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 1793

Daston Park 1872

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 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), or the Museum (17) are suggested as the best starting points. 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.

THE CORN EXCHANGE, THE PATRETS

Edmund Keane
Actor

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

40/46 THE PATRETS

Richard Beaux’ Nash
Leader of Fashion

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

63A MT SION

Richard Cumberland
Playwright & Novelist

Cumberland and Cumberland Gardens through which you have just walked are named after Richard Cumberland, playwright, leading local resident and civic defence activist in the Napoleonic era. 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 CAVERLEY PARK

Lord Dowding
Air Chief Marshal

One of the town’s heroes, Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding, lived at Nos 1-6 Caverley Park. Lord Dowding was Commander-in-Chief of RAF Fighter Command from 1936-1940, including during the Battle of Britain, and retired to Royal Tunbridge Wells until his death in 1970.

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, CHURCH ROAD

Canon Edward Hoare
Vicar and Leading Churchman

Canon Edward Hoare was the leading figure in religious life in Tunbridge Wells for over forty years, and as vicar of Holy Trinity Church from 1853, attracted large congregations, many of which came to Royal Tunbridge Wells specifically to hear his preach. A memorial to Canon Hoare stands at the entrance to Caversley Park Road in the town.

MAVO HOUSE

Dr John Mayo
Medical Doctor

A prominent medical doctor in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Dr John Mayo and his son Thomas (not to be confused with Thomas Bayes) were amongst others, lodged and wrote in this little tile-roofed house during the first half of the 19th century.

69 LONDON ROAD

Rev Thomas Bayes
Mathematician & Non-conformist minister

The well-known mathematician and inventor of Bayesian statistics Rev Thomas Bayes lived here for 36 years. His work is still used today in a wide range of applications including the social sciences, ecology, computing and the justice system.

10 EARLS ROAD

EM Forster
Novelist

The well-known writer and author of works such as ‘A Room with a View’, ‘Passage to India’ and ‘Howard’s End’ lived here from 1885-1901 as a young man and attended school in nearby Tunbridge.

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS

HOW TO GET TO ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Royal Tunbridge Wells takes less than an hour by train from London (Charing Cross) and Hastings, and regular, direct services run from both daily.

The Pantries is a five minute walk from the railway station.

The town is a half hour drive from the M25 and M20 and a pleasant drive from the Channel ports.

Ample car parking is available in the town.

HERITAGE WALKING TRAIL

A special Heritage Walking Trail through Royal Tunbridge Wells published to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the discovery of the Chalybeate Spring

www.visittunbridgewells.com

For further information about Royal Tunbridge Wells and the surrounding area, contact:

Royal Tunbridge Wells Tourist Information Centre
Unit 2, The Corn Exchange, The Pantries
Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 5TE

Tel: 01892 515675
e-mail: touristinformationcentre@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council accepts no responsibility for accidents or injuries incurred as a result of following this walk.

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of this brochure, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any errors, omissions or subsequent changes.

This leaflet can be made available in large print or any other format.

Telephone: 01892 554229

JORDAN HOUSE

68 LONDON ROAD
Humphrey Barns Sr.
Humphrey Barns Jr.

Producers of Tunbridge ware

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

68 LONDON ROAD

Lord Robert Baden Powell
Founder of the Scout Movement

Lord Baden Powell was given his first lessons by his mother and later attended Rose Hill School where he gained a scholarship to Chaterhouse School in Surrey. The school once occupied Yale Towne and subsequently moved next door to Rose Hill House. Lord Baden Powell went on to found the Scout Movement, and during the Second Booer 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.

THE CHALÉT

86 MT EPHRAM
Edmund Nye & Thomas Barton

Producers of Tunbridge ware

This charming long white building was the workshop of Nye and Barton, leading exponents of the Tunbridge ware-saws industry for 50 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.

33 CHURCH ROAD

Holy Trinity Church

The oldest church in the town, Holy Trinity Church was first recorded in 1100, although the present church was built in 1755. The churchyard contains several plaques featuring famous Tunbridge Wells residents.

Cover Image: An engraving of the Pantries in 1748 after a painting by Thomas Logan from Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery. Selected historic images courtesy of Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery and The Historical Graphic Record of Tunbridge Wells Society, found at www.royaltunbridgewells.org.

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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 less well-known features of Dunorlan Park 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 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 letter written home from the Battle of Jutland. The letter was written by one of the recipients who served in the Royal Navy.

The grove is located in the grounds of Victoria Grove, Dunorlan Park, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 4PD. It is approximately a 20-minute walk from the town centre. The grove is open to the public at all times and is a popular spot for visitors to stop and enjoy the natural surroundings. It is also a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to the presence of rare plant species.

Directions:
- From the town centre, take the A26 north for approximately 1.5 miles.
- Turn left into Little Mount St and follow the road as it curves to the right.
- Continue straight for approximately 0.25 miles before turning right into Victoria Grove.
- Follow the road as it curves to the right and continue for approximately 0.5 miles until you reach the grove.

The Victoria Cross Grove is a peaceful and serene spot that is perfect for a walk or picnic. It is a fitting tribute to the brave men and women who served their country and made the ultimate sacrifice. It is a reminder of the sacrifices made by those who served in the armed forces and a testament to their courage and dedication. The Victoria Cross Grove is a place of remembrance and a symbol of reverence for those who served and those who sacrificed.