

Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2009 review of Tunbridge Wells Borough

Fig. 5 John Bowra, *A Survey of Tunbridge Wells and all Places of Note Within a Mile and a half of the Chappel* (1738).



Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey 1st edn 25" map (1867).

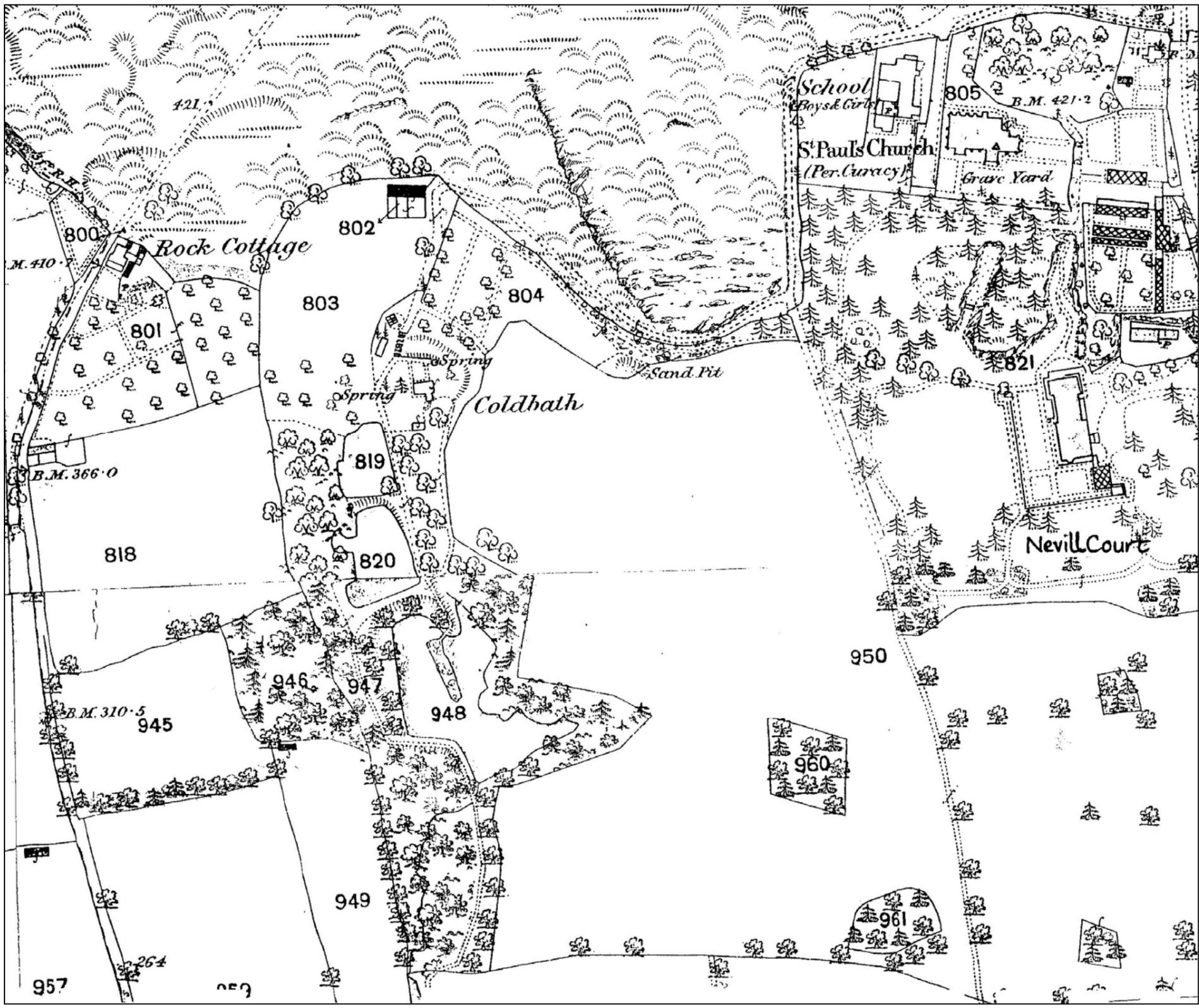
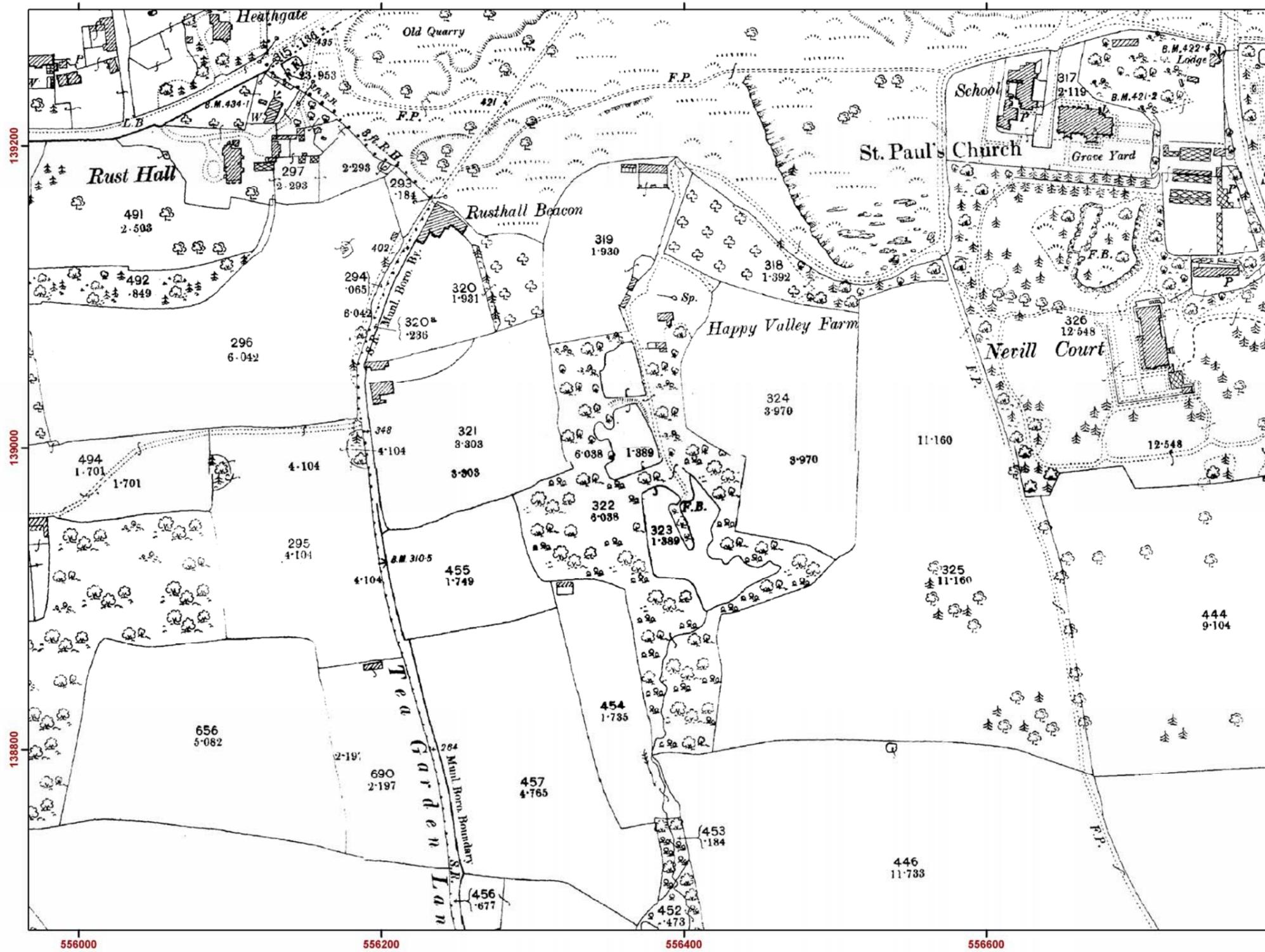


Fig. 7 Ordnance Survey 2nd edn 6" map (1897).



Beacon Hotel Cold Bath and Tea Gardens

Address:
 Beacon Hotel Cold Bath and Tea Gardens
 Royal Tunbridge Wells

Map centred on NGR: 556324 139032

Report completed: April 2009

N

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

ENGLISH HERITAGE

Kent County Council

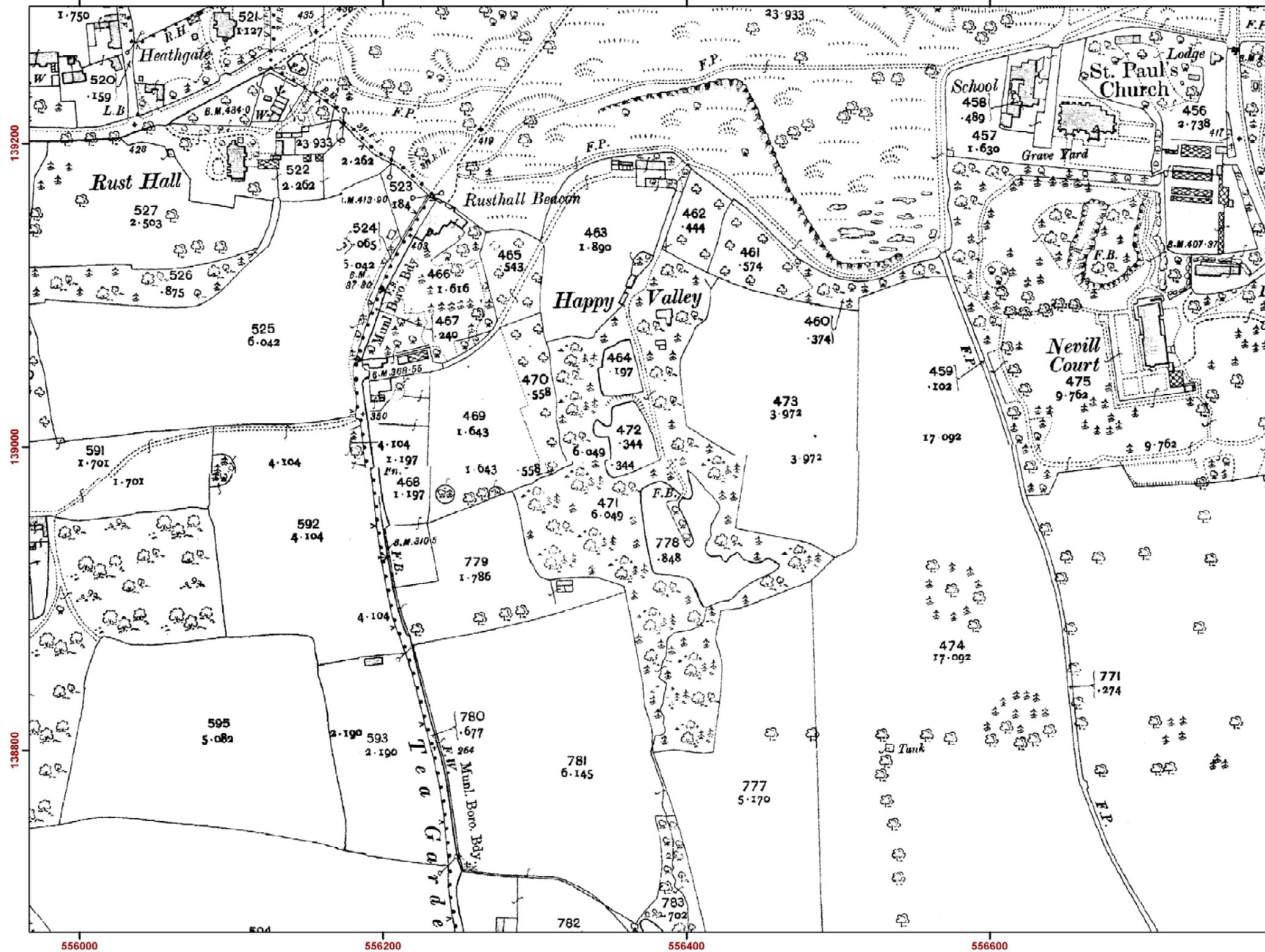
HIGH WEALD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Kent Gardens Trust

Produced by the KCC Heritage Conservation Group

This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (C) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. 100019238. 2007

Fig.8 Ordnance Survey 3rd edn 6" OS map (1907).



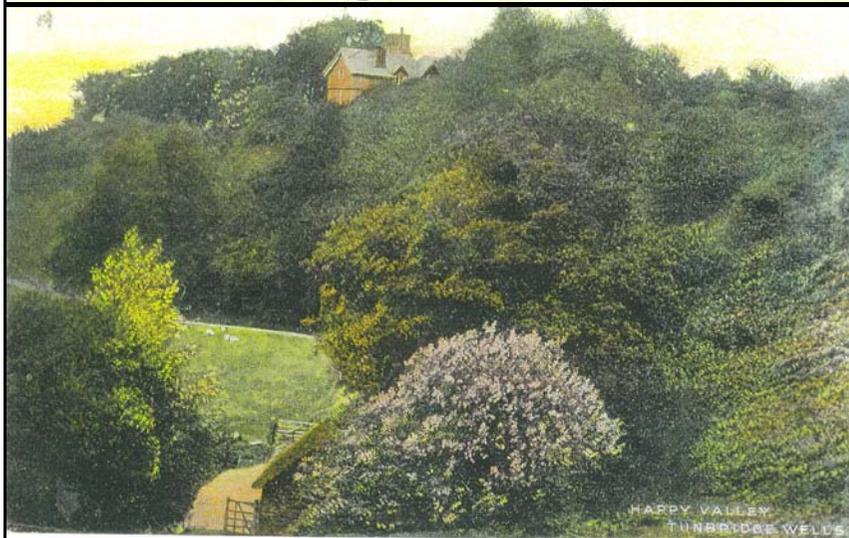
Beacon Hotel Cold Bath and Tea Gardens

Address:
 Beacon Hotel Cold Bath and Tea Gardens
 Royal Tunbridge Wells
 Map centred on NGR: 556324 139032
 Report completed: April 2009



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2009 review of Tunbridge Wells Borough

Fig. 9 Postcards of Happy Valley 1912.



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2009 review of Tunbridge Wells Borough

Fig. 10 Postcard of steps to the cold bath from Rustall Common 1914



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2009 review of Tunbridge Wells Borough

Fig. 11 Extract from Edward Hasted, 'Parishes: Speldhurst', *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 3 (1797)*, pp. 275-300.

Sponsor Institute of Historical Research Publication [The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 3](#)
3 Author Edward Hasted Year published 1797 Pages 275-300 Citation 'Parishes: Speldhurst', *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 3 (1797)*, pp. 275-300. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=62858> Date accessed: 05 April 2009. > [Add to my bookshelf](#)

Highlight: (Min 3 characters)

Contents [SPELDHURST](#)
[Charities](#)
[Church Of Speldhurst](#)
[Footnotes](#)

SPELDHURST

IS the last parish remaining undescribed in this lath. It lies the next adjoining parish south eastward from Penshurst, and was sometimes written, in antient records, *Speleberste*, but in the Text u Rossensis, *Speldburst*.

THE PARISH of Speldhurst is about three miles across each way; the north-west part, in which the church stands, and Hallborough, is within the hundred of Somerden, as is the hamlet of Groombridge, three miles from the church, at the southern boundary of it, where a branch of the river Medway separates this county from Sussex, throughout all which the soil remains a stiff clay; the remaining part of this parish is in the hundred of Warchlingstone, which stretches across a narrow district, by Mitchell's and Tophill farms, and towards the parish of Ashurst, which it includes, thus entirely separates that part of the hundred of Somerden in which the hamlet of Groombridge lies, and surrounds three sides of it, from the other in which the church stands. The soil in the eastern part of this parish changes to an uninterrupted scene of losty hills, with deep vallies intersecting, the soils are a stiff loam and a barren sand, which covers a continued bed of rock stone, several of which appear above it, of large size and dimensions, greatly abounding with *iron ore*, which renders the springs of it more or less *chalybeate*; at the south east boundary of the parish is the noted resort of Tunbridge-wells, (of which a further account will be given hereafter) situated thirty-five miles from London, and five from Tunbridge town; here the high road branches off to the right, by Rust-hall, and the hamlets of Bishopsdown and Rust-hall common, on by Groombridge, across the branch of the Medway into Sussex.

The large and populous hamlet or village of TUNBRIDGE-WELLS is situated at the south-east boundary of this parish; part of it only is in Speldhurst, another part in the parish of Tunbridge, and the remainder in that of Fant, in the county of Suffex. It consists of four smaller districts, named from the hills on which they stand, Mount Ephraim, Mount Pleasant, and Mount Sion; the other is called The Wells, from their being within it, which altogether form a considerable town; but the last is the centre of business and pleasure, for there, besides the Wells themselves, are the market, public parades, assembly rooms, taverns, shops, &c. Near the Wells is the chapel, which stands remarkably in the three parishes above mentioned—the pulpit in Speldhurst, the altar in Tunbridge, and the vestry in Fant, and the stream, which parted the two counties of Kent and Suffex, formerly ran underneath it, but is now turned to a further distance from it. The right of patronage is claimed by the rector of Speldhurst, though he has never yet possessed the chapel or presented to it; the value of it is about two hundred pounds per annum, which sum is raised by voluntary subscription; divine service is performed in it every day in summer, and three times a week in winter. Adjoining to it is a charity school, for upwards of fifty poor boys and girls, which is supported by a contribution, collected at the chapel doors, two or three times a year.

The trade of Tunbridge-wells is similar to that of Spa, in Germany, and consists chiefly in a variety of toys, made of wood, commonly called *Tunbridge ware*, which employs a great number of hands. The wood principally used for this purpose is beech and sycamore, with yew and holly inlaid, and beautifully polished. To the market of this place is brought, in great plenty, from the South downs, in Sussex, the little bird, called the *wheatear*, which, from its delicacy, is usually called the *English ortolan*. It is not bigger in size than a lark; it is almost a lump of fat, and of a very delicious taste; it is in season only in the midst of summer, when the heat of the weather, and the fatness of it, prevents its being sent to London, which otherwise would, in all likelihood, monopolize every one of them. On the other or Suffex side of the Medway, above a mile from the Wells, are *the rocks*, which consist of a great number of rude eminences, adjoining to each other, several of which are seventy feet in height; in several places there are cliffs and chasms which lead quite through the midst of them, by narrow gloomy passages, which strike the beholder with astonishment.

THESE MEDICINAL WATERS, commonly called TUNBRIDGE-WELLS, lie so near to the county of Suffex that part of them are within it, for which reason they were for some time called Fant-wells, as being within that parish. (fn. 1) Their efficacy is reported to have been accidentally found out by Dudley lord North, in the beginning of the reign of king James I. Whilst he resided at Eridge-house for his health, lord Abergavenny's seat, in this neighbourhood, and that he was entirely cured of the lingering consumptive disorder he laboured under by the use of them.

The springs, which were then discovered, seem to have been seven in number, two of the principal of which were some time afterwards, by lord Abergavenny's care, inclosed, and were afterwards much resorted to by many of the middling and lower sort, whose ill health had real occasion for the use of them. In which state they continued till queen Henrietta Maria, wife of king Charles I. having been sent hither by her physicians, in the year 1630. for the reestablishment of her health, soon brought these waters into fashion, and occasioned a great resort to them from that time. In compliment to her doctor, Lewis Rowzee, in his treatise on them, calls these springs the Queen's-wells; but this name lasted but a small time, and they were soon afterwards universally known by that of Tunbridge-wells, which names they acquired from the company usually residing at Tunbridge town, when they came into these parts for the benefit of drinking the waters.

The town of Tunbridge being five miles distant from the wells, occasioned some few houses to be built in the hamlets of Southborough and Rusthall, for the accommodation of the company resorting hither, and this place now becoming fashionable, was visited by numbers

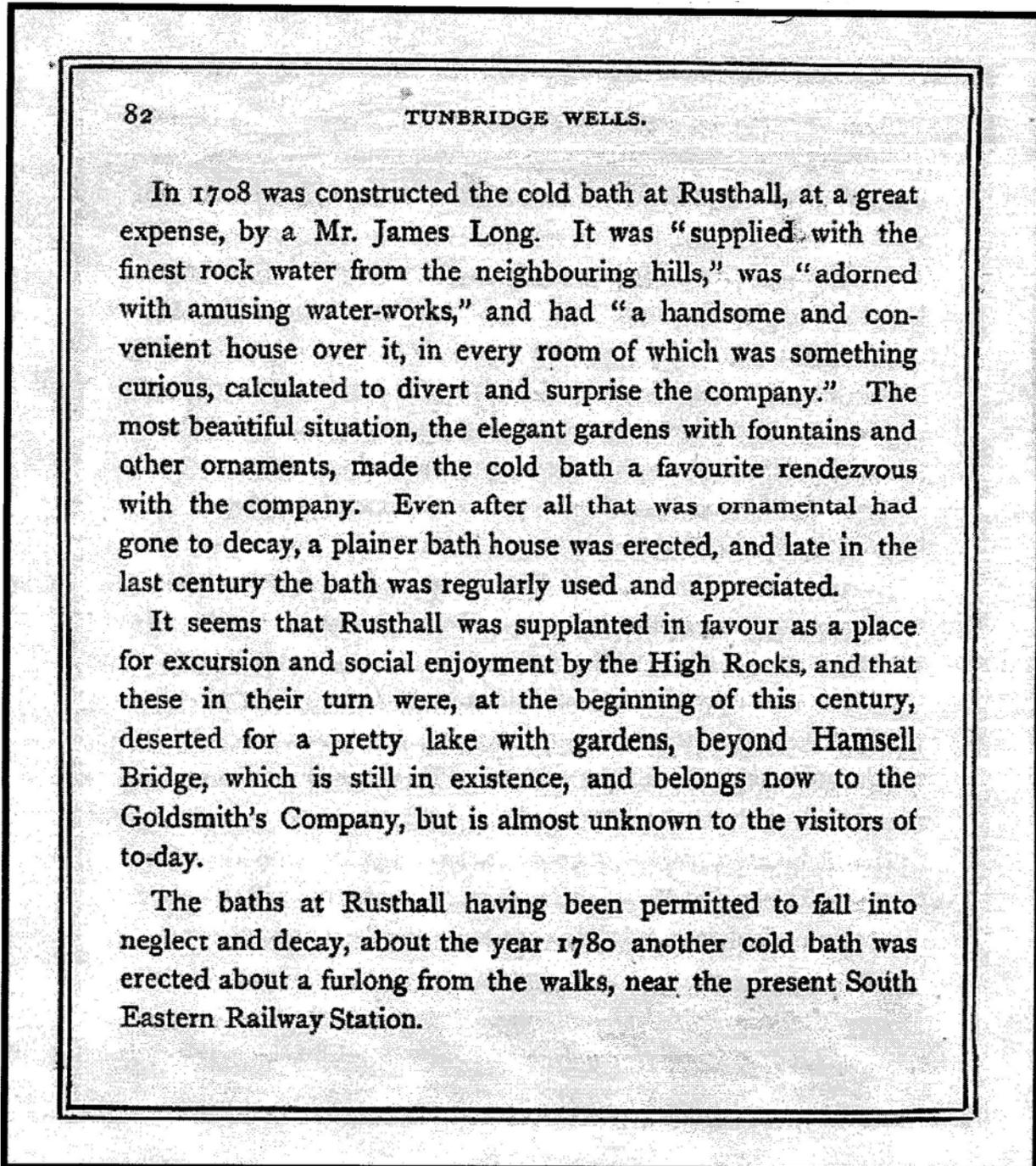
for the sake of pleasure and dissipation, as well as for the cure of their infirmities; and soon after the Restoration every kind of building, for public amusements, was erected at the two hamlets above mentioned, lodgings and other buildings were built at and near the wells, the springs themselves were secured, and other conveniencies added to them. In 1664, the queen came here by the advice of her physicians, in hopes of reinstating her health, which was greatly impaired by a dangerous fever, and her success, in being perfectly cured by these waters, greatly raised the reputation of them, and the company increasing yearly, it induced the inhabitants to make every accommodation for them adjoining to the Wells, so that both Rusthall and Southborough became ruinous and deserted by all but their native inhabitants. The duke of York, with his duchess, and the two princesses their daughters, visited Tunbridge-wells in the year 1670, which brought much more company than usual to them, and raised their reputation still higher; and the annual increase continuing, it induced the lord of the manor to think of improving this humour of visiting the wells to his own profit as well as the better accommodation of the company. To effect which, he entered into an agreement with his tenants, and hired of them the herbage of the waste of the manor for the term of fifty years, at the yearly rent of ten shillings to each tenant, and then erected shops and houses on and near the walks and springs, in every convenient spot for that purpose; by which means Tunbridge wells became a populous and flourishing village, well inhabited, for whose convenience, and the company resorting thither, a chapel was likewise built, in 1684, by subscription, on some ground given by the lady viscountess Purbeck, which was, about twelve years afterwards, enlarged by an additional subscription, amounting together to near twenty-three hundred pounds.

About the year 1726, the building lease, which had been granted by the lord of the manor of Rusthall, in which this hamlet is situated, expiring, the tenants of the manor claimed a share in the buildings, as a compensation for the loss of the herbage, which was covered by his houses. This occasioned a long and very expensive law suit between them, which was at last determined in favour of the tenants, who were adjudged to have a right to a third part of the buildings then erected on the estate, in lieu of their right to the herbage; upon which all the shops and houses, which had been built on the manor waste, were divided into three lots, of which the tenants were to draw one, and the other two were to remain to the lord of the manor; the lot which the tenants drew was the middle one, which included the assembly room on the public walk, which has since turned out much the most advantageous of the three. After which long articles of agreement, in 1739, were entered into between Maurice Conyers, esq. then lord of the manor of Rusthall, and the above mentioned tenants of it, in which, among many other matters, he agreed to permit the public walks and wells, and divers other premises there, to be made use of for the public benefit of the nobility and gentry resorting thereto, and several regulations were made in them concerning the walks, wells, and wastes of the manor, and for the restraining buildings on the waste, between the lord and his tenants, according to a plan therein specified; all which were confirmed and established by an act of parliament, passed in 1740. Since which several of the royal family have honoured these wells with their presence, and numbers of the nobility and persons of rank and fashion yearly resort to them, so that this place is now in a most flourishing state, having great numbers of good houses built for lodgings, and every other necessary accommodation for the company. Its customs are settled; the employment of the dippers regulated; (fn. 2) its pleasures regulated; its markets well and plentifully supplied, at a reasonable rate, with sowl, fish, meat, every other kind of food, and every convenience added that can contribute to give health and pleasure.

The whole neighbourhood of Tunbridge-wells abounds with springs of mineral water, but as the properties of all are nearly the same, only those two, which at the first discovery of them were adjudged the best, are held in any particular estimation. These two wells are enclosed with a handsome triangular stone wall; over the springs are placed two convenient basons of Portland stone, with perforations at the bottom; one of them being given by queen Anne, and the other by the lord of the manor; through which they receive the water, which at the spring is extremely clear and bright. Its taste is steely, but not disagreeable; it has hardly any smell, though sometimes, in a dense air, its ferruginous exhalations are very distinguishable. In point of heat it is invariably temperate, the spring lying so deep in the earth, that neither the heat of summer, nor the cold of winter, affects it. When this water is first taken up in a large glass, its particles continue at rest till it is warmed to nearly the heat of the atmosphere, then a few airy globules begin to separate themselves, and adhere to the sides of the glass, and in a few hours a light copper coloured scum begins to float on the surface, after which an ochreous sediment settles at the bottom. Long continued rains sometimes give the water a milky appearance, but do not otherwise sensibly affect it. From the experiments of different physicians, it appears that the component parts of this water are, steely particles, marine salts, an oily matter, an ochreous substance, simple water, and a volatile vitriolic spirit, too subtle for any chemical analysis. In weight it is, in seven ounces and a quarter, four grains lighter than the German Spa (to which it is preferable on that account) and ten grains lighter than common water: with syrup of violets this water gives a deep green, as vitriols do. (fn. 3) It requires five drops of *oleum sulphuris*, or elixir of vitriol, to a quart of water, to preserve its virtues to a distance from the spring.

This water is said to be an impregnation of rain in some of the neighbouring eminences, which abound in iron mineral, where it is further enriched with the marine salts and all the valuable ingredients, which constitute it a light and pure chalybeate, which instantly searches the most remote recesses of the human frame, warms and invigorates the relaxed constitution, restores the weakened fibres to their due tone and elasticity, removes those obstructions to which the minuter vessels of the body are liable, and is consequently adapted to most cold chronic disorders, lowness of spirits, weak digestions, and nervous complaints. Dr. Lodowick Rowzee, of Ashford, in this county, wrote a *Treatise of the Nature and Virtues of these Waters*, printed in 12mo. 1671; and Dr. Patrick Madan wrote a *Philosophical and Medical Essay* on them, in 1687, in quarto.

Fig. 12: Extract from Richard Pelton, Illustrated guide to Tunbridge Wells and the neighbouring seats, towns, and villages (Tunbridge Wells, 1881), p.82.



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2009 review of Tunbridge Wells Borough

Fig. 13 Photographs of Beacon Hotel Cold Bath and Tea Gardens February 2009.



Above left: Middle pond

Above right: Surviving Yew trees by the Cold Bath

Left:: 18th century steps to the bath