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CONTRIBUTIONS AND DISBURSEMENTS FOR BUILDING, EXTENDING AND ENLARGING TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHAPEL, 1676-96

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Introduction

The chapel, later the parish church, of King Charles the Martyr at Tunbridge Wells is one of the finest late seventeenth-century buildings in Kent and one of a relatively small number of outstanding churches built outside London in the same period. Although internally altered by Ewan Christian's restoration in 1882, which added a shallow chancel, it still preserves its remarkable plaster ceilings, executed by John Wetherell in the original section of the building in 1678, and by Henry Doogood in the extension in 1690, and the side galleries complete with their theatrical tiered seating. Although the new chancel led to a liturgical re-orientation of the building, it was not unsympathetically furnished with woodwork from the demolished Wren church of St. Antholin in the City of London. Before 1882 the liturgical focus of the building was towards its ritual west end, in the middle of which was a large three-decker pulpit; the altar was placed on the opposite wall and railed on three sides; the seating, provided by loose benches rather than fixed box pews, was arranged to face the pulpit and reading desk so that the congregation sat with their backs to the altar.

We are fortunate to have preserved the lists of subscriptions towards the erection and enlargement of the chapel, together with the details of expenditure. Those for the original building cover the period 1676-84; those for its enlargement the years 1688-96. The original lists have been hung in large wooden frames in the church where they are beginning to show signs of deterioration. Fortunately they were copied in about 1840 into two slim folio volumes now held in the archives of the chapel deposited at the Centre for Kentish Studies, County Hall, Maidstone (P371E/6/1-2), the second of these volumes containing an account of the building and almost immediate enlargement of the chapel. This account, and the disbursement sections of the two volumes, are printed below. The lists of subscribers, which are extensive, have not been reproduced, but they are an interesting roll call of the leading County families and of distinguished visitors to a rapidly growing spa town. Indeed it was for the benefit of these visitors that the chapel was built and subsequently extended. It remained extra-parochial until 1889. Although no marriages could take place in the chapel, the sacraments of baptism and holy communion were celebrated there, baptisms in the chapel being subsequently entered, as required, in the parish registers of Frant, Speldhurst and

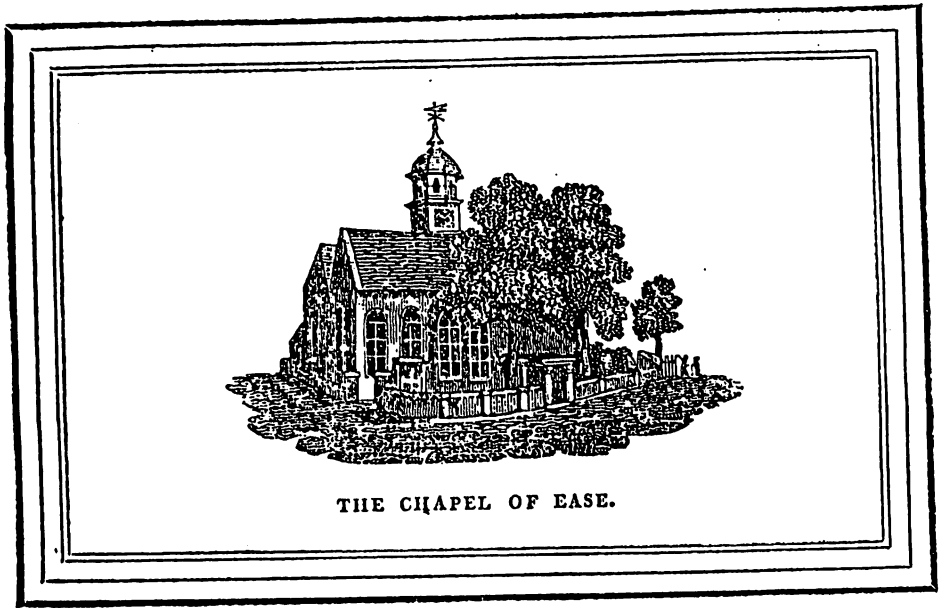


Fig. 1. The Chapel of Ease from *The Descriptive Guide of Tunbridge Wells*, published by J. Clifford, 1823

Tonbridge, the settlement of Tunbridge Wells taking in small sections of all three parishes. The chapel was managed by a local committee and there was a charity school connected with it.

Most of the subscribers to the chapel and its enlargement contributed relatively small sums of a pound or less, though the total amount collected in the two lists was £ 2,177 12s. 10d. By far the largest subscriptions came from nine sources: Princess Anne of Denmark, the future Queen Anne of Great Britain, contributed £ 64 10s.; the Duchess of York gave £ 21 10s.; Earl Clarendon £ 10 15s.; Dr. Eachartt and friend £ 6 9s.; the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort £ 5 10s.; Thomas Ashenhurst and the Duke of Monmouth each gave £ 5 7s. 6d.; and the Earl of Bristol and the Bishop of Rochester each gave £ 5.

A feature of the expenditure on the chapel was the considerable sums spent on elaborate decoration and the fitting out of the pulpit, reading desk and altar table to provide a worthy setting for divine worship. Daily services took place in the chapel in the early eighteenth century as was the custom in the churches of most fashionable watering places.

Early Records of Tunbridge Wells Chapel

It having been considered that any document or authentic information connected with Tunbridge Wells Chapel might be interesting to the visitors and inhabitants who frequent that old established place of worship, the following verbatim copy of the Contributions and Disbursements for erecting, extending, and enlarging the building, was made some years ago, by particular request, for the purpose of preserving a duplicate of that valuable, and curious Record, in consequence of a considerable portion of the writing, having by age, become nearly illegible; but which, has since been so far restored by chemical agency, as to be enabled to revise the transcription with a greater degree of correctness, and which has recently been accomplished by the kind assistance of Mr John Jenner, Clerk of the Chapel.

The two Scrolls of Vellum, from which this copy was taken, contain a list of nearly 2, 600 subscribers, and were formerly suspended in the old vestry-room, for the inspection of visitors, who frequently referred to them with peculiar interest, particularly on recognising the names of their ancestors, or those of their friends, by whose 'Work of faith and labour of love', they not only thus provided for the spiritual wants and comforts of themselves, and their poorer brethren, but also left it as a monument of piety and gratitude to posterity; a work in which Royalty stands pre-eminently distinguished, by the contributions of Her Royal Highness the Princess Anne of Denmark and Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York. It may also be worthy of remark that in the said list will be found enrolled the names of several Catholic families, including the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Arundel, Lord Shrewsbury, Lord Talbot, *et cetera*.

To strangers it may be observed, that this is the only place of worship in Tunbridge Wells where the whole of the sittings are free; although there are no funds, or parochial rates whatsoever for the maintenance of the building, which has been kept up in its present state of repair, entirely by the annual and voluntary contributions of the visitors and inhabitants during a period of 176 years. But as the hand of time now presses heavily on this venerable and sacred structure, its exigencies must of necessity claim a proportionate degree of liberality and support.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHAPEL 1676-1696

Shall we then, so dishonour God's holy service, or forget our religious obligations, as to suffer that pious bequest which has thus been transmitted to us, to fall into decay, through our indifference or neglect? No! Rather let us endeavour to follow the good example of our predecessors, and say "Stand and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk herein, and ye shall find rest for your souls". And at the same time remember the ardent and expressive zeal of David - 'neither will I offer burnt offerings with the Lord my God, of that which doth cost me nothing'.

Tunbridge Wells 1852

A short description of the building, extending and enlarging the Chapel, particularised in the two Catalogues, under the head of Disbursements.

The building of the first or original chapel, was begun in 1676, and opened temporarily [*sic*] for divine worship in 1678; the length of which extended from the present entrance door, near the font, to the aisle in front of the opposite gallery; and the width from the wall at the back of the Communion table*, to the large columns; the centre of the ceiling being ornamented by the present elliptic dome, over the aisle. There was then no gallery within the walls but that called the ante-gallery (over the organ loft) was built over certain tenements belonging to the Earl of Buckingham, which were severally occupied, until purchased by the trustees about 40 years ago. This part of the building was rebuilt in 1846. In 1682 it was extended on the NE about 12 feet and a gallery built at each end⁺. The additional ceiling comprises the octagon dome, in which is inscribed the above date.

In 1696 it was enlarged to its present size; or twice the width of the original building, with a continuance of the end galleries, and a corresponding one in the front, altogether forming the general appearance of the present edifice. In the octagon dome of this part of the ceiling is executed the last mentioned date.

* It is within the recollection of some of the old inhabitants, when the communion table was on the NE side of the Chapel, the site of which is now occupied with short seats.

+ The end joints of the floor and seats still mark their former extent.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHAPEL 1676-1696

Disbursements on the Chapel in the years 1676, 1677, 1678, 1679, 1680, 1681, 1682, 1683 and 1684

	£	s	d
Paid John Wibourn for his shedde and c standing on the Ground where the Chapel was to be built	4	0	0
Paid Labourers for clearing the ground and other odde jobbs	1	11	0
Paid John Carrier at several times for carriage of Stone for the Walls and Porches, and for sand and earth and levelling the ground of all the passages	13	3	4
Paid Richard Pett for levelling the Ground in Front	5	3	6
Paid Mr Greene, Bricklayer at several times for building the Skelliton of the chapel by contract and for materials and workmanship aboute the Coopeloe by award	331	10	0
Paid John Waghorne in full for Bricklayers and Masons work done by him on occasions of extending the chapel	46	15	0
Paid the Widdow Hodgkin in full for Tiles	9	1	4
Paid Bricklayer at twice for making a dreyn for Wibourn's water that would have otherwise annoyed the Works	5	3	0
Paid for Oak boards for incloseing and making Windows to the Coopeloe	3	16	9
Paid for 60 Deals with Carriage and Workmanship for the temporary use of the Company anno 1678	4	16	3
Paid Mr Day for 15 large clean Deals for Doors and charges	2	2	0
Paid Alderman Peter Rich for 48 Deals for the Porches	2	10	0
Paid Mr Wilmot, Plumber at twice in full of Lead for covering the Coopeloe and pediment footing the weather boards and charges with workmanship	20	18	6
Paid Stephen Smart for lead used in the Gutters at the new end and about the Porches	9	9	6

TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHAPEL 1676-1696

	£	s	d
Paid John Cossam at twice for casements for the Chapel and Vestrie and other Iron work aboute the Palizadoes	9	16	0
Paid William Durrent for Casements and other Smith's work	2	2	0
Paid John Peacham for a long bolt and other appendant necessities for securing the Doore	1	14	0
Paid William Hayes for severall hinges		15	0
Paid Mr Barton for a Phane Iron works and gilding it	7	5	6
Paid Edmund Baker in full for Smith's worke	1	18	0
Paid Thomas May at severall times in full for making a Stone Arch and other Mason's worke by him done	33	19	6
Paid Richard Constable at twice for making a Stone Wall for encloseing the Chapel Yard	26	0	0
Paid John Elsum for 52 Lyme Trees to plant in the yard with some charges he was at	4	11	0
Paid for Engrossing Edward Martin's contract and bond		6	0
Paid Mr Weller for assisting aboute Writeings		5	0
Paid Edward Martin at severall times in full of Joyner's and Carpenter's worke aboute the Chapel and Coopeloe Wainscot and palizadoe pales; and materialls and workmanship for extending the Chapel, and disbursements and an Artist to measure the same £ 522 5s 10d viz by Deales and Oak boards remaining £ 3 2s 0d and in money	519	3	10
Paid Edward Martin in part of formes and other work since the close of the Accompt above	5	0	0
Paid Edward Martin what he laid out for a long ladder		9	8
Paid Mr Birt for advice and journey aboute the additional building	1	7	6
Paid William Fownes for one hundred of pitch for securing the Wainscot		9	6

TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHAPEL 1676-1696

	£	s	d
Paid Nathaniell French for carriage of the pitch and a box for the new furniture		3	4
Paid William Pack for Iron Cynders to cover the earth floore and secure the timber floore from damp	5	16	0
Paid John Wetherell in full for the Fretwork and plain ceilings and all other plasterers work done by him	62	8	0
Paid John Wetherell for his draft of the additional ceiling		10	0
Paid being charges in a journey to view and forward the workes		18	6
Paid Mr Still for his draft of the designe		10	0
Paid John Wibourn at severall times for severall jobs for removing his Sewer from the chapel ground and the Ground upon which the chapel is extended and for his consent to extend it and set the Palizadoes on his ground and removing his house of office that was offensive to the passage and ceiling under the Ante-Gallery	13	2	0
Paid Henry Doogood for making the additional fretwork ceiling and other plasterer's worke	28	0	0
Paid Ralf Cadman for staff and workmanship of the Altar and Altarpiece	16	0	0
Paid John Jefferies for carriage thereof		15	0
Paid Samuel Nicholls for painting the same	7	15	0
Paid Thomas Houghton for Hat pinns		18	4
Paid Thomas Fulman at twice for Mason's worke about Sewer	12	10	0
Paid Sir Humphrey Miller for a small Bell, viz 2 qrs 10 lb	4	0	0
Paid Mr Bartlett for new casting the former Bell being found too small and 105 lbs of metall into a new Bell, viz 1 cwt 1 qr 27 lbs with a suitable clapper thereunto	5	0	0
Paid for a Stock and Wheele to it	1	5	0

TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHAPEL 1676-1696

	£	s	d
Paid for Gudgins for the Bell to run in, carriage of them given to and spent on workmen and for five journeys to settle agreements with them and severall other petty disbursements	12	14	8
Paid to an Artist for his charges and paines in viewing the place and to take the dimensions of the clock	2	14	0
Paid John Bayley at severall times for 616 Hassocks	8	2	4
Paid John Wibourn for his service and attendance as Sexton	2	10	0
Paid for this and severall other catalogues from time to time exposed for satisfaction of the Company	17	8	0
Paid William Baxter for his Officiousnesse about the Formes & c		5	0
Paid for a Bible in folio and a Common Prayer Book	2	16	0
Paid for six service bookes ordered to be used in the thanksgiving for deliverance		3	0
Paid Edward Tooke for two Common Prayer Bookes for the Communion Table	1	10	0
Paid for Calico Stay Tape Rings makeing and altering Curtaines	2	13	6
Paid for a Table and six Chaires for the Vestrie	1	12	3
Paid for a Surplice	2	14	0
Paid John Peacham for Curtain Rodds & c	1	0	0
Paid Sir Edmund Wiseman for velvet, Sir William Gostin for Fring and John Barnard for making and fitting the velvett furniture and for whisks & c to keep them clean	33	17	0
Paid Mr Browne at twice for Glazing and painting	10	7	0
	<u>1334</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>2</u>

TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHAPEL 1676-1696

Disbursements for enlarging the Chapel in the years 1688, 1689, 1690, 1691, 1692, 1693, 1694, 1695 and 1696

	£	s	d
Paid for a lock to the doore opposite the Vestry		7	0
Paid Edmund Massy for a Clock and dyall set up by him in the Chapel	34	0	0
Paid him for charges in a journey to mend the Clock and for lines	1	7	0
Paid Mr Win to take back a horizontall dyall which he had fix'd by mistake		10	0
Paid at severall times to Richard Newnham for reparaire of the Chapel Vestry house and draine under the pallizadoes	22	18	6
Paid to John Waghorne at severall times for workmanship and materialls by agreement for enlarging the Chapel	440	0	0
Paid him more in consideration of overworke and the hardship he lay under by his contract	67	0	0
Paid him more for timber and Carpenter's worke, for partition railes of the galleries and things delivered by him for the Chapel	8	14	10
Paid him and Richard Drury in full for raising the pallizadoe pales	18	0	0
Paid Richard Newnham for underpinning the pallizadoe pales	12	0	0
Paid for a horizontall dyall post and paveing with stone round the same	8	5	6
Paid Richard Newnham and Samuel Wagon for paveing the Chapel Yard	60	5	0
Paid Richard Waghorne for paveing before the Chapel doore and ceiling the coveings under the eves	1	0	0
Paid John Skinner for Carriage of Stone	1	14	0

TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHAPEL 1676-1696

	£	s	d
Paid at severall times on acc ^t for digesting into an exact Alphabet all the Contributors' names, engrossing them annually with those of former years in a book with faire catalogues and scrolls exposed for satisfaction of the Company	11	5	0
Paid a Master in Chancery and his Clerk that took the acknowledgement of ye Lady Purbeck's Deed and enrolling it	1	12	6
Paid Edward White for locks and scaffolding	1	3	0
Paid Thomas Fulman for work about a draine	3	5	6
Paid Phil Seale for painters and Glaziers work	16	6	0
Paid Mr Cornwall which he paid for repairing the Glasse windowes		5	0
Paid him more for Carriage and Lime & c	2	9	3
Paid J Fuggle for Wainscoting the Vestry & c	39	4	9
Paid J Pannell for repaireing a sewer	1	14	0
Paid Henry Doogood for the fret ceiling & c	100	0	0
Paid for 8 cane chaires for the Vestry	2	0	0
Paid William Jeffreys for Smiths worke	2	6	2
Paid William Durrant for iron ware	4	17	6
Paid Edm Baker for iron wares for the Gallery	2	10	0
Paid Ralph Jordan for repaire of a breach in the fretwork ceiling	2	12	6
Paid John Pack for Bricks, Tiles, and carriage of stone, sand and gravel at severall times	21	2	9
Paid the Widdow Pack for tiles, Lime & c	4	0	0
Paid Henry Heath for Lime and Haire	2	12	0
Paid for Lime and Sand	1	6	8
Paid John Bayley for Hassocks	5	0	0

TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHAPEL 1676-1696

	£	s	d
Paid for a ladder at the Gallery Staires framing the pallizadoes on each side of the porch, and removing the Bannisters in the Gallery & c	2	6	6
Paid John Waghorne by bills for disbursements and a yeares attendance	7	18	6
Paid being charges in a journey to take acct of work done, given to workmen to drink and to severall persons at sundry to preserve the Gallery for the Company	6	15	6
Paid Mr Midgley for drawing and engrossing the Articles for enlarging the Chapel	1	3	0
Paid for digesting into an exact Alphabet the names of Contributors, engrossing the same annually with those of former yeares faire in a book for this and former Catalogues and several large Scrolls in Vellum and for making up and repaireing the first Catalogue	13	5	0
Paid Samuel Wagon for repaire of a draine through the Chapel Yard	3	3	0
Paid John Jeffrey's Widdow which was owing to her husband	2	5	0
Paid for a book and copying therein the first Catalogue	1	3	6
Paid John Feild for a carriage of a box with a large Catalogue		1	0
Paid being charges by Mr Pett in makeing the Contract with Waghorne		6	0
Paid Sir Peter Rich for 100 Deals for the use of the Chapel	4	15	0
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	943	6	5
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TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHAPEL 1676-1696

	£	s	d
Contributions as by the first Catalogue	1380	7	3
Contributions as by third Catalogue	797	5	7
Oweing to Mr Wiliam Petts executors	100	0	0
Due to Mr Nathan ^l Hawes to balance this acct		8	9
	<u>2278</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7</u>
Paid by the first Catalogue	1334	15	2
Paid as above by this Catalogue	943	6	5
	<u>2278</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7</u>