



James Burton
1761-1837



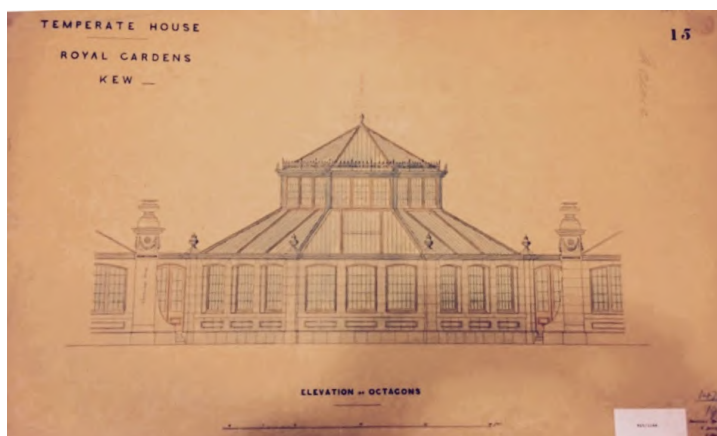
Decimus Burton
1800-1881

Newsletter Autumn 2019

A GLORIOUS TRIP TO KEW Elizabeth Nathaniels

We set off for Kew from St Leonards on a lovely spring day, Tuesday, 30 April. Joining us on the trip was Pat Thomas Allen, one of the authors of the attractive little booklet *Travelling with Marianne North*, describing the remarkable work of the daughter of a Hastings MP, who recorded plants and scenery world-wide, and who is duly commemorated in Kew's gallery named after her. Also with us was David Cruickshank, who plans to create a Marianne North trail in Jamaica, where there are historic links with Kew.

During the trip on the coach, our Chairman, Christopher Maxwell-Stewart, and I said a few words about some of the treasures which awaited us. For him, these included a special exhibition of the large and intricate glass designs of Dale Chihuly dotted around the grounds, with their glistening brilliant colours and swirly shapes. For me, as ever, my prime interest lay in the work of Decimus Burton whose vast Temperate glass house (1863) (below) – the world's largest Victorian glasshouse - had been recently restored under the immaculate care of Donald Insall & Associates. The drawing of the octagon may be seen in the archives at Kew.



On arrival, free to do as we wished, David Cruickshank, Patrick Glass and I took the outrageously touristic route by stepping aboard one of the rail-less 'trains' which circulate throughout the gardens, every half-hour, allowing passengers to stop off and get on again at will. I highly recommend it! It was a revelation to see hints of intriguing sights, including the way leading to Queen Charlotte's cottage and glimpses of the Thames, which forms the northern boundary of the Park. We dropped off to visit the ill-named Kew Palace - for it is more of a formal Dutch house than a royal domain - whose house and gardens have been exquisitely renovated. This visit conveyed us into a time capsule, which Fanny Burney was to describe in her diaries. We were gently guided throughout the house until we reached the final room, where, in 1818, poor Queen Charlotte - two years before her mad sequestered husband,

George III died - presided at the wedding of two of her wayward sons. One was the Duke of Kent, whose Duchess, a mere year later, was dutifully to produce the future heir to the throne, Victoria herself.

Decimus Burton's works at Kew savagely attacked by Sir Joseph Paxton

Up to 1840, Kew's park and gardens formed a private royal pleasure ground, but on 25th June, 1840, they were set to become a public national institution. It was then that the Treasury sanctioned the transfer of most of Kew, from the Lord Steward's department to the Commissioners of Woods and Forests. By the end of the same month, Kew had a new, highly qualified Director, Sir William Hooker, formerly professor of Botany at Glasgow University. By April the following year, the new First Commissioner of Woods and Forests, Lord Lincoln, was appointed. Keenly interested in architecture, he was not only familiar with Decimus Burton's work in other royal parks, but would have known of Burton's overall design of the Duke of Devonshire's huge conservation at Chatsworth, completed in 1839.

In 1844, Decimus Burton became Kew's architect, and remained so until well into the 1860s. During this time, he designed the great curvilinear Palm House, 1845-1848, in collaboration with the Irish glasshouse builder/engineer, Richard Turner. In 1846, he designed the elegant entrance gates now called the Elizabeth Gate, off Kew Green, now superseded by the new larger modern entrance, and his final swansong in glass design, the Temperate House. There were many other smaller works he undertook, including the re-building in stone of William Chambers' Temple of Eolus and the Museum of Botany, now a pleasant restaurant overlooking the lake in front of the curvilinear Palm House.



Richard Turner (1798-1881)
iron founder, engineer and
glasshouse designer who collaborated
with Decimus Burton in the creation
of the Palm House



Sir Joseph Paxton (1801-65)
landscape gardener, glasshouse
designer, architect of the Crystal Palace,
and Liberal MP

Hereby hangs a tale, for this modest building was the subject of a savage attack in Parliament, condemning it as resembling 'a third rate lodging house' in 1856. The *Gardener's Chronicle* of the same year concurred: it was 'frightful', 'mean' and 'misplaced'. So, who was the MP who launched such an attack on this building, who was also co-editor of the *Gardener's Chronicle*? None other than Sir Joseph Paxton himself. And hereby hangs another tale to be continued later.



The Turncock Keeper's Cottage

The cottage, No 48 West Hill Road, recorded in this recent photograph, has been empty and fenced off for many years. It sits immediately west of the redundant reservoir for which planning consent was submitted for demolition and residential redevelopment in 2005. For a combination of reasons that has not been progressed.

It has features in common with the Lodge of the Archery Gardens, which was demolished in 1970, and Winterbourne which happily survives, nicely restored, in Quarry Hill. Research by the Burtons' St Leonards Society has established that it was built as the residence of an employee of the Burton Water Works Company whose duty was to regulate the supply of water from the adjacent tank. His title was "Turncock Keeper" and residency of this cottage ensured that he could be available for duties at any time.

The Burton Water Works Company was established to supply potable water to the buildings which were constructed from the late 1850's on those parts of James Burton's Estate which had remained undeveloped since his death in 1837. Primarily these were the terraces between No 72 and 106 Marina, the houses in The Mount and the Archery Villas. A tank in West Hill Road was constructed in 1857-58 to supply water to those on the Marina and another was established on the highest part of the Burton Estate above the Archery Ground to service the 12 houses in the Mount and 6 Archery Villas. The water in the West Hill Road tank was sourced from a borehole in Caves Road and pumped by a steam engine 70 feet up to the tank on the cliffs above it. The tank above the Archery Gardens was fed from springs in the adjacent undeveloped part of the Eversfield Estate. These two tanks were connected so that the upper one could supply the lower one by gravity in the event of a breakdown of the steam engine in Caves Road.

A person was needed to control the cocks as they were then termed which regulated the supplies of water from these two tanks. He was the Turncock Keeper. The technical terms "tank" and "cock" are now more usually respectively rendered 'reservoir' and "valve".

Over ...

So we come to the question of who designed this cottage which was constructed between 1859 and 1861. Certainly it would have been designed in the office of the Burton Estate. While it shares some features in common with other buildings designed by Decimus Burton, it is more likely that it was designed by his brother, Alfred, or his nephew, Henry Marley. The latter is proven to have been the architect of another public health facility, namely the Turkish Bath at the eastern end of West Hill Road recently converted into an unconventional house.

It is the Society's contention that this cottage should be conserved as an important example of a public work which contributed much to improvements in public health during the Victorian era. It should be noted in this context that it was a policy of Hastings Borough Council not so long ago to demolish the 1860's Archery Villas and replace them with a curtain-walled slab block for further education. Currently Gemselect is refurbishing those villas to return them to original use as single residences. Burton buildings have an enduring quality! We shall continue to argue that this is true of the Turncock Keeper's House.



Mr Burton, Builder - left: image reversed to facilitate comparison; right: original

The Society was recently requested by the London Mathematical Society to assist it to find a good quality image of James Burton which could be displayed in its 57 Russell Square premises - one of the first-rate houses which James built on the Duke of Bedford's estate in the first years of the 19th century. We advised that our image (top left of our Newsletters) is a reproduction of a portrait of James Burton circa 1830 in the archives of Hastings Museum attributed to the lithographer Maxim Gauci (1774-1854).

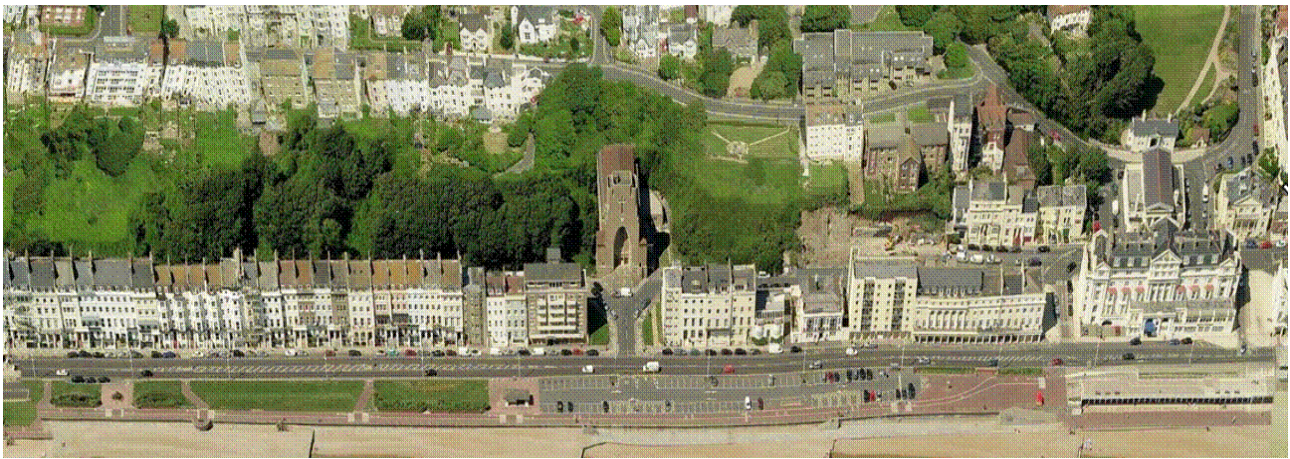
We advised the Mathematical Society that a more readily available original of this lithograph was in the RIBA collection. This enquiry prompted us to search for a portrait of James in the earliest years of the 19th century when he turned 40 and the last two of his twelve children were born. This yielded the sepia ink caricature of "Mr Burton - Builder", National Portrait Gallery reference collection NPG D614, which we reproduce here. The NPG annotate this "James Burton?". The man caricatured is neatly but unpretentiously attired. Is this the man making his fortune by building terrace after terrace of second- and third-rate houses on the Skinners and Foundling Estates in which he added fourth-rate houses much to the consternation of the middle classes? That he included "affordable housing" could be construed as pioneering social inclusion.

St Leonards Parish Church and Steps

Chris Lewcock updates

Discussions have been continuing on the future of St Leonard's Church and the Steps in their wider context. It is hoped to engage all interested parties, the Church and former parishioners and other residents, local and national amenity societies, the Borough and County Councils, etc. These discussions will help in the creation of a portfolio of constraints and opportunities and provisional ideas which can be "sold" to different funding institutions.

Preliminary very positive contacts have been made with, in particular, the Church, the Borough Council and the Twentieth Century Society. Feedback is awaited in particular from the Twentieth Century Society. Discussions are in train with the Church Commissioners and contacts are being made with the County Council. Members or former parishioners or others interested who have views on the above are invited to contact the Society so that these can be taken into account.



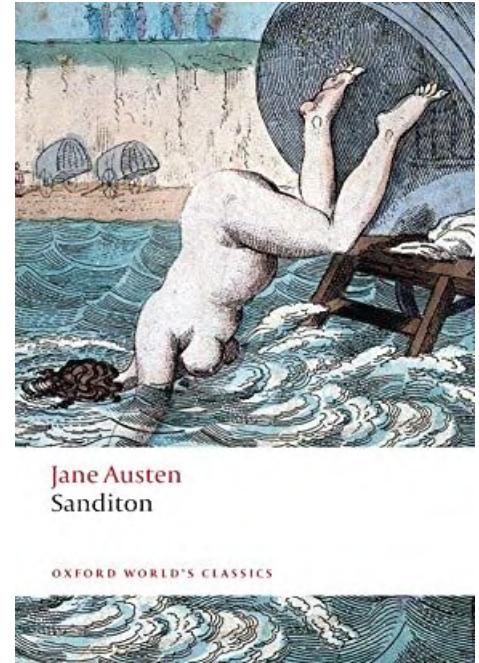
Sanditon — Jane Austen (1775-1817)

The recent ITV adaptation of Jane Austen's last and unfinished novel, *Sanditon* (1817), has aroused renewed speculation as to where the author had in mind when she created her small seaside town.

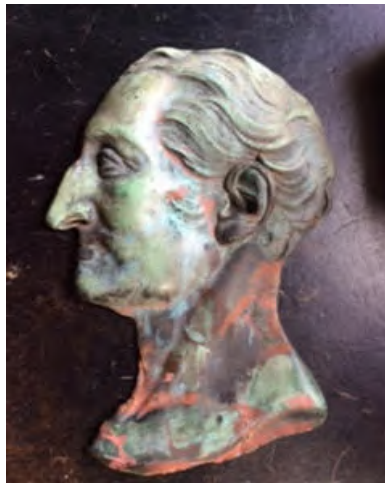
The novel is based on a well-to-do family who live at 'Willingden' - this could well be our Willingdon (the description of its distance from Battle suggests so). It's widely thought that 'Sanditon' is based on the Hastings locality (though described in the book as lying between Hastings and Eastbourne); but some have suggested that Worthing played a part—or more than a part—in the creation of the fictional town: see, for example, Antony Edmonds' *Jane Austen's Worthing: The Real Sanditon*. She had stayed there in 1805 and came to know Edward Ogle well, who helped to develop the town as a seaside resort.

The novel illustrates the growing interest among the upper middle classes in the salubrious possibilities of the south coast resorts in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Regrettably, Burton couldn't have read the book as it was not published in his lifetime, but we do know that Austen knew of him (perhaps knew him) as she refers to his Bloomsbury architecture in *Emma*, published the year before (1816). The novel was first published in 1925.

Over ...



Left: Rose Williams as Charlotte Heywood in Andrew Davies' adaptation of the novel for ITV—Right: the saucily indecorous cover of the recent Oxford World's Classics edition. Regrettably, the filming was done in Somerset rather than on the Sussex coast.



Readers of our last issue (Spring 2019) will have noted the Society's plans to restore the vandalised plaque (in replica) to its rightful place, on the memorial plinth to James Burton in the gardens of Gloucester Lodge. Work on this project is now well advanced. A wax image has been made by Milwyn Foundry in Molesey, Surrey, for casting in bronze. The replica will have a reinforced periphery in the form of a flange and will be fixed to the granite plinth with epoxy resin. The total cost will be £1,242, which has been received in donations and pledges.

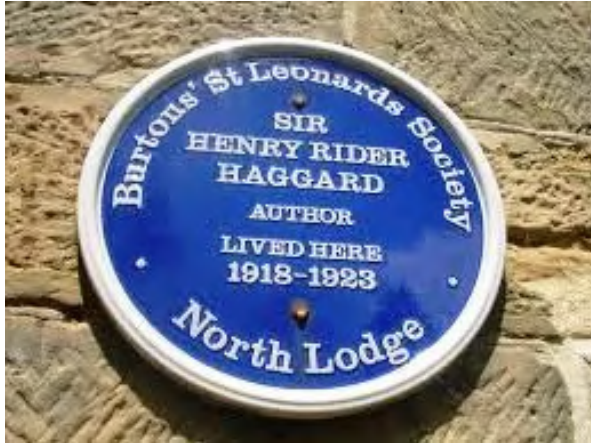
Further donations towards the ongoing work will be warmly appreciated. It is hoped that the bronze will appear in its original setting very soon.

Interest has been expressed by a private homeowner in obtaining another replica. Further castings can be made at a cost of £990.

Sunday 29th September 2019 - 4-6 pm

Kino Teatr, Norman Road, St Leonards

A showing of the 1925 silent film *She* with introductory talks by Christopher Maxwell-Stewart and Olga Mamonova on the life and works of St Leonards resident, Sir Henry Rider Haggard. *She* was one of Rider Haggard's most popular works, together with the famous *King Solomon's Mines* and its sequel, *Alan Quartermain*.



The film was co-directed by Majorie Vint's husband, Bertie Samuelson. Marjorie was a pioneering feminist member of a local Hastings family who broke the conventions of her day by becoming the actress Marjorie Stattler and marrying the Jewish film director Samuelson. She appears in the film as ancient Egyptian priestess, Amenartès.

Pianist Mick Bolton will accompany the film on the Kino's grand piano.



Open Event

Tickets: £10 (Members £8) - Bookings/enquiries: info@burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk

Dates for the diary: 27th October—architect Stephen Gray will talk on 'The building of a Georgian House'. Royal Victoria Hotel at 4 pm.

The Society's AGM will take place at South Lodge on 24th November at 6 pm.



Membership of the Society

£15 per person per year or £25 per couple

Membership application details may be found on the Society's website:

www.burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk

The Society was registered in 1970 but conservation efforts leading to its foundation began in the 1950s. Our campaign, backed by various organisations such as the Civic Trust and the Georgian Group, resulted in the designation of Burtons' St Leonards as a Conservation Area by the local authority in 1969. Our aims are to:

- encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in St Leonards-on-Sea and prevent unsympathetic development
- stimulate interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the area of St Leonards-on-Sea and its surroundings
- encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general interest, in particular the contribution made by James and Decimus Burton to the architecture and town planning of St Leonards-on-Sea.

The Society keeps a vigilant eye on local planning applications, especially those affecting listed buildings, and on alterations to such buildings made without planning consent.

For more information, please visit our website at:

www.burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk

For further information, eg on specific events or for advice on architectural or planning matters, please email: info@burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk

Or contact the Society's Chairman, Christopher Maxwell-Stewart, at

christopher.ms@icloud.com

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Note for existing members

If you are paying your membership subscription through your bank at an old subscription rate, we shall be very grateful if you would amend this to the current rate(s) shown above.

Email

If you have an email address which you think we may not hold, we shall be glad to have it. It will not be communicated to others except with your express consent. Use of email saves us a considerable amount of time and of money in printing and postage, and means that we can ensure that members receive communications as rapidly as possible.