



**James Burton**  
1761-1837



**Decimus Burton**  
1800-1881

## **Newsletter** **Spring 2022**



This attractive watercolour by Joseph Dodd (1809-1894) is of 'Princess Victoria greeted at St Leonards on Sea, 1834'. Dated 1838, it was probably worked up from an earlier drawing by Dodd made during Princess Victoria's visit to St Leonards in 1834. The building is of course Crown House, no. 57 Marina, designed by James Burton, where Victoria stayed with her mother, the Duchess of Kent, during the winter of 1834/35. It is copied here, with permission, from the 2020 catalogue of *British Watercolours and Drawings* of the Martyn Gregory Gallery in St James's.

Joseph Josiah Dodd was born in Liverpool in 1809. The family moved to Tunbridge Wells and by the 1830s Dodd was gaining a reputation as a topographical artist and engraver. He made several paintings of Princess Victoria in her years of association with Tunbridge Wells and these were gifted to her following her coronation. The album of originals is now in the Queen's Collection. Dodd later appears to have made copies of some of them on request. One recorded her departure in November 1834 from Tunbridge Wells on her way to St Leonards.

We are grateful to Robert Hall, Consultant for Works on Paper at Robert Hall Pictures, and to the Decimus Burton Society for information.



Continuing the watercolour theme, we reproduce below this charming but amateurish one of Gensing Farm House, dated 1867, from collections in Hastings Museum and Art Gallery. The name of the painter is indecipherable. The reference at the foot is to Robert Deudeney (1801-1883), the agent for the farm. The farm buildings appear to have been situated near the junction of present day Pevensey and Dane Roads. Part of the farmland was purchased from the Eversfield Estate in approximately 1828 by James Burton in order to extend the land on which he would build St Leonards-on-Sea. By 1873 the farm buildings had been demolished. The photograph of the buildings is of unknown date—perhaps 1860s. Our thanks to Hugh Bryant for these discoveries.





**Anthony Connerty (1938-2022)**

The Society is saddened by the passing of former valued member of its council of management, barrister Tony Connerty. Our condolences go to Tony's wife, Margaret — they would have celebrated their 51st wedding anniversary this year — and to their family. We reproduce below an extract from the eulogy given by his son Julian at Tony's funeral at St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Church.

"My father loved life. He told stories every day of people he met and things that made him laugh. His newest love was the pukka pad to which he gave equal glory alongside the old time favourites, the treasury tag and the post-it note. His enjoyment of life was for things big and small, from his family and friends, food and drink, restaurants and pubs, art, travel, the seaside, the countryside, cities and places around the world, sailing, reading books and newspapers. He loved architecture and design and was happy in his last home by the sea restoring his grade 2 listed home from bedsits to its former beauty. His greatest love was his work, and he had a work ethic like no other. He has worked 7 days a week for a lifetime alongside writing books and articles. One of his greatest gifts was his interest in people and listening to their stories and lives. He was immensely proud of his family and friends and told them so. In his last conversations he said that he had had the most marvellous of times. These are the things that he leaves behind for us."

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Tony's wake took place, appropriately, in St Leonards' earliest building, Crown House, 57 Marina. Tony asked that any donations in his memory be made to any or all of several local organisations he supported: the Electric Palace Cinema in the High Street (Old Town), the Durbar Hall at Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, and the Friends of Edith (FoE) (conserving the statue of Harold & Edith in West Marina Gardens).

Ian Jarman of FoE writes:

With some of the Tony Connerty donations we have created two new flower beds, with temporary notices (engraved plaques have been commissioned). Sarah and her mother have been down to see them - although quite emotional it was nice to show them what we have done. The flowers are now beginning to blossom. We've also used some of the donations to continue other projects, such as renovating and painting the statue's plinth and an adjoining wall (waiting for workmen to finish their maintenance work on the nearby electricity sub-station) and then erecting already commissioned notice/storyboards, subject to planning permission. We are also now in a position to move forward with plans for a herb and dye-plant bed and wildgrass plantings later in the season or start of next.



**A. A. Gill was an acerbic (but highly amusing ) restaurant critic and commentator on social affairs. He provoked many complaints to the Press Complaints Commission. He had a particular dislike of the Isle of Man and took—as we see below—a wry view of St Leonards-on-Sea. Gill was married briefly to the former MP for Hastings & Rye, Amber Rudd.**

The article, from which the piece below is an extract, was called 'Old Age', and appeared in the *Sunday Times* in March 2009.

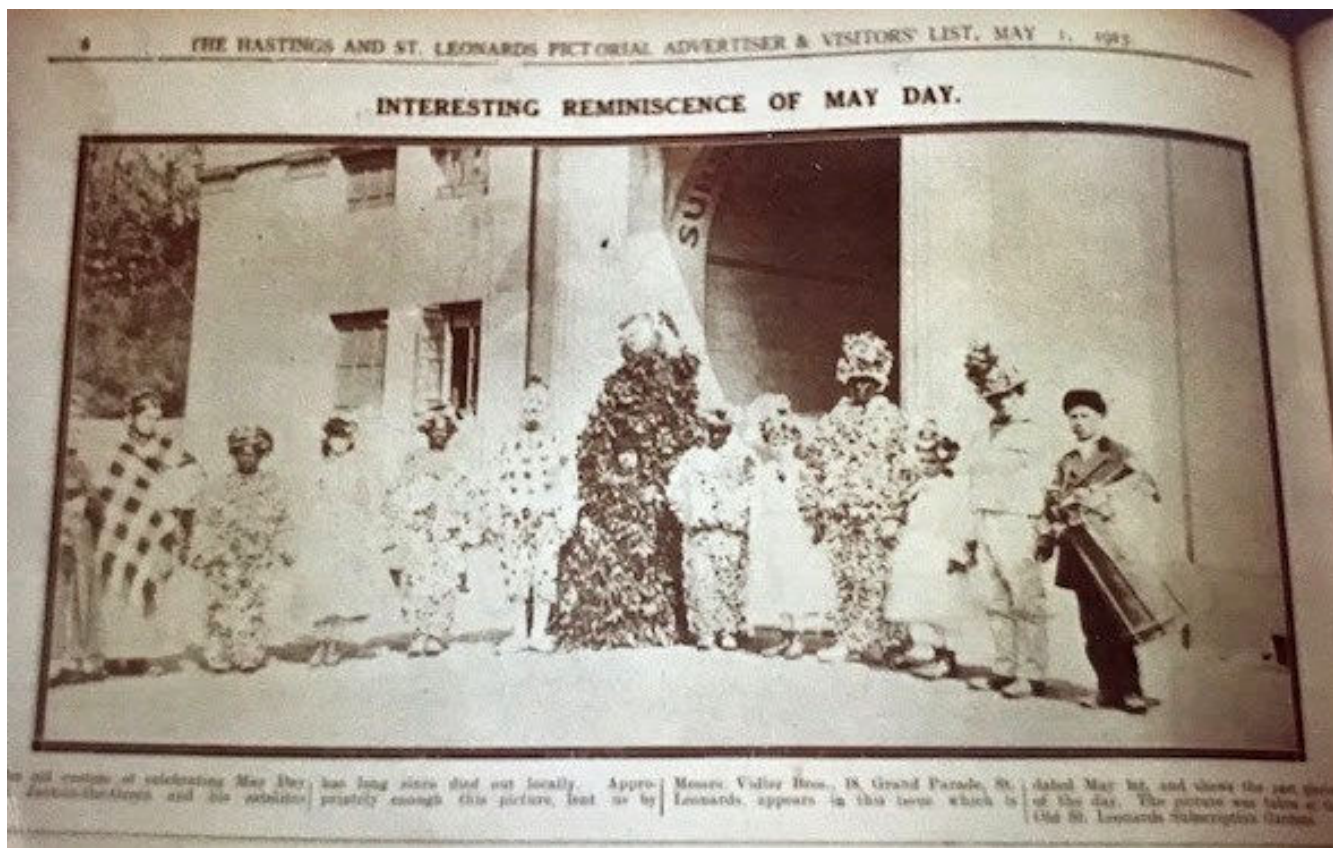
St Leonards-on-Sea was built by an old man. James Burton bought a lump of farmland on the coast and conceived a new town, a town of bracing gentility. The collection of gleaming, po-faced streets, the promenades of probity, the municipal gardens for quiet reflection, became journey's end for the retired civil servants of empire and the imperial military, a final move for the widowed spouses of industrial engineers and provincial department-store magnates, the rheumatic and the consumptive, the dun-achieving tricked down here to the sea's reflective glister that bounced off the white-cliff-stucco guesthouses and sedate residential hotels.

They came to play vicious bridge and smiley bowls, formed exclusive societies, had tea dances and charabanc outings, and filled stuffy rooms with Benares brass, Burmese teak, Turkey rugs and careful china. They hung gilt-framed views of Table Mountain and dead boys in khaki and dusted the parsimonious riches of adventurous lives with gingerish prudence.

St Leonards was, from the start, mildly risible, a crepuscular community twinned with the letters page, the Conservative Party and the crematorium. But it was also a reward, a just desert, a symbol of a life filled with standards, with napkins and polished shoes. And if you had to be old, it was a good place to be old in at a time when being old was an achievement. But those black-and white granny ghosts should see it now.



James Burton (1769—1837) and Adrian Anthony Gill (1954—2016)



A picture of Jack in the Green and his attendants, photographed outside St Leonards Subscription Gardens in 1849. It had been organised by local chimney sweep, Charles Lee, and his family. The Jack looks remarkably similar to today's Jack, who is based on it.

Spotted by Bernard McGinley in the *Hastings Online Times*. Bernard comments:

"Not the only time that Hastings gets the credit for St Leonards."

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### A Message from the Chair

#### Appeal for donations to enhance the Society's website

During the Covid pandemic the Council of Management (the Trustees) have given much thought to the ongoing role of the Society and the reality that communications with members will increasingly be by emails and via its website. This supports allocating more of the Society's resources to making its research and archives accessible to members and other enquirers by enhancements to its website. This will make the fruits of years of research into the architectural and social history of individual properties readily available to members.

A commitment to enhance the Society's website with a blog with short accounts of items of interest and a searchable archive including illustrations and plans has been made at an estimated cost of £1,800.

Donations towards this expenditure are invited. These can be by direct transfer to the Society's account or by cheque as detailed on page 7 of this Newsletter. Donations should be referenced 'Web' and the surname of the donor. Please email us to let us know if you have donated and whether it is gift-aided. Each donation will be formally acknowledged.



## 'Unearthed' 2022 - a work by Carly Ralph

Shown at the 'Stains & Traces' exhibition at Hastings Arts Forum, February 2022

The artist writes: "This work began with a curiosity about the vanished generations who once lived or worked in a particular building in St Leonards over 19 decades of its existence. Once our research had uncovered names, dates and occupations, the reality of lives lived within those four walls became more tangible. This further reinforced a sense of connection to this shop property, once a part of Lavatoria Square, now in use as studios.

*"If walls could talk it would be ordinary homes, not grand public buildings or the mansions of the rich, that would have all the best stories" \**

These words by David Olusoga indicate the social significance of these lives lived in 'ordinary homes', 'where human dramas were played out in every room.' In response to this idea, this artwork has been made from books found discarded in the building, reclaimed to acknowledge such stories. Each book now bears the name and occupation of a previous resident as its title. Each book would have a story to tell.



### SHOPKEEPERS

JAMES ADAMS . BEER RETAILER 1855  
JAMES BURTON . BEER RETAILER 1858-1866  
STEPHEN FISHER . BEER RETAILER 1866 - 1869  
WILLIAM AVERY . OFFICE MANAGER 1878  
JOHN WALL . SHOE & BOOT RETAILER 1878-1880  
DUNCAN COOK . TAILOR & HABIT MAKER 1882-1889  
GEORGE MARKS . CLOTHIER 1890-1891  
STEPHEN FISHER . BATH CHAIR PROPRIETER 1885-1898  
RICHARD NOAKES . GROCER 1892-1908  
GEORGE SOUTHON . DAIRYMAN 1913 -1917  
K. & F. PAGE . TOBACCONISTS 1924  
H. KENT . TOBACCONIST & CONFECTIONER 1925  
J.H. HOGGARD . TOBACCONIST & CONFECTIONER 1926 -1927  
J. SMITH . TOBACCONIST 1928  
REGINALD GOODACRE . TOBACCONIST 1929  
ALBERT HEATH . TOBACCONIST 1930  
ANDREW MORRISON . TOBACCONIST 1930 - 1937  
ELLEN EDWARDS . CONFECTIONER 1938-1940

MRS. H.M.WEBB . CONFECTIONER 1950-1958  
SAXON PRESS, PRINTERS - 1968 -1973  
MITRE ANTIQUES c. 1970's  
W CLIFFORD ANTON TRUST 1972-1974  
REGINALD HILL . PRINT DEALER & FRAMER 1982-2017

### RESIDENTS

ANNE CORKE 1841  
JAMES BARNES & CAROLINE BARNES 1851-1861  
STEPHEN FISHER & EMMA FISHER 1866 - 1891  
FREDERICK CHAPMAN 1867  
MRS CHILDS 1888  
RICHARD NOAKES & ANNE NOAKES 1901 - 1905  
CHARLES COSENS 1909 -1910  
ARCHIE COSENS & ALICE COSENS 1911-1912  
ARTHUR STATHAM & MINNIE STATHAM 1922  
HARRY KENT & NORA KENT 1925  
ALFRED SMITH & MAUD SMITH 1928  
ANDREW MORRISON & ELIZA MORRISON 1930-36  
ELLEN EDWARDS 1939-1940  
DONALD TRAYLEN & ETHEL TRAYLEN 1947  
ARTHUR GROVE 1960 -1962

Packed together, the books jostle for space within the framework, to imply the cramped living conditions that often prevailed. Indistinct type and fragile scraps of stained fibres act as a reminder of the erosive effects of time on surfaces and memories. The work means to convey a sense of discovery, of old secrets being revealed within the fabric of the building."

Carly Ralph was born and raised in Hastings, and studied art and textiles in London. She was a Senior Lecturer at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design until 2010 and now lives and works as an artist in St Leonards. She has known this particular property for 40 years.

Census Research: Helena Wojtczak; Kelly's Directory: Carly Ralph.

\* David Olusoga & Melanie Backe-Hansen, *A House Through Time*, Picador 2020



**James Burton**  
1761-1837



**Decimus Burton**  
1800-1881

### **Membership of the Society**

Application details can be found on the Society's website:

[www.burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk](http://www.burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk)

### **Membership subscriptions**

Please renew your subscription if you have not done so already.

Single membership £20.00 — Joint (2 people living at the same address) £35.00

How to pay:

#### **Bank Transfer:**

HSBC

Sort Code: 40-40-09

Acc No: 01215248

Please identify the payment with your name.

#### **By Cheque:**

To Burton's St Leonards Society  
South Lodge  
St Leonards on Sea  
TN38 0BA

### **Note for 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.

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Readers may like to know that the **Decimus Burton Society**, based in Tunbridge Wells, is now well established. We maintain very close links with them. Their activities and resources available can be found on their website at: <https://www.thedecimusburtonsociety.org/>

They also have a Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/DecimusBurtonSociety/>

Both are excellently illustrated and highly informative.



### **The Burtons' St Leonards Society**

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.

For more information, please visit our website at:

[www.burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk](http://www.burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk)

For further information, eg, on specific events or for advice on architectural conservation or historic matters, please email:

[info@burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk](mailto:info@burtonsstleonardssociety.co.uk)

**Please note that because of the large numbers of requests for technical or historical advice, we can only provide this free of charge to members. In other cases we request a donation of £25 except where the query is simply and readily answerable.**

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#### **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 very considerable amount of time and money in printing and postage, and means that we can ensure that members receive communications much more rapidly than is otherwise possible.**



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