

# 9 and 10 Calverley Terrace

## Royal Tunbridge Wells

**The case for establishing the buildings as  
The Decimus Burton Museum and  
National Headquarters of The Decimus Burton Society**



*9 & 10 Calverley Terrace (photo courtesy of Kent Live)*

Prepared by: The Decimus Burton Society

In consultation with the Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society

April 2020

## Contents

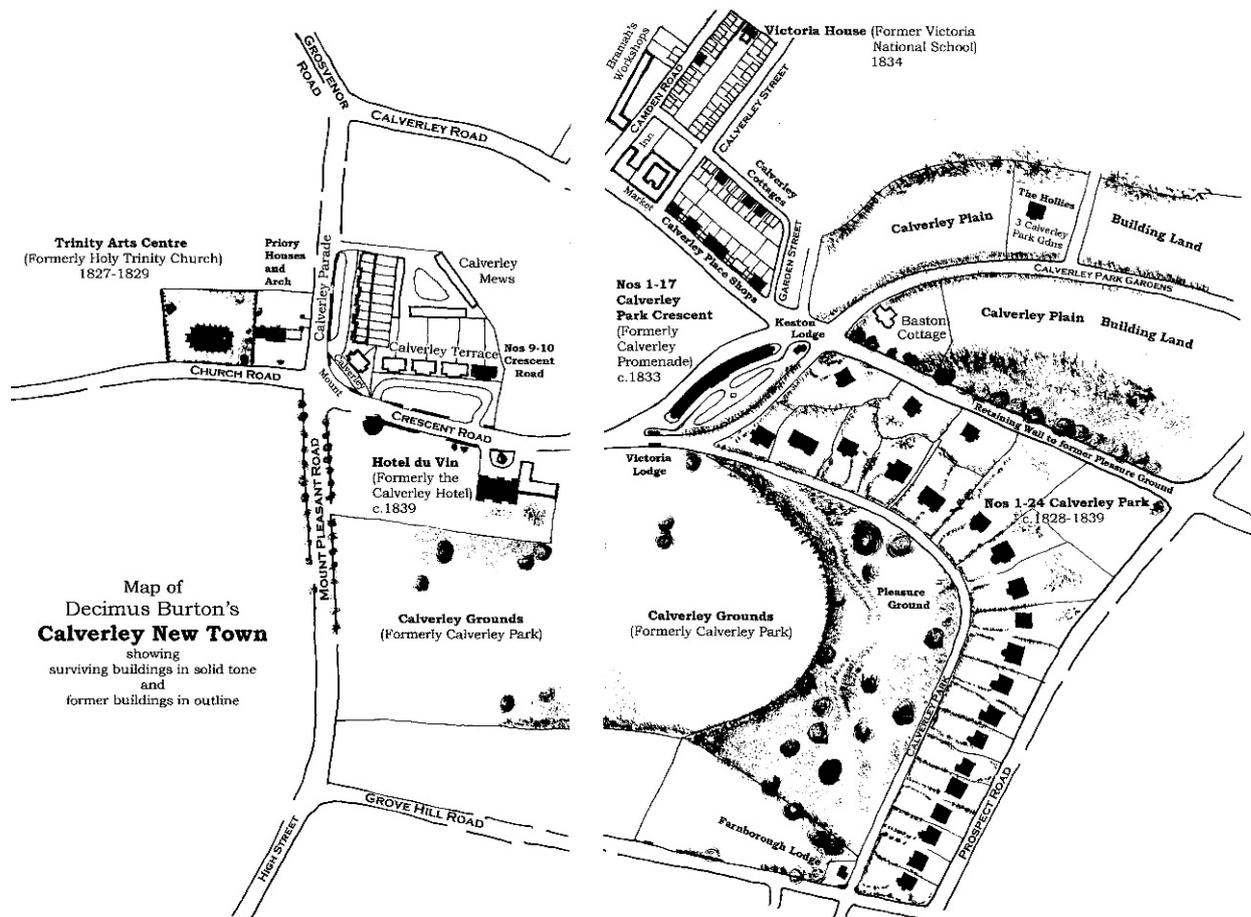
1. Introduction	Page 3
2. 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace – an important heritage landmark	Page 3
3. The 2013 Conservation Statement – Details of 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace	Page 4
4. The Decimus Burton Museum concept	Page 5
Appendix A – Decimus Burton, his work and the Calverley New Town Development	Page 12
Appendix B – Extracts from the 2013 Conservation Statement relating To 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace	Page 15
Appendix C - The Decimus Burton Society	Page 18

## 1. Introduction

Recently, several members of The Decimus Burton Society, along with members of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society were given the opportunity to visit numbers 9 and 10 Calverley Terrace in the centre of the town while they were unoccupied. The visit, arranged by the council, proved very interesting and has resulted in the following paper.

The Council has recently committed to a review by a cross party group of the potential use to which the existing council offices and associated buildings (which include numbers 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace) should be put. In the light of this, and the recent site visit, The Decimus Burton Society, in consultation with The Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society, is offering a strong case for developing the two buildings as The Decimus Burton Museum and headquarters of The Decimus Burton Society, as a component of a total package of renewal.

## 2. 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace – an important heritage landmark



Map of the Calverley New Town development showing the remaining Nos 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace opposite what is now the Hotel du Vin.

Decimus Burton's obituary in "The Builder" magazine notes that "Mr Burton's public works would probably have been more numerous had he not been early tempted by the offer of Mr John Ward, of Tunbridge Wells, from whom he accepted a special retainer to lay out for him the Calverley Park Estate. This engagement occupied most of his time for some years...."

Burton went on to become the RIBA's Vice-President, and Tunbridge Wells clearly benefited from the architect's reputation and prestige, as he undertook many local commissions in addition to Calverley (eg Trinity and St Peter's churches, Mabledon, Burrswood and Bentham Hill, to name a few). Tunbridge Wells should take this unique opportunity to benefit from Decimus Burton's reputation now, especially as the town is seeking to re-establish its reputation as a tourist destination. **For further details on the history of the Calverley new town development and Decimus Burton's work, see Appendix A.**

### **3. The 2013 Conservation Statement – details of 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace**

In 2013 the Council and English Heritage issued a brief to AHP, the Architectural History Practice to assess the conservation value of all the listed buildings, including 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace, which make up the present Civic Complex. The report was prepared with the assistance of Alan Legg from the TWBC Urban Design Team Leader and Ian Beavis of the Tunbridge Wells Museum. It is useful in establishing an independent evaluation of the importance of these two Decimus Burton buildings, the only survivors of this part of his Calverley New Town development.

The findings of the report can be summarised as follows:-

- **9 & 10 Calverley Terrace have considerable evidential and historic value, with a high associative and illustrative significance.**
- **The original plan form of 9 & 10 Calverley terrace are still largely discernible, and that they retain several original features.**
- **9 & 10 Calverley Terrace were designed by Decimus Burton, one of the country's greatest architects of the Victorian period, who worked extensively in Tunbridge Wells. Decimus Burton's national works include work at Regent's Park and Zoo, The Wellington Arch, The Athenaeum Club, Calverley New Town, The Palm House and Temperate House at Kew, as well as work at St.Leonards, Fleetwood and Phoenix Park, Dublin.**
- **9 & 10 Calverley are of considerable aesthetic value.**
- **9 & 10 Calverley Terrace date from a key period in the history of Tunbridge Wells when the town expanded and Burton developed the Calverley Estate. This period and the buildings it produced form part of the identity of Tunbridge Wells and lend this building communal significance in the form of commemorative and symbolic value.**

**For further details of the report, see Appendix B.**

### **4. The Decimus Burton Museum concept**

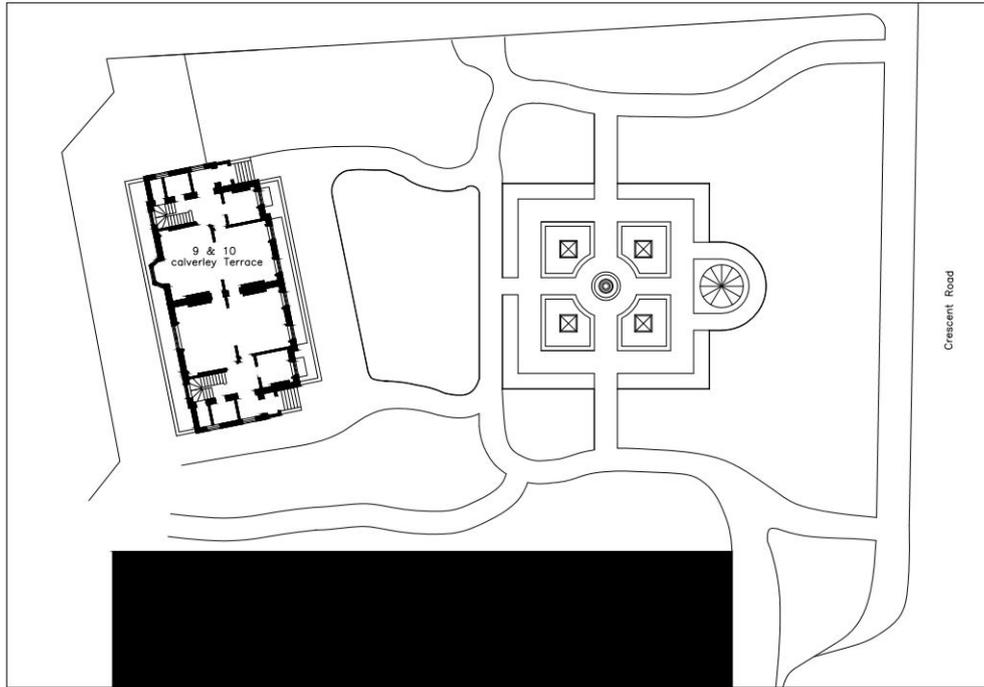
There are a number of examples of museums that offer good community, educational and tourist resources. The following is our recommendation for the potential development of 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace to provide a valuable community asset for the residents of Tunbridge Wells, the surrounding areas, and the nation.

#### **Renovation of the 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace**

The proposal is to develop both 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace by:-

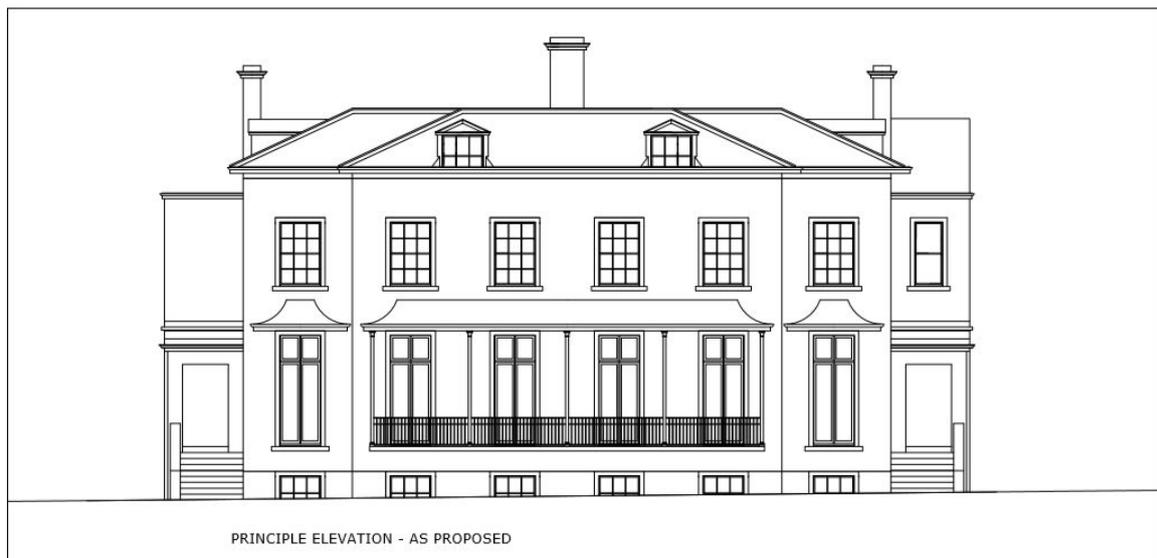
- Renovate the ground and first floors of the two buildings to form the nucleus of the museum. These should be reinstated as residential rooms of the period, and could include drawings, models, artefacts etc that are associated with Decimus Burton's life and times.
- Renovate the basement floor to be used for such activities as: museum shop, educational workshops, stores and offices, and/or an exhibition of a period kitchen and servants' quarters/rooms.
- Renovate the second floor to be used for office/admin space, lecture rooms, meeting rooms, stores.

The following drawings help to illustrate this proposal:

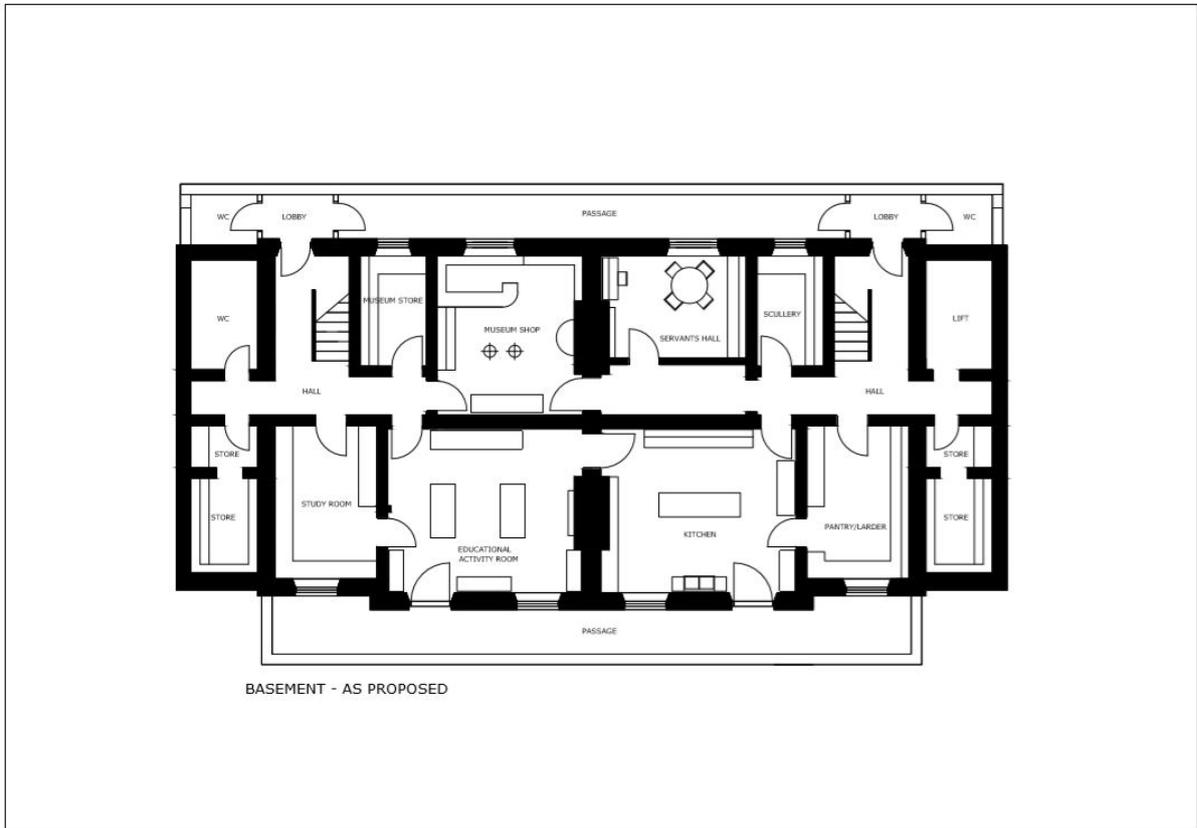


**Proposed Site Layout**

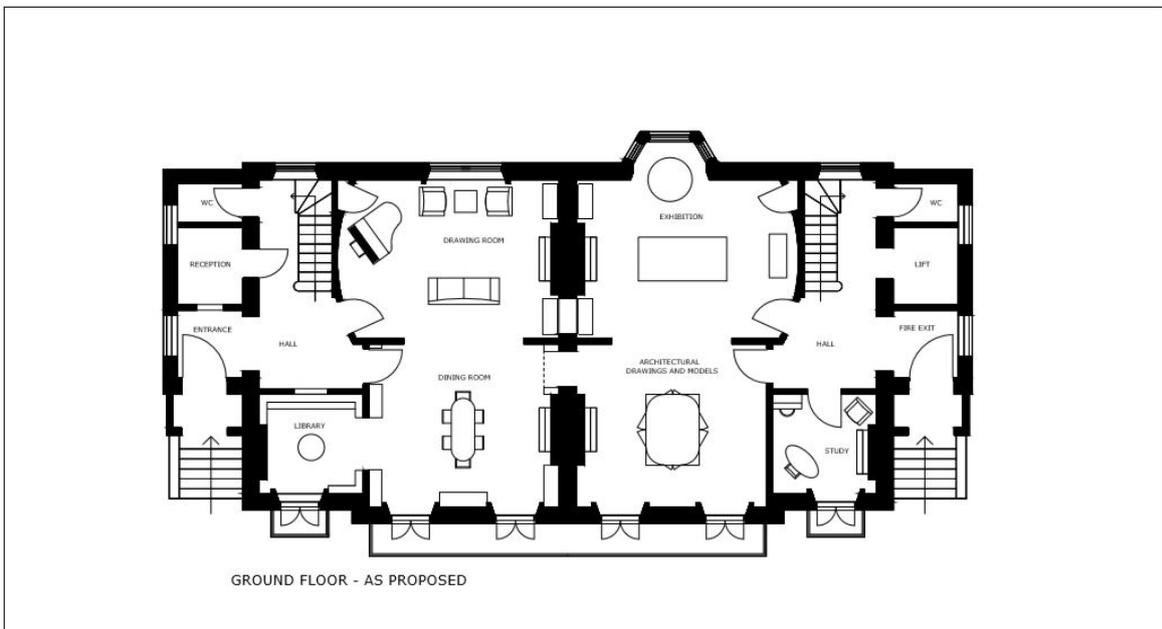
*The shaded block at the bottom is the existing Police Station. The illustration shows the existing car parking in front of 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace being developed as a public garden, in line with the recommendation of the report commissioned by the Council and English Heritage. Originally, the houses of Calverley Terrace had gardens in front of them, so the opportunity of reinstating a garden that is for public use is welcomed. Such a garden could not only reflect aspects of a Victorian garden in keeping with the period of the buildings, but should also be disabled friendly, as well as including sensory elements that would make it accessible to a wider audience.*



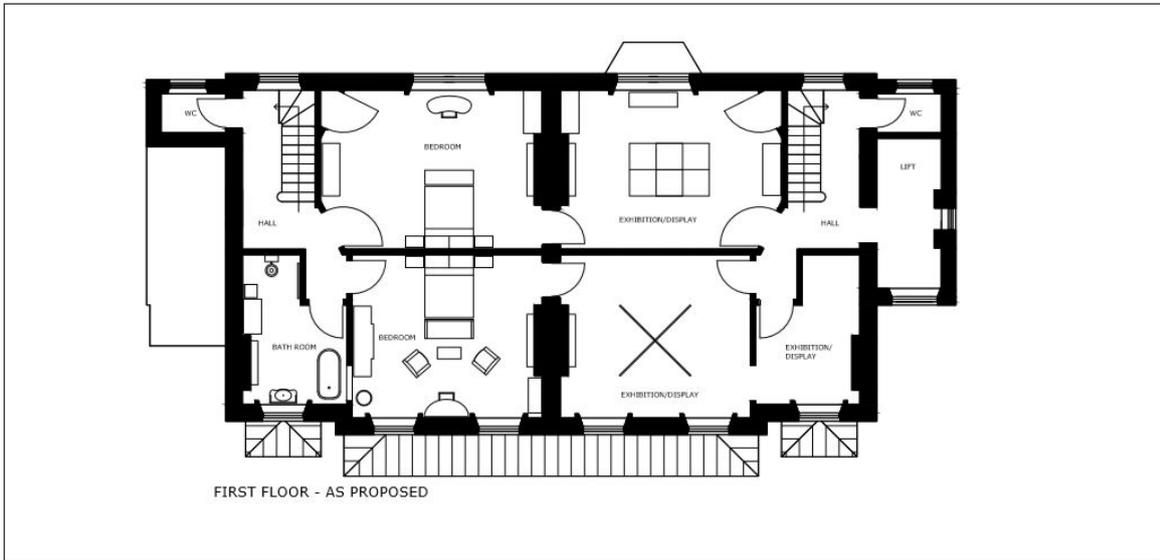
**Principle Elevation as proposed** - -with possible reinstatement of the canopies over the balconies.



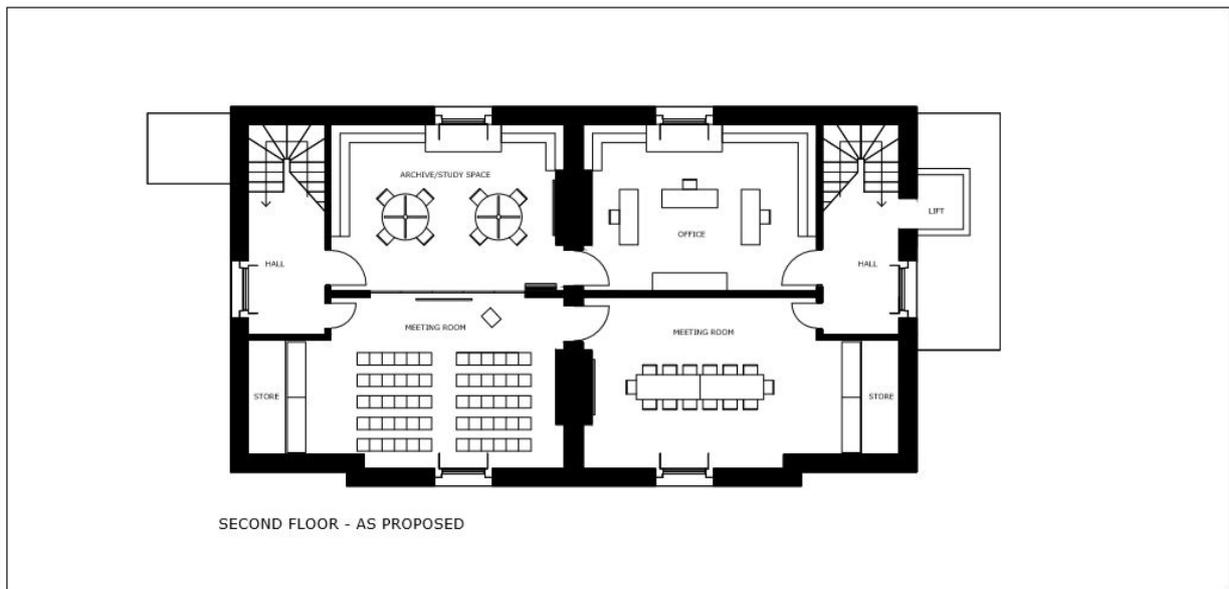
**Basement Layout as proposed** – *The basement provides the opportunity to recreate some of the typical rooms, such as kitchen, pantry, larder, scullery, stores and servants’ hall that may well have formed the below stairs rooms. In addition, as this level is not as sensitive from the perspective of original features, it also provides the opportunity to create a museum shop, educational, activity and study spaces, as well as ample storage, WCs and lift.*



**Ground Floor Layout as proposed** – *The existing ground and first floors are the most significant in terms of architectural and historical period layout and detail, and it is proposed that these two floors will form the main attractions of the museum open to the public, and decorated in Burton’s style, while some spaces will contain exhibits of his work and life.*



**First Floor Layout as proposed** – As with the ground floor, the first floor spaces have been remodelled in Burton’s style to reflect either period rooms, or exhibition spaces relating to the architect’s life and works.



**Second Floor Layout as proposed** – As with the basement, the existing second floor does not contain much of the original layout or detailing, and therefore lends itself well to use as meeting rooms and office space. One of the buildings could incorporate a sliding/folding partition, which would accommodate meetings of either 60 or 100+ in a comfortable setting. The other, could accommodate smaller corporate style meetings or again gatherings of around 60. Both spaces are shown with storage facilities for tables and chairs when not needed, and the option for tables for light refreshments in front of the stores. The lift facility has been extended to this floor, requiring a modest bump out to the rear of the side elevation. There is a generous archive/study space for The Decimus Burton Society, as well as office space for admin staff of the Museum/Society.

#### **What the museum would offer its visitors:**

- **A series of rooms restored to reflect the buildings as they might have appeared during Decimus Burton's lifetime. This process in itself is an opportunity to involve the expertise and enthusiasm of local experts, academics, students and the community.**
- **Interiors that are part furnished through acquisition, donation, loan or adopting "facsimilies" where appropriate.**
- **A national archive of the life and work of Decimus Burton, through physical, digital and video/audio works, with links to other museums and installations.**
- **A series of talks and lectures by qualified experts on subjects connected to the life and times of the architect.**
- **A series of guided tours of the museum and other local historical buildings.**
- **A range of educational programmes (eg workshops, talks, work books, research support) for primary, secondary and higher education establishments.**
- **A range of opportunities to hire out parts of the museum/building for private functions.**
- **A museum shop selling books, gifts etc to help promote the architect, Tunbridge Wells, local artists and commerce.**

#### **Benefits of developing 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace as a museum:**

The potential benefits to the town are considerable. For instance, it will:-

- **Put Tunbridge Wells on the map as the base of the national Decimus Burton Society and Museum, celebrating one of the country's greatest architects in what was really his home town (the Burton family home was at nearby Mabledon);**
- **Create a nationally recognised tourist attraction and focal point for visits to other national treasures with the co-operation of other national institutions linked to Burton (eg The Soane Museum, Kew, London Zoo, and the V&A/RIBA);**
- **Bring together in one place a national archive of the work of an eminent architect that can be accessible on line as well as in the flesh, and a centre for research;**
- **Tell an important story about the town's development and a base for educational activities for local and national primary and secondary schools, societies and organisations, universities and colleges specialising in architecture, landscaping etc;**
- **Set up a unique venue in a spectacular setting for events, promotions and private functions for local businesses, societies and organisations to help develop their business and commercial presence in the town;**
- **Complement and expand the offer of the Amelia Scott Centre with additional display space and scope for touring exhibitions and cultural events;**
- **Provide increased value as an historical asset over and above what could be achieved by converting the buildings into merely office space for rent.**

## Examples of Similar Museums

Developing the buildings as a museum has some very successful precedents. The following are just two examples of museums with what we have identified as having similar offerings.

### i) The Sir John Soane Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London

Sir John Soane was a leading architect of Georgian England, who as Professor of Architecture at The Royal Academy from 1806, gave a series of lectures on the principles of architecture, at least some of which Decimus Burton attended while studying to be an architect. Indeed, Soane was a major influence on Decimus Burton's work. The museum, which was the home of Soane (and also comprised two buildings) is unique, and whilst it would be wrong to try and replicate the experience, it does give a good idea of the potential feeling and attraction that a Decimus Burton Museum in Tunbridge Wells could have for a national, international, and even world audience (there is, after all a Sir John Soane Association in America).

The Museum raises over £1m in funding per year from individuals, trusts, foundations and companies. It also attracts over 120,000 visitors a year.



*The Drawing Room*



*The Library set up for a private dinner party*



*The Model Room*

ii) **No 1 Royal crescent, Bath**

No 1 Royal Crescent is a museum which has been decorated and furnished just as it might have been during the period 1776-1796. The rooms feature historic furniture, pictures and objects that reveal what life was like for Bath's fashionable residents – both upstairs and downstairs. Although this museum is from a period that is fifty odd years before the Calverley Terrace buildings, it also gives another good idea of a period home that has developed into a successful tourist attraction with added educational benefits for the local community. The museum is run as a business enterprise.



*The Drawing Room*



*The Kitchen*



*TV celebrities host events*



*Educational events – period dressing up and cooking*



*An exhibition on Georgian life*

### **Financing the proposal**

When it comes to financing the proposal, there are a number of questions that should be addressed. In our opinion, the most successful ventures of this kind are ones where a successful partnership of individuals, organisations and the public, which have a vested interest in seeing the venture succeed, join forces to make it succeed.

Nos 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace are certainly an asset. However, to develop these buildings as office space or as private residences, for example, would be a tragic undervaluing of the asset, and just as importantly, it would represent the loss to the residents of Tunbridge Wells of two of the most significant architecturally and culturally valuable buildings that the town has – even more so, since the buildings are not in public ownership, but owned by the Council.

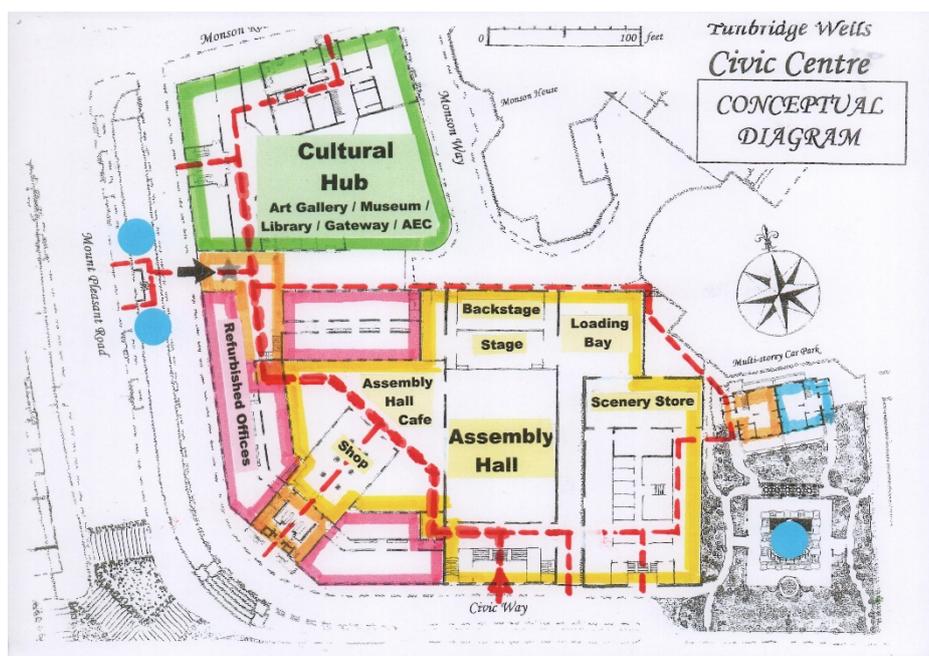
Many ventures such as the one here proposed, have attracted not only the financial support of individuals, institutions and organisations, but also grants from bodies dedicated to preserving the national heritage, while offering an exciting future for local tourism, education, and business. It is firmly believed that here is an opportunity that would attract such investment. We would suggest an early application is made for Lottery funding.

Both The Decimus Burton Society and The Civic Society have a wealth of knowledge, expertise and experience to assist in turning the proposal into a reality, and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Council and help put Tunbridge Wells back on the map through such a venture.

### **Conclusion**

We believe that the above should be sufficient to give you a flavour of what the exciting future of Nos 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace could be in providing Tunbridge Wells with a desperately needed project that the public could get behind, and join with the council and others to bring to reality.

## APPENDIX A



Nos. 9–10 Crescent Road is the only surviving remnant of 'Calverley Terrace' by Decimus Burton. The building was originally to the right of four similar semi-detached houses, and is shown in the bottom right of a paper, produced for the Civic Society in 2013, on the potential future development of the civic complex. A suggested garden is also shown replacing the current car parking in front of the buildings, which is in line with the Conservation Statement recommendations.

### **The Conservation Statement, prepared by the Architectural History Practice in response to a brief from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and English Heritage, 2013.**

The following are some extracts from the Conservation Statement, prepared in response to a brief from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and English Heritage, dated 11 January 2013, for the preparation of a Conservation Statement for the group of listed buildings which make up the present Civic Complex. The report was prepared with the assistance of Alan Legg from the TWBC Urban Design Team Leader and Ian Beavis of the Tunbridge Wells Museum. It is useful in establishing an independent evaluation of the importance of these two Decimus Burton buildings, the only survivors of this part of his Calverley New Town development.

#### **History**

Nos. 9–10 Crescent Road is the only surviving remnant of 'Calverley Terrace' by Decimus Burton. The building was originally the easternmost of four similar semi-detached houses built in the late 1820s and early 1830s on part of the Calverley Estate.

Calverley Parade and some of the land behind it was acquired by the Corporation in 1895 with a view to building a town hall and other municipal buildings. In the years around 1900, most of the mews were built over with public baths (foundation stone laid in 1897) and then the Technical Institute (1900–02). The Calverley Terrace property was acquired by the council between 1928 and 1931. As early as 1930, the site of Calverley Terrace and Parade had been earmarked for the new civic centre. Most of the houses were gradually demolished in 1937/8 as redevelopment progressed. The proposed fire station on the site of Nos. 9–10 was the last phase of the civic centre and ultimately remained unexecuted, ensuring the survival of the last two houses.

Both houses were used as a health clinic for several years. In 1978, listed building consent was granted for the conversion of most of the building to offices. The basement was used as a dental laboratory until c.1992. The building is now used as offices by various Council departments and the ambulance service. It was listed in 1974.

## **Description**

Nos. 9–10 Crescent Road is a pair of houses, each of two storeys, with a raised basement and an attic. The materials are local sandstone with a slate roof. The roof is hipped but has at the centre a narrow valley. There are two dormers to the front (south), four to the north and one to the west. Originally, there would have been three chimney stacks, one at the centre and one at both sides. Both houses have recessed stone porches. The main frontage is six windows wide, with the centre of the façade projecting slightly. The ground-floor windows have cast-iron balconies on fine scrolled brackets. The rear elevation has two central bays of wider, nearly square windows, with narrower windows to the outer bays. There is a single storey canted bay window to the rear of no. 10, supported on columns standing in the rear basement area.

Originally, the plans of each half of the building would have been probably identical, but this is now occasionally obscured by later partitions. The entrance door leads into a lobby around the corner from the stairwell, which is placed beside the back rooms. On ground and first floor at least, the original plan would have had one large room to the front and back for each house.

Both houses have the original staircases, which have plain stick balusters and terminate in a scroll at ground-floor level. The stair between the basement and the ground floor at no. 10 has been replaced. The basement rooms are relatively plain and without any distinguishing features. There are doors leading to the basement from the front area. Several rooms are subdivided and toilets have been built into part of the back area. The ground-floor back rooms in nos. 9 and 10 have curved corner doors, matched by curved outer walls with niches or cupboards beside the windows. Both of the original front rooms have ceiling roses and decorative cornices. The narrower part of the front room of no. 9 (where the front wall steps back) has a depressed arch on volute brackets which separates the narrower part as an alcove.

The first floor of no. 10 has a modern kitchen and toilet above the entrance porch, with a small arched window with a sash with margin lights and etched coloured glass rosettes, as well as modern coloured glass. The back rooms have canted corner doors and cupboards in the outer corners. The flues from the outer ground-floor front room fireplaces curve up on the first floor walls, disguised as arched niches (that at no. 10 being only half an arch).

The second floor is lit by dormers both on the main roof and the central M-section roof. There are cupboards on both of the landings, and there is another cupboard with drawers in the front kitchen of no. 9. Several rooms have modern timber-panelling to the walls. The rooms are small and plain.

Most fireplaces are blocked up, but some retain their surrounds: for example in the ground floor rooms of no. 9; the first-floor front room of no. 9 (with a cast-iron grate); and the second-floor back room of no. 10 (with a cast-iron grate). Some of the windows have working internal shutters.

## **Alterations**

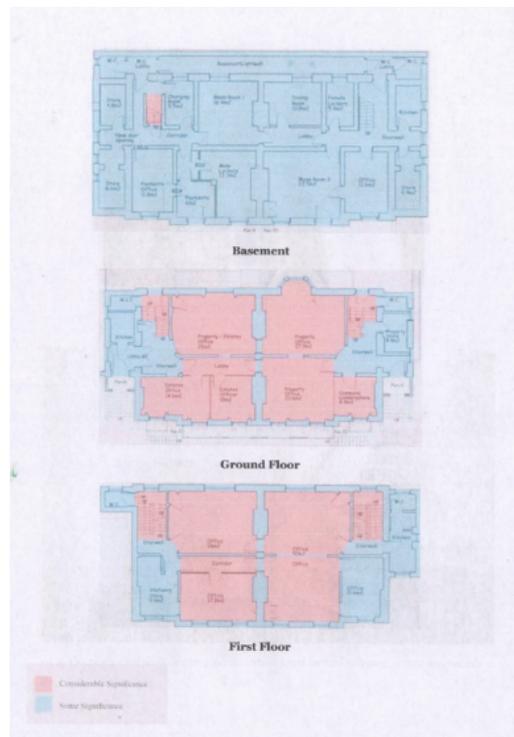
The bay window to the ground floor of no. 10 is a Victorian addition (according to map evidence), as were the tented verandas on the front elevation (since removed). The party wall stack may have been taken down or shortened as part of roof alterations as it is not visible from the street.

There have been a range of internal alterations associated with office use. Connections were made through the former party wall on all levels. On the first floor of no. 10, part of the spine wall has also been removed. Several rooms were subdivided and partitions inserted so as to create a corridor between front and back rooms; although some partitions have recently been removed on the ground floor. A number of fireplaces have been blocked up and some of the fire surrounds removed. Toilets and kitchens have been inserted. The stair at no. 10 between ground and basement level appears to have been removed at some point and later reinstated (listed building consent 1992).

## Principal spaces

The principal spaces include the staircases, the main ground-floor rooms, and the main first floor rooms, all of which are of considerable significance. These are the spaces which preserve most of the original features, including plasterwork, fireplaces, and staircases. The ground-floor back rooms are particularly attractive spaces, due to the unusual curved corner rooms, which are matched by curved cupboards on the same wall. All of these rooms are of considerable significance.

**Significance assessment** The plans below show the areas that are considered to have considerable significance coloured blue, while those spaces considered to have some significance are in red.



Nos. 9–10 Crescent Road have considerable evidential value. As residential houses of the 1830s, both the site and the building are likely to have some potential to yield evidence about past human activity, including archaeological evidence.

As 1830s houses whose original plan form is still largely discernible, nos. 9–10 have a considerable historical value. The building is of high associative and illustrative significance as it is the only one remaining of Decimus Burton's Calverley Terrace, Calverley Mount and Calverley Parade. (There are of course other surviving Burton buildings in Tunbridge Wells.)

Nos. 9–10 Crescent Road are a finely detailed Regency pair of houses, with several original features. Designed by an important architect of the period who worked extensively in Tunbridge Wells, it is of considerable aesthetic value.

While not in communal use, the building dates from a key period in the history of Tunbridge Wells when the town expanded and Burton developed the Calverley Estate. This period and the buildings it produced form part of the identity of Tunbridge Wells and lend this building communal significance in the form of commemorative and symbolic value.

## Open space in front of 9 & 10

The plot immediately in front of 9 & 10 was originally the front gardens of this pair of houses and is an integral part of their setting. The significance of the listed buildings would certainly be damaged by any building here and it would be preferable to enhance the significance of the space by more sympathetic treatment. Ideally this would mean the removal of cars and the restoration of a suitably landscaped space.

## APPENDIX B

### Decimus Burton, his work, and the Calverley New Town Development



*Drawing of Decimus Burton 2019 by Indi Ellis (copyrite the Decimus Burton Society)*

#### **Decimus Burton**

Decimus Burton, the tenth child of James Burton (the famous London developer, who had worked with John Nash, and was responsible for building many of the major developments of his day in London, including Regent's Park) had made a name for himself working with the likes of his father and Nash, and by the time he started on the Calverley New Town design, he had already designed buildings in Regent's Park and Kew Gardens, as well as The Wellington Arch, and The Athenaeum Club, amongst others.



*The Temperate House Kew, which was recently renovated by Donald Insall Associates.*



*The Athenaeum Club, London*

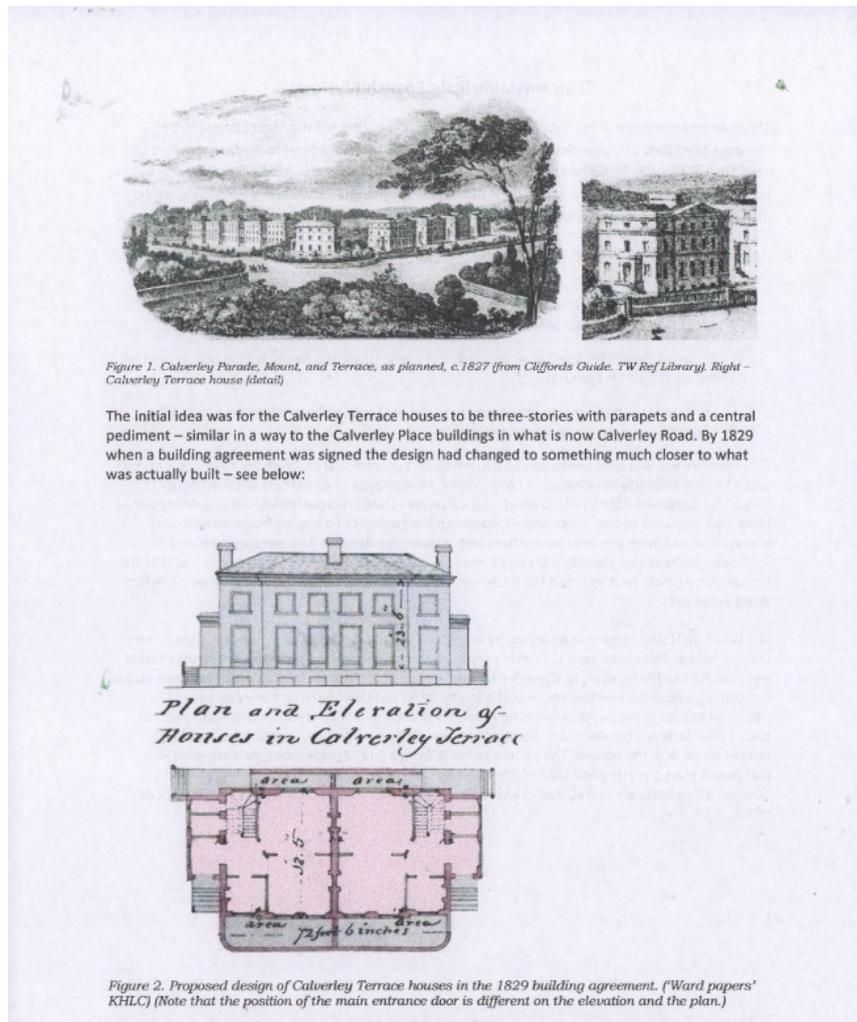
### **The Claverley New Town Development**

By 1826, John Ward had amassed an 874 acre estate, called the Calverley Estate. Decimus, who was familiar with the town, having lived with his family at nearby Mabledon before undertaking his career as an architect in London, laid out the estate for Ward in 1828. It was to include shops and houses in Calverley Rd, together with Calverley Park Villas and Lodges, Calverley Terrace and Calverley Parade, Calverley Promenade (Calverley Park Crescent), Calverley Cottages, Calverley House (Hotel du Vin) and the Victoria National School. Trinity Church is sometimes linked to the development, although it was designed prior to this date, and was already being erected by 1827.

The aim of this new estate, according to J Colbran, was “to erect a number of edifices suitable to the reception of genteel families: and simultaneously with the larger buildings, a number of shops etc, in their immediate neighbourhood, so that the residents upon this estate might enjoy the same advantages as those who lived near the Springs” (ie The Pantiles).

And so the development commenced. The buildings that Burton designed for Calverley New Town reflect a variety of styles, prompting John Britton FSA to comment “in designing and placing these houses the architect has evidently studied variety, but restrained his fancy to such simple forms and sizes as seemed best adapted to an economical expenditure.” This is one of the unique features of the development as a whole. Burton’s experience through his work in London, allowed him to introduce Italianate, Grecian, Old-English and Gothic features into his buildings in Tunbridge Wells, although the pockets of the town’s residents dictated the developer’s overriding requirement of making a profit. Consequently, whereas the villas in the park are in an idyllic setting, the buildings of Calverley Parade and Calverley Terrace were what are nowadays often referred to as cookie-cutter designs. That does not detract from their pleasant appearance, as the success of the development is to be seen in its whole, and not in the individual parts.

Calverley New Town remained largely in tact until in the early 1930s, Calverley Parade and much of Calverley Terrace was demolished to make way for the current council offices. All that remain of Decimus Burton’s original buildings in this immediate area are Nos 9 & 10 Calverley Terrace.



*An extract from Dr Chris Jones' illustrated talk on the residents of Calverley Terrace, 2018.*



*Burrswood in nearby Groombridge, and Mabledon, the Burton family home*



*Bentham Hill in Southborough and Trinity Church in Tunbridge Wells*

A very small selection of some of Decimus Burton's local projects

## APPENDIX C

### The Decimus Burton Society

#### a) The purposes of the charity

The Decimus Burton Society is a charity that was set up with the following purposes in mind:-

- 1) The creation of a central resource point, containing a collection of material relating to Decimus Burton and his work, with links to material in other places.
- 2) The holding of talks and lectures relating to Decimus Burton and his work.
- 3) The publication of research into Decimus Burton and his period.
- 4) The encouragement of students and others to study and appreciate Decimus Burton's work.

The inaugural meeting, held at The Society of Antiquaries in Burlington House, Piccadilly on 14th May 2018, proved a great success and led to the official formation of the Society in 2019. The first AGM of the Society was held at Salomons, Tunbridge Wells on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

#### b) The membership of the Society

Patrons of the Society currently include Princess Katarina of Yugoslavia and Sir Donald Insall. Dr Philip Whitbourn is President of the society and Lady Jennifer (Dr) Freeman is the Vice-President.

The executive committee currently includes Paul Avis (Chairman); Aimee Felton (Vice-Chairman) of Donald Insall Associates, and a project manager of the recent restoration work at the Temperate House, Kew; Stuart Page, Architect, whose projects include restoration work at Ightham Mote, Herstmonceux Castle and The Tower of London, as well as a feasibility study and schedule of work for Burton's West Lodge, St Leonards (for Hastings Borough Council), and a Conservation Plan for Burton's Trinity Church here in Tunbridge Wells; Dr Chris Jones (Secretary) archivist at the Salomons Museum; Richard Holme (Treasurer); Caroline Auckland (Marketing), and Chair of The Friends of the Tunbridge Wells Museum; Guy Fearon, a descendant of Decimus Burton; and Amanda-Jane Doran, curator at Ightham Mote.

Donald Insall Associates is a Firm of architects, designers and historic building consultants. They have worked on contemporary and historic listed buildings, monuments and sites throughout Britain, and at UNESCO World Heritage Sites including The Palace of Westminster, Cross Bath, the Tower of London, Kew Gardens and Caernarfon Castle. They have worked extensively in the adaptive re-use of historic buildings, contemporary interventions and new design.

Stuart Page Architects is an award winning RIBA Chartered Practice which specialises in adapting existing buildings for new uses and the conservation of historic buildings.

Membership of the society is open to the general public. To date, interest has largely come from architects, historians, researchers, educational establishments and academics, writers, Burton home- owners, and those with some knowledge of the man, but wishing to enlarge on it. We are currently developing our marketing to approach a wider audience.