In 2006, Royal Tunbridge Wells celebrated the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the Chalybeate Spring by a young nobleman, Dudley Lord North in 1606. The discovery of the Spring was fundamental in the birth of Tunbridge Wells and its subsequent development as a favoured resort of the gentry and royalty during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and later in forming the town’s character and reputation as a pleasant place to live, work and visit.

The Chalybeate Spring
1792

Throughout the past 400 years, Royal Tunbridge Wells has attracted visitors and residents of all walks of life, many of which have played an important role in the history and development of the town itself. To celebrate this important birthday and the lives of these notable figures in the history of Royal Tunbridge Wells, a series of commemorative claret-coloured plaques was erected to mark buildings of particular significance in the town’s history. The stories behind those persons featured on the plaques are described here and linked together, along with other points of interest, in this special Anniversary Heritage Walking Trail.

Each point along the route, which incorporates a plaque, is marked with a symbol. The walk takes around two hours (blue route). For a shorter walk of one hour, follow the purple line leading from the main route. You can begin at any point on the route, but The Corn Exchange (1) is suggested as the best starting point.

We wish you a pleasant promenade.

THE PLAQUES

Fourteen notable figures from history with connections with Royal Tunbridge Wells are commemorated in this series of special plaques. Their stories are told in more detail here, and the plaques themselves can be discovered by following this Heritage Walking Trail (overleaf) which links together all the plaques, as well as other points of interest in the town.

63A MT SION
Richard Cumberland
Playwright & Novelist
9

Cumberland Walk and Cumberland Gardens through which you have just walked are named after Richard Cumberland, playwright, leading local resident and civil defence activist in the Napoleonic wars. Nos 45–63 Mt Sion are built on the site of his house. Cumberland also served as Secretary to the Board of Trade in the late 18th century.

1 CALVERLEY PARK
Lord Dowding
Air Chief Marshal
12

One of the town’s heroes, Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding, was Commander-in-Chief of the RAF Fighter Command from 1938–40, including during the Battle of Britain, and retired to Royal Tunbridge Wells until his death in 1970.

HOTEL DU VIN & BISTRO
Queen Victoria
14

The building now home to the Hotel du Vin was remodelled by Decimus Burton in 1840 from Mount Pleasant House (later Calverley House), said to have been built in 1762. Mount Pleasant House was used as a residence by the Duchesses of Kent and Princess Victoria, Queen Victoria’s mother. On their visits to Tunbridge Wells during the 1820s and 1830s, Princess Victoria also attended church services at King Charles the Martyr Church (see 37 on map). A brass plaque marks her seat in the upper gallery.

THACKERAY’S
William Makepeace
Novelist
20

Author of ‘Vanity Fair’, one of the best loved and most influential Victorian novels, William Makepeace Thackeray, who was born in nearby Wadhurst, spent part of his childhood in Tunbridge Wells and wrote about the town in his work. This charming long white building was the workshop of Nye and Barton, leading exponents of the Tunbridge ware scenic industry for 80 years. Intricate wooden marquetry often depicting local places of interest, Tunbridge ware is unique to this area and became very popular in the 19th century. Examples can be found in the Tunbridge Wells Museum.

THE CHALET
86 MT EPHRAIM
Medical Doctor
27

A prominent medical doctor in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Dr John Mayo and his son Thomas built the house. The well-known mathematician and inventor of Bayesian statistics Rev Thomas Bayes lived here for 30 years. His work is still used today in a wide range of applications including the social sciences, ecology, computing and the justice system.

58 LONDON ROAD
Lord Robert Baden Powell
Founder of the Scout Movement
33

Lord Baden Powell was given a scholarship to Charterhouse School in Surrey. The town once occupied Vale Towers and subsequently moved next door to Rose Hill House. Lord Baden Powell went on to found the Scout Movement, and during the Second World War in South Africa, he successfully defended the city in the Siege of Mafeking. Baden Powell continued to maintain links with Royal Tunbridge Wells later in life until his death in Kenya in 1941.

JORDAN HOUSE
68 LONDON ROAD
Producers of Tunbridge ware
35

Jordan, a leading Baptist of the town, is thought to have made Tunbridge ware here, and later Humphrey Barrows and his son John Barrows, manufactured and sold the intricate wooden ware from this black-columned building during the first half of the 19th century.

THE CORN EXCHANGE
The Pantiles
Edmund Kean
Actor
2

Regarded as one of the greatest Shakespearean actors of his day, Edmund Kean performed as the small finacee, now the site of the Corn Exchange as well as making numerous appearances in London’s Drury Lane and in two New York productions.

4046 THE PANTILES
Richard ‘Beau’ Nash
Leader of Fashion
4

Richard ‘Beau’ Nash, a well-known dandy and leader of fashion in the 18th century, became well-appointed Master of Ceremonies at Tunbridge Wells, presiding over balls and gaming in the former Assembly Rooms at Nos 40–46. Nash split his time between Tunbridge Wells and the town’s 18th century rival, Bath.

32

The well-known writer and author of works such as ‘A Room with a View’, ‘A Passage to India’ and ‘Howard’s End’ lived here from 1898–1931 as a young man and attended school in nearby Tunbridge.

EM FORSTER
Novelist
32

EM Forster
Novelist

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58 LONDON ROAD
Rev Thomas Bayes
Mathematician & Non-conformist minister

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Each of the fourteen commemorative plaques is marked on the map with a symbol. Further details of each featured person are found overlaid.

1. **CORN EXCHANGE**
   - Sarah Bakers, whose grand lamp and flamboyant personality of her day, had a theatre built on the Lower Walk of the Pantiles in 1801, which later became the Corn Exchange. The Goddess of the Harvest still stands above the building where the Tourist Information Centre is located.
   - There is a lot more to see and learn about Royal Tunbridge Wells - the staff in the Tourist Information Centre will be delighted to help you discover other places to visit, events and accommodation in the area.

2. **CORN EXCHANGE**
   - Edmund Kean, Actor.
   - With the Corn Exchange behind you, turn left and stroll along the Lower Walk then climb the steps back on to the Upper Walk of The Pantiles and commence your promenade strolling the full length of the colonnade. Pause in front of the former Royal & Sussex hotel with the coats of arms of the Duke and Duchess of Kent above the door.

3. **THE PANTILES**
   - You are standing on the former site of the 18th century bookshop belonging to the dwarf Thomas Loggan, a well-known artist at the time. No 68 was Upton's bookshop belonging to the dwarf Thomas Loggan, a supporter of the radical statesman Henryorris Dunant, who is remembered on the plaque.

4. **43 THE PANTILES**
   - charming 'Musick Gallery' above No 43, to your left up the hill and pause in front of Jerningham House.

7. **THE BATH HOUSE AND CHALYBEATE SPRING**
   - The Chalybeate Spring was discovered accidentally in 1735. It was the gift of the self-styled Earl of Buckingham in 1730, given to the town’s people to provide for ‘a grove and shady place’. Today it is a secluded haven of the town. Younger visitors may enjoy a moment or two at the children’s play area.

8. **CALVERLEY VILLAS**
   - A twenty-minute walk out of the town centre will bring you to Calverley Park, restored in 2004 with the help of a Heritage Lottery Fund award. One of the best-known features is the grove of twenty-one young oak trees set in the grassland near the Bayhall Road entrance.

9. **9.63MT SION**
   - Richard Cumberland, Playwright & Novelist.
   - Turn left into Little Mt Sion and then right into Belgrove and the Grove.

10. **THE GROVE**
    - This town centre park has much to offer. The scented lavender beds, the sunken Italian Garden, the vibrant flower displays and shady place.’ Today it is a secluded haven of the town. Younger visitors may enjoy a moment or two at the children’s play area.

11. **CALVERLEY GROUNDS**
    - This town centre park has much to offer. The scented lavender beds, the sunken Italian Garden, the vibrant flower displays and shady place.’ Today it is a secluded haven of the town. Younger visitors may enjoy a moment or two at the children’s play area.

12. **1 CALVERLEY PARK**
    - An imposing structure, this ‘Gothic’ Decimus Burton work of the architect Decimus Burton, who left his mark in the grounds.

13. **VICTORIA LODGE**
   - A charming, tall-timbered cottage built around 1810 is perched on top of the hill behind a gravel slope. During the Second World War, air raid shelters were built into the caves beneath.

14. **THE HOTEL DU VIN & BISTRO**
   - Queen Victoria.
   - [As you continue on your way the clock tower of Holy Trinity Church can be seen directly ahead on Church Road.]

15. **HOLY TRINITY CHURCH**
   - An imposing structure, this ‘Gothic’ Decimus Burton church was completed in 1829 as a Parish Church for the town’s increasing population. It is now home to the lively Trinity Church.

16. **HOLY TRINITY CHURCH**
   - Canon Edward Hoare, Vicar and Leading Gentleman.

17. **FORMER MUSEUM & ART GALLERY**
   - The Tunbridge Wells Museum & Art Gallery originally dates from 1885. Whilst the 1950s building is closed for redevelopment some collections are displayed in the Library’s temporary premises at Royal Victoria Place Shopping Centre.

20. **BELLVILLE**
    - As Thackeray gazed from his window in Rock Villas, happy memories came flooding back to him of his childhood in Tunbridge Wells, for it was in Bellville that he often stayed as a boy. The cottage nestles on a rocky slope, below which donkeys were once stabled.

21. **ROYAL WELLS HOTEL**
   - The 1830s The Victoria Hotel was built over part of the old Hare and Hounds Tavern. This picturesque white-washed building is now the Royal Wells Hotel, crowned with the Royal coat of arms.

23. **ST. HELENA**
   - A charming tall-timbered cottage built around 1810 is perched on top of the hill behind a gravel slope. During the Second World War, air raid shelters were built into the caves beneath.

24. **GIBRALTAR COTTAGE**
   - Scholes, a local stonemason, the fine Tuscan portico to the large house was added between 1849 and 1850.

28. **MOUNT EPHRAIM HOUSE**
   - This town centre park has much to offer. The scented lavender beds, the sunken Italian Garden, the vibrant flower displays and shady place.’ Today it is a secluded haven of the town.

29. **WUGTON ROCKS**
   - The town abounds with unusual rock formations like these, including High Rocks to the west of the town and Ticehurst Rock to the east. These result from movement on the fault line of the sandstone ridge running through the town.

32. **THACKERAY’S**
   - William Makepeace Thackeray, Novelist.
   - [From here, continue uphill on the footpath which crosses London Road, crossing this busy road with care.]

34. **OPERA HOUSE**
   - Further down the hillside, this most unusual house is perched on top of the hill behind a gravel slope. During the Second World War, air raid shelters were built into the caves beneath.

The Heritage Walking Trail is available online at www.visittunbridgewells.com.

VICTORIA CROSS GROVE, DUNORLAN PARK

A twenty-minute walk out of the town centre will bring you to Dunorlan Park, restored in 2004 with the help of a Heritage Lottery Fund award. One of the well-known features is the grove of twenty-one young oak trees set in the grassland near the Bayhall Road entrance.

Planted over the winter of 1994–5, it commemorates ten Victoria Cross recipients of the Victoria Cross who had connections with the borough of Tunbridge Wells. It was dedicated by the Mayor, Councillor Hugh Wright, on 8 May 1995, which was the fiftieth anniversary of Victory in Europe Day.

The Victoria Cross was instituted by Queen Victoria in 1856 as a way of recognising acts of outstanding bravery by members of the armed forces. The first medals were awarded by Queen Victoria on 26 June 1857. Among those honoured on that day was Charles Lucas, a resident of Tunbridge Wells who was recognised for his bravery as a sailor on board HMS Hecla during the Crimean War.

Among the other nine Victoria Cross recipients commemorated are three from Victorian and Edwardian times, four from the First World War and two from the Second World War. Their stories are told on a special interpretation panel erected in 2006 as part of a series of enhancements to the Victoria Cross Grove. A memorial sculpture by Charles Garey features an extract from a poem written by Andrew Motion, the former Poet Laureate, specially commissioned by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to commemorate the ten Victoria Cross recipients.

The unveiling of the new memorial in 2006 coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of Victory in Europe Day.