loveliest of English cities -birthplace of the crescent³. In doing so, Burton respectfully remodelled John Wood the

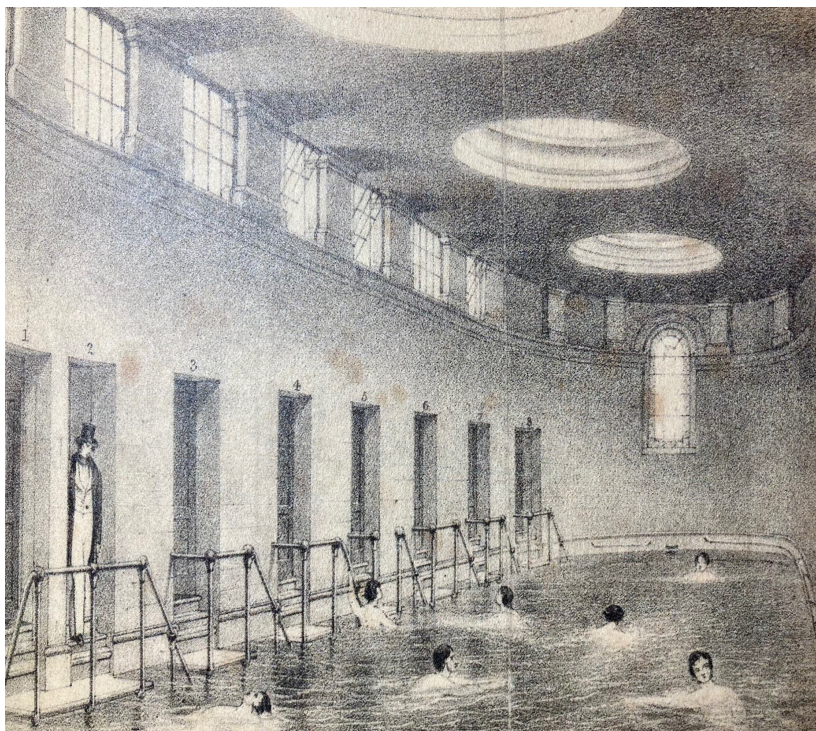


Fig. 1 - The Tepid Bath, opened in 1831 was Bath's first swimming pool. Swimming as exercise was a relatively novel concept and lessons were given here. The water was just 4'6" deep, so there was little chance of drowning.



Fig. 2 - 'The Comforts of Bath' by Thomas Rowlandson. A generation earlier to the swimming pool showed a motley mix of both sexes floundering about, fully clothed.



Fig. 3 - Hogarth's Line of Beauty is now illustrated on the filled-in former, clumsy entrance to Burton's curved wall.

Younger's 1770s adjacent Hot Bath, introducing a curved wall to allow access to the new Tepid Bath. But, sadly, virtually nothing of Burton's work - apart from the curve - endures. Demolished during the early 20th century, the remains lie beneath Nick Grimshaw's clever glass-enclosed Bath Thermae of 2006, which also encases the remodelled Hot Baths. All that remains now is an elegantly curving wall. A serpentine line of beauty: Burton's curve. Apart from examining this, both inside and out, we might also ask what role did Burton's experience of Bath play in his own development of another spa town, begun in 1828, which was being developed at about the same

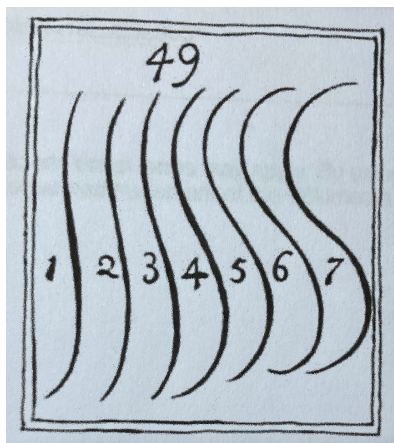


Fig. 4 - Hogarth's Line of Beauty, from his theory of aesthetics of 1753, *Analysis of Beauty* in which S-shaped serpentine lines signify liveliness and activity. His ideal line was marked number 4. Lines 5,6,7, are said to bulge too much whereas 3,2,and 1 are deemed 'poor'.

time? Could ancient Bath and the original Royal Crescent of John Woods Junior from the 1770s have influenced the late 1820s Calverley Park, Decimus Burton's creation to the north of Tunbridge Wells?

BATH IN 1829

Work on the Baths was needed to bring them up to the standards of the nineteenth century. John Britton's admonition to the Bath authorities, in his descriptive book published in July that year, may well have stirred the Corporation into action with these words:

'Though Bath owes its chief celebrity and prosperity to its warm waters, it cannot but excite surprise and regret that the appearance of the Baths, and the accommodation for the visitants, have not been sufficiently studied and respected. *It is full time that the Corporation should direct their attention and monies to these objects* ⁴. (My Italics)

Evidently the Corporation decided to do just that. The report of a Council meeting held on February 1, 1830, is unequivocal. Item 8 on



Fig. 5 - Entrance to the curve along with (l to r) the late Peter Cary of Donald Insall's, Elizabeth Nathaniels, and Peter Rollins of Thermae Bath Spa.



Fig. 6 - The curved wall seen from above the Hot Bath



Fig. 7 - Close up of the curve

the agenda reads:

To consider a Letter from
Mr Decimus Burton with his
charges for the Plans of the
Improvements at the Baths

The report continues:

Mr Decimus Burton's Letter
now being read and his Charges
viz Twenty one Pounds for his
Survey and Report on the State
of the Baths, and Thirty six
pounds and fifteen shillings for
Plans, Sections etc, explanatory
of the Improvements,
amounting together to Fifty
seven pounds and fifteen
shillings being now considered,

and it being the opinion of this Hall that the Improvements according to such Plans can be executed without Mr Burton's further attendance, Resolved that a Draft for eighty four pounds be sent to him; and that such plans and sections be placed in the hands of the Town Clerk for safe custody. (My Italics)⁵

Questions arise. What did the Town Clerk do with the drawings? Why was Burton paid £26.05 more than he had asked for? What parts of which baths were to be improved? What, if anything remains of Burton's work today?

To answer the first, the Town Clerk almost certainly handed the

drawings over to George Phillips Manners (1789-1866), the then City Architect, to whom Howard Colvin ascribes the design itself, even though he considered Manners as 'a prolific architect who appears to have designed nothing of great distinction⁶'. Walter Ison, author of the magisterial work on Georgian Bath, gives an equivocal account:

For some reason the works, which entailed reconstructing the Hot Bath and adding thereto a tepid swimming bath, were carried out during 1830 by George P Manners, then the city architect, although Burton is generally credited with the impeccably Classic design of the Tepid Bath⁷.



Fig. 8 - Inside the Hot Bath



Fig. 9 - Inside Burton's curve

Bath archivist Colin Johnston suggests that the answer lies in the page from the Corporation Minutes quoted above⁸. These demonstrate that the Corporation was more than happy with Burton's work. He must have produced copious working drawings for them to feel that his presence wouldn't be necessary to supervise the building. The extra funds could have been suggested to cover the cost of the considerable extra working drawings which Burton must have produced. And Manners himself was probably not overly keen to promote the name of the feted London architect. Like the more gifted John Palmer, another Bath city architect, who built the Theatre Royal in Beaufort Square, 'largely from the designs of George Dance the younger' he probably 'did not scruple to minimize the part played by his distinguished collaborator...'⁹

Many Bath architects were indeed highly gifted, from the John Woods, father and son, to Thomas Baldwin, who created the exquisite ambience of colonnades and buildings around the central Pump Room in the 1790s. But, as we have seen, new moves were being made from 1800 to invite leading Greek Revival architects from London, including Decimus Burton¹⁰, then at the height of his work in London and elsewhere.

BURTON'S LIFE IN 1829

In 1829, Decimus Burton was heavily involved with the minutiae of completing the Athenaeum, on the corner of Pall Mall and Carlton Gardens; writing letters to the authorities of Woods and Forests over his unfinished Wellington Arch at Hyde Park Corner; laying out the Regent's Park Zoo and continuing to build villas in the Regents Park. In addition, he had begun work in Kent in and around Tunbridge Wells and was almost certainly assisting his father in some of the designs for the new seaside resort of St Leonards near Hastings¹¹.

DECIMUS BURTON'S BATH

Decimus Burton would have delighted in the Palladian terraces and crescents of Georgian Bath spreading up the slopes of the hills which surround the bowl of the city's ancient centre. It was here, near the Roman hot springs, happily hugger-mugger with the Gothic Abbey, that a magical classical area had been created and still remains. There are colonnades, an elegant ballroom-sized Pump Room and intimate human-scale walks, providing delectable vistas. Just beyond the central Pump Room you see the open crescent-shaped arms of the colonnaded beginning of Bath Street inviting you to walk towards the intriguing

eye-catcher at the end known as the Cross Bath. Now sensitively restored by Donald Insall's architects, it is incorporated into the 2006 Thermae Bath Spa.

Off to the left of this, with Nicholas Grimshaw's glass Thermae towering discretely behind, is the former Hot Bath. It is here that we find the only visible work of Burton's remaining – his delectably curving wall. It is unfortunately punctuated in the middle by a former entrance, topped with a heavy keystone by a later Victorian architect. But this insult is alleviated by the Insall-Grimshaw notice reminding us of the Hogarthian Line of Beauty, on

this wall. (fig.4)

It is an elegant curve, paying homage to the setting and respectfully added to John Wood the Younger's only piece of civic work, the original Hot Bath of 1777¹². Its purpose was to allow entrance for wheelchairs leading to the Tepid Bath beyond. Inside, it now accommodates semi-clothed sybarites reclining within the curve, awaiting their spa treatments or swims¹³.

INTRODUCING THE CRESCENT

Decimus Burton must have been delighted with Bath. It was, after

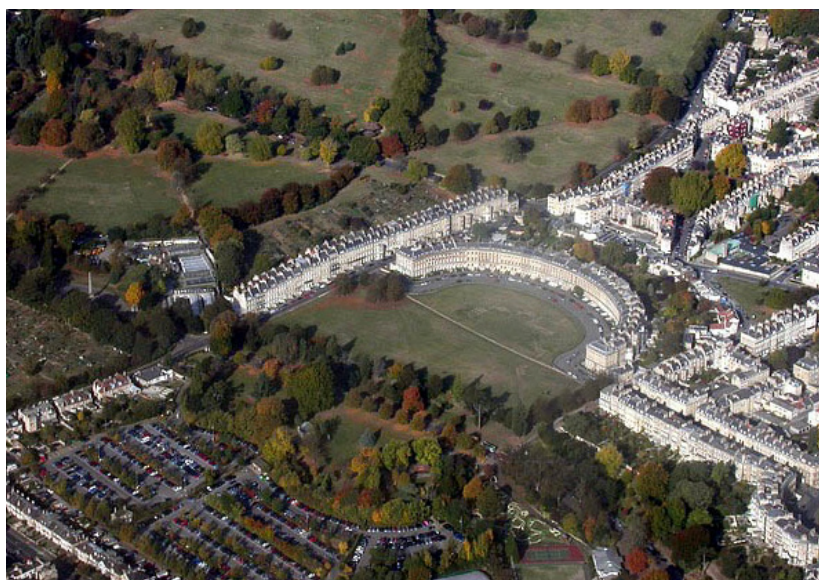


Fig. 10 - Royal Crescent, Bath. Photo by Jonathan Lucas, 2004.
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Fig. 11 - The Royal Crescent as it was in 1829 and is today
(www.rareoldprints.com)

all the birthplace of that English invention, the crescent. The first known of its kind had been created by John Wood the Younger, with his splendid Royal Crescent, begun in 1767 and completed in 1775. Described by Walter Ison as ‘The summit of the Palladian achievement in Bath.’¹⁴, it forms a curving unit of thirty terraced houses, presenting a uniform frontage. It faces a dell, embracing the countryside beyond, with trees hiding other buildings. It took architects by storm in the 1770s. Crescents begun to spring up everywhere, from James Burton’s own putative ‘Crescent Place’ near London Bridge of the 1780s and his later Burton Crescent (now Cartwright Gardens) of 1807¹⁵ to Joseph Kay’s magnificent 1824

Pelham Crescent at Hastings. And so strong was the Bath mystique, it was not surprising that John Nash, who, at that time, had to put up with stucco rather than stone in Regent’s Park, nevertheless insisted it should be painted the colour of ‘Bath stone’.

In short, the city was the Georgian architects’ beau idéal: a model of excellence and beauty. Much of historic Bath remains as Burton would have seen it in 1829, despite the ruthless modernizing destruction of whole sections of the city in the 1960s.

AN IDEA FOR TUNBRIDGE WELLS

The landform of the dell in front

of the Royal Crescent in Bath, kept rigorously simple and turfed, bears some resemblance to the shape of the land which, fifty years later, could originally be seen by the houses in Calverley Park, as shown by Chris Jones' map¹⁶. And while the twenty-four separate villas, both detached and semi-detached were of varied design, from cottage orné to Italianate¹⁷, they gained some unity from all being made of the same stone, almost certainly quarried from the owner, John Ward's 874 acre estate which included 'Jack Wood's stream and quarry'¹⁸.

However, the shared view of the landscape, which can be seen from John Britton's illustrations, has

disappeared over time. Trees have grown up and individual owners of the houses have planted tall hedges, shyly hiding themselves from the public gaze. The original privacy of the 'park' was formerly maintained by the three manned entrance lodges. These still exist, but no longer close off the park.

So, as Philip Whitbourn suggests, while the original occupants 'could enjoy the illusion of looking out from their front windows over ancestral acres'¹⁹ alas, these acres are now filled with trees. The idea of villas in a shared residential park, however, lived on, complete with lodges and carefully guarded privacy until the early twentieth century. References to Decimus



Fig. 12 - Plan showing Calverley Park houses built in a crescent.
© P. Whitbourn

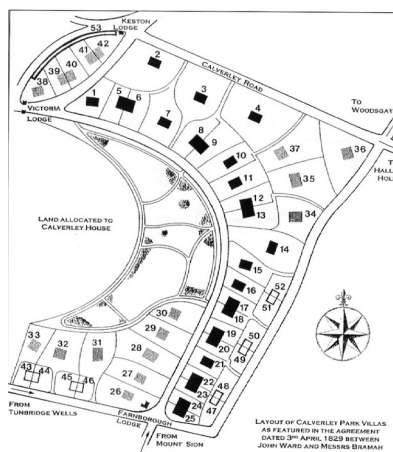


Fig. 13 - Calverley Park as intended in April 3, 1829
© P. Whitbourn

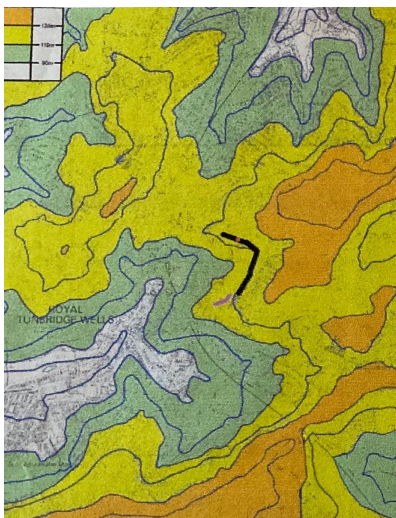


Fig. 14 - Chris Jones' topographical map of the Calverley Park houses shown as a black line, which, like Bath's Royal Crescent, had fine sunny views to the south west

Burton's Calverley Park, part of his Calverley New Town in Tunbridge Wells abound, at least one of them carelessly inaccurate, that of John Summerson, who describes the variously designed villas as 'classical'.²⁰ Professor Henry Russell Hitchcock called it the 'finest example ..of the idea (of the proto-garden-suburb).'²¹

Overall, Bath and Tunbridge Wells had many similarities. Peter Borsay's study of the English Urban Renaissance describes Bath as "The queen of the spas" which by the mid eighteenth century had become 'the most fashionable of all provincial towns.'²² He later claims that "The

only real pretender to Bath's crown was Tunbridge Wells...'²³

Architecturally, though, they were very different: Bath with its classical urban terraces and crescents; Tunbridge Wells with its scattering of picturesque cottages. Yet in Burton's early 19th century Calverley Park we can see a reflection of Wood's Crescent – both positioned to benefit from a particular landform, both with a general outlook to the southwest, and both benefitting from picturesque views. And both curved – the lingering influence perhaps of Hogarth's 'line of beauty'?

Notes

1. W.Ison The Georgian Buildings of Bath from 1700 to 1830, Faber....(1948) p. 45
2. G.White Hot Bath the story of the Spa, Nutbourne Publishing Ltd, Bath, 2003m p.56
3. James Stevens Curl & Susan Wilson, Oxford Dictionary of Architecture, (OUP 2016) p.208
4. John Britton, Bath and Bristol, with the Counties of Somerset and Gloucester, displayed in a series of views ... from original drawings by T. H. Shepherd, with historical and descriptive illustrations by John Britton. (London: Jones & Co, 1829) p.16.
5. Bath Council Minutes BC2/1/1/4 of 1 February, 1830
6. Howard Colvin, A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840 (London: John Murray, 1978) p.536

7. Walter Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bath from 1700 to 1830*. [With a Plan.] (Faber, 1948) p.64
8. I am very grateful to the Bath Archivist Colin Johnson who helped me during a visit to the Bath Guildhall on July 11, 2017
9. Ison, p. 43
10. Ison, p.45
11. E.Nathaniels, 'James and Decimus Burton's Regency new town, 1827-1837', *The Georgian Group Journal*, Vol XX, 2012. P.162
12. A. R. Boucher, R.K.Morriss, S.R. Mayes: 'An architectural analysis of the Hot Bath and Cross Bath, Bath, 1997-2003', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 47/1 (2013) pp.167-168
13. I am grateful for the help of the late Peter Cary, of Donald Insall's office in Bath, when I viewed the site in July 2017.
14. Ison p.154
15. James Burton's Diary, Hastings Museum, HASMG: FAM8.30 mentions James visiting Bath in 1788
16. C.Jones, *Picturesque Urban Planning – Tunbridge Wells and the Suburban ideal, The Development of the Calverley Estate, 1825-1855*, D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 2017, p.156
17. P.Whitbourn, *Decimus Burton Esquire Architect and Gentleman (1800-1881)* 2nd edition, 2006, pp. 24-27
18. Ibid p. 23
19. Whitbourn, op cit. p.24
20. J. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530-1830*, 9th edition, Yale University Press, 1993, p.495
21. H-R Hitchcock, *Early Victorian Architecture in Britain*, Vol. 1, Yales, 1954, p.449
22. P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770*, 1989, p.31
23. Ibid, p. 32

All pictures supplied courtesy of E. Nathaniels

THE REJUVENATION OF HYDE PARK

Burton's influence

By Harry Reid – from Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens

Introduction

Decimus Burton is unquestionably the most important contributor to the development of Hyde Park in its almost 500 year history and in fact the best of his vital rejuvenation work is still happily with us, some 200 years later – like the imposing Apsley Gate Entrance (often called the Ionic Screen) and the magnificent Wellington Arch, and of course the radically improved overall layout of the park itself.

But, first, let us look at the challenges Burton faced in 1825.

Hyde Park in dire condition

With Kensington Gardens becoming much more accessible following King George III's decision to move his residence from Kensington Palace to Buckingham Palace in 1761, visitors were able to quickly see that the condition of Hyde Park was notably inferior to the Kensington park which had been kept in superb condition for the benefit of the Royal Family members living in the Palace.

The comparison was really quite marked and the new Woods



Fig. 1 - The main entrance to Hyde Park taken from Wellington Arch terrace.
© H. Reid

and Forests management team, appointed in 1823, under the leadership of Charles Arbuthnot as President of the Board of Commissioners, knew that urgent action was needed to repair the overall fabric of Hyde Park.

Hyde Park's sorry state was partly the result of the damage done by frequent military reviews over decades past (including some ruinous military billeting) and large crowd celebrations following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 which had involved over 20 years of conflict, and then George IV's Coronation in 1821 when the king laid on extensive (and expensive) celebratory events for huge numbers of Londoners to enjoy!

Cattle and horses surprisingly still roamed through the park with little control or organisation. The Westbourne stream which fed the Serpentine had become virtually an open sewer, with unsightly swamp areas allowed to develop. And the park was still partly surrounded by a crumbling brick boundary wall built by Charles II as long ago as the 1660's.

But, being brutally frank, overall management neglect for almost a century was very much a key factor in explaining Hyde Park's appalling state.

Charles Arbuthnot in charge

Charles Arbuthnot was considered

the ideal man to lead the Hyde Park rejuvenation programme, starting in 1823, as he was well respected by all branches of the Government following his considerable time as Joint Secretary to the Treasury and in the Diplomatic service. He also had the opportunity to see how the recent development of Regents Park had begun to work out so well.

As a first step Arbuthnot took care of the routine improvements needed like pathway changes close to the Serpentine, road adjustments at Grosvenor Gate and problems caused by the Westbourne stream.

On a bigger scale he commissioned renowned Scottish bridge builder Sir John Rennie to design and

build the striking five arch stone Serpentine Bridge to carry the newly built West Carriage Drive along the boundary between Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens – thus dividing the Serpentine (East) and the Long Water (West). Incidentally gathering on the new bridge soon became as fashionable as “The Ring” had once been!

The Serpentine Bridge still remains an impressive sight today.

The Decimus Burton master stroke

But Arbuthnot’s master stroke then was to appoint Decimus Burton in 1825 to develop the overall rejuvenation plan for Hyde Park. It was a daring but inspired move as Burton was just 25 and still



Fig. 2 - Swans in early morning sun by Serpentine Bridge
© H. Reid

relatively inexperienced, but he had already proven himself with some outstanding architectural work on the first villas and terraces in Regents Park.

Arbuthnot wrote to the Prime Minister: "Having seen in the Regents Park, and elsewhere, works which pleased my eye, from their architectural beauty".

The brief for Hyde Park to Burton was concise but ambitious in terms of comprehensively upgrading the park to restore both its condition and dignity, as well as the ability to handle the fast increasing number of visitors, both on foot and in carriages.

Meetings between King George IV, Prime Minister Lord Liverpool and Charles Arbuthnot had also agreed the need for Hyde Park "to match the splendour of rival European capital cities like Paris and Rome", bearing in mind its proximity to Buckingham Palace. In the King's words the requirement was to develop "Some great ceremonial outwork that would be worthy of the new palace that lay to its rear" ie his new Buckingham Palace home.

Burton's Objective

Following all his briefings and consideration of the task Burton summarised his aim as "To create

an urban space dedicated to the celebration of The House of Hanover, National Pride and the Nation's Heroes" And he certainly succeeded with this goal.

Burton's Strategy

Arbuthnot enthusiastically accepted Burton's proposed strategy of enhancing the countryside feel of Hyde Park with additional drives, pathways and bridle trails with long vistas wherever possible – all designed to ensure that the park never looked anything like an average municipal park.

Burton was also keen to develop a dignified and unified character for the park which would certainly require incorporating some stylish structural building development.

Burton's Specific Proposals

In summary Burton's plan recommended the following action:

- New iron railings to be installed along the entire boundary of the park to replace the dilapidated brick walls dating from the days of Charles II and this also included locating stylish new wrought iron gates at all entrances.

- Create additional pathways and bridle trails, including new drives around Buck Hill and beside the

Serpentine. This work obviously also involved making changes to certain aspects of the overall landscaping of the park, including specific tree management in certain situations.

- Design and construct a series of four classically designed lodges at key gates of the park, namely Cumberland, Grosvenor, Stanhope and Hyde Park (and later at Prince of Wales Gate)

- Then the two major projects of designing and constructing a striking new wide entrance at Apsley Gate and a Tribute Arch to celebrate the Duke of Wellington's

victory over the French at Waterloo, both at Hyde Park Corner.

The architectural composition was designed to create a strong visual crossing from Hyde Park Corner to Green Park, sweeping down Constitution Hill and into Buckingham Palace.

In addition with the Wellington Arch in position now at Hyde Park Corner and the Carrara Marble Arch situated as the State Entrance to Buckingham Palace, the two arches together were unique symbols of victory coming out of the Napoleonic wars which were particularly important to King



Fig. 3 - Lodge at Apsley Gate entrance to Hyde Park,
now a popular spot for coffee lovers
© H. Reid



Fig. 4 - Apsley Gate entrance seen afar from Hyde Park's famous Rose Garden
© H. Reid

George IV in order to impress his foreign visitors (and of course his subjects)

Timing of project work

All this rejuvenation work was of course required as soon as possible and, once formerly approved by the government team and George IV, including the considerable costs involved, Burton went to work and essentially delivered the

entire package in just four years, by 1829. It was certainly a demanding agenda.

One of the first tasks tackled by Burton was to arrange for the existing Achilles Statue (also in honour of Wellington) behind Apsley House to be re-positioned to make it a major focal point for visitors entering the park from the planned new entrance at Hyde Park Corner - a detailed point

but indicative of Burton's high professional standards, even at his young age.

Official reaction to Burton's work

It's fair to say that both the Government and King George were delighted with the results of Burton's rejuvenation work when it was all completed in 1829. The appearance of Hyde Park had been spectacularly transformed, whether it was the impact of the new triumphal arch at Hyde Park Corner or just the tidy new iron railings round the boundary of the park. No longer was Hyde Park the ugly sister in comparison with Kensington Gardens!

Hyde Park was also now under new efficient management which

delivered much improved ongoing care and attention to all aspects of the park facility, including to the increasing visitor requirements.

Burton's two main creations, the Apsley Gate Entrance and the Wellington Arch, remain today integral parts of London's architectural and historical profile – and surely form Decimus Burton's main legacy to the British nation.

Lets take a closer look at Hyde Park's Apsley Gate entrance

A major new entrance gate was a prime requirement specified in the brief to Burton to provide impact on Hyde Park Corner and to fit with the architectural map of the surrounding area as mentioned earlier.



Fig. 5 - The famous Apsley Gate entrance in lush early Summer weather.
© H. Reid

The previous wooden gates were simple and undistinguished in style and so Burton elected to transform the entrance with a classical stone gateway leading into the park with its scroll-topped columns, made from Portland Stone.

The sculpted decoration at the top of the central gateway consisted of a distinctive frieze developed by John Henning, which was copied from the Elgin Marbles, originating from the Pantheon in Athens. The frieze design features a naval and military triumphal procession again reflecting military success over the historic French enemy.

The extent of the whole frontage is about 107ft (33m). The entrance seems in fact to have a number of different descriptive names including Apsley Gate (the official name), the Grand Entrance, the Main Entrance or the Triumphal Screen at Hyde Park Corner – but all four seem to work.

Just inside the gates is a classically designed Lodge House also developed and built by Burton with three bays in a Greek portico style and a turret clock by Thwaites and Reeds. (Incidentally it is now used as a coffee shop and very popular indeed with park visitors!)

King George IV very much liked Burton's design for the new main

entrance and virtually approved it on the spot on first sighting of his design sketches.

Nearly 200 years later Burton's entrance gate continues to stand firm with authority and elegance in the ever increasing traffic chaos of Hyde Park Corner. Somehow it seems to quietly promise everything that Hyde Park is about – peace, serenity and the beauty of nature.

Lets take a closer look at Wellington Arch

Wellington Arch, one of London's best known landmarks was designed and largely completed in 1828 by Decimus Burton. In fact due to a freeze imposed by the Government on public building expenditure that year the completion of the quadriga (a chariot drawn by four horses) as the decorative sculpture on the roof of the Arch had to be suspended, as was some scripture planned for the sides of the structure.

So Wellington Arch's original design developed by Burton was never actually completely finished to his satisfaction during his lifetime, particularly when a controversial (and colossal) equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington was erected on top of the arch in 1846 (30 feet high and weighing 38 tons) which had been forced through by the

80 strong Wellington memorial committee (which had considerable influence as they were also the subscribers to the statue) - and of course it was much liked by Wellington himself.

Both Queen Victoria and Burton were appalled by this decision, strongly arguing that it looked very ugly and the statue was completely disproportionate in size to the arch, but as usual what Wellington liked, Wellington got!

And it wasn't until 1883 that the ridiculously over-sized Wellington statue was removed from the Arch (to coincide with the traffic-forced re-positioning of the Arch away from facing Hyde Park's Grand Entrance to its current position) and the opportunity was taken to move the equestrian statue down to Aldershot where it is still situated beside the Garrison Church in very uncontroversial surroundings!.

This extraordinary decision to position a "giant Wellington" on top of the Arch had become known in the national press as "The Greatest Sculpture Fiasco of the 19th Century" and was an embarrassment to the Government for nearly half a century.

In its place the Quadriga sculpture (as originally proposed by Burton) was then developed by Adrian Jones

and finally placed on the Arch as late as in 1912, and which still looks highly appropriate to this day and it's certainly in the right scale to the Arch!

Wellington Arch has high terraces on both sides which offer excellent views of the surrounding area and very much worth a visit. The inside of the Arch is actually hollow and until 1992 housed the smallest police station in London!

Wellington Arch, which is certainly one of the nation's treasures, was extensively restored by English Heritage between 1999 and 2001.



Fig. 6 - Wellington Arch - on the way to Horse Guards Parade for the Changing of the Guard ceremony
© H. Reid

Burton became exceptionally well connected in London, including with Queen Victoria

With his family background (son of James Burton – London's largest property developer of the day, and brother of James Burton who was one of Britain's earliest Egyptologists) plus his many working contacts, Decimus was soon moving in London's top society circles. He was also closely involved with the fashionable Athenaeum Club which he designed and built with its fine frieze and handsome interiors, and of course he regularly frequented it.



Burton was also on excellent terms with Princess Victoria and her mother, The Duchess of Kent, which included in 1834, the Princess at the tender age of laying the foundation stone of a Decimus Burton school in Tunbridge Wells. Then both the Princess and her mother were guests, at Decimus' invitation, to stay in his father's impressive villa at St Leonard-on - Sea for several weeks later that year.

For the rest of his life Burton enjoyed a very close relationship with Queen Victoria and was always on-hand to give her advice and assistance on national projects, always in total confidence – for example like the physical transfer of Marble Arch which is discussed later.

Later projects for Burton in Hyde Park

Another Lodge or two at Prince of Wales gate

Then in 1846 Burton was briefed to design and build a fifth lodge in Hyde Park at Prince of Wales Gate on Kensington Road – in fact this project at Burton's suggestion ultimately involved the building of

two identical lodges opposite each other – one named Prince of Wales East Lodge, the other West Lodge. The twin lodges were made possible with the wide space available at this particular gate.

In fact this new structural arrangement worked very well for the Prince of Wales Gate in 1851 as it became one of the major entry points for the millions of visitors attending the Great Exhibition, held on The Old Football Pitches.

The Marble Arch transferred to Marble Arch

Following Queen Victoria's coronation and her move to Buckingham Palace, after a few years she found the new location to be too small for her increasingly large court and her own expanding family.

The solution was to enlarge the "Cour d'honneur" (principal and formal approach and forecourt of the palace) with a new East Range. The resulting facade is today the principal front and public face of the Royal Palace.

The only slight problem with this otherwise perfect solution was what to do with the massive three arch Carrara marble structure which John Nash, the original architect, had commissioned for the original

Palace design with the approval of George IV. It had cost over GBP8million at today's value, so it certainly did justify some serious consideration.

So Victoria turned to close friend Decimus Burton for his ideas on the project.

Burton developed an audacious plan to move the Arch just over one mile north from the palace to the North-East corner of Hyde Park, close to the Cumberland Gate lodge, at the confluence of the four main roads there.

The Queen was very taken with this solution as it still placed the Arch in the orbit of Hyde Park Corner (and Wellington Arch) and Buckingham Palace and so she quickly signed off on it and that area soon became known as Marble Arch, as it remains today.

Victoria's decision was taken in a matter of days but it took literally years, nearly four in fact, to complete the actual move of the monument as it involved a painstaking "stone-by-stone" removal and transfer which Thomas Cubitt and Burton painstakingly oversaw.

Rather like the Wellington Arch there was just enough space inside Marble Arch, with three small



Fig. 7 - Marble Arch at Marble Arch, North East corner of Hyde Park
© H. Reid

rooms, to operate a police station which operated there from 1851 until 1968.

More recently a traffic island was formed around Marble Arch which is probably not the best position for this striking building for it to be appreciated by visitors as closer access is subject to crossing some very busy roads. Hopefully a solution could be found to resolve this problem – possibly to incorporate it more directly in Hyde Park and link it to the Speakers Corner area.

Incidentally tradition dictates that

only members of the Royal Family and the King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery, are permitted to pass through the Arch which takes place in ceremonial processions.

Two Burton projects associated with Hyde Park which unfortunately were not completed

In his career Burton designed and developed hundreds, if not thousands of projects across the United Kingdom, the vast majority of which were successfully completed. However two projects associated with Hyde Park, both extremely creative, sadly didn't get

past the drawing board.

The first was a very dramatic design for a Lodge at Bayswater Gate which was totally circular in shape as opposed to the more traditional design he had developed for the five other Lodges round the park.

Sketches for this stunningly original Lodge design can be seen on the internet, dated 1827, but that was it – it would seem no work was put in hand for reasons unknown which could have been cost or perhaps the design was just too avant garde for the Woods and Forests management!

The other very creative proposal was to develop a tunnel leading off the top of Piccadilly, close to Hyde Park Corner, to reach Green Park with the tunnel design based on Greek Temple architecture. Again cost may have killed this one off as in 1828, as already mentioned, there was a Government moratorium on public building work.

So two great projects from Burton which sadly never saw the light of day!

Burton finally retired in 1869

After a long career of nearly 50 years Burton retired in 1869, living in both Kensington and St Leonard –on –Sea. He died in 1881 at the

age of 81, having never married, and was buried at the historical Kensal Green Cemetery in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, alongside his brother Henry and sister Jessy.

Burton's tomb is in the form of a Sarcophagus (stone coffin) made from grey Cornish granite with a pyramided cover – creative of course to the end! The tomb was in fact listed by the National Trust in 2001.

A personal salute to Decimus Burton.

Decimus Burton was certainly one of the most renowned architects and urban designers of the 19th century in Europe. He was unquestionably the foremost Victorian architect in the Roman Revival, Greek Revival, Georgian Neo-Classical and Regency styles.

By 1826, aged only 25, the name of Decimus Burton was on the lips of everyone who cared at all about the arts and architecture.

“Decimus was very well liked and his modesty, politeness and upright bearing were enduring, and his integrity and professional competence were worthy of the greatest respect” Quote from Architectural Scholar Guy Williams

Burton's greatest legacy is surely his

work involved in rejuvenating Hyde Park, in particular the design and building of both the Apsley Gate Entrance and Wellington Arch, both on Hyde Park Corner – and not forgetting his overall contribution to the layout and style of the entire park.

Almost 200 years later I feel a little concerned that Burton's rich legacy to Hyde Park has been somewhat forgotten in the mists of time and there is a case for something to be permanently recorded and be visible on his extraordinary work.

I'm not for one minute proposing yet another statue in the park but finding some way to publicly highlight Burton's unique contribution to the development of Hyde Park which we all have been so fortunate to inherit.

It's fair to say that the Royal Parks organisation is understandably very reluctant to add items like statues or signboards which obviously can very quickly disturb the natural appearance of any park and also involve costly maintenance.

However finding some way to highlight Decimus Burton's contribution in my view is a totally different matter, taking into account his very special involvement with Hyde Park.

My suggestion would be for the Society to consider this very embryonic idea and, if keen to proceed, then to set up a very preliminary discussion with the Royal Parks Management to establish their views, possible parameters for the project, how it might be funded and other basics – obviously all with no commitment on either side.

I hasten to add that this concept has only just occurred to me, but it's one of those ideas which seems to make more sense, the more one thinks about it. The idea is of course entirely dependent on finding a very special way of communicating Burton's contribution.

I suspect Decimus would have been the sort of personality who would be slightly embarrassed by this sort of recognition and would be keen to make it low key but in his case it would have to be low key designed with great taste! This sort of recognition has surely been earned and one could add that it is really a little overdue.

Harry Reid December 2021

RESCUING THE WELLINGTON ARCH

Part 1 - Conservation 1999-2001

By Alasdair Glass

On 1st April 1999 the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) transferred responsibility for Decimus Burton's Wellington Arch at Hyde Park Corner to English Heritage (EH) along with forty five other statues and monuments in London, including Marble Arch and the Cenotaph. Deemed a Building at Risk, this was due more to its deteriorating condition than through lack of use. This, the first of two articles in Decimus, describes the external repair and conservation of the arch; the second article will describe its beneficial re-use.



Fig. 1 - Wellington Arch from the east
© Paul Avis

Background

The history of the arch is thoroughly covered in an article in the *Georgian Group Journal* 11 (2001) by Stephen Brindle, the Historic Building Inspector for the project. It was conceived together with Burton's Hyde Park Corner Screen during the brief interlude of post-Napoleonic triumphalism to create a formal entrance to London's West End and a western approach to the recently elevated-in-status Buckingham Palace. As part of the same impulse, Apsley House was re-edified as the town house of the victor of Waterloo and the remaining corner site adorned with St George's Hospital, now The Lanesborough Hotel.

The arch was built closely to Burton's designs in 1826-9, including the ornate cast iron gates, but the intended sculptural programme went unrealised, leaving uncarved blocks for trophies between the portico pilasters and on the portico friezes. No stone was even allowed for carving a frieze on the attic and the intended statues on the blocking course and the crowning quadriga were omitted.

Though at first glance the arch today appears to be much as it was originally built, it has actually undergone substantial

changes during its history. Much to Burton's dismay, chagrin and financial loss (note 1), it was adapted in 1838 to take a monstrous equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington by Matthew Cotes Wyatt. To ease the flow of traffic from Piccadilly to Victoria Station, in 1883 the arch was moved from its original position, which was immediately to the north of where the Royal Artillery Memorial now stands to its present position on the line of Constitution Hill. This severed its formal relationship with Burton's Hyde Park Corner Screen (see Fig. 7, p56 for plan).

Fortunately, the statue of the Duke was not reinstated but relegated to a backwater of Aldershot.

The Duke was honoured instead by a smaller equestrian statue by Sir Edward Boehm, which was installed in front of Apsley House in 1888. The subsequent lack of any crowning feature to the arch attracted the attention of the then Prince of Wales, who commissioned Captain Adrian Jones to make an enlarged version of his group 'Triumph' (the Angel of Peace descending on the Chariot of War) for the top of the arch. Edward VII, however, died before it was installed in 1912.



Fig. 2 - Wellington Arch and the Wellington Monument
© Harry Reid

The last major intervention came in the early 1960s with the construction of the Hyde Park Corner underpass, which left the arch isolated on a traffic roundabout and severed its relationship with The Green Park and Constitution Hill. To add injury to insult, the northern leg of the arch was commandeered for the underpass ventilation shaft, rendering it unusable, leading to decades of neglect.

DCMS had rather simplistically approached the arch as a straightforward repair project, commissioning a condition survey and costed schedule of works. EH approached it properly as a conservation project, to maintain

and enhance its architectural and historical integrity as well as ensuring its structural stability and future maintainability. A detailed conservation statement was drawn up to provide an underpinning conservation philosophy for the project. This determined that the overriding significance of the arch lay in Burton's original design for the monumental exterior, though the interior and the details of its building fabric were not without value.

Exterior Stonework

The cleaning and repair of the Portland stonework was not intended to achieve a pristine appearance. After 175 years of exposure to the elements and having been moved in 1883, its condition would not have allowed this without excessive intervention, as well as being unaffordable. The cleaning was needed to avoid a contrast with the Hyde Park Corner Screen which had been cleaned by the Royal Parks Agency in 1992. The aim was to recapture Burton's original intention of a crystalline block of fine ashlar to which a minimum of architectural ornament had been judiciously applied to maximum effect. The porticos had been emphasised not only by the magnificence of the Corinthian columns on their projecting podia but by the

enrichment of the entablature, with an acanthus leaf ornament in the middle fascia of the architrave and egg and dart in the ovolo of the cornice, even if the frieze was never carved.



Fig. 3 - Wellington Arch
from the southwest
© Harry Reid

Cleaning revealed the extent to which the masonry had been patched and repaired in the past. The repairs aimed to ensure that the effect of fine ashlar, crisp arrisses and delicate detail was retained. Loose elements were refixed. Plastic stone repairs were used more extensively than expected to replace unsatisfactory old patching while avoiding additional joints in the finely jointed masonry, particularly on the fluting of the columns and

pilasters. Replacement of carved detail was almost entirely done with new stone carved on site, including elements of the column capitals, modillions and dentils and the egg and dart on the portico cornices.

Having borne the brunt of the weather, the crowning cyma of the cornice required the most repair. Approximately a third of it was renewed in order to restore its protective function and give a sharp line against the sky. The cyma was ornamented on all sides of the arch with lion's-head masks which give scale and a counterpoint rhythm to the cornice. Naturally, these were remade when a stone was replaced. Masks were also carved and pieced in where the stone was otherwise still sound if they had lost their circular appearance when seen from the ground. Protecting the top edge of the cornice was a particular concern as an effective drip was needed without an intrusive detail; in the event a lead strip was introduced.

The floral scrolls masking the second floor windows on the flanks of the arch were the subject of particular attention. They had been delicately carved in softer Portland stone than the general run of masonry. Most of the south side had already been replaced in



Fig. 4 - Detail of the entablature
© Paul Avis

the past but it was wished to retain as much of the surviving original work as possible. The delicate task of cleaning and conserving the scrolls was undertaken by EH's Building Conservation and Research team, which by then was virtually the last preserve of hands-on skills in EH.

Porticoes

Of particular concern was the stability of the entablature of the wide central intercolumniations of the porticoes which carries the weight of the elaborate coffered ceilings. The architrave is made up of three blocks between the blocks over the capitals and the span was

too great to be self-supporting, even with secret voussours. Burton was known to have used cast iron beams to support the similar wide spans on the Screen. Radar investigation revealed the existence of metal beams, at frieze rather than architrave level as had been expected. What was not known was whether the original cast iron beams had been reused when the arch was moved or whether they had been replaced by new beams. These could be expected to have been wrought iron and therefore vulnerable to corrosion in the conditions prevailing within the structure.



Fig. 5 - Central span of the west portico
© Paul Avis

Upon opening up their ends, the beams were found to be the original paired cast iron beams with wrought iron tension rods. They were in excellent condition partly because they were housed in dry, although unventilated, hollows within the masonry rather than being built in solid. While the whole entablature was not about to collapse, this still left the problem of the architrave, which had dropped by up to 15mm in places. Half of the blocks were cracked through at their centre points, the cracking extending across mortar patches presumably covering inserted cramps. The answer, obvious in hindsight but worryingly insecure from a structural perspective, was that each block was suspended from the cast iron girders by a single hangar at its centre point. Since it was impractical to restore the integrity of this inadequate suspension system a new one was installed using stainless steel rods.

The biggest surprise in the course of the work was particularly difficult to resolve; this was the discovery after cleaning that one of the columns was cracked at the second drum below the capital. The crack was at an angle of 45° and visible over approximately 60% of the circumference. No movement was apparent but, as with the entablatures, monitoring



Fig. 6 Portico ceiling
© Paul Avis

would not have given certainty, the consequences of a structural failure could have been disastrous and the cost of repairing in the course of the contract was relatively low. Because of the inclination of the crack, though, and the forces involved, simple pinning was not the answer. The structural engineer devised an ingenious system of rectangular stone plugs cut within the fluting along the line of the crack to recreate a vertical load path in place of the potential shear plane.

The porticos had solid roof structures over their stone-coffered ceilings and the side roofs

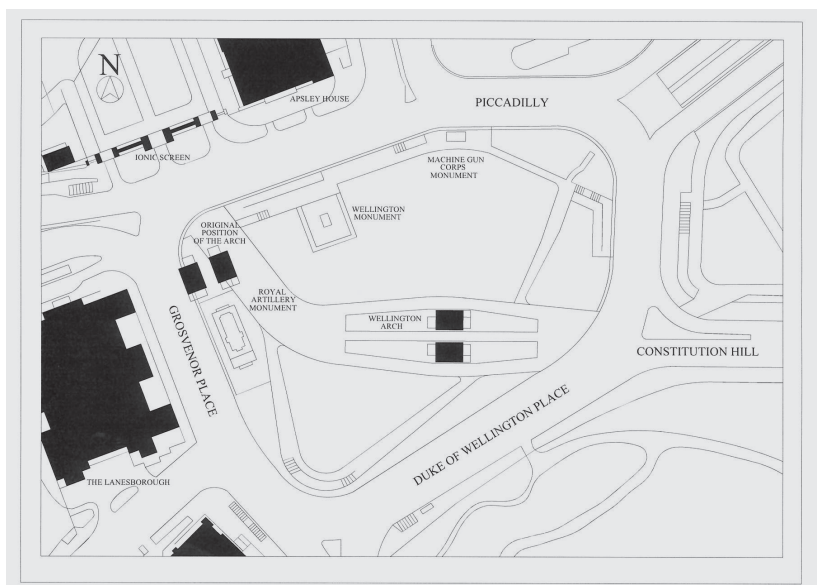


Fig. 7 - Plan of the Wellington Arch in its current and original positions. Drawing © P. Avis

were York stone slabs. Both roof constructions were lead covered, in oversized sheets on unventilated timber benching; the leadwork required renewal and the benching was rotten. The existing roofing was probably from the 1880s, though preserving the form of the original. As it was not normally visible and of little historical significance, it was replaced with asphalt to avoid the previous problems.

Cast Iron Gates

The magnificent gates by Bramah and Co were in good condition having been protected within

the archway and only the bottom rails required repair. This was just as well as the insertion of the underpass ventilation shaft had sealed in the fixings of the northern leaf preventing removal to a workshop (the huge spanner for the fixing nuts was put on display inside the arch). As the gates are seen at close quarters in all their elaborate detail, the small missing elements whose forms could be determined by examples elsewhere on the gates were replaced.

The paintwork of the gates was in relatively good condition and did not require complete stripping but

their black colour was questionable both visually and historically. No conclusive evidence of earlier paint schemes was found on the gates, which had been thoroughly stripped in the past. Paint research in the early 1990s though had shown that the railings of Apsley House and therefore plausibly the arch and Screen ironwork had originally been bronze verdigris green. With the arch now isolated on the traffic island, it was more meaningful to relate it to the Screen by painting the gates the same green colour than to retain the black from the time when the

arch stood directly at the top of Constitution Hill. EH repainted the Apsley House railings at the same time as the work to the arch was in progress, with the same Verdigris green colour and paint specification. The Royal Parks also painted the Screen railings and gates at the same time but unfortunately used an epoxy paint system in a standard colour which did not match and weathers differently.

Quadriga

Adrian Jones' magnificent quadriga is an integral part of the historical and artistic significance of the Wellington Arch. Decimus Burton conceived the arch being crowned by a quadriga and by the time EH became responsible the quadriga had been in place for half of its lifetime. The dynamic realism of the sculpture contrasts rather than conflicts with the monumental stability of the architecture, adding value to both. Its conservation was as much a part of the conservation of the arch as the conservation of the porticos.

The quadriga is three times life size, estimated to weigh 38 tons and cast in about 77 separate pieces. The bronze was in excellent condition having been protected either by the remnants of the lanolin wax coating applied up



Fig. 8 - Northern leaf of the cast iron gates © Paul Avis

to at least the Second World War or by a stable corrosion skin. The outer surface was cleaned back to bare bronze, which was darkly patinated to match the remains of the original patination visible when the later coatings were removed and then hot-waxed. The final coat of wax was only partly burnished, to emphasise the highlights. The interior surface was left untouched as it was in good condition and much of it was inaccessible.

The main cause of concern with the quadriga was its stability: the stresses from its dead weight and wind loads were obviously considerable. The complex form of the sculpture was ingeniously conceived to give it strength and stability. It is held down by three bolts at each wheel, eight in the horses' hooves and a single bolt into the banners trailing behind the chariot. The horses, which seem as if they might fall forward, are actually rearing up so their hind hooves are under their centre of gravity, with their back legs cast solid around iron armatures to give them strength and act as a counterweight. The horses are linked by their harnesses and individually tied back to the chariot by their tails. Since there is no chariot bed, the pole has no structural function other than to support the boy charioteer, being lightly fixed to the weak bodywork.

The chariot wheels are naturally robust elements which caused no concern. The axle is formed of a shaped bar, probably wrought iron, within a bronze casing which had been filled with concrete; whether this was for additional strength or to protect the bar, or both, was unclear. Where the concrete had been partly removed in the past, revealing the good condition of the bar, the void was refilled. The body of the chariot is fixed to a frame of steel angles and flats which rests on the axle tree and supports the weight of the angel. A series of metal tubes fixed to the frame and running up inside the angel to waist and shoulder height takes the wind loads in tension. The internal structure required a considerable amount of minor interventions to ensure its integrity. The angel's wings though, which generate the greatest wind load, had no signs of stress at their connecting points.

The roof over the attic had been rebuilt when the arch was moved and the Duke of Wellington's statue removed (both in 1883) and again to receive the quadriga. The block of concrete underneath the chariot, which once held an air raid siren, was retained and replaced on top of the new asphalt roof as part of the long history of the arch.

Alasdair Glass MA FSA is a retired historic buildings architect.

His responsibilities as a project manager and then Director of Heritage Design at DOE/PSA London Region included the Hyde Park Corner Screen and Wellington Arch. He was English Heritage's project director for its conservation and beneficial reuse.

This article derives from his article 'The Conservation and Beneficial Use of the Wellington Arch, London' in Transactions of the Association for Studies in the Conservation of Historic Buildings 24, for 1999.

Notes:

1. He was never paid the £210 fee he was due for reinforcing the arch to take the weight of the statue of Wellington.

61 CALVERLEY ROAD, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Remodelling part off Burton's
Calverley Place.

By Stuart Page, Architect RIBA SCA

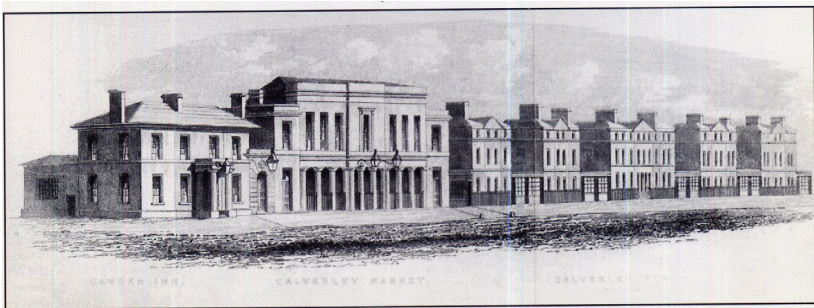


Fig. 1 - Calverley Place (its original name) in the 1830/40s. Five three-storey blocks separated by single-storey shops to the top right of the picture.
(Picture courtesy of Philip Whitbourn)

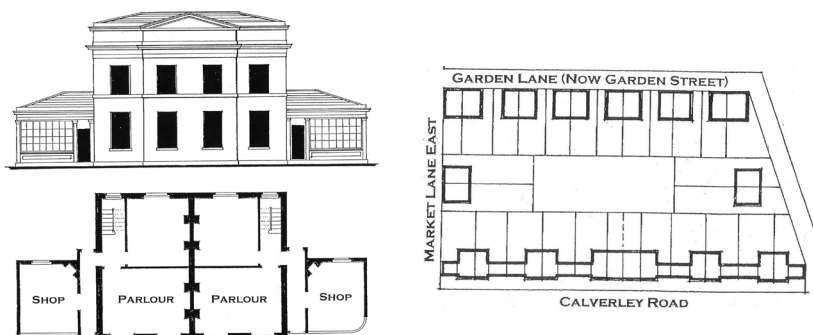


Fig. 2 - The Calverley Place houses and shops,
based on drawings in a building agreement June 1829.
(Philip Whitbourn)

In the early 1980s, Stuart Page designed a new Laura Ashley shop at 61 Calverley Road, Tunbridge Wells. His account of it gives us an opportunity to look a little more closely at Calverley Place, a relatively unusual Burton-designed row of commercial buildings.

Rosemary Yallop's talk to the Society last September, *Architecture and Gentility: The Cult of the Villa*, gave us a fascinating insight into the development of a new building form – the residential villa - in the early years of the nineteenth century. It was a form in which Decimus Burton excelled. Burton occasionally also worked on commercial buildings, and he brought to them many of the same design features as his villas.

At the eastern end of Calverley Road, Tunbridge Wells, there is one such development, largely intact, though the original form is somewhat obscured by later works. The Historic England description is not quite correct. It states that detached houses have been linked after their construction c. 1835 by modern buildings. Although the linking buildings have indeed been altered, extended or rebuilt, and some links bear little resemblance to the original concept, the intention was always that the main houses would be linked by single storey shops, as shown in the illustration (fig. 1) from a guide book of the 1830/40s.

Four of the five blocks comprised pairs of semi-detached houses. The drawing (fig. 2) shows that each

house and its adjoining shop were intended as an integral unit. The adjoining plan shows that there were small rear gardens and a parallel line of cottages and stables to the rear. The houses had railed basement areas to the front but were entered from side doors.

The fifth, central, block was wider, with two extra houses inserted in the centre. The extra width of the central block gives a unity to the whole composition – it might even be called Palladian – with the smaller blocks forming ‘pavilions’. The terrace as a whole was a skilful addition to the townscape, increasing the density of development, and providing commercial space to the Calverley ‘New Town’. The Classical form

had presence, with first floor string courses, eaves cornices, parapets and central pediments. The buildings were faced with Tunbridge Wells Sandstone but over the years this has deteriorated and many have been rendered and painted.

The original form can still be seen at the eastern end (fig. 3), though the houses are no longer occupied by the owners of the adjoining shops. The last resident shop owners were the Burslems (funerary stone masons) who lived in the last but one house up until the mid-20th century (and used the end shop as their showroom). The single-storey links were retained when Barclays Bank re-developed the adjacent block.



Fig. 3 - The eastern end of ‘Calverley Place’ in 2021, where there are still single-storey links. (Picture: Stuart Page)



Fig. 4 - The premises of Weddel Beef Co Ltd. taken in 1984. Built on the sites of the single storey shops of nos. 59 and 61. Note the insertion of the front door.
(Picture: Stuart Page)

Over the years commercial uses overtook residential and in some cases the changes were significant. At 61, Calverley Road, for example, the single storey shop was combined with its neighbour at 59, and extended upwards to provide offices and warehouse for Weddel's meat importing business (fig. 4).

During the 1980s, Laura Ashley Ltd was expanding, and looking for new premises, often in conservation areas and listed buildings. David Alcock, of Mount York Properties, had completed the conversion

of the Baptist Church on Mount Ephraim for Habitat, and now was looking for a suitable site for Laura Ashley in Tunbridge Wells. He approached Stuart and Christine Page to ask if they would help with a new project (at the time, Stuart was an Associate Architect at Henry Osborne Associates' Tunbridge Wells office). Would 61 Calverley Road make a good site for Laura Ashley?

It was quite a challenge: number 61 was the least attractive building in the road: one of the single-

story links had been replaced by a steel shuttered ground floor and rendered upper levels, while the adjacent house had been badly neglected. The interiors were as poor as the façade and the regular arrival of chilled carcasses to the ground floor wholesale meat warehouse was an unpleasant addition to the street.

Working closely with the company's retail team we developed a design that replaced the cold store with showrooms, including a new top-lit central spiral staircase (fig 5) and placed offices and utility spaces in the original residential premises to the right.



Fig. 5 - The new glazed roof lantern which flooded the interior with light. (Picture Stuart Page)

The street frontage was remodelled to reflect proportions of a classical façade while adapting it as a retail frontage. The second floor was retained for commercial reasons but was set slated to suggest

mansard. The first-floor windows were extended to suggest a piano-nobile. The chimney stacks were restored with the distinctive cream clay-ware pots that are a feature of the Calverley estate, improving the skyline. Unfortunately, the condition of the sandstone was very poor, so, like its neighbour, it was repaired and painted: today there



Fig. 6 - above - Stuart Page's presentation drawing for the new Laura Ashley building (Picture Stuart Page)

Fig. 7 - below - a view of the complete building (Picture Stuart Page)





Fig. 8 - . 61 Calverley Road in 2021 (Picture: Stuart Page)

would be much more debate about that.

This was a major investment in the property and although not a restoration of the original terrace, it transformed the appearance and function of the building. Listed building consent was granted in 1982 and the shop opened in 1984, receiving a Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society Award that year.

The use and occupiers of Calverley Place offer a fascinating insight into the varied activities and lives of the town: there is a rich source of material for research. For instance, Kelly's 1914 directory lists the occupant of 61 as Walter Edward Munns, and its use as dining rooms,

while 63 was a workshop for the blind, and 65 was used by George South, a wholesale confectioner.

The project was completed before the advent of design, access and heritage statements and limited research was undertaken on the property's history. We hope that this short article will be followed by others on the social development of the terrace, with reference to the trades, families and professions that have occupied the site.

This is also the type of research that could be fostered by the Decimus Burton Museum proposed by Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society and supported by the Decimus Burton Society

SAVING BURTON'S VEN HOUSE DRAWINGS

By Paul Avis

In October 2021, we received the wonderful news that drawings by Decimus Burton of his work at Ven House were returned to their rightful home. The story is a remarkable one that shows how the collaboration of society members and the organisations we work with can come together to produce successful outcomes for projects and situations that benefit not only a few, but in this case, the nation as a whole.

On Friday 10th September I received an email from Sue Palmer, Archivist, and head of Library Services at the Sir John Soane's

Museum, alerting me to an auction that was being held on Tuesday 14th September at Christies. One of the lots, No 93, was described as follows: -

DECIMUS BURTON'S PLANS FOR VEN HOUSE, SOMERSET

Decimus Burton, F.R.S., F.R.S.A.,
F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A. (1800-1881)

A folio of eleven sheets of plans, elevations, and drawings for Ven House, Milborne Port, Somerset, produced for Sir W.C. Medlycott, Bart., with a cover sheet reading:

DESIGNS
FOR THE PROPOSED ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO
VEN HOUSE
MILBORNE PORT – SOMERSETSHIRE
THE SEAT OF
SIR W.C.MEDLYCOTT – BART
TO ACCOMPANY REPORT DATED, NOVEMBER 1835
-DECIMUS BURTON-
6 SPRING GARDEN
NOVEMBER 1835

And with the original green silk portfolio.

The Lot formed part of the sale of the collection of Jasper Conran, a former owner of Ven House. With very little time to act, I contacted Christies, requesting that they ask Jasper to withdraw the lot from the sale, to give the society time to see if it could make alternative arrangements for its purchase to avoid an important collection of Decimus Burton's work being potentially lost to public access for good. The answer came back that the lot would remain in the sale.

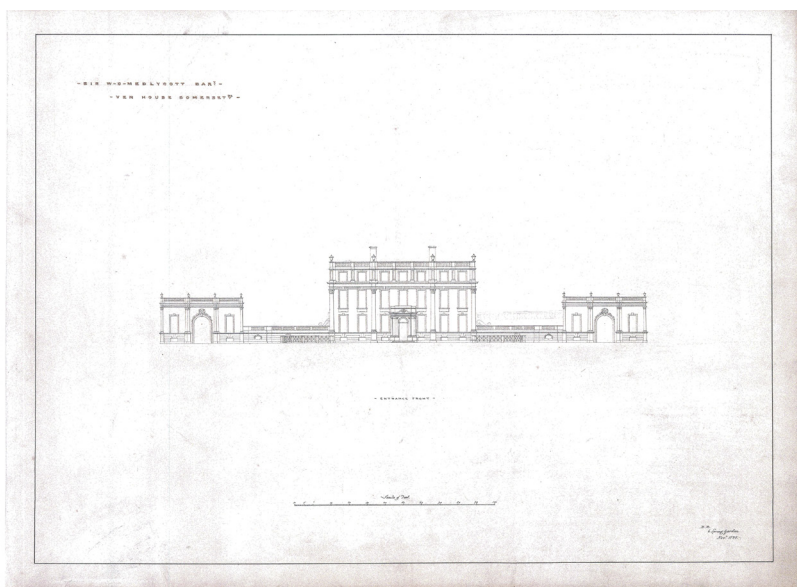
A further call was made to one of our Burton homeowners, Lord Best of Grimston Park, in the hope that he might be able to discuss the situation with Lord Allen, the current owner of Ven House. Later in October, I received the welcome news from the current owners of Ven House that they had purchased the drawings at the auction, and together with other drawings already in their possession, they now have a comprehensive and important archive of material relating to the design of the house and its gardens. Also, most welcome to the society was the offer that we

could have copies of the drawings for our archives, to have the loan of the drawings for exhibitions and for the society to arrange a visit to the house to see the drawings, Burton's work there and the recent restoration work that the owners have undertaken.

Needless to say, we are planning a visit for members to be preceded by an article on the house in a future edition of our journal.

Our thanks must go to Sue Palmer and our friends at the Sir John Soane Museum, as well as to Lord Best, Lord Allen at Ven House and Mike Fisher of Studio Indigo for making this all possible.

We look forward to seeing the entire collection in due course.



One of the Decimus Burton drawings that formed part of the lot at Christie's sale.

© Ven House

Book Review

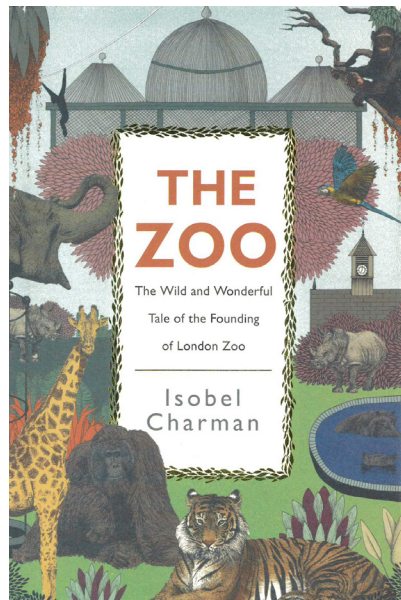
“The Zoo – The Wild and Wonderful Tale of the Founding Of London Zoo”

By Isobel Charman

A fascinating story of the early days of the Zoological Society of London, told through the eyes of some of the remarkable people who were instrumental in creating it. Over the years there have been many accounts of the Zoological Society. In “The Zoo” however, Isobel Charman has pursued a novel approach, taking her extensive research of the Society’s records, as well as newspaper articles, correspondence and diaries of the people involved in the project, and has combined this research with her imagination and storytelling abilities. The result is that she has succeeded not only in presenting the historical facts but has recreated the atmosphere of the times as well as the emotions and ambitions of the main characters involved.

Consequently, as we delve into the pages of the book, we come across

the stories of Sir Stamford and Lady Raffles, Decimus Burton, Charles Darwin and the 13th Earl of Derby. We also experience the stories of lesser know characters, such as the Animal Preserver, John Gould,



and the Head Keeper, Devereux Fuller, as well as that of the Medical Attendant, Charles Spooner.

A thoroughly enjoyable read.

Reviewed by Paul Avis

“The Zoo – The Wild and Wonderful Tale of the Founding Of London Zoo”

By Isobel Charman, Published By:
Penguin Random House UK, 2016 - ISBN:
978-0-241-24068-7

News

The Decimus Burton Museum and Study Centre

Some of you will have recently attended the Tunbridge Wells Civic Society’s talk, held via zoom, in October 2021 to present the case to their membership for a Decimus Burton Museum and Study Centre in Tunbridge Wells. It is a subject that Decimus Burton Society members are very familiar with.

The TW Borough Council are currently in the process of repurposing the Council offices within the current Civic Complex. The group of buildings that comprise the Civic Complex include 9 & 10 Crescent Rd, the museum site, and since the Civic Society had produced a paper on the development of the complex back in 2013, they felt it important to ensure that the two Decimus Burton buildings were not lost to an unsuitable development. The Civic Society has a successful track record in this area, having saved another of Burton’s buildings, Trinity Church in the 1970s, which was repurposed as a Theatre and Arts Centre. It should also be noted that several members of the Civic Society are also members of The Decimus Burton Society (I, myself, am currently Chairman of both societies) The talk was well attended not only by both societies, but also by guests which included members of the Council and members of the Town Forum.

We will be adding details of the presentation on our website. In the meantime, the feedback from the meeting was that the Council is

receptive to the idea of a Decimus Burton Museum/Study Centre, and has agreed to discuss the Civic Society's request for a year to present a detailed business plan for the proposal, and that during this time access to the 9 & 10 Crescent Road would be given to assist in this. The Council did confirm that their current plans for the Civic Complex did not involve 9 & 10 Crescent Rd, which is a relief.

At the time of writing, the RTWCS (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society) has set up a steering committee to head the project. Work has been started on surveying the two buildings and approaches have been made for funding. Future updates on progress will be provided via the journal, website and talks. Needless to say, the support of The Decimus Burton Society will be invaluable in making this project a reality.

I would like to thank the many individuals and organisations that assisted in providing some advice for the project and presentation to date based on their own experiences, in particular The Fleetwood Museum, The Sir John Soane's Museum, and the museum at No 1 Royal Crescent in Bath, together with members of both The Decimus Burton and Tunbridge Wells Civic Societies.

Blackhurst Park, Tunbridge Wells

The society has also been sharing information with one of the owners of Blackhurst Park in Tunbridge Wells which will hopefully extend our knowledge of one of Burton's houses on the edge of the town.

Poulton-le-Sands

The rise of seaside towns in Lancashire: Blackpool, Fleetwood and Poulton-le-Sands, 1830-1860. Who were the investors and builders? The society has recently received a copy of a student's dissertation from the University of Strathclyde, following our support and the advice of our friends at the Fleetwood Museum in the student's research

Phoenix Park, Dublin

The Society continues to receive enquiries from individuals and companies in relation to Decimus Burton and his work. Recently, we received an enquiry from an architectural practice in Ireland that had been commissioned to renovate one of the lodges at Phoenix Park. The specific question related to the fenestration detailing of the original building, since the renovation work included reproducing the existing window detailing. Although we were unable to locate images of the original lodge, we were able to advise on the likely detailing based on similar lodges of the time on the site.

Future Events

2022

Mabledon House

Thursday 17th March @ 7.30pm

An online talk by Fiona Woodfield on the house that was the Burton's family home for many of Decimus' early years.

The Decimus Burton Museum & Study Centre

Thursday 18th September @ 7.30pm

An online talk by Paul Avis providing an update on the project in Tunbridge Wells

Guided tour of Decimus Burton's work at Kew

Friday 13th May

The tour will include a visit to the archives at Kew and will be led by Aimee Felton and Kate Teltscher

Guided tour of The Wellington Arch

September 2002

The tour is planned and will be led by Alasdair Glass.

A photograph of Trinity Church in Tunbridge Wells, a large Gothic Revival style church with a prominent square tower and multiple spires. The church is made of light-colored stone and features pointed arch windows and a blue door. The sky is overcast and grey. A white rectangular box with a thin border is positioned in the upper right corner, containing the title text.

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.

