

DEVONSHIRE PARK.

Introduction

On the back of an iron pillar in the Floral Hall of Eastbourne's Winter Garden can be found the paint suffocated words, "Fletcher Lowndes & Co." A little further on, through a small hole in the wall, there can be discerned the glint of glass. Nearby in an electrical cupboard, the remains of an antique ticket counter poke through the wall. Next to this, in an elaborate heating pipe are stuffed envelopes containing our tickets to hear 'Amers and the Municipal Orchestra.' Upstairs, under a floor-board in The Gold Room, is found a rodent chewed blue ticket, upon which the words, '...vonshire Park Pavilion - Grand Concert July 1876' peer back through the dust.

Eastbourne's Winter Garden is littered with the detritus of its mostly under realised history. A history that served to a large part as the focal point in the development of Eastbourne as a fashionable Victorian resort. The stories of the many lives the Devonshire Park has touched over the years have now begun to fade, and with each new layer of paint and alteration the ghosts become a little quieter, their memory dipping below the surface to join many others that will not be heard again.



This work attempts to piece together the story of, what could be considered, to be the glory years of the Devonshire Park, a place famous for its Illuminated Fetes, Fireworks, Roller Skating, Athletic Sports, Orchestral Concerts, lectures, bazaars, theatreplane crashes... watered down whiskey, poor toilets, Winston Churchill, Oscar Wilde, the invention of the telephone and there's something else oh yes, tennis.

THE DEVONSHIRE PARK,

During the mid to late 1800's, Eastbourne was the location for a monumental amount of development under the supervision of local landowners such as the the 7th Duke of Devonshire, William Cavendish and Carew Davies-Gilbert.

The Railway had arrived in 1849 and the town's population was increasing considerably every year, at times it felt almost out of control with concerns locally that there would be little, if any, space left for the provision of hospitals, libraries and recreational areas ; considered essential amenities to any modern Victorian town of the time.



Being a seaside resort, Eastbourne was well patronised in the summer months, but was often likened to a ghost town in Winter. It's neighbours, Hastings and Brighton, boasted aquariums, concert halls, meeting rooms, town halls and markets and it appeared as though Eastbourne was in danger of falling behind. This created a proverbial tug of war between those that considered "Eastbourne the quiet" to be the town's most attractive accolade and those who believed it to be its most crippling handicap.



(Above : Two views of Eastbourne in 1865. The first : 'The Sands' as Eastbourne's beach was once known and second : 'Sea Houses' in the East-End, an area that is little changed today)

Eastbourne Cricket Club

Most local histories date the founding of Eastbourne's Devonshire Park as taking place in the mid 1870's, although, it could be argued that the park's origins lie a little further back, maybe even as far back as the 1850's. It perhaps began with some local cricketers being chased off of an area named Cornfield Green, near the current day Devonshire Place.

Cornfield Green, was an area sometimes used for military parades, sports and Guy Fawkes celebrations. In 1854, a few local inhabitants happened upon this inviting, but privately owned, open space and began to play cricket upon it. Despite periodically being chased off by foreman, William "Old Bill" Bradford, these games continued and were soon to become an issue in need of addressing. In 1855 a public meeting was called at the Anchor Hotel between the proprietor, John Filder and the cricketers, a gentleman by the name of Robert Insoll being one of them. Robert Insoll was a Field Agent for the Duke of Devonshire and one of the people destined to make an enormous impact on the development of Eastbourne. The outcome of the Anchor hotel meeting was that cricket activities were to cease on Cornfield Green, and instead, Dog Kennel field, behind today's Tally Ho pub, up in Old Town was to be used for the next season. It was here that in 1856 that the now named Eastbourne Cricket Club began to first receive and host visiting teams. The club quickly gained strength, despite soon having to move to an alternative field, Burrlane Field and again in 1860, yet another field was required. At a meeting on the 25th of May at the Lamb Inn, it was decided that as the town of Eastbourne was growing so rapidly, the club needed to move nearer to the Railway station. Land was soon sourced between the Squirrel Inn (at the bottom of Grove Road) and the current day Gildredge Road from the tenant James Gorrige, and after a little adjustment towards the area where Ashford Road sits today, the club had once more found a new home. A committee was then formed and financial help sought locally in order to prepare the ground for the coming season. By this time, the club had caught the attention of the Duke of Devonshire, who soon became first among the club's benefactors, with his agent Robert Insoll, also becoming a member of the committee.

The new cricket ground quickly began to take shape, and was soon augmented by a new pavilion, courtesy of Mr. Caleb Diplock, a local wine and beer importer and owner of the nearby Lion Steam Brewery. By 1862, the ground had also gained an Archery club, a Croquet club and a Boys club and on special occasions military bands would be engaged to play within the grounds.



(Left : Eastbourne Cricket Club in 1870. Copyright Eastbourne Borough Council.)

There were 25 cricket matches played in 1862 and the club's balance book was showing profit, a trend that continued throughout the next year or so. In 1865 the first annual athletic sports event was held on the ground, contributing nicely to club coffers. The following year the Duke of Devonshire became even more involved, enlarging the field, improving the turf and also providing a new grand pavilion, all under the direction of Robert Insoll. The club's standing continued to improve to a point where a game was played against the All England Eleven in 1866, which was considered a great success even though the Eastbourne side lost.

In 1867, as well as games against Kent and Surrey, an event featuring fireworks was held. On this occasion, the fireworks marked the occasion of the Eastbourne Regatta, a long running and popular rowing and boating event held near the pier. Many of the firework displays held at the cricket ground were provided by Wells of London and were often followed by dancing, accompanied by Herr Wolf's Band.

In 1869 a gentleman named Captain Thomas Holman was appointed as Honorary Secretary of the Club. He was a retired member of the Wiltshire Rifles and served on Eastbourne's Local Board, he would later become the Secretary of the Devonshire Park and Baths Company, as well as holding the post of Secretary for Eastbourne College.

In 1873, it became apparent that the Cricket Club's ground was potentially worth £30,000 in building revenue for the Duke of Devonshire. Once again, the Cricket club was to be without a venue. There was much consternation and anger locally when after a meeting towards the end of 1873, it appeared that the the Eastbourne Cricket Club gave up the ground, seemingly, without a fight. There was some hope though, in that the Duke had set aside an area of roughly eleven acres for a new Cricket ground near to Eastbourne College. This ground, previously earmarked for houses, was known locally as 'The Wash', 'The Wish' or 'The Green Wish.' It resembled a swamp and was filled at high tide by sea water, draining again at low tide through a shingle bank. It was said that, in antiquity, there was once an inlet, also described as a small creek, that led into where the new ground was to be located. Also, the remains of wooden piles and facings suggested that this creek was possibly once adapted for the passage of boats.

At low tide, on land between the new ground and the sea, were to be found even more wooden pilings, said to be the remains of an historical harbour, perhaps utilised by boats transporting material from the local green limestone quarries of Roman times.



(Left : The Wash or Wish in 1859. A line drawing by R.H. Nibbs.)

At The Ship Inn, Meads, in January 1884, there was a Mayor's dinner held for the old people of Meads. These people were asked whether any of them remembered an inlet at the Wish; none of them did, but some did remember that the site of the new ground was once a pond, called Wish Pond, and that during bad weather, the sea would break over the roadway and fill up the pond. They also remembered that the Western end of the new park site had previously been utilised for market gardening and that a lane ran from Southbourne (South Street) towards the sea, along the route of the current day College road. There was also said to be a small house on the area that is now the College Road car park.

At the Eastern end of the ground, emptied the Shomer Dyke, this was a stream that carried sewerage from Southbourne to the sea via basically the same course as Cornfield Lane runs today. Said to be so unpleasant that at one point a stone bridge had to be built across it, and evening worshippers travelling from Trinity Church were advised to carry lanterns so as to avoid falling into the mire. The Shomer Dyke was filled-in during the latter half of 1800's and its course became known as Shomerdyke Road before eventually acquiring its current name, Cornfield Lane. There is perhaps another clue to this area's past in the name given to Blackwater Road.



(Above and left : Looking towards the future site of Devonshire Park and Eastbourne College in about 1871. St. Saviour's tower is centre left and Old Wish Road is visible passing in front of Wish Farm's haystacks on the right.)

Old Wish road, which partially still exists on the Eastbourne College campus, used to enter the ground where the rear of the Towner Art Gallery sits today and traversed the Park site towards South Terrace. In January 1874, Old Wish road was blocked and diverted onto the new Carlisle road, enabling work on the new cricket ground to commence.

The site earmarked for the new cricket ground, already had a history of recreational use with bazaars and fairs having been held there in the past and a fair had been held there in 1865 to raise money for a clock for the Leaf Hall in Seaside road. Nearby, in the area now covered by Grange Road and Furness Road there was another large field that, in the 1860's hosted an annual fair, held circuses and was the location for barn theatres.

The Devonshire Baths

Initially, the new cricket ground was to be named Burlington Park, and an area within its eleven acres was to be reserved for the Eastbourne Cricket Club, though, it was made clear very early on, that the new ground was to be retained under the Duke's control. This caused some local concerns, mainly as to whether the Eastbourne Cricket Club would 'really' be in control of the cricket as it appeared to some that the Duke had surreptitiously taken control.

As well as the new recreation ground, there was also to be a new salt water bath house, constructed on land between the new park and the sea. The Eastbourne Baths Company, later to be called the Devonshire Park and Baths Company, was formed in 1873 and came into existence via a very similar set of circumstances to those that led to the creation of the new cricket ground.

In 1867 the Eastbourne Royal Marine Baths and Laundry Company was founded at the Eastern end of Pevensey Road, supplying fresh and sea water bathing facilities as well as laundry provision. Underground pipes carried sea water from the beach into the building where, male and female baths were provided in porcelain baths, separated across two floors.

Bathing, especially salt water bathing, was increasingly considered to be essential for public health in the 1870's and a lack of adequate warm sea water bathing was to some, a big 'put off' to visiting Eastbourne. Premises such as The Victoria Sea Baths, located on the western side of the Burlington Hotel, only managed to supply limited provision. *"Last year more than one visitor to Eastbourne was in the habit of journeying to Brighton and back everyday for the purpose of procuring a warm sea-bath,"* The Eastbourne Gazette printed on the 24th April 1867, *"One gentleman, who came from the interior of Madagascar, hot and dusty, had to wait three or four days before he could obtain a warm bath to cleanse himself."*

The 1870's were something of a golden epoch for Bath-House building in Great Britain, with many towns building facilities in much the same way as Eastbourne was about to. Greenock, Harrogate, Ashton-Under-Lyne, Belfast, Dundee, Southport all had new bath houses in the 1870's and there was even a new bath-house built for Buxton courtesy of the 7th Duke of Devonshire in 1875.

The Eastbourne Royal Marine Baths and Laundry Company was initially to be funded by the sale of a thousand shares of ten pounds each, with any profits to be split between the shareholders. Anyone wanting to purchase shares could apply to Mr George Ambrose Wallis of Seaside Road. Wallis, was an agent and engineer for the Duke of Devonshire, and in his short lifetime, Wallis was to have an enormous impact on the development of Eastbourne, also becoming Eastbourne's first mayor.

The Royal Marine Baths struggled to sell enough shares, and it was wondered whether its location in the poorer East end of town was a contributing factor. There were a series meetings held towards the end of 1872, chaired by the Duke of Devonshire and attended by George Ambrose Wallis and Robert Insoll, where it was proposed that the Baths should close and the premises sold. This proposition was agreed upon and the Royal Marine Baths closed soon after.



(Above : An early view of The Devonshire Baths site, the roof of which can be seen to the left of the half built Cavendish hotel.)

By 1873 a new company was formed, *“promoted by the directors of the old ‘firm’ for the erection for new baths”* (Eastbourne Gazette 12th Feb 1873) on a site between Mostyn Terrace, which is on the seafront by the Wish, and Carlisle Road. *“A site which seems to have been designed by nature for the purpose”* (Eastbourne Gazette 12th February 1873.) The Duke sold the plot to the new company for a sum greatly reduced of its value, and subscribed to one thousand pounds worth of capital shares for himself. The baths were to be fitted out with the machineries from the old baths. These were purchased at auction on the 20th February 1873. *“The draw-back attaining to the locale of the old baths will not apply.”* (Eastbourne gazette 12th February 1873.) It was hoped that by providing these facilities in the West end of town a higher class of person might be attracted to visit, if not settle permanently.

The plans for Eastbourne’s new Baths were drawn up by architect and consulting engineer, George Ambrose Wallis. Local builder, James Peerless was to be in charge of construction, the iron work being supplied by Richard Moreland and Son, of Goswell Road, London. The entire project was to be supervised by Mr. D. Preston.

Preston would later become the assistant engineer in charge of the baths, with Mr. Harriott being appointed the main engineer and superintendent.

It was hoped that the new amenity would be open to the public by the beginning of July 1874, but in fact, the baths were opened well before that, with an understated opening ceremony held on April 1st 1874, this was followed by an opening for the public on April 6th 1874. Captain Thomas Holman, the secretary of the Eastbourne Cricket Club was appointed Honorary Secretary.



(Left : The entrance tower of the new baths. Picture copyright Eastbourne Borough Council.)

The Eastbourne Gazette published a description of its “sneak peak” on the 18th March 1874. Describing the entrance as a “handsome and conspicuous tower 70ft high, built in the Italian style of architecture. Ascending a couple of short steps on either side of the tower - the entrance for ladies and gentlemen being quite distinct - we find ourselves in the receiving hall facing the small and tastefully erected ticket office, and as our intention naturally leads to the swimming baths, we take a turn to the right, along a corridor, and are conducted down two or three short flights of stone steps, quickly finding ourselves in the gentlemen’s swimming baths. Here, we feel bound to say, presents an opportunity of a ‘dip’ which would put to blush many more pretentious places. The centre of the building, so to speak, forms a lake 57 feet by 34 feet, with a varying depth of from four feet to eight feet, containing no less than 68,400 gallons, and on either side are some fourteen or fifteen dressing rooms of stained wood and varnished. These are very nicely fitted with a seat and the usual requisites, and the perfect privacy of each is secured by a

handsome crimson curtain. At the eastern portion of the building is to be placed a diving board, and at the opposite end a shower bath, the floor around being laid with kamptulicon. Another advantage here is that an overflow is provided, as also eight perpendicular steps fitted with a hand rail, a rope running round the side to facilitate ingress to or egress from the “lake,” while at the north-west side of the building a private entrance has been arranged for schools patronising the same. The roof of the building is remarkably light and open, being formed by a single span of 50 feet, and supported by trusses of angle-iron varying in length from 3ft 6in to 9ft. In the evening the building will be illuminated by a number of sun-lights. Rewinding our steps, we are conducted to the “ladies” swimming bath, which is on the opposite side of the building and in every respect arranged and fitted precisely similar to the room we have just described, with the additional advantage of a dressing-box or two being convertible into a “.....” sufficiently large to admit of a maid being in attendance on her mistress - a sliding partition giving the accommodation required. The “lake” too is but 50 feet in length with a breadth of 23 feet, and the quantity of water but 45,700 gallons. Returning to the entrance-hall, we are invited to inspect the ladies’ and gentlemen’s private baths. The locale of these is in every respect similar to the swimming baths, and we take the opportunity of inspecting those intended to be used by the sterner sex. These are ten in number, fitted with the most modern and improved appliances enabling the bather at pleasure to obtain water of any temperature during the ablution, and attached to each bath is a very comfortable fitted dressing-room - each bath being separated by a partition.”

“At the end of the gentlemen’s private baths is the entrance to the washing and drying rooms, which we gain by descending a short flight of step of steps.” “It is divided into three compartments by nine semi-circular arches of brickwork, which run through to the base of the building. Here we find a couple of 15 horse Cornish boilers and a splendid 4 horse power engine, as also a huge well some 14 ft by 25 ft, while above and around are a number of pipes, the purposes of which are the conducting of the water into a couple of monster tanks at the top of the building, and the supplying of the steam jets by which the baths are made

tepid. The swimming baths are supplied by gravitation direct from the sea by an 18 inch pipe, and the overflow is carried off through a tunnel which empties itself into the pipe beyond the filter.” “This is a brief description of the baths, but independent of the rooms for public use, six others have been set aside for the use of the manager who will reside on the premises. The directors have also a board-room which is approached by a spiral iron staircase from the ticket office.”

The New Park

In the early part of 1874, the new cricket recreational ground was laid out by the Duke’s agent, Robert Insoll. The ground was levelled and turfed, and framed with sloped boundaries, bordered by trees on all sides. The western area, which sat at a greater height, was to be reserved for pastimes such as Croquet and the north eastern six acres reserved for cricket. The path round the edge of the park was to be paved rather than sanded or pebbled and Mr. William Knight of Hailsham Floral nurseries was entrusted with the task of planting the eight thousand Elms, Evergreens, Laurels and Hollies destined to populate the borders. In January a request to divert Old Wish road had been granted, this diversion can be seen today within the Eastbourne College campus.



(Above : An early picture of the Devonshire Park looking towards Eastbourne College.)

On the 4th of May 1874 a Carter by the name of Simeon Funnell, who was employed on the development of the new park, arrived two hours late for work after drinking all night and well into the morning, at a friend’s house in Westham. He was employed transporting chalk from the pit to the new park construction site, and it was while doing this that his horse suddenly bolted, knocking down a column and section of wall on the property of James Gorringe. Funnell hastened to the New Inn in South street, deposited the horse in the stables there and absconded with nearly seven shillings of advanced pay. This resulted in an arrest warrant being issued for his apprehension. It is unclear as to whether he was ever caught, though he does reappear in the records, living in Ringmer a few years later.

Another man employed in the construction of the new Park, Alfred Paris, was arrested after attempting to initiate a series of fights on his journey from Westham to Eastbourne. It was near to the Workmen's Hall, today's Leaf Hall, that he was finally arrested. While Paris was being transported along Langney road by P.C. Gladman, Paris suddenly pulled a knife and threatened to "rip" Gladman. Paris was sentenced to three weeks imprisonment with hard labour.

Against the back drop of continued construction, the Park was already in use and taking bookings for future events. No longer called Burlington Park, the new Park was now re-named as The Devonshire Park, and The Baths and Park Company is now titled, 'The Devonshire Park and Baths Company.' Early on, it was made very clear, that the The Devonshire Park and Baths Company intended to



manage the Park under their own directives. On the 27th of May 1874, The Eastbourne Gazette announced the Company's intention of forming a new cricket club. Captain Holman was to assume the mantle of secretary, while at the same time retaining his position of secretary with the Eastbourne Cricket club. *"We learn by a circular just issued that the Devonshire Park and Baths Company have decided on inviting the co-operation of the gentry and leading tradesmen of the town with the view to the establishment of a club which shall be equal, if not superior to that which has hitherto made Eastbourne famous in cricketing matters. The Park ground, we understand, is in fair condition, and the lapse of the few weeks necessary to float the proposed new club will render the turf quite fit to be played on. Captain Holman, though still retaining his post of honorary secretary to the old club, has placed his services and practical knowledge at the disposal of the Devonshire Park Club, and therefore there is every guarantee that the organisation will be under good management."*

The turf of the new ground was nearly in a fit state to be played on, thanks to the efforts of groundsman, Jesse Hide. Hide, along with his brother, Arthur were highly regarded Sussex County cricketers. Jesse became bowler for the Devonshire Park club in 1876 and went on to do good things for Australian cricket upon travelling there in September 1878. Jesse and Arthur Hide's youngest brother, Charles Hide, was so thin as a boy that he was nicknamed, 'Bones.' Bones Hide became a well known and well celebrated member and Coxswain of the Eastbourne life-boat.

The Pavilion

Even while the new park was being planted, paved and turfed there were worries that access to the Park was destined to be restricted to the more gentile sections of society. There was also a feeling amongst some, that it would have been preferable for the new park to be placed under the control of the Local Board. Though at that time, the Local Board was not in any kind of financial position to do this and were, as a consequence, very much at the mercy of the Duke of Devonshire. The Gazette reported on the first of April 1874 that the new park, *"We believe is intended for the use of the public, but whether any or what restrictions may be put upon those frequenting the same, we are not at present in a position to state with any degree of accuracy."* The article continued, *"and it is to be hoped that the tenure of the new ground will not be quite so uncertain, nor more restrictive in character."* *"We are of those who would have preferred that the matter should have entirely been in the hands of our local authority."*

Devonshire Park opened to the public on the 1st of July 1874 and the first cricket match, attended by the Duke of Devonshire, was held against Windmill Hill over the course of the two days of the 16th and 17th July 1874. The ground was said to be in great shape and credit was given to head groundsman, Jesse Hide



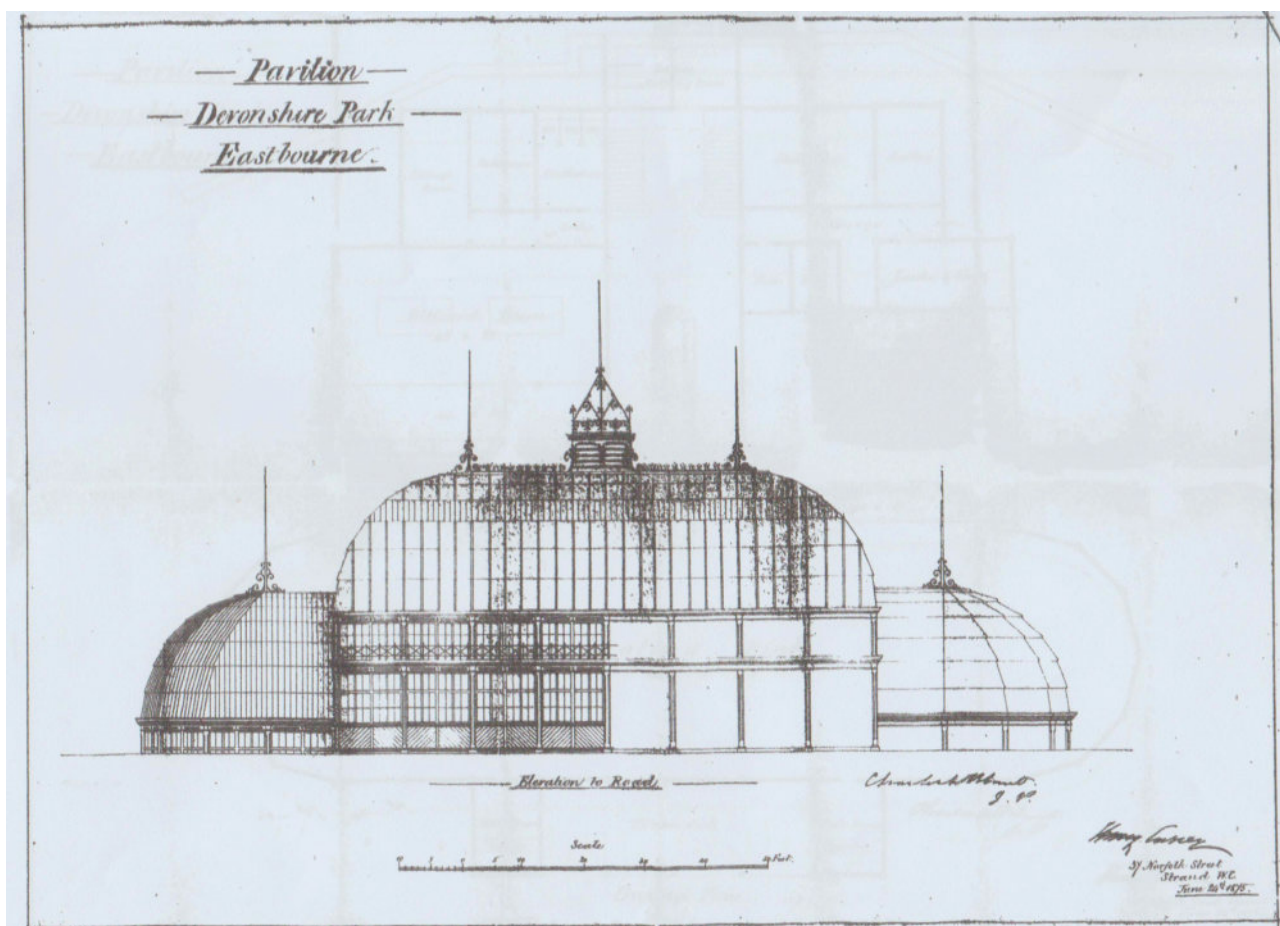
(Left : H. A. Curteis, who played cricket for Devonshire Park in the first game ever held there.)

The Eastbourne Gazette gave a description of Devonshire Park on the 8th of July 1874, *“This newly acquired ground was formally opened to the public on Wednesday. There was no ceremonial nor demonstration, but those who presented themselves were admitted free of charge. Although much has been done, and a vast deal of money expended, the aspect of the park is very different to what it will be when the thousands of shrubs which cover the sloping borders have grown up and hidden the bare ground, and when the handsome building it is proposed to erect, together with skating rinks and winter gardens, occupy the vacant space set apart for the purpose.”* The “handsome building” referred to here would eventually become what we today know as the Winter Garden. It was after a Baths Company general meeting in May 1874, that the Duke of Devonshire’s agents announced the Duke’s intention to build the pavilion, with a cost of

roughly £16,000. Henry Currey, the Duke of Devonshire’s architect, drew up the plans for the new building and once built, the pavilion would be handed over for the Baths Company to control. *“The building will face Compton-Street and Carlisle-Road, and the entrance will be through a covered way constructed so that carriages may draw up and set down their occupants at the door. Descending a flight of steps from the entrance hall, the visitor will find himself in a wide passage leading to the skating rink, a long building, 150ft by 41ft, with a dome roof.”* (Hastings and St. Leonards Observer 19th of December 1877.) There was also to be reading rooms, a room for billiards tables, a refreshments saloon, an outdoor and an indoor skating rink, accommodating up to 500 skaters at a time.

The Daily Telegraph and Courier (London) 15th July 1874 told its readers, *“Visitors are beginning to arrive in considerable numbers, there being at present time between two and three thousand in the town. Devonshire Park - laid out by his Grace the Duke of Devonshire - is now open, and a cricket match is announced for Thursday and Friday.”* Then on the 18th August 1874, *“Arrivals here increase in number daily, and the pier and promenades are thronged at the fashionable hours. Excellent cricket is being had in the New Devonshire Park, and several good matches are fixed to take place - (weather very fine.)”*

The first Flower Show in the Park was held on the 21st August 1874. This was held in three marquees on the upper terrace and was accompanied by music from the Coldstream Guards. The Flower Show had previously been a yearly Eastbourne event, which had lost favour in recent years and had been allowed to lapse.



(Above : Henry Currey's original Pavilion plans dated June 1875, courtesy of Richard Crook.)

The Outer Rink



On the 30th June 1875 the Eastbourne Gazette printed, *"The Devonshire Park executive have completed their "uncovered" skating rink, and it is to be opened to the public tomorrow. We wish them every success. The novelty here should prove attractive; and we have no doubt it will."*



The outside Skating rink was raised about 1 ft above the ordinary level of the park, constructed of six

inches of concrete and topped with a layer of three inches of cement.

Victorians were very fond of ice skating in winter months, although, it was not always possible. The invention of Roller Skates supplied a way of skating in any weather, inside or out. Originally invented in the 1700's, roller skates didn't make great gains in usability until the 1860's when the American inventor, James Leonard Plimpton's patented "rocking skates". "Rocking Skates" enabled people to steer by leaning left or right and featured rubber bearings which added much longevity to the skate's useful life.



On the 19th of February 1874, Plimpton exhibited his roller skates at the Brighton Corn Exchange on a wooden floor. Then, in May 1874, a rink was opened in Hove with a cement floor. This rink had a glossy surface so as to give the appearance of ice, the same effect would later be utilised at the Devonshire Park's rink.

This was the beginning of what would be termed 'Rinkomania,' skating rinks were very much in vogue, with rinks opening up all across the country. There were soon fashionable rinking clothes, designed to be worn by 'rinkomaniacs,' some of whom would later attain celebrity status. The Victorians enjoyed the fact that roller skating could be enjoyed by both sexes, at the same time, similarly the same was true for tennis, which was also gaining in popularity at this time.



(Above skating pictures by Charles Breach, originally appearing in a Pearson's Magazine article featuring the Devonshire Park.)

The outer Skating rink of the Devonshire Park opened on July 1st, 1875. A rainy day that probably deterred many visitors, though it was estimated that one to two hundred people were present at the occasion. Just after 4 o'clock, the rain ceased and at 4:30 the rink was officially opened with a ceremony that consisted of skating demonstrations executed by James Leonard Plimpton and his daughters. Free refreshments were provided, courtesy of the Devonshire Park Company, and later a meal was held at the Southdown Hotel in honor of the event.

The Devonshire Park's new Pavilion was completed towards the end of August 1875 at a cost of between £12,000 and £16,000. The contractor was James Hayward (of Croydon and Eastbourne) and Mr. Shute served as the manager of the building works. The building was designed by the Duke's architect, Henry Currey, who designed it in a similar style to Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace. As well as the indoor skating rink, a concert room 88ft by 44ft was also being constructed, with the aim to have it completed and operational for the 1876 season.



(Left: The new Pavilion and outer skating rink. Comprised of two photos from the author's collection, stitched together courtesy of Richard Crook. The lower domed section is the indoor rink, the higher is the concert room. Notice also the entrance block to the far right, which was soon to be augmented by the addition of a further storey, comprising of a new lecture theatre.)

Both the indoor Skating Rink and the Pavilion Concert Room were covered by circular arched roofs with hemispherical ends. These were supported by semi-circular iron hollow tubes that were driven together, rather than screwed together in the normal fashion, and featured the patent tubular principle of Messrs

Fletcher and Lowndes. The wood and iron framework was covered with glass and zinc, supplied by the Vieille Montague Company of Belgium. Later pieces of ironwork, used in the entrance block area were provided by Young and Co. of Ecclestone Iron Works, Plimlico.

The height from the floor to the beginning of the span of the arched roof was 13 feet and the total height was 34 feet, The Eastbourne Gazette printed, *“The appearance of the roof is light and neat, and is one of the kind never before fixed on a large public building.”* Messrs McFarlane and Co. supplied the ventilators, vanes and ornamental cresting and the asphalt floor was laid by Mr. Pilkington. The foundations of the building were seven feet deep and made of Portland cement and concrete mixed to a proportion of eight to one.

In 1875 the building comprised of a one story entrance-way which led to a staircase. This staircase descended towards a corridor that gave access to the skating room. There were various other smaller rooms accessed via this same route along the corridor. The Eastbourne Gazette printed a description on the 16th December 1875, *“Descending a flight of stairs from the entrance hall, in the vicinity of which will be the ladies and gentleman’s retiring rooms, the visitor will find himself in a wide passage, on each side of which are two rooms, 44ft square, and usable for various purposes. This passage, in which will be two refreshment bars, leads to the skating rink, a long building, 150ft by 40ft, with a dome roof, and while running cross-ways to the passage is entered at the centre.”* *“From the entrance hall, a flight of steps will lead to the concert hall some 110ft by 88ft. It is to possess a tubular dome roof strung together with iron ties, with a band of glass running round, the other portions being filled in with match boarding. The structure will be thus well lighted, as the boarding will only be carried to a height of seven feet. At the top of the dome outside is an ornamental turret.”*



(Above : An early picture of the Internal Rink.)

The previous year, on the 4th of November 1874, the Gazette told its readers that, *“One side of the building faces the cricket field, and here are the usual pavilion, dressing rooms, and other offices, and elsewhere there are two commodious reading rooms, near the main entrance, by variation of ground, about 9ft above the general floor level.”*

The Concert Room

What today is called the 'Gold Room', was known in 1875 as the Concert Room and was completed roughly a year after the indoor rink. The Gazette reported on the 25th August 1875, "*The new concert hall in course of erection at Devonshire Park, is planned on a scale as complete as the rink on which it abuts. The size of the large hall will be 110 feet by 44 ft., and the height to the springing 18 feet, and from thence to the centre of the domed roof 22 feet. Large and convenient ante rooms, both for the public and the artistes, are provided, and no expense will be spared in order to make the arrangements as complete as possible. The main entrance in Carlisle road will have a large covered porch.*"

The Concert Room was almost structurally complete in September 1875 but wasn't opened until July 1876. A lecture room was next to be constructed in 1877, sited above the Compton street entrance, the construction of which resulted in the removal of most of one side of the Concert Room windows, the evidence for which can still be seen at the time of writing.



(Above : An early photograph of the Concert Room. Notice the windows to the right, obscured by blinds, later to be filled in. Photograph Copyright Eastbourne Borough Council.)

Downstairs, the indoor and outdoor skating rinks were separated by glass doors. These could be removed in good weather to allow skaters to move from one rink to the other. Around the internal rink, Evergreens were being trained to twirl around the pillars and letters constructed from more Evergreens spelled, "DPC Rink." Flower baskets were suspended from the ceiling, eight large ones down the centre and seven smaller ones which hung on either side. These baskets exhibited many types of flowering plants and creepers, such as variegated vines, Hedera, Maculata Superba and Clematis. The spaces around the outer edge of the rink featured Clematis, Jasmine, Tacsonias and Creepers, all supplied by Mr. William Knight of The Nurseries at Hailsham. The Duke of Devonshire's flag of blue and yellow was hung from the roof, joining many other coloured flags around the room and the band of Messrs Weippert and Co. supplied music in the evenings.

The first Secretary was Captain Thomas Holman and there is mention of a Captain Ellis being the first manager, although further evidence of the existence of Captain Ellis has proved elusive.

Throughout this initial period the Devonshire Park Pavilion was known for the most part as “The Skating Rink,” and for the first couple of years this served as its main purpose. “Do you rink?” was often heard in conversation and it was estimated that two thousand skaters a week were visiting the Rink.

In October 1875, adverts were placed locally inviting potential investors to come forward, as it had become apparent that a further £35,000 was required to continue the building works.

In early November 1875, a thief gained access to the skating rink office and made off with fourteen Shillings, in the process managing to also disturb some umbrellas.

The Eastbourne Skating Rink by H.B. Worth

Pray have you seen the ladies skate,
The sight the dullest will elate
Curving swerving tastefully,
Gliding, sliding, gracefully

Of all the sports, the best I think, is gliding on the skating rink

Whirling, twirling in the dance
They quadrille and often lance
The brightest smile is of pretence
So warning take and always fence

Of all the sports, the best I think, is gliding on the skating rink

Flirting you can here combine
In fact 'tis cupids fav'rite shrine
For you can pass Kate as you dance
And backward go to her advance

Thus true at times you tumble down
But at your fall they smile and frown
Or help you on your wheels again
Till you your altitude remain
Forward, backward round they go
Little reck they fall or blow
Though some frown or look askance
At a luckless wights mischance

Yet the smile will light again
Scarce the sourest can refrain
Laughing, chaffing at another
Who has hapless kissed his mother

Here the lesson you may learn
To the weak to give a turn
Always help a fallen friend
You may need him in the end

(Printed in the Eastbourne Gazette 29th September 1875)

In the early days of the Rink, a band would accompany the skaters from the centre of the rink, but in November 1875 Captain Holman moved the band to the edge, which proved to be a popular decision. A short while later, a minstrel's gallery was constructed, accessed via a spiral staircase located on the north side of the building, roughly where today's stage sits.

On 18th December 1875, The Hastings and St. Leonards Observer printed, *“Although the weather of late has been so severe as to afford opportunities for “real” skating, the assemblies at the Eastbourne Rink have by no means fallen off, but, on the contrary, have increased in numbers. Rinking is now fairly established in the town, despite the prejudices which existed on its introduction.”*



A local butcher by the name of Henry Simmons became one of the first casualties, falling and braking his arm while skating. Simmons would have been one of the few shopkeepers able to visit the Rink, as skating concluded at nine and shops generally remained open till 8.

(Left : The glass panels in the roof of both the indoor rink and the Concert Room were maintained and cleaned by staff who utilised ladders that slid on rails.)

As far back as May 1875 the Eastbourne Mutual Improvement Society had petitioned the Duke of Devonshire for a recreation ground for townspeople of lesser means. This society had formed in 1873 with the aim of promoting intellectual improvement through social recreation. It often staged some very popular musical concerts, lectures and other events in various venues throughout town, such as the Workmen’s Hall and Diplocks Assembly Rooms and later within the Devonshire Park itself. The society asked the Duke to grant them a piece of land to use for croquet, cricket and bowls, stating that the Devonshire Park demanded tariffs beyond the means of the Society’s members. This request for recreational space for people of lesser means would become a recurring issue.

The Devonshire Park’s first Athletics Sports event was held on the 27th August 1875 and featured events such as running, hurdles and cricket ball throwing, with some events being only open to subscribers of the Devonshire Park. Herr Wolf’s band provided music for the occasion, the same band as previously employed on the old cricket ground.

On the same date but up on the Archery Terrace, St. Saviour’s Bazaar and fancy fair was being installed. This was held in a marquee over two days, with various stalls and tents, one of which was a museum that featured a Piping Bullfinch as the main attraction.

Throughout the Summer of 1875, around twenty temporary licences had been obtained for events within the park and a permanent refreshment license had been applied for the Pavilion for September. This had been obtained despite complaints of people being drunk at cricket games the previous June.

In November 1875 it was announced that the Devonshire Park and Baths Company would be adding Hydropathy to their roster of services. This awoke the anger of a well known, but little loved, local character by the name of John Kennett. John Kennett was one of the owners of the property known as ‘The Grotto,’ which was located in the area that became Sussex Gardens and in more recent years where Barclays Bank sits in today’s Terminus Road. Kennett was a believer of temperance, vegetarianism and was known to recklessly quote passages from the Old Testament to support any argument he was trying to convey. He was so disliked, that upon his death there was trouble finding a minister willing to bury him. On November 17th 1875, Kennett announced in the press his intention of opening ‘The Matlock and Malvern Hydropathic Baths’ in the grounds of Montmedy Villa, Cornfield Road, very near to the Devonshire Park Baths. On the 20th of November 1875, Kennett was annoyed to learn that a similar enterprise had been announced by the Devonshire Park and Baths Company. This prompted Kennet to vent his anger in a stern letter to the

Eastbourne Gazette, which they published on the 1st December 1875. Kennett wrote : *“In some letters to follow I shall, at my leisure, have something to say about the old and new Bath Company, the old and new cricket ground, the big job which is now going on to convert the “Dismal Swamp” of the place into building ground ! the mode in which water is supplied to the town etc. In conclusion, I may mention that I did not begin this war ; that although my powder has been stored up a long time, it is in very good condition, and, moreover PERFECTLY DRY. I am, sir, yours faithfully, John Kennett.”* John Kennett died on the 1st July 1878.

In December as the early snows receded, chalk from the cricket pitch was dug down to a depth of a foot, and soil added to replace the chalk, it was hoped that this would reduce the parched appearance of the grass in summer.

On New Years eve 1875, about 200 people gathered in the Rink, accompanied by a band playing Rossini, Hemingway and Muller with tea, coffee and biscuits being served in the, soon to be completed, Billiards room. Midnight was heralded by Auld Lang Syne with the gas being lowered at the same time. The National Anthem brought the evening to a close an hour later. The first of many New Years eve celebrations that would be held in this space.

1876

In the first week of January 1876, the Devonshire Park Company directors announced their intention to make alterations to the Baths. The Gentleman’s Bath was to be lengthened to 155 feet 6 inches with a further 44 more dressing boxes added. Also, the Ladies’ bath was to be extended to 111 feet 6 inches with a further 30 more dressing boxes added. It was expected that the improvements would be completed during the month of July.

In mid March, 1876 the directors had offered half price swimming tickets to members of the Eastbourne Swimming club, something which was to cause friction in the future as it was suspected that people were joining the club just to take advantage of the cheaper tickets.

At this time, the Directors began to refer to the Rink room as The Floral Hall, the intention here was possibly to utilise the space for purposes other than Skating in the future, it had also been suggested in the press that the rinking craze might be short lived.

The Devonshire Park Company had purchased the sole rights to use Plimpton’s Skates in Eastbourne and the surrounding area, so any new proposed skating rinks had to be sanctioned by them. In 1876 there were two applications to the Devonshire Park Company for other parties to open rinks in the area, and a third would materialise from someone connected to the Devonshire Park.

On surplus land in the East end of town, Mr. Isaac Adams, of Scott, Adams & Co. Nurseries was proposing to construct his own skating rink. This land, adjacent to their Ceylon Nurseries, was leased from the Duke of Devonshire. Adams petitioned Henry Currey, the agent and architect of the Duke, to allow the construction of a new rink, his request read, *“That a second skating rink is much needed in the Eastern part of the town of Eastbourne. That since the closing of the old cricket ground numerous residents have been deprived of the means of recreation which they formerly enjoyed, as the present ground is very exclusive.”* The petition was signed by a large number of persons but, predictably the application was declined. The Hastings and St. Leonards Observer’s columnist, Dogberry, had this to say on the 26th of February 1876, *“I have on two or three occasions in this column, hinted at the probability of Eastbourne possessing a skating rink in the eastern portion of that rapidly rising and improving town. Alas ! All my brightest hopes have been dashed from me just as I was about to sip from the cup of joy, and the good intentions of a would be benefactor have been cast aside in the most un-ceremonious and ruthless manner. Need I say that I refer to the proposal of*

Mr. Isaac Adams to form a rink near the Ceylon Nurseries, and the peremptory manner in which the proposal has been refused by the Duke of Devonshire. Ah me ! Hitherto I have been inclined to look upon the noble house of Cavendish as belonging to that school of progressive liberals and ardent reformers, who claim credit for having inaugurated all the good things enjoyed by this favoured and sea-grit town of Eastbourne! True: when I recall to mind the manner in which the old cricket ground was taken from the town, under the promise that the new one would be equally as accessible to the inhabitants, I am not much surprised at the last nail which has been driven home to preclude the middle and lower classes from recreational enjoyment.....”

There were potentially other ominous threats on the horizon. In March 1876, it was announced that a Professor Gamgee had discovered how to make real ice by a process involving Ether, in fact the owners of a rink in Belgravia were, at that time, in the course of establishing a ‘real’ ice rink at a cost of £10,000.

In the Devonshire Park, known by the Baths staff as “The Other Side,” things were beginning to find form, Herr Wolf’s band had been engaged to accompany the skaters and now provisions for Badminton, Bowls, Cricket, Croquet and Lawn

Tennis were being advertised. A permanent license for the restaurant had been applied for by John Henry Campion Coles in mid April 1876.

Campion Coles was a Solicitor by trade, becoming involved with the Devonshire Park Company from 1873. His services were often utilised in obtaining many of the licenses the Devonshire Park required annually in order to operate.

Near the beginning of September 1876, the

Devonshire Park Company asked the Judicial board for a

5am license extension for dancing, though this was not obtained, instead a 3am license had been granted. At this time, there was only one restaurant in Eastbourne with an alcohol license and it seemed to be a matter of pride for Eastbourne’s Local Board that it had issued less alcohol licenses than Brighton.

The Devonshire Park Company went back before the Bench on the 18th of December 1876 in order to apply for a 12 month license to perform stage plays at the Devonshire Park Hall, Campion Coles again representing the Devonshire Park Company. This was the first time such a request had gone before this particular Bench and its members were not without concerns that the opening of a theatre would create a nuisance. Instead of a twelve month licence, the Bench granted a six month license, with Captain Holman paying a £100 Surety and Robert Insoll and Henry Evenden paying £50 each.

In May 1876 it was reported that friendly cricket matches were being played in readiness for the competitive season and that tennis was being played to a good standard in the Park. The rise in the popularity of tennis would in the future, lead to the removal of cricket and all other sports from the Devonshire Park altogether.

The 22nd August 1876 was a landmark day for the annual Devonshire Park Athletic Sports as donkey races were added to the list of competitions for the first time. It was a perfect sunny day, with an estimated five



thousand attendees at the Park. Admission was 6 pence, though if you wanted to compete in any events you would have to have been a resident in Eastbourne since the 18th of August 1876. Both Weippert's and Herr Wolf's bands were present, as was Lady Fanny Howard, the Duke's sister, serving in the role of prize giver. The Eastbourne Gazette observed that there were many ladies present who "*contributed, by their presence, additional grace to the charming scene by which they were surrounded.*" The Hastings and St. Leonards Observer went on to say on the 26th August 1876, "*honour to those whom honour is due. Captain Holman is doing more than well. If he is promoting private interests by the spirit and enterprise which characterise all his undertakings, he is also doing much good for the common weal of Eastbourne.*"

Bell's Life In London, reported mixed feelings on Saturday August 26th 1876, "*The Eastbourne meeting was almost as poor in quality of competition as the Brighton gathering, but the pretty grounds of the Devonshire Park, where it is held, are sufficient attraction in themselves to the seaside visitors, and there were more people there than ever on Tuesday.*"

Towards the end of May it was reported that the parquet floor of the new concert room was half way towards completion and soon adverts appeared in national papers advertising hire rates for prospective bookers. People such as W. Leach and Thomas Gowland would soon regularly promote events in the new room, alongside the Devonshire Park Company's own programming.

On the 27th May 1876, The Eastbourne Chronicle published an account of their sneak peak of the new Concert Room. "*The new Concert-hall has so far advanced towards completion that the stage-an all important part of the internal arrangements-is now fitted up and in working order. With a few others we were invited to a private view on Thursday, and were certainly very favourably impressed with the scene. In the brilliant light afforded by the corona of gas jets above and the numerous foot-lights below, the stage presented an attractive, not to say gorgeous, appearance, which we can best convey in words by asking our readers to imagine a picture in massive gilt frame magnified to the colossal, the platform serving as the base. Hals-curtains, formed of lengths of blue and orange silk, are drawn quickly and smoothly aside at the sound of a gong till they hang in rich folds at the side.*" "*Such was the spectacle which those who assembled in the building on Thursday night were invited to behold, and which naturally drew forth marks of appreciation and approval. The stage and shifting scenery has been supplied and fitted up by Messrs. Grieves & Son, of Charles-street, Drury-lane, who provided the stage at Windsor Castle. It is so arranged that it can be let down at pleasure and in a very short space of time, so that on special occasions when it is not required there will be no difficulty in removing it. With a view to try the effect of music in the hall, the section of Herr Wolf's band engaged in the Rink gave a selection of music on Thursday evening, and as far as could be judged, the building seems to possess excellent acoustic properties. The parquet flooring, which is a special feature of the hall, is being laid down, and will probably be completed next week.*"

The Eastbourne Gazette also described the room on the 5th of July 1876. "*The room is a magnificent apartment, 110 feet in length, 45 feet in width, and about 43 feet in height, capable of seating 700 persons. It is lighted with two sun lights in the roof, each containing 136 burners, besides which there are 40 gas brackets at equal distances round the walls of the room. The flooring is of parquet oak of beautiful workmanship. The roof is of polished wood, and glass, and of a semicircular shape. Both the roof and the upper part of the walls are beautifully decorated. The new contract is approached by a noble staircase leading from the principal entrance hall. Adjoining the concert room are ante, and retiring rooms for the artistes and cloakrooms.*"

The first Concert in the new concert room, programmed by the Directors, was held on Saturday, July the 8th 1876. The musical aspects were carried out by Weippert's Band and Scott and Co. from the Ceylon Nurseries were engaged to decorate the orchestra stand. It was billed as The First Grand Concert and featured Madame Edith Wynne, Madame Blanche Cole, Miss Julia Elton, Mr. Edward Lloyd and Signor Caravoglin. Unfortunately, a few hours before the concert was due to commence, a telegram was received at the Devonshire Park, informing that Madame Edith Wynne was too unwell to perform and had been advised by her doctor not to travel. This development was announced to a very sparse audience at the beginning of the



concert. Madame Wynne did eventually did make the journey to Eastbourne, performing at the Grand Concert of August the 12th 1876.

The “Second Grand Concert” on the 15th of July, again featuring Weippert’s Band, was to fair no better, and ticket prices were reduced on the morning of the concert, perhaps in the face of low advance sales. The Hastings and St. Leonards Observer printed on the 22nd July 1876, “*On Saturday eve the second of the series of Saturday evening concerts, was given in the Devonshire Park Concert Room. Mr. Wilford Morgan and Miss Russel were the Artistes engaged. The audience, which was a very thin one, was much pleased with the way in which the programme was executed.*” The Chronicle described the attendance as “a failure.”

The idea was entertained that perhaps if the concerts were rescheduled to a Friday evening, they might fare a little better. The next Saturday Grand Concert, on the 22nd of July and featured Miss Annie Sinclair, Madame Osborne Williams, Mr. Stedman and Mr. J. L. Wadmore, it was once again disappointingly attended. The Eastbourne Gazette printed on the 26th of July 1876, “*The directors of the Devonshire Park Company have not met with that encouragement that their enterprising spirit merits. The concert given on Saturday, in a*

pecuniary point of view was a failure, the number being quite inadequate to realise the amount necessary to pay expenses. Surely this cannot arise from the non-appreciation of the merits of the artistes that the directors have engaged, or the class of music that has been chosen for their entertainment. The excessive heat of the weather may be pleaded by many as a reason for absence, and therefore militate against the success of these concerts. The directors have altered the night to Friday for the next entertainment, and have also reduced the prices, so as to give every lover of truly good music, a chance of hearing it, and that performed by good artistes.:”

There were two Grand Concerts in August, one on Friday the 4th August, featuring Mademoiselle Risavelli, Miss Harriott Leuscher, Mr. Bernard Lane and Robert Hilton and another on August 12th, once more a Saturday, featuring Madame Edith Wynne, Miss Julia Elton, Mr E. Lloyd, Signor Foli, Mr G.F. Jefferies and Mr. H. Harper. One perhaps can assume that the attendances improved as, at this point the reviewers seem to use their columns to focus more on the quality of the entertainments rather than any lack of attendees. Audience sizes did improve as the year progressed, as did the variety of acts on offer. At the end of August Miss Glyn read Shakespeare and on the 4th of September 1876 the demand for tickets to see Dr. Lynn dismantle and reassemble a living man outstripped demand and people were turned away. Dr. Lynn was known as a Prestigator and Professor of Legerdemain, today perhaps his ‘Palingenesia’ show would fall under the general heading of stage magic. Lynn’s afternoon performance was well attended and the evening performance was the first entertainment to successfully fill the Devonshire Park’s Concert Room, the event being promoted by Thomas Gowland.

The next evening was to witness the first visit to Eastbourne by the Fisk University Jubilee Singers and their show, ‘Service of Song.’ The Singers were comprised of emancipated slaves from the United States and their show featured hymns and melodies as sung by them in their days of slavery. They had originally set out to secure \$20,000 for the impoverished school in which they were students, though after three years of traveling, they had instead returned with \$100 000. During their travels, they had been turned away from hotels and forced out of railway waiting rooms, they had also been received by the American president and by Queen Victoria.



(Above : A view of the Park from Musical Director, Julian Adams' house in 1886. The Thatched Pavilion can be seen to the left of the outer rink. This would, in years to come, be the site of the Indian Pavilion.)

On the western side of the outer rink, a thatched pavilion had been constructed, which provided changing facilities as well as catering areas.

At nine in the morning on the 7th of September 1876, a Police Constable named Pettit climbed up above the changing room and onto a door that had been laid across the rafters. This was to be the first of two days spent here hoping to catch a thief who had been stealing money from cricketers' personal effects.

On this day, Chiswick Cricket club has been in Eastbourne playing the Devonshire Park side. Not long before close of play, Pettit witnessed a cricketer, named George Parsons, enter the changing room. Parsons was a boot maker and professional cricketer who lived at Ealing, and he was in Eastbourne to play cricket for the Chiswick side. Once amongst the clothes rails, Parsons traveled along the rows of hanging garments tapping them, listening for the tell tale clink of coinage. He stopped at one waistcoat belonging to William Francis, who was a medical student living in Lushington Road, Eastbourne. Reaching in, Parsons extracted a shilling and some small change from one of the pockets. He returned the small change, but pocketed the shilling and before resuming his search. At this point, another man entered the room and headed towards the toilet, Parsons, to disguise his enterprise, made a ruse of pretending to undress. When the coast was clear, Parsons resumed his hunting. Pettit then saw Parsons stop and remove a chain watch and some other items from the clothes of a cricketer named Henley, a magistrate from Northamptonshire. But once again, another person approached and Parsons quickly returned all the items to their respective pockets, except for a half sovereign which Pettit believed he saw Parsons deposit into his pocket. It was at this point that Pettit jumped down and made the arrest. In answer to the charges, Parsons claimed that he was merely looking for his own coat and that it resembled the one Pettit saw Parsons searching through. Groundsman Hide was summoned to fetch Henley and Francis and upon their arrival it was ascertained that Henley believed his belongings to be complete and that Francis was indeed missing a Shilling.

When the case went to court a few days later, Pettit's mistaken charge over Henley's half sovereign played against him. It was suggested that if he had been mistaken about that, he could've been mistaken about Francis' Shilling, especially in face of a complete lack of any other evidence. Parson's defence also produced

some stellar character witnesses who declared his character to be beyond reproach. One of these character dissections lasted over an hour. The jury very quickly acquitted Parsons and the case was dismissed.

The national obsession with skating continued into the Autumn of 1876 and on the 18th of October the Eastbourne Gazette printed, *“The rink is now the home of local beauty and graceful amusement, and they must indeed be hard to satisfy who are not content with the use of a capital reading room, the performance of an excellent instrumental band of music, and the pleasure of seeing rinking for the reasonable amount charged for entrance.”* *“While on the subject of rinks, I am told managers are introducing novelties of a grand scale in London. A new floor was “inaugurated” at the City Skating Rink in Moorfields last week. There was a full dress soiree for the skaters, who were attired in gorgeous costumes. Side by side, spinning round on wheels, were Charles the second and Mary Stewart ; Hamlet and Mephistopheles; here a jockey was arm-in-arm with a jester; there rinked Sarah Gamp and a gristte.”* *“Could we not get up something of the City Skating Rink entertainment at Eastbourne? Here is a hint for Mr. Holman.”* Indeed, Fancy dress galas were set to become very popular at Eastbourne’s Rink.



(Above : In about 2020, I found this piece of wood under the Floral Hall stage. Myself and theatre carpenter, Joe Whitten then discovered that it was a kick plate for the skating rink and that it fit perfectly onto the base of the Floral Hall pillars. The roman numerals seen in the left picture denoted which pillar that particular kick plate marked up to. In the right hand picture can be seen a groove, worn by contact with many Victorians wearing Plimpton Skates. This item was handed to the Eastbourne Borough Council Heritage department.)

The Concert Room continued to be well used towards the end of 1876, including a large gathering of the elite, including Lady Fanny Howard, for a performance from Miss Lydia Howard.

A troupe called The Holdfast Bell ringers visited twice in 1876, once in September and again in November. Their well attended show was described by the Eastbourne Herald on the 15th of November as, *“A campanological entertainment, interspersed with vocal and insertional music.”* A late November performance from comic singer “Jolly Nash” was also well patronised.

On December the 6th the Mutual Improvement Society used the venue for their M.I.S.S. Minstrels and Miss Rose Montgomery’s Dramatic Company did fairly well during the week of December 8th with a series of dramas, which featured Buckstone’s Petite drama ‘Good For Nothing’ and the poorly attended Irish drama ‘The Shingawn.’ This was followed by Craven’s ‘Meg’s Diversions,’ and ‘Lady Audley’s Secret.’ The week was concluded with ‘The Weavers’ and ‘East Lynne,’ both of which sold many tickets.

As Christmas neared, a building fundraiser for St. Saviour’s School proved popular on the 21st of December, with three quarters of the room engaged as a reserved seating area. The Eastbourne Gazette printed on

December 27th, “Soon after the opening of the doors, carriage after carriage came up in rapid succession, and by eight o’clock, the time fixed for the commencement of the entertainment, the room was well filled with a fashionable audience. The Platform was tastefully decorated with choice exotics from the nurseries of Messrs Scott & Co. The seating arrangements were well carried out, as were also the orders given by superintendent Newnham for the regulation of carriages.” Newnham was a well known local police officer and was often responsible for traffic management at the park entrance.

On Boxing Day, Thomas Gowland engaged Miss Virginia Blackwood’s Dramatic Company to execute a show that featured Dickens’ ‘David Copperfield’ as well as Gilbert’s ‘Sweethearts’ to a very crowded Concert Room. Thomas Gowland had taken an active part in providing various amusements for the town for many years, often utilising the Diplocks’ Assembly Rooms and the Devonshire Park Concert Room. He was distinguishable by his white spade beard and was known for all year round bathing from the pier, controversially in the nude.

(Right : The seventh Duke of Devonshire, William Cavendish.)



The question of a public recreation ground was raised repeatedly throughout 1876. In December, the Eastbourne Ratepayers association petitioned the Local Board for their help in obtaining a ground. An extract from their meeting minutes illustrates their disappointment with the Devonshire Park, “*Mr. Cable at first understood that the ground now forming Devonshire Park was set apart for the benefit of the town, the management being vested in the local board, but it now appeared to be entirely in the hands of a private company.*’

In April there had been public meetings at the Railway Hotel to consider the question of petitioning the Duke of Devonshire to let, at a low rent, a piece of ground for the uses of cricket and recreation. “*The Devonshire Park not being considered to answer this purpose, by reason of the prices charged for admittance and membership,*” (Eastbourne Gazette 26th of April 1876.) The Duke did eventually offer some land near to the waterworks, but this land was considered to be in such poor condition that the Local Board could not afford to make it of any use.



(Left : Luggage label retrieved from a rotten kit bag found under the Floral Hall stage.)



(Above : A view of the front of the Pavilion, showing the covered entranceway. Hackney carriages would queue on the road to the left and pick up from the covered entrance.)

1877

The atrocious weather of early January 1877 did little to put anyone off attending events in the Concert Room, now increasingly referred to as the Pavilion. There was a good sized audience attending a performance by Miss Virginia Blackwood and The London Company of Artistes, who performed 'New Men And Old Acres,' and also the first Devonshire Park performance of 'Cinderella,' followed by a benefit concert for Virginia Blackwood.

In the Herald of the 20th December 1877 it was announced that a Grand Ball was to be held at Devonshire Park, "*we beg to direct the attention of our readers to an announcement which appears in our advertising columns, of a grand ball which is to take place in the Devonshire Park hall on the 9th January. This Ball is not limited to any class in the community, the object being to draw together the upper and trading classes in social concourse at this season of goodwill.*" The Ball was organised by Captain Thomas Holman and there was hope for it to become an annual fixture in the future. It perhaps served as an attempt to address complaints that the Devonshire park was only accessible to the higher classes.

The Grand Ball was held in the Pavilion on the 9th January, with the room being laid out for dancing with chairs placed around the outside of the room. The scenery was removed from the stage and the band, who were Gates' Celebrated Band from Brighton, performed surrounded by ferns and other evergreens, supplied by Scott of the Ceylon Nurseries. All the Corridors and stairs were covered in red baize and the Reading Room served as a tea, coffee and light refreshment room. Ladies' and Gentleman's Cloak rooms were set apart on each side of the ball room entrance and downstairs, the Skating Rink was turned into a supper room with tropical and other plants in abundance. The pillars of the Floral Hall were ornamented with evergreens, double festooned with flowers and even more evergreens trailed between each pillar. The Rink floor itself was covered in red baize and white felt, and the outside Rink end, could be found tropical and foliage plant varieties, which were displayed in two rows of large pots. Under the minstrels gallery were situated tables for

the use of meat carvers, and fifty tables, for the use of the guests, were placed around the Rink floor, each of these decorated with pot plants, fruits and various sweets. Mr. W. Leach of Grand Parade Library provided artistically elaborate tickets, menu cards and programmes and the list of Stewards contained many local people of influence, including the Wallis Brothers, Robert Insoll, Mr. and Mrs. Holman, Mr. and Mrs. Lady Howard, Dr. Hayman, J.C. Towner, Henry Evenden and Mr & Mrs. Peerless.

The Ball was heralded as a success, although it was when people attempted to leave that there would be problems.

Police Superintendent Newnham had left instructions with Sergeant Self, PC William Bourne and PC Tullett as to how the Hackney Carriages outside the venue were to be managed. The carriages were to be organised into one rank, and ushered forward by a Police Constable for the purpose of picking up the guests as they left. At around 01:30 am, Mr. Charles Bradford, a Hackney Carriage Proprietor of 11 Susans Road, found that he didn't agree with Newnham's traffic control system resulting in an argument between Charles Bradford and Sergeant Self. Bradford didn't believe that the Police had any jurisdiction over the supposed private road at the front of the Devonshire Park, so Bradford ordered his seven or eight carriages, out of Self's rank and had them form a second rank. Bradford was reported as saying, *"I will have a double rank; my drivers shall not be under the control of a (.....) policeman. This is a private road, you attend to your public ones,"* to which Sergeant Self replied, *"This is a public place, and the carriage regulations at these times must be under the control of the police."* Sergeant Self then prepared to take the numbers off of Bradford's carriages, but before he could do so, Bradford's son, under instruction from his father, had removed the numbers himself. Bradford then told his carriages to pick up customers from the pavement directly in front of the archway, which as a consequence caused obstruction to any carriages trying to exit the arches. One fly driver, John Martin, claimed one of his customers was poached by one Bradford's drivers. Charles Bradford was later fined 20 Shillings with a further 51 Shillings costs for obstructing Sergeant Self in his duty as an inspector of Hackney Carriages.

1877 was to prove a busy year for the Concert room, with many bookings. In February 1877, there was a benefit for distressed Wallsend (Pevensey Bay) Coastguardsmen in the Concert Room, but alas it was not greatly supported and the promoters ended up £5 out of pocket.

The end of February saw Thomas Gowland book Bullock's Royal Marionettes to appear. This was a puppet show that probably involved the audience as The Eastbourne Herald printed the following on the 29th February 1877 in its letters pages : *"We have received another letter signed "A Visitor" from a gentleman residing in Pevensey road, complaining of irregularity, and unfair treatment, at the Marionette's entertainment at the Devonshire Pavilion, but on account of the great pressure on our space we are compelled to omit inserting it."*

The first two weeks of March saw the Concert Room or Pavilion close for alterations and improvements. Scheduling was resumed with the first public practice of the Eastbourne Choral society on the 15th of March. These public practises were usually very well attended and occurred often. The April the 20th public practice saw 'Les Huguenots' feature Elizabeth Evenden and there was also a duet between Mr.Coles (possibly Percival) and Miss Carlisle. This was followed by a performance of 'The Bear Hunt' by Mr. Welch, a member of the Local Board. There were two more Spring practices at the end of May and then two more in the Autumn, the December practice featured selections from 'The Messiah.'

In early April Harry Templeton's Minstrels were in the Pavilion for two nights. Templeton was known for minstrelism and later burlesque opera.

On the 24th April, a fundraiser for the St. Saviours School building project. These fundraisers were fairly common, and would feature musical acts, lectures or comedy, with the intention to raise money for various building projects throughout the town.

On the 5th of June 1877 there was a fundraiser for All Saints Church, which comprised of a vocal and instrumental concert directed by J.H. Deane who was the organist at Trinity church.

May 7th till May 12th saw Miss Grace Armytage's Comic Opera in residence in the Pavilion, they were a comedy and burlesque company. It was reported that attendances were not great in the earlier part of the run. Three days later on the 15th of May, Herr Adalbert Frikell was booked by Thomas Gowland to appear for two days. Frikell was a professor of Legerdemain and his performance was titled, 'Extraordinary Fantastical Deceptions, Manipulations of Ancient and Modern Miracles, and Marvellous Metamorphoses.' This type of entertainment was very popular in this period, in fact, Dr. Lynn, who had been very successful at the Devonshire Park the year before, returned to the Pavilion from India on the third of August, "*his entertainment is so startling, and withal performed with so few adjustments that it is extremely difficult to believe that he is not in league with his satanic majesty,*" printed an Eastbourne Herald reviewer.

On the 18th of May the Fisk Jubilee Singers returned for a repeat engagement. On the 12th of June, there was a certificate and award distribution event for Cambridge University Local Exams of which, Captain Holman, Rev. T. Pitman, H.R. Whelpton, F.W.H. Cavendish were members of the committee. The next day on the 13th there was a Church of England Temperance Society Meeting in the Pavilion at which Robert Insoll was present. The Temperance movement was strong in Eastbourne at this time and it caused more than a few bumps in the road in regards to licensing. In the Devonshire Park there were separate 'Temperance Refreshment Tent' on some occasions.

Another well known 'Magician' to visit was Professor Pepper. Pepper was booked by Leach for three days on the 28th, 29th, 30th August 1877 to perform his "Mirrors by the ancient magicians." Pepper became famous for developing a technique to create illusions by utilising mirrors, known as 'Pepper's Ghost' and is still a technique used to this day. Professor Pepper returned to the Pavilion for three days in October for his 'Experiments In Vibratory Motion and Optical Wonders' which drew very large audiences.

As August moved along, the entertainments in the Pavilion began to pick up in frequency. On the tenth, Gowland booked the Royal Osborn Hand Bell Ringers for the first of two visits for 1877, the next visit being Boxing Day. Then on the 15th of August there was Miss Ada Cavendish in Wilkie Collins' 'The New Magdalen.' Wilkie Collins was a popular author of the era. Two days after this, Leach booked Mr. Fletcher Norton's 'Picnic Portraits' on the 17th and 18th. Two days after that, Mrs. Howard Paul performed in 'By Return of Post,' 'Arabella and Alatheia' and 'A Very Cross Examination:' which attracted large and enthusiastic audiences. In no danger of being out done, Thomas Gowland booked J.L. Toole and Company which resulted in the Pavilion being very crowded.

About this same time, the Devonshire Park Pavilion obtained a licence for a further twelve months of stage plays.

Next, was a visit by the very famous Mr. Vance on the 31st, another coup for Thomas Gowland, who seemed to be unstoppable in his programming. In September he booked Miss Nigella Davenport from the academies of music in New York City and Miss Leila Dillion. On the first of October, he booked Wallace Roberts' and Charles Archer's Dramatic Company to the Pavilion for a series of short plays, with a return visit planned for December. This was the beginning of a long association with Eastbourne for Wallace Roberts, he eventually became manager of the Theatre Royal (Hippodrome) in Seaside Road. In fact, Wallace Roberts was to pass away while working at the Theatre Royal, contracting septicaemia from a cut to his hand, sustained whilst making a sandwich.

Autumn 1877 featured a few firsts in the Pavilion, a first booking for M. B. Clift of M.B. Clift Pianoforte Saloons of 4 Gildredge Road. Clift obtained a large audience for his programming of Madame Arabella Goddard's Pianoforte recital on the 17th of September. She was a pupil of Thalberg and the assembled audience much enjoyed the concert.

On the 8th of October the Pavilion hosted a concert by pupils of the Wilberforce school for the blind from York. Henry Robert Whelpton was in attendance as was the Archbishop of York and the Duke of Devonshire. The next day on the 10th of October, George Grossmith, the comic lecturer returned for his second visit of

the season. George Grossmith was very popular in Eastbourne and visited many times, performing in venues ranging from Diplocks, to the Devonshire Park and the Town Hall.

The rest of the Park also had a good year in 1877. In the summer the Brothers Lane had attracted large audiences in the downstairs rink with skating demonstrations, and out in the Park, cricket was being played to a high standard by the Devonshire Park Cricket Club. Over the course of the 1877 Season the Devonshire Park Cricket Club played thirty fixtures, winning 20 and only losing four, one of the four draws being against the East Sussex team.



(Above : The Bicycle Club Sports prize giving, 1885.)

The first Annual Bicycle club sports was held on the 10th of August 1877 with musical services supplied by Gate's Celebrated Band. This was the first time an exclusive cycling event was ever held in the Park and it proved to be very popular. Cycling was fast becoming the next big spectator sport after pedestrianism and skating.

On the 22nd of August 1877 it was the return of the Annual Athletic Sports, with an estimated 8 to 10,000 spectators present. It was a good sunny day accompanied by both, Weippert's Town and Pier Band and the the Devonshire Park Band. This year, the winner of the cricket ball throwing was G. Ford who threw the ball 113 3/4 yards.

On the tenth of October the Eastbourne Gazette reprinted an article first printed in a publication called 'Truth.' The article, edited by Mr. Labbouchere was entitled, "Letters From Lazy land" and it contained a nice description of a visit to the Devonshire Park:

"Picture a glass palace festooned with flowers in the middle of a slippery surface, covered with skating girls, and all round a conversational circle of pleasant people looking on and drinking tea. Conceive the

possibility of opening the glass doors of the skating conservatory and walking out upon a model cricket field, planted with shrubs and as well ordered as Prince's. Think how jolly it would be to pass from the cricket field, by garden walks, to select and silent lawns, where all day long that prince of games, lawn tennis, is carried on without intermission. Dot in here and there sly shrubberies, cosy Pavilions, umbrella tents, lounging chairs, and shaded arbours, and then you have an idea how an afternoon can be spent at Eastbourne. Skating there is under the glass roof or away round the open-air rink among the flowers; cricket there is every afternoon in the summer months, and the best cricket in the county, the lawn tennis nets are never free, and from Devonshire Park the idlers are never absent." "But if Devonshire Park is merry by day, how gay and exhilarating it can be at night. The conservatory is brilliantly lighted, the skaters are whirling upon wheels the musicians overhead are reminding us of the everlasting "Sweethearts;" upstairs in the admirable theatre, Mr. J. L. Toole is making the people roar with laughter, or a suitable entertainment is going merrily, thanks to the Grossmiths - clever father and versatile son - and outside is the delicious garden, there is a hunters' moon under whose cold rays the skaters pass like ghosts upon a floor of unearthly white. I have seen many pretty scenes in my life, but none so strange as this Eastbourne Park, and its surrounding gardens, standing out in the autumn moonlight."



Mid way through October 1877, Captain Holman made a surprising addition to the ticketing policy. He announced that in the future, dogs would be required to wear a lead and to pay the same six pence entrance fee as human visitors. This legislation was issued as a consequence of dogs chasing skaters, barking, and generally making a nuisance of themselves throughout the Park.

On the 24th of October a post box was installed at the entrance to the Rink, being located to the right of the covered entryway arch. People could now purchase and send post-cards from the the Devonshire Park, these could be stamped at a counter located just within the entrance. In 1882 a new branch post office was opened at the Devonshire Park entrance, the need of which had been felt for some time in the locality. This was to be short lived however and removed a few years later in an attempt to improve access to the building.



(Left : A rare Devonshire Park postal stamp.)

On the 18th of October 1877, the Duke of Devonshire's architect, surveyor and predecessor of both Robert Insoll and G.A. Wallis, James Berry died. Berry had been born at Lewes on February 29th 1796, a leap year, which afforded him a birthday only once in every four years. He became county Surveyor at a young age and was recommended to the Earl of Burlington (The Duke of Devonshire) by J. And W. Simpson in about 1847. During this time Berry had designed the first block of the Grand parade, Cavendish and Victoria Places, and along as far as the Wish Tower. He also drew up the first plans for the New Town, plans which, in the end, were mostly superseded by plans drawn up by the Earl's

London agents. Berry resigned his position in 1870 upon the death of his wife, living out the rest of his days with his son in Newhaven.

At 3pm on the 19th October 1877, the first Promenade Concert was held on the indoor Skating Rink. Well attended and successful, the event featured Mr. Gates' Band, Miss Kate Leipold and Signor Alfonso Seneca. For the occasion, the Rink was covered in a huge crimson cloth, the orchestra, surrounded by plants, being placed at one end of the rink. There were two more of these promenade concerts held in the Autumn of 1877, the second being held on the 26th of October and featured the band of the 20th Hussars with Mr. J.S. Lee in the role of conductor. The audience was large and composed mainly of the elite of Eastbourne. The third in the series was held on the 2nd of November and Miss Maud Woodcock and Mr. G. J. Larkner held top billing.

There were other military themed events introduced in 1877. At the end of October, the Eastbourne Mutual Improvement Society held a Grand Assault At Arms in the Pavilion, also featuring the 20th Hussars, it comprised of Sword exercises and weapon demos.

The Mutual Improvement Society also held an event that featured the Mutual Improvement Society Minstrels, featuring 'The Laughable Ethiopian Sketch', featuring singing and various varieties.

Rinking was still popular, and on the 15th, 16th, 17th November 1877 there appeared the "Star" skaters, which were the Brothers Lane figure skaters and bicyclists, who had previously visited the rink in

June. Eastbourne Herald had this to say, *"On Thursday, Friday and Saturday last, the Brothers Lane, the accomplished and renowned skating artistes, exhibited several of their marvellous feats. Their evolutions are certainly wonderful, and great praise must be given to the directorate, for this endeavour they have made, to amuse as well as instruct those of their patrons, who pride themselves on the acquisition of this graceful and pleasing art. There was a large and appreciative audience at each of the performances that were announced by the Brothers' Lane, "The Star Skaters," and no doubt the returns made were satisfactory to the directors."*



In mid December there was a demonstration of the Telephone at Brighton Aquarium, and there was an intention of connecting the Eastbourne and Brighton skating rinks via the existing telegraph lines. This didn't happen, but on the eleventh of December 1877, courtesy of Mr. Volk, the telephone was exhibited at the Devonshire Park rink. One piece of the apparatus was placed at the far end of the rink while the other was located upstairs in the reading room, linked via cables. The Eastbourne Gazette published an account on the twelfth of December 1878: *"The apparatus appears to consist of two mahogany boxes, about twelve inches in length and six inches in height and depth, the narrowest sides being the front and back. In the centre of the front is inserted a mouth piece similar to those used for ordinary speaking tubes, and at the bottom of the further side two copper wires covered with gutta-percha are attached."*

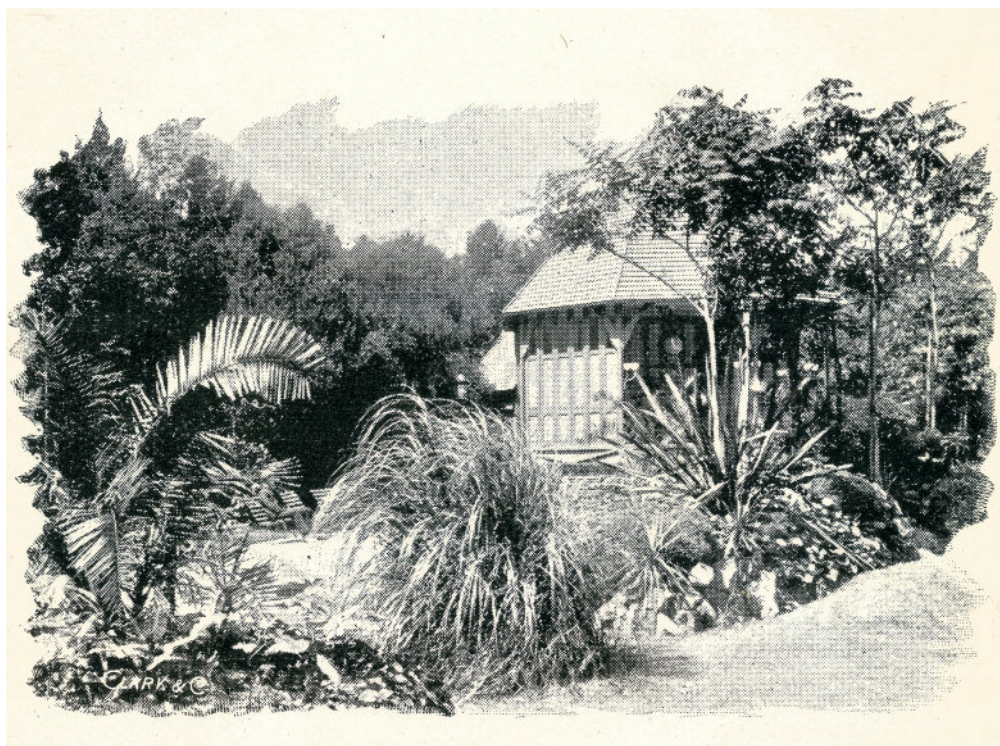
Unfortunately during the test the Rink was in use, complete with a band, this greatly hampered any useful results, although, on the 18th of December 1877 the Sussex Agricultural Express printed: *"Telephone - The powers of this wonderful instrument have been tested at the Devonshire Park during this past week. Two mahogany boxes with mouth pieces attached, have been fitted up with a considerable space intervening, connection between the two being brought about by a wire. Sounds appear to be conveyed with great facility."* The following year the first domestic telephone use occurred in Eastbourne, between a house in Seaside Road belonging to Mr. Ryder and a house 400 yards away in Cavendish place where Mr. S. Bretton lived.

1878

1878 was the year that the Devonshire Park and indeed Eastbourne really came to the attention of the elite, with many well known visitors, such as the Grand Duke and Duchess of Hess-Darmstadt, who spent eight weeks in the town over that summer and were frequent visitors to the Devonshire Park during their stay. The Grand Duchess of Hess, known in Great Britain as Princess Alice was Queen Victoria's second daughter and a very popular public figure. There would be great sadness when on the 14th December 1878, Princess Alice succumbed to Diphtheria. Eastbourne felt her loss greatly, and funds were raised locally to build the Princess Alice hospital, which was dedicated to her memory.

In August 1878 it was reported that the Grand Duke of Hess, The Duke of Abercorn, Lord Edward Cavendish, Baron Knesbech and the daughter of the Earl of Durham, Lady Lambton, be seen playing lawn tennis in the Devonshire Park. Previously, in July 1878, the German Royal family had visited the Skating Rink, which had been reported in the Eastbourne Gazette on the 10th of July 1878, *"On Friday afternoon, the imperial Royal Family paid a visit to the Skating Rink at Devonshire Park. Early in the morning workmen were busily engaged making preparations for the visit of the royal children, and the rink certainly presented a very tasteful and pretty appearance. Red cloth was laid from the entrance door-way to a raised dais at the west end of the rink. On the the dais, which was also covered with red cloth, were placed seats for the royal party and their attendants. On and around the front of the dais were placed some rare exotic and beautiful flowering plants, and the entrance doorway to the dais was similarly ornamented. At half-past three o'clock the Imperial Royal family arrived, and were conducted by Captain Holman to their seats. Mr. Harry Lillywhite and his daughter, Miss Lottie Lillywhite then entered the rink and performed some astonishing and graceful feats of skating. The royal children expressed their approbation of the skill of the artistes by frequent plaudits. After the performance on the rink the royal party took a walk in the grounds, and soon*

after walked to Highcliffe House, to visit the Grand Duke and Duchess of Hesse."



(Left : The Music Garden.)

Later that month the Devonshire Park Company introduced what it called "Garden Concerts," these were a series

of concerts held in the the Music Garden, which was located on the western side of the Park.

The first of these concerts was inaugurated by Princess Alice, The Grand Duchess of Hess-Darmstadt. The Gazette published an account of it on the 24th of July 1878, *"Monday night with propriety be numbered among the chief red letter days of Devonshire Park. The day was extremely fine and the gardens arrayed in their most superb and brightest mantles. In whatever direction the eye turned there could be seen the most*

exquisite coloured flowers or beautiful tints of green from the varied foliaged trees or grasses. Within the past three weeks the directorate have determined to provide during the summer months for their patrons, open air Orchestral Concerts of the best description, and to further their purpose a piece of ground was selected at the North-west end of the cricket pavilion about 150 feet long by 100 feet in width. On this spot has been erected a commodious octagonal shaped orchestra 18 feet across, which is surrounded with broad gravelled paths, relieved with tastefully designed and arranged parterres containing beautiful flowering plants. Around the outer walks are arranged an almost continuous line of seats, and an immense number of chairs for the accommodation and comfort of those attending these entertainments. The band engaged for these concerts consist of twenty two members selected from the Royal Italian Opera, Her Majesty's Theatre, the Philharmonic Society, etc, and under the direction of Mr. E. Stanton Jones... ”



(Left : An Orchestra plays. Photograph by G & R Lavis, Copyright Eastbourne Borough Council.)

“The first of these concerts having been announced to take place on Monday, and Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess of Hess-Darmstadt (the Princess Alice of England) having graciously condescended to imitate her intention of being present, the Directors determined that everything should be done that would give additional interest to the occasion, and engaged the services of the magnificent Band of the Grenadier Guards, under the masterly conductorship of Mr. Dan Godfrey. Under some trees - in close proximity to the end of the cricket pavilion - which formed a shady alcove, was erected a platform , fourteen inches high, and about twenty feet square. This was draped with red cloth, on which were placed chairs for the royal party. It was splendidly ornamented with a background of ferns, palms, and fine foliage plants ; while at the sides and frontier arranged fancy tables, on which were placed splendid bouquets of the choicest flowers. About eighty feet westward from the front of this dais was another slightly raised spacious platform, which was also draped with red cloth, for the use of the Guards Band. On the right side of the dais was a raised mound, on which was placed some seats for the accommodation of the Directors, their friends, and some elite of the town ; while fronting the dais, on the level ground and surrounding mounds, were placed innumerable seats for the accommodation of subscribers and the public. Shortly before four o'clock, the time fixed for the opening of the concert, the Band of the Grenadier Guards took their places upon the platform, and the seats commanding a view of the dais were filled. At twenty minutes past four the Royal party were observed to enter the grounds by the lodge entrance at the end of Compton Street. They were met at the entrance by Mr. R. Insoll, the Chairman of the Company, and his fellow Directors, with Captain T. Holman, the indefatigable

manager. As the Royal party crossed the Park from the upper terrace, they entered freely into conversation with Mr. Insoll and the other Directors, making some enquiry pertaining to the Park and its management. When they came in view of the Guards Band, it immediately struck up the National Anthem, at the first notes of which the assembled thousands stood up to receive with appropriate honour their Royal Highnesses. As the procession passed through the long lines of spectators, the Grand Duke and Duchess frequently and gracefully acknowledged the courtesy paid to them. Upon arriving at the dais, they cordially shook hands with His Grace the Duke of Devonshire, Lord George and Lady Cavendish, Lady Fanny Howard, the Marquis and Marchioness of Lothian, the Countess de Noilles, Mr. Henry Brand, and Mr. Foljamb. The Grand Duchess took her seat at the centre of the dais, The Grand Duke and the Royal children sitting on her right hand. On the left of the



Duchess, the Duke of Devonshire and Lady Fanny Howard (with whom Her Royal Highness freely conversed) occupied seats. One taking her seat, the Grand Duchess was presented with a copy of the programme printed on white satin in letters of gold, with a blue and gold border. The Guards Band having concluded their rendering of the National Anthem, the refrain was taken up by the Park Band, the company still remaining, until its conclusion, standing, and the gentlemen uncovered. The programme was opened by the performance of the overture to Zampa, by the Guards Band, after which each Band played alternate pieces. At a few minutes to six, their Royal Highnesses and suite, after having honoured the company with their attendance for nearly two hours retired, but before doing so, expressed to Mr. Insoll the pleasure they had derived from their visit, and thanked him for the kind and courteous attention that had been paid to them. The Royal party left the Park by the same route as they entered." "Her Royal Highness wore a cream-coloured costume, trimmed with ecru, and a white hat. The princesses were attired in white and pink costumes, and the young prince in a sailor's suit." "The Directors announce that these concerts will be given twice daily, at 4 p.m., and 7:30 p.m., during the season in the open grounds ; if the weather is unpropitious they will be given in the Floral Hall, where a new orchestra to accommodate the increased numbers of performers has been erected. They have also announced that holders of summer special season tickets will be admitted free to the evening concerts. The portion of the park in which the evening concerts are held, will, at dusk, be brilliantly illuminated. The number of persons present at the concerts on Monday afternoon and evening is estimated at nearly five thousand."

The Devonshire Park Band, under the direction of E. Stanton Jones, proved so popular that the Devonshire Park Directors were forced to consider extending their engagement for two weeks after the agreed termination of their contract. There was the case of one gentleman who stayed in a hotel for three months purely to enjoy the Park's entertainments.

The Concert Room was advertised in 1878 as, "The Theatre Royal, The Pavilion, Devonshire Park," its third name change in as many years, perhaps due to the many royal visitors who were now visiting the site. It becomes even more confusing when on occasion the Rink Room downstairs begins to be referred to as The Concert Room.

It wasn't all Royals and Dukes to concern the Devonshire Park Company in 1878, as up at the Wish people had noticed a pipe extending from the beach into sea. This pipe was causing a degree of worry as it was assumed that the pipe's purpose was the conveyance of sewerage. Consequently, in January, the Devonshire Park Company asked the Local Board for permission to erect a sign above the beach informing people of the pipe's real purpose, which was in fact the sea water inlet for supplying waterier to the Baths. There were to be further problems with the Bath's sea water intake pipe later in the decade. A man named Mr. Harwood, who while sea swimming near the pipe, suddenly found himself being sucked into a deep pool of water from which he had trouble escaping. In a letter to the Local Board he said that "*he did not know whether the Baths engine was drawing off the water or not, but he had all his work as an expert swimmer to extricate himself.*"

January 22nd 1878 saw the occurrence of the second annual Town Ball, although this year there was no reports of conflict between Hackney Carriage drivers and Police officers. In fact it seemed very much a repeat of the previous year and indeed the Gazette report of the 23rd Jan 1878 could almost be mistaken for describing the same event: "*Last (Tuesday) evening, this ball, which might truthfully be called the ball of the season, took place at Devonshire park Pavilion. The entrance hall leading to the ball room was prettily drooped with red cloth, and the room presented to the sight on entrance a beautiful appearance. The smooth polished parquet flooring, the vast amount of space and the splendid floral decorations, carried out under the personal superintendence of Mr. Scott and Co., of Ceylon Nurseries, rendered this beautiful room a perfect picture, extremely pleasing to the eye of the beholder. On looking towards the platform, among some fine foliage plants of choice and rare descriptions, by which it was ornamented, appeared two splendid specimens of ferns, namely, a Lalini Bordonica and a Corphus Australis. On the slabs at the sides of the room were foliage plants of several varieties, with a beautiful edging of green. Produced by a number of plants, Tvolepsis Gracilis. Festoons of evergreens adorned the upper part of the walls, and wreaths and stars, composed of evergreens and holly, completed the ornamentation of the room. Near the entrance hall, rooms were set aside as cloak rooms, and the reading room was appropriated to the service of tea, coffee and other light refreshments. The skating rink was, for the occasion, transformed into a supper room. The flooring was covered with red baize, festoons of evergreens adorned the sides of the upper portion of the light iron work supporting the expansive roof, while round the numerous pillars were entwined wreaths of evergreens, the upper portion of the column being adorned with red-berry holly. The tables, six in number, were adorned with flowering table plants, while fine foliage, and tropical plants of almost every known variety, completed the ornamentation of the room. The cuisine, which was of the most recherché description, was supplied by Mrs. Freeland of the Devonshire Park restaurant, and the arrangements made for the supply of creature comforts to the visitors, reflected the greatest credit on all parties concerned, as well showing forth the unrivalled resources of the establishment. The corridors, passages, and stairs throughout the portion of the building used during the evening, were all covered with red cloth, giving the place a warm and genial appearance. The menus, programmes, and tickets, which were of pretty and appropriate designs, were supplied by Mr. W. Leach of the Grand-parade.*

Shortly after nine o'clock the company began to arrive, and a little after ten o'clock to the delightful strains of Gates' band, dancing was commenced. The Pavilion now presented an extremely pretty appearance, the varied coloured dresses of the ladies as they whirled in the mazy dance considerably enhanced the beautiful decorations of the room....." "*Dancing was kept up with great spirit until a little after twelve o'clock, when an adjournment to the supper tables took place. The necessary refreshments having been partaken of, the company returned to the ball-room, where dancing was resumed with unabated vigour until the programme was concluded. At an early hour in the morning the company separated, highly delighted with the pleasurable evening they had spent.*"

1878 saw trouble in the Baths from less than sober patrons, namely three men by the names of Bruce Wilson of Hurst and Co Brewery, Meynell Collyer a Gentleman and a man called Bennett, who appeared to be a member of the Clergy. On the 22nd of July, the three men entered the baths at about four thirty and were issued with towels and paraphernalia by a thirteen year old bath attendant named Henry John Barber. The



three men proceeded to bathe with Bennett being the first to egress and proceeding to dress. After dressing, Bennett hid Collyer's hat under his coat and left the Bath, returning a few moments later. While dressing Collyer noticed that his hat was missing and called to Barber, the Attendant, and asked him if he knew where his hat had gone, to which Barber replied that he did not. Collyer then seized Barber by the collar and dragged him out of his box asking him again as to the location of his hat. He then called to Wilson and said, "Let's lob him in!" Collyer then asked Barber as to whether he could swim to which Barber replied that he could not.

Grabbing him by the collar and the leg, Collyer threw Barber into the 6 foot deep area of the bath and then ran off laughing with his companions. A private bath attendant named John Pierce saw the men run out of the baths and into the waiting room. It turned out that Barber could actually swim a little and had managed, with assistance from staff member Thomas Foster, to get himself, scared and crying, out of the bath. As a consequence of his actions Collyer was to receive one month in a correctional facility with hard labour.

(Above - Looking down Carlisle Road. Notice the absence of today's shops, these were added, along with the shops across the road in the 1880's. Photograph by G & R Lavis, Copyright Eastbourne Borough Council.)

By this point the Baths was in its fourth year, The Gazette visited and published a new description, which was published on the 10th of July 1878:

"The tall red brick tower of the Devonshire Baths forms a prominent feature in the landscape at the western extremity of the Grand Parade, and honours are divided between it and the Wish Tower as landmarks to strangers visiting Eastbourne. Excepting this tower and the quaint little cottage near, in which the manager lives, the exterior of the Devonshire Baths presents no striking feature, for the long low glass roof is unromantic in the extreme, and the brick wall on the Carlisle road is rather a dull affair in spite of its golden letters. But the interior presents a very different aspect. There you can indulge your propensity for a swim in the swimming bath, which is one of the largest in the Kingdom, or you can have a hot bath, a cold bath, a vapour bath, a sea water bath, a fresh water bath, a shower bath, or in fact almost any kind of bath...." "In it you can indulge in a plunge in a miniature lake, calm as a duck pond, while a storm may be raging outside, and listen to the rain falling on the the arched glass roof..." "For the sum of 1 Shilling bathers are admitted to the swimming baths, a delightful pond 160 feet long by 30 feet broad, varying in depth from four to six and a half feet, around which runs a platform with dressing rooms for the accommodation of 70 bathers, in the rooms a curtain shuts off communication with other bathers while one is undressing...." "The dressing rooms, 70 in number, are fitted with seats and clothes pegs, to say nothing of the looking glass and brush and comb, which with towels, afford a finishing touch after emerging from the water. Another swimming bath 120 feet by 30 is dedicated to the use of ladies and affords an even greater degree of privacy to its patrons than other forms of sea baths. In addition to there cold swimming baths, there are shower and douche baths for those who have a predilection for hydropathy in that form ; or hot baths of salt or fresh water, or vapour in which immersion can be almost unconsciously enjoyed. The gentleman's swimming bath is quite unique, for its one of the largest sea baths in the kingdom and apart from the pleasure to be derived from bathing there, the establishment is worthy of a visit as a novelty, and the courteous attendants are always willing to explain the different forms of bathing to visitors"

The Gazette also published its observations of the Skating Rink on the 3rd of July 1878 :

“The Eastbourne Rink is undoubtedly one of the prettiest in this district both as regards its structure and surroundings. In shape it may be described as an oval-parallelgram, and being built of glass, it has always a bright, cheerful and fairy-like aspect. In the day-time even for those who prefer the covered to the outdoor rink, there is the delightful view of the beautiful grounds of Devonshire Park, the shrubs, flowers, and lawns of which are now in splendid luxuriance. The management is all that can be desired, the greatest order and decorum being constantly observed, while the attendants are civil and obliging. It must be admitted that rinking is a healthful and pleasurable exercise for the human frame, and one decided attraction is, that both ladies and gentlemen can indulge in the amusement, thus affording an opportunity for social intercourse, at the same time bringing functions, both of mind and body, in to play. The important qualities of skill and dexterity are developed in a remarkable manner, so that the lesson learnt on the rink may prove a valuable aid to a man or woman in many an emergency in after life. There is an ample fund of incidents to amuse those who chose to spend an hour in this pleasant miniature Crystal Palace, as mere spectators. Watch the tyro, as the first effort is made to balance the body on these treacherous rollers! Be it one of the gentler sex, she will proceed cautiously and carefully along the side of the rink, holding on to the ropes which are beneficially placed down each exterior for the use of beginners.....” “I would suggest to the directors of the Company that it is time the floor was over-hauled, many parts being rough and broken, but this is a slight matter which will be easily remedied.”

The floor was to be replaced many times in the future and the metal rings that held the ropes that beginner skaters would use to guide themselves can still be seen (at the time of writing) on the outside edge of the pillars at the East end of the Floral Hall.

In late December 1878, Captain Holman came up with the idea of flooding the outside rink, thus creating an ice skating rink, this was to be repeated on other occasions in the future when conditions allowed. It involved banking the rink with clay and then flooding the skating area, all of which demanded a great deal of effort and expense. The Sussex Advertiser approved of the enterprise and described its success on the 31st December 1878: *“The idea conceived some time ago of flooding the outside rink at the Devonshire Park, at great trouble and expense, was carried into effect during the late frost. The votaries of skating for a few days enjoyed some excellent sport on a fine sheet of ice.”*

Exhibition skaters were still proving to be a big draw throughout the year as were visits from The Royal Western Skaters, The Brothers Lane and the Lilywhites. There was also a “Grand Bicycle Feat” for a week at the end of January and beginning of February, which featured Americans, Mr. And Miss Carrie Moore.



The now annual Athletic Sports was held in August 1878 and the second annual Bicycle Club Sports had been held in July 1878. There was said to be three to four thousand spectators at the Bicycle Club Sports, Captain Holman serving as judge and Lady Fanny Howard's daughter, the prize giver. It had been a hot summer and the ground was rough, though this did not hinder any of the outside sports or concerts. The September tennis tournament was won by G.E. Brakespeare and Mr. E. G. Coalville and the cricket Season went ahead after an opening match against The Old Eastbournians.

(Photograph from the previous page : An early view of tennis in the Devonshire Park by G & R Lavis. Copyright Eastbourne Borough Council.)

1879

1879 was to be a big musical year in the Devonshire Park, with the Directors making the decision to engage the well regarded pianist and conductor, Julian Adams as their musical director commencing from June 1879. Julian Adams was born in London in 1825, and was trained as a musician in his early years by Moscheles, later moving to Paris to complete his training as a pianist. Adams returned to England in 1848 after the outbreak of the February Revolution in France, and began conducting orchestras all over the country from Edinburgh to London. He was considered to be a pioneer of the Harmonium, an instrument invented by Debain, who requested that Adams demonstrate the instrument at the 1855 Paris exhibition to an audience comprising of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and the Emperor Napoleon. After the concert Debain presented Adams with the Harmonium that he had demonstrated. In 1870, Adams was engaged to play at Buxton, another of the Duke of Devonshire's estates, which made it a fairly natural assumption that he could eventually be engaged at Devonshire Park. Adams was known for having a magnificent memory for the pieces he performed, and his ability to infuse his energy into an orchestra was highly regarded though, sometimes controversial among those of a more conservative nature. Adams would often become very animated while performing and inspired his musicians to do the same, with laughing and conversations between the musicians.

Initially the line up of Julian Adams' Devonshire Park orchestra was :



Violins and violas - Mr. C. Hayes, Mr. Richardson, Mr. Howard,
Mr. Haley, Mr. J. Dally, Mr. Abbott, Mr. Page.

Basses - T. Turner, A. Knight, Grosse Jnr., Whiteside.

Flute - Hayes

Oboe - Van Den Berg

Clarionets - H. Grosse, Windscheffel.

Cornet a pistons - Richardson, De Banzie

Horns - T. Reynolds, Praton

Bassoon - Monsieur Lanlade

Euphorium - T. Blamplin

Trombone - o'brien

Drums - weaver

Harp - H. Blamptin.

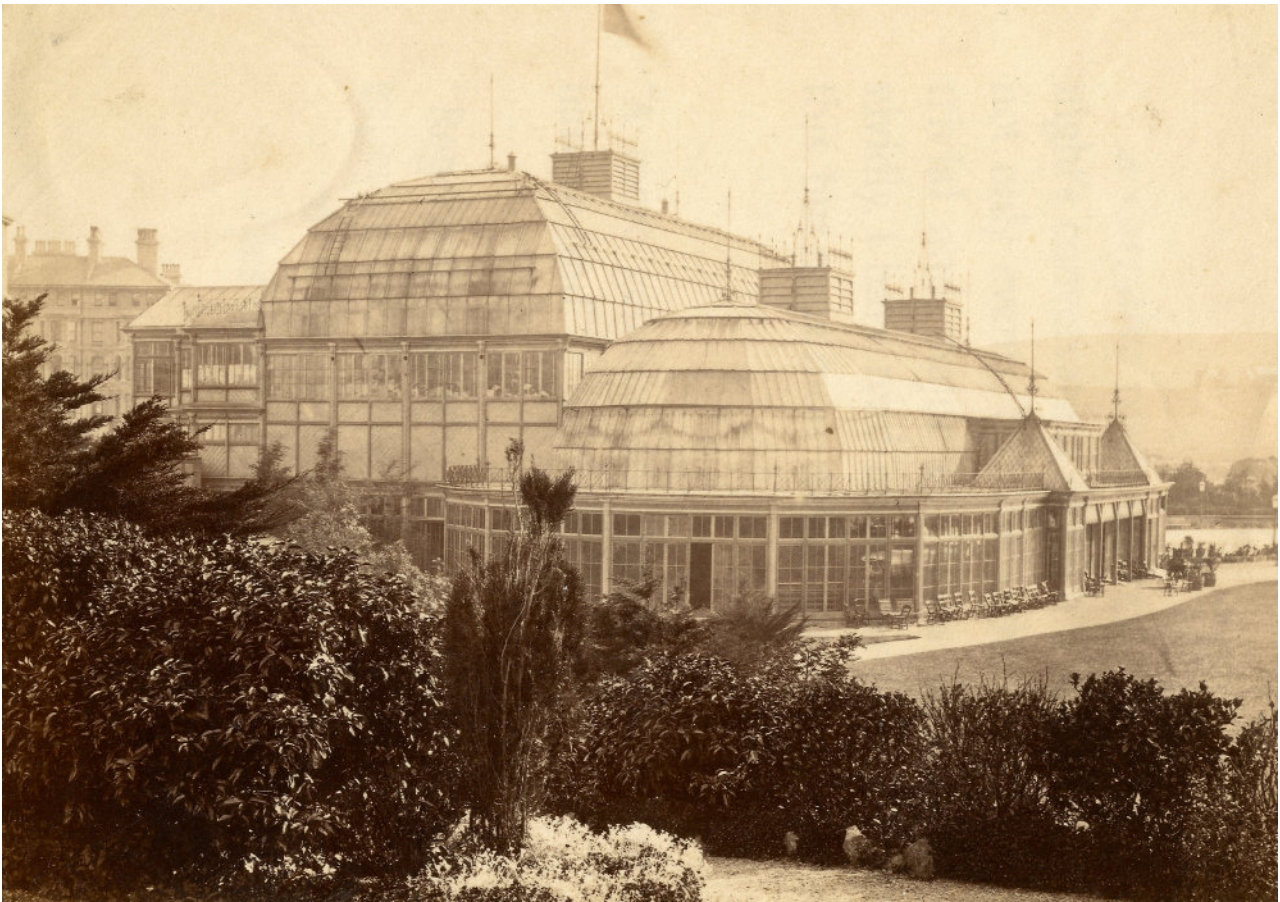
(Above : Julian Adams)

In early July 1879, The Buxton Improvement Company, managed to obtain a block against Mr. Windscheffel playing Clarinet for Adams's new orchestra at Eastbourne, claiming that it was in breach of his contract to play for them. They'd even written to Captain Holman complaining about Windscheffel's employment, though Holman replied saying that the roster of musicians was purely the responsibility of Julian Adams. Apart from this minor hiccup, and a few mumbles in the letters pages claiming that Adams was perhaps past his best, Eastbourne for the most part received Julian Adams very warmly.

On the 24th of August, The Era published an article on Julian Adams, *"Eastbourne at the present time boasts of a musical conductor who outdoes even the late Jullion in gymnastics. It is quite necessary to impart as much soul as possible to musical performances, but Mr Julian Adams, to conduct the concerts at Devonshire Park, is probably the most eccentric conductor ever seen in the orchestra. Musical inspiration must affect him deeply since he appears to feel it from the crown of his head to the soles of his boots. He is all alive with musical energy, and the audiences regard him with as much wonder as admiration. They applaud his enthusiasm and his pianoforte solos, but sometimes question if some of the conductor's wonderful contortions might not be dispensed with. "Lightning Conductors" are more useful affixed to tall buildings than in guiding the movement of an orchestra."*

On the 10th of September a writer for the Eastbourne Gazette published an account of his visit with Adams at his home at 6 Lascelles Terrace, which was a mere stones throw from the old Devonshire Park gates and also backed on to the Park Baths, *"... .. since the advent to Eastbourne of this distinguished musical director, with his unrivalled orchestra, his name and well-known figure had been hourly before the public, few, we opine, are acquainted with the many excellent qualities which constitute Julian Adams one of the most endearing of private acquaintances, one of the most warmhearted, abiding friends, and one of the most hospitable of hosts. Whole-souled in everything, he does nothing by halves, and with him it seems to be "do or die." Julian Adams' musical ability has been recognised, and extolled in the highest quarters, and by the most competent critics in Great Britain, and on the continent. He has demonstrated to the public here since his occupation of the pavilion at Devonshire Park, that the eulogiums passed upon him have been richly merited, and since his arrival amongst us he has become a great favourite, winning golden opinions from all – from royalty, aristocracy, residents, and visitors generally. The card of a friend handed in at the door of 6, Lascelles-terrace, Brings into the hall the great redacteur himself, oftentimes in shirtsleeves, but this eminent musician is a hard worker, and, what is more, can get through an almost incredible amount of work in a day. "how are you, my dear fellow: come in, come in," and with a hearty shake of the hand you are shown into what might be called his sanctum, which you find strewn with musical compositions, letters, papers of all kinds, books, and various insignia of the vocation and ptosis of the occupant. He is "up to his eyes" in making selections from the greatest of the great masters, arranging programs, announcements, et cetera. By his elbow there is usually a pile of correspondence which needs attending to, yet he takes it all coulis and systematically. Julian Adams is fortunate in having in his amiable wife a most valuable help mate, equally at home in entertaining her guests in the most gracious manner, and in helping her husband in his correspondence. Like the skilful Redacteur himself, she has made many friends since coming to Eastbourne. Busy as he might be, Julian Adams is always careful to make enquiries relative to the latest news, for he has not had time to read the papers. He is very fond of recounting and hearing good jokes and when at comparative leisure his conversation is full of sparkling pleasantries, and witticisms. Though praise has been freely according to him in the press, he never takes it cavalierly, but has often been known to point out errors in judgement on the part of his critics when they have been too lavish in his praise. Only mention the name of one of the great composers" "and Julian Adams is all aglow with fire of music. He goes over the greatest works with marvellous enthusiasm, and it at once becomes evident that his every fibre is musical. No visitor leave the "snuggery" of this remarkable man without feeling all the better for half an hours chat, and without being thoroughly impressed with his genuine good nature, as well as his great musical ability. His home is always a happy one, and there is an Admiral air of repose about it. Julian Adams laughed heartily at the mini conjectures afloat as to his nationality." "We all know how remarkable his conducting is for the force and finish which it exhibits, the genius of his interpretations, and the accuracy of his timing. His enthusiasm is so electric, that his Orchestra seems imbued with his own pulsations. Since his advent here*

Julian Adams' classical concerts have drawn crowded and distinguished audiences. They have three times being patronised by the Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Baden, Princess Victoria and party, and are usually attended by large audiences of the mobility and gentry. Several years ago, Julian Adam is conducted similar entertainment in London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin, Belfast, Newcastle on time, York, Scarborough, Leamington, Liverpool, Harrogate, and in Continental cities, always with success. I have been shown the first method ever published in England for the harmonium, composed by Julian Adams, he was the 1st to introduce that instrument into England, and for his unrivalled performances on which, at the Paris exhibition in 1855 before her Majesty, the Prince consort, the Princess Royal, and the Emperor Napoleon, he was presented with the instrument, which was of the value of 160 guineas. The echo of his great success in Buxton whence he came to Eastbourne, is still a vibrating, and he is sadly missed in that delightful health resort, by the visitors who have frequented his concerts during the past seven years."



(Above : The Pavilion in the 1880's)

By August 1879 it was estimated that roughly 15,000 visitors a day were visiting Eastbourne and some of the concerts in the Devonshire Park were attracting audiences of 5000 in number. As the summer days lengthened, this popularity did not wane, and it was felt the need by the Directors to extend the Season further into the Autumn. It was also deemed necessary to move the indoor concerts from the upstairs Pavilion to the Rink room downstairs where at the eastern end of the room a new concert platform had been constructed. This was not an entirely popular strategy illustrated by a letter printed in the Eastbourne Gazette on the 17th of September 1879 : *"We complain to the management of the Floral Hall and skating rink - in allowing skating while a full orchestra is playing. The noise of the skates renders it impossible to hear the music, and the general turmoil is most disagreeable to those who do not care about skating on wheels. The remedy is simple. There, should be a separate place for skaters, and the Floral Hall, an admirable building in its way, might be kept for the music in bad weather, and at all times could be used as a shelter. At present,*

the noise and turmoil made by a crowd of boys and girls skating, the dust and the smell of bad oil used for the rollers, renders the place insupportable to any but 'Rinkomaniacs.'”

In the Pavilion, there were now classes in Department, Exercises and Drawing Room Dancing courtesy of Miss Phoebe Way on Saturdays at 11:30. The Pavilion had suffered yet another name change this year courtesy of adverts accorded to Leach's promoted events where he advertises the room as, "The Royal Pavilion, Devonshire Park." One could almost understand the adoption of this moniker as the Devonshire Park was still in favour with the European Royal families, such as Queen Victoria's oldest daughter, Princess Victoria. Princess Victoria became Empress of Germany and Queen of Prussia through her marriage to Frederick III, she was also mother to Wilhelm II, who would wage war against Britain in the Great War. It would have been hard to imagine at that time, that in only a few years Kaiser Wilhelm's effigy would be displayed at a Red Cross fundraiser at the Devonshire Park where participants could enjoy an activity called, "Nailing The Kaiser."

Other notable visitors to the park were, the Grand Duke and Duchess of Baden and Prince Ludvic. When the Grand Duchess of Baden left Eastbourne in September it was one of her last acts to direct her secretary to acknowledge the enjoyment she derived from Julian Adams's concerts at the Devonshire Park.

The Eastbourne Gazette of the 23rd of July 1879 said, "*Mr. Julian Adams, the talented conductor of the Devonshire Park band, might legitimately appropriate to himself the time honoured motto, "veni, vidi, vici."* He has come to Eastbourne, he has seen, and been seen, and as, perhaps, the greatest band leader of his time, he has conquered."

The great popularity of the Devonshire Park with visitors from outside of Eastbourne could be left in little doubt, and it was from within the ranks of the residents of the town itself that the Devonshire Park Company wished to increase patronage. During the snows of November 1879, the Directors issued a special offer to local residents; annual tickets would now cost £1.1S for the first ticket, 17S. 6d for the second and 15S. for the third. These tickets could be transferred to other members of the family, but not to people lodging in subscribers homes.

From outside of Eastbourne the visitors poured in, it was the first town to utilise poster advertising on the railway network. On the 2nd of August 1879 the Croydon Guardian and Surrey County Gazette printed: "*Under this title, there appeared in the Croydon Guardian, some time ago, an article from the pen of a valued contributor, in which was predicted a great musical treat for the residents and visitors to Eastbourne during the present season in consequence of the engagement by the Directors of the Devonshire Park Pavilion, of Mr. Julian Adams, the late musical director of the celebrated Buxton concerts. That our correspondent was right in his estimate is now fully proved, as the musical and local journals testify. The "season" at eastbourne can scarcely be said to commence until the dissolution of Parliament, never less the concerts under Mr. Adams, which commenced last week, are already attracting extremely large and enthusiastic audiences. As Croydon sends a large number of visitors to Eastbourne every year, besides contingents to Brighton, Worthing, Hastings etc. Not a few of our readers will, with ease and comfort, have the pleasure of hearing the sweet strains of Mr. Julian Adams' band, under his genial and splendid conductorship. A late visit to eastbourne enables us to inform our readers that the hotel, and other accommodation has been much increased. All classes may now find a local habitation. There are the palatial hotels, and the unpretentious houses, with such middle-class, yet withal, most comfortable and inexpensive quarters, as those of mine host Mr. Ambler, of the "New Inn," which, if not overlooking the briny ocean, is near enough to receive its invigorating breezes, and within easy walk of the majestic Beachy Head. Private apartments are there too, to suit purse and convenience of a diverse public.*" At the end of the season the same publication printed: "*This elastic and enjoyable resort seems determined that Brighton shall no longer monopolise the winter. If up to the present time it has, like the majority of seaside places, contented itself with developing its beauties in summer only, the inhabitants have suddenly awakened to the fact that in the magnificent grounds and Pavilion of Devonshire Park, they possess a resource which is unequalled on the south coast. This is due in a great measure to the excellent band arrangements which the Directors have made and especially so in the selection of Julian Adams, whose remarkable ability and zeal sustained Buxton*

in its musical fame and glory. But the bandit apparently only a season affair, and, according to present arrangements, this season closes today, when, unless a re-engagement is made, Eastbourne must sink down to into an autumnal and winter seclusion much against the pecuniary interests of the town, and greatly to the loss of visitors, who would, if the amusements were made permanent, much prefer Eastbourne to Brighton. The concerts, under Julian Adams direction, have assumed a position to which Eastbourne was previously a stranger. Nothing like them has ever been presented, and both the townspeople themselves and the numerous visitors from all parts view their discontinuance with considerable regret. It only requires some increased energy infused into the affair to save Eastbourne from six months' somnolency, and we are delighted to see that a movement is on foot to draw the attention of the directors of the Pavilion to the advisability of retaining the immense attraction which Julian Adams' excellent band has proved, with a view of elongating the Eastbourne season."

On the 8th of November the Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News published their acknowledgement of the extension of the musical season at Devonshire park. *"The Eastbourne Pavilion Concerts - The regular Eastbourne "Season," which usually terminates with September, has this year been prolonged a month later, thanks, in no small degree, to the delightful music provided at the Pavilion, under the direction of Julian Adams. The engagement of Mr. Adams with the Devonshire Park Company terminated on the 4th of October, but so highly were the diurnal concerts appreciated by visitors and residents alike that an arrangement was made to extend the period to Saturday last, November 1st, on which occasion a large and fashionable assembly met in the great Floral Hall to listen to the concluding concert of the series."*

The September 1879 Athletic sports was patronised by some top tier dignitaries. The Eastbourne Gazette published this article on 10th September 1879: *"On Thursday, thousands of spectators, amongst whom were many distinguished spectators, left Devonshire Park, thoroughly satisfied with the result of the sports, and*



the manner in which they were conducted. This is the best and most satisfactory compliment that could be paid to Captain Holman, and the gentlemen who kindly acted with him as officers of the day. The weather was beautifully fine, and the park decked with be vies of beauties, and "swells" In the pink of fashion, looked charming. The ground was encircled with tents, rows of ladies and gentlemen, and the

arrangements for their accommodation left nothing to be desired. Though from an athletic point of view the sports could not compare favourably with those held in the new college grounds recently, yet from a spectacular standpoint they were quite superior, the theatre of amusements and competitions on Thursday being the most picturesque, the weather being fine, and the gathering more brilliant and numerous. Add to this the presence of royalty, and mobility, and you have an eclat of which the Eastbourne Cricket club sports were shorn. Shortly before 4 o'clock her Royal Highness the grand Duchess of Baden, the Princess Victoria and party, into the grounds, and were received and conducted by Captain Holman to their seats, where they were met by Lady Fanny Howard and party, with whom they spent the afternoon in friendly converse. The Grand Duchess witnessed the competitions for the different events apparently with great interest, and at the

close of the proceedings distributed the prizes to the winners, Dr Hayman reading out the names, and Captain Holman handing to her Royal Highness the cheques for the prizes. Mr Superintendent Newnham, with his usual tact, so that the committees arrangements were carried out in an orderly manner; and the program, which comprised 16 events, was run off without the slightest delay or hitch. The musical part of the days proceedings was very interesting. The Town and Pier band commenced rendering a selection of music early in the afternoon, and at 4 o'clock, the usual time, Julian Adams' Orchestra gave forth the "magic waves of silver sound," which reached the ears of the Royal party as they entered the ground. Save in three or four instances, notably the bicycle races, the competitions were not close."

In the 1870's, one of the most popular spectator sports to emerge was Pedestrianism. Originating in the united States, its popularity was soon to spread worldwide and thousands of spectators would gather to watch famous pedestrians take part in walking matches, some of which could last for 24 hours.

One of these famous American walkists visited Great Britain in January 1879 for an endurance event, his name was Edward Payson Weston. Weston's aim was to walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours, a feat which he began at the Royal Exchange in London with Eastbourne scheduled as one of the stops. Weston arrived at Eastbourne at ten past eight on the the night of Monday 18th January 1879. He had travelled via Folkestone, where he had stopped to give a lecture. He was accompanied from Pevensey by a group of horsemen who had ridden out to meet him and when he got to Susans Road, a volunteer band and crowd bearing torches followed him the rest of the way to Devonshire Park, amid much cheering. Around the Devonshire Park Pavilion there was such a dense crowd, that Police Constable Plumb had to force a way through the throng of admirers and into the Pavilion by a back entrance. The Eastbourne Gazette published this account of Weston's lecture "How To Walk" at the Pavilion on January 22nd 1879. *"On his appearance in the pavilion he was greeted with applause from the large audience assembled there. He was dressed in the light black jacket, rather tight black dittoes, and high boots, well known to everybody who has seen his likeness either on wall posters, in illustrated newspapers, or in photographs. The pedestrian commenced his lecture with an apology for his dress, and the remark that he knew when they considered the task he had to perform we would not wish to rob him of even the few minutes it will take for him to array himself in evening costume before presenting himself on the platform. He also apologised for coming into the hall in such a suspicious manner - by a back entrance, and with a police officer pushing him along. (Laughter.) He had not a particle of fear that he should be maliciously injured during the performance of his task, but he had a terrible fear that some persons should be pushed by another person on to one of his feet, and bye-bye make him a fit subject for a third class funeral. (A laugh.) While speaking on walking, he would tell them that he was not only mindful of the fact that the American people, as a nation, had not until the last few years manifested much interest in that branch of physical exercise which is the cheapest, the most healthful, The most useful, and the most graceful. He had, as they knew, given much time and attention to pedestrianism, so he hoped they would not accuse him of egotism if he noted and then refer to himself in the course of his remarks. No exercise could be more dignified, less expensive, or more healthy than walking. They knew that he was engaged in walking 2000 miles in 1000 hours, not walking on Sundays."*

From the Devonshire Park Pavilion, Weston adjourned to his lodging at the Gildredge Hotel, but was up and on the road again early the next morning to continue his feat. Weston completed this journey and many others, living to the age of 90.

A notable event for the Devonshire Baths in 1879 was the introduction of their version of a Turkish Bath, which was designed by Baths engineer Mr. Harriott. The Hastings and St. Leonards Observer reviewed their visit on Saturday, the 18th of October 1879: *"In my reference to the baths last week, I ought, perhaps, to have put in the qualification that although I consider them in every way well-managed, admirably designed, and fitted up with care and taste, I inclined strongly to the belief that, in certain respects, they are still capable of improvement. I simply drop the hint, and if it should be worth anything, and should catch Mr Carpenter's eye, I have no doubt it will meet with your consideration. It frequently occurred to me while "frizzing" at 180 degrees Fahrenheit in the hottest chamber of the Turkish at Huntley, that such an amount*

of heat was altogether unnecessary to induce perspiration, and the waste of fuel to provide such heat must be correspondingly great. By way of illustrating what I mean, I may mention that, having been strongly advised by Dr. Hawkes on leaving, to continue Turkish baths on my arrival home until a complete eradication of my ailment had been secured, I patronised the Devonshire Baths, and enquired of Mr Harriott if he could supply the article I was in need of. That gentleman replied "oh, yes," and immediately introduce me to a comparatively small box, standing in the corner of one of the bath compartments. "That," said he, "is our 'Turkey'." "well it is an odd looking institution." I answered: "and pray, what heat can you get in it?" "well, we sometimes go up to 130, but it is very seldom that bathers require more than 125." I laughed heartily at the idea of such a degree heat having any perceptible affect upon me in the way I desired. "why that is not the heat of the first chamber at Huntley." I observed; "and at Bartholomew's at Bristol you may think yourself lucky if you find the hottest room as low as 200°." "Will you do me the favour to try?" remarked the manager: "I have had so many Gentlemen enter doubting depart convinced, that I should be glad if you would give it a fair trial." "certainly." I remarked, "but if I must confess I am dubious." I took my seat in the box, which was then registering 80°. 20 minutes later the thermometer showed 118°, and two minutes subsequently (at 120) The perspiration was issuing every pore and streaming off me: in fact I was "done" beautifully."

There was to be a tragedy at the Baths on January 7th 1879, when one of the Baths staff members, Thomas Foster, fell to his death while painting in the Baths. Born in Chichester in 1829, Foster had had a naval career based in Portsmouth, later being employed as a coast guard man, stationed in one of the coast guard cottages up on Beachy Head. He had six children with his wife Elizabeth and by 1879 he was employed by the Devonshire Park Company as a Bath Attendant. On January the 7th, Foster and another worker named, George Cox were painting a ceiling 32 feet above the floor of one the drained bathing pools. While moving one of the planks, Foster fell all the way to the floor. When George Cox climbed down and reached his side, Foster was lying winded and speechless, bleeding from his mouth, nose and left ear. Cox asked as to whether Foster was in pain to which Foster indicated the area of the right side of his chest. After being conveyed home, he also complained of pain in his back and of feeling cold. Sadly, he was to die roughly four hours after his fall, leaving his wife, Elizabeth and their children alone and without any means of income. There was a fundraising plea put out locally to help provide for the family. In the end they appeared to fair well as by 1901, Elizabeth Foster was living by private means in Lavant with her daughter, Helen. Charles Foster followed his father's footsteps and joined the navy in 1911.

Eastbourne Gazette printed this article on July 9, 1879, "*It is in the evening that time might be found to hang heavily, and therefore it is at that period of the day that amusements should be provided. Theatres and concert halls are eschewed as not becoming a town so situated as Eastbourne, but we have Devonshire Park all the year round, and here the most fastidious will find much to divert, to amuse, and to instruct. The park is beautifully situated within easy access of all parts of the town. Its green sward is most refreshing to the eye, and it is surrounded by a shaded walk in which the cool of the evening can be much enjoyed. It has been suggested that the park could be made more attractive if it were laid out in nice walks and flowerbeds, and we think the suggestion worthy of consideration. The Pavilion, which stands in the park, is a handsome structure, in bracing a large skating rink with an orchestra, a most enjoyable reading room, a convenient smoking room, a commodious billiard room, which is being fitted up with three excellent tables, cloakrooms, and a refreshment bar. Nobody visiting the town need suffer from ennui, while we have within reach such a pleasant resort as Devonshire Park. Skating which is usually practised most in the evening affords healthy exercise to those who don the "rollers," and no little amusement to the spectators, as many of the novices make unbidden acquaintance with the floor in the effort to get along. It is always agreeable to witness the performances of proficient skaters, and we must say, so far as we have seen at Devonshire Park this year, that the ladies had the best of it in this respect. They flirt about amongst the crowd gracefully, and often times with more gallantry than the opposite sex display, helped a "worn and weary brother" struggling hard to find his feet, and talking off to the ropes with great tenacity. It is most amusing to watch the efforts of*

beginners, and to notice the queer figures which they cut on the rink: anything but elegant it might be safely averred."

On Saturday the 27th of September 1879, the first Julian Adams Benefit concert was held in the Floral Hall and featured Madame Patey the well known, jewellery adorned contralto singer. A local hackney carriage driver named John Bradford, was employed to carry Madame Patey and her husband from their hotel accommodation to the Floral Hall for the evening performance. As the carriage travelled from the corner of Carlisle road into Compton street, it cut the corner and narrowly missed a gentleman, Leon Farmin and his family. Leon Farmin was from London and was residing at 12 Lascelles Terrace, a few doors from Julian Adams' home. When John Bradford went to set down the Pateys at the Floral Hall it was realised that Madame Patey, who was always adorned in jewellery, had forgotten her bracelets, so Mr. Patey requested that Bradford return then to their accommodation to collect them. When Bradford returned to the Carlisle Road corner, Farmin tried to stop Bradford's horse by grabbing its head at the same time demanding his number. Mr. Patey, who was inside the carriage, feared that Farmin's intention was to rob Madame Patey of her jewellery so he urged John Bradford to drive on. Bradford hit Farmin across the wrist with his whip and attempted to continue his journey, only to be stopped by Farmin's son, who also earned a strike from the whip when he attempted to pull the horse towards the pavement. Madame Patey made it to the concert on time and the concert was described by the Gazette as one that "*will live long in the local memory.*"

At Christmas an enormous Christmas tree was erected in the Floral Hall and as normal, free presents were given out to Children. The Lane Brothers performed their skating spectacles twice daily and concerts featuring Madame Patey, Jose Sherington and Mr. Edward Lloyd were much enjoyed.

1880 to 1910



The 1880's were to prove a decade of consequence for Eastbourne and the Devonshire Park. It was the decade that saw Eastbourne become Incorporated, gain a Town Hall and have George Ambrose Wallis elected to be its first mayor. There was a visit from the Prince of Wales, who came to open the Princess Alice Memorial hospital, the Bedfordwell Pumping Station and the east and west extensions to the promenade. Two new theatres were built in the town, and finally the opening of a public recreation and cricket ground for Eastbourne residents at the Saffrons.

In the Devonshire Park, the 1880's began much in the same way the 1870's ended, with Captain Holman still highly regarded in his role as Secretary and Julian Adams, now residing at 2 Wilmington Square, still engaged as the Park's musical director. Skating, cricket, athletics, tennis were still offered but, there was now

soccer and rugby for the colder months. There was also a move to attract and hold large annual trade shows within the Devonshire Park, such as the Fine Art Show and the Sanitary Exhibition, which was initially intended to run for one month every year. This created a desire for the erection of a bespoke building within the Park in which to house these and future exhibitions. It was decided to attempt to raise the sum of £8000



from the sale of shares in order to finance the building works, though this would not be shares in the Devonshire Park Company but shares via the Eastbourne Sanitary Exhibition Council, which had been formed to facilitate these enterprises. Unfortunately, this initiative failed and by October 1883 the building scheme was abandoned.

The first of the Fine Arts and Sanitary exhibitions was held between the 22nd and 27th of August 1881. It was primarily the idea of Mr. J. T. Rodda of the Eastbourne Water Company & Mr. Schmidt, who was the town building surveyor. It was a grand and very Victorian event, with lectures daily, including, “How not to build a house” and demonstrations of pneumatic bells, instantaneous potato peelers and non poisonous wall-paper. There were two rooms,

blackened out where luminous paint was exhibited. It was suggested that this paint could be used on the hulls of fishing vessels. *“Nearly all the available spaces in the Pavilion being taken by intending exhibitors, an annexe will be established on the waste spot of ground opposite Wilmington Square, in which will be shown a large display of stoves and cooking apparatus in working order....”* (Eastbourne Gazette 20th July 1881.)



Sewerage ejectors were also exhibited at the exhibition. In 1882, Eastbourne was one of the first towns to adopt the Shone Ejector sewerage system, which involved using compressed air to pump sewerage up-hill towards the point of ejection, which was into the sea at Langney Point. It utilised small pumping stations roughly every mile along its course from Meads. One of these stations was sited just above Devonshire Park in Carlisle Road, in the area opposite today's Congress Theatre, this station was rediscovered in 2016 by the construction company working on the Devonshire Park redevelopment.



(Above: The Ejector Station discovered in 2016. Photos from Paul Quanstrom.)

“To the editor - Sir, Just a line in reference to the present sanitary working of the Devonshire Park Concert Hall. As a visitor I last Saturday evening entered the gentlemen’s lavatory, and in reference to the accommodation I think they are very lax. Do you not think that a better, more healthy, and practical working and ventilation of the same would add to the benefit of the visitors? If you think this is worth consideration I trust you will insert this letter, obediently yours, An interested visitor. (Eastbourne Gazette, 19th of October 1881.)



(Above : The Internal Rink between 1879 and 1883. Notice the new stage at the East end of the room.)

In the early part of the decade the floral Hall’s gas lighting system was proving to be problematic and far from robust, “..very indifferent light shone on Mr.Adams’ Concert last night.” (Eastbourne Gazette, 8 Sept 1880.) All this was to change however, as in the summer of 1881 the Floral Hall was destined to be illuminated by electricity.

On the 6th of July 1881 the Eastbourne Gazette announced, “the Devonshire park Company are adding to the numerous attractions of their charming grounds, the electric light. ‘How beautiful!’ I can in imagination hear thousands of young ladies exclaim ; ‘why, we shall now be able to play tennis long after dusk.’ I do not know whether that can be done, but I dare say it will be possible. Cricket matches have been played in various parts of the country by aid of Messrs. Siemens’ invention. I am afraid, however, that the young ladies and gentlemen who carry on a little innocent love-making in the Park during the season evenings, will not be able to transact their ‘spooning,’ as it is commonly called, without being seen. That electric light, mesdames et messieurs, is almost as searching as the sunlight.”

On the eighteenth of July 1881 there was a grand concert in the Floral Hall where the electric lighting was to be experienced for the first time. The evening was initially lit by gas and there were many visitors crowded into the hall for the occasion. Not surprisingly, there was a strong presence from the Eastbourne Gas Company as well many other important personages, visitors and residents. The orchestra was set up in its usual position at the east end of the hall and shortly before 8 o’clock, the musicians filed in to take their seats. This prompted the rest of the hall to fill up as people came in from the Park outside and took their seats in the middle of the hall. Julian Adams, the conductor then entered and made his way to the stand. The concert was opened with the overture to Rossini’s grand Egyptian opera ‘Semiramide.’ Then, during the second half, after Haydn’s ‘Farewell Symphony,’ one by one of the orchestra members tapered their candles and left the stage, leaving Julian Adams alone on the podium. Adams then himself blew out his candle and

left the stage. *“For a few moments all was comparative darkness, a few gas jets were permitted to exhibit just a little light,”* reported the Eastbourne Herald, *“then came the brilliant burst of electricity startling all beholders for a while.”* It was reported that some people ran outside, either to escape the sudden glare or to witness the spectacle from outside, some either conducted their own experiments and set about testing the electric light’s ability to aid the reading of newspapers and the like.

The hall was lit by three 2000 candlepower lamps which were suspended from the ceiling and powered by direct current. The adoption of electric lighting also had heating implications, the air being much cooler than with gas lighting, this would prove a blessing in summer and a problem in winter.



(Above: Notice the new chaotic electrical wiring hanging from the ceiling.)

The Devonshire Park’s electricity was generated in the plant room of the swimming baths by two ten horse power Siemens engines. This was conveyed via wires into the park through the East Gate and from there to various other areas. There were fourteen 350 candle power lamps placed in the grounds operating under alternating current stretching from the East Gate to the Band Stand in the music garden. The Band Stand had just been moved from the centre of the ornamental gardens to nearer the embankment, allowing for improved patronage at concerts.

A continual programme of improvement was necessary for the electric lighting systems, and by mid September the three Floral Hall lights had been replaced by five so that the flickering and proportional brightness was much reduced. The Eastbourne Gazette had a look around the plant room in the Baths and published this article on the 11th Jan 1882. *“To any person curious enough to want a peep at the interior workings of the wonderful illuminative power now employed at the Park, it will only remain for him to apply to Mr. Harriott at his residence, near the Devonshire Baths, and all inquisitive longings will soon be satisfied. He will be conducted to the engine room where he can see the fountain-head of the electric light and the heating process, the combined generator of both, in the shape of the engine which was erected by Tangye of Birmingham, and near this the small machine of Siemens, from which the electric sparks are scintillating as the engine works, and to which are attached two other small machines. From the latter run the insulated wires, generally seven in number in each coil, insulated, or covered with silk and India rubber. These wires, inside the coils, are conductors of the electricity from the electric machines, and go all over the*

Baths, the Floral Hall, Rink etc, to the globes which are suspended in these places. The sparks on the generating machine are due to matter rendered incandescent by the high temperature produced, mechanical force, such as that of the steam engine and water being called in to produce the currents employed for the purpose of lighting. The motive force is, according to Preece, simply the motion of the conductor through a magnetic field, and the greater the velocity with which the conductor cuts the field at right angles to its lines of force, the greater the current produced. Another feature worthy of notice in the Park's arrangements for electric lighting, is a condenser introduced by Mr. Wallis, by which the premises are lighted, and the swimming baths heated at the same time. In viewing the simplicity of the contrivances used to produce this wonderful means of illumination, one is led to the inevitable conclusion that it will in the end, completely supersede gas." The Chairman of the Devonshire Park Company, Robert Insoll, also possibly subscribed to this school of thought as he was soon to resign his seat at the Gas Board.

Messrs. Siemens Brothers improved the lighting system further by adding the equipment needed to supply the Park with the Swan incandescent light. This involved the use of accumulators, which had to be charged with electricity every day. There were also switches, so that either one or two lamps on each of the brackets could be engaged.

There were still teething troubles though. After a Julian Adams concert of the 19th September 1883, it was reported in the local press that the electricity was periodically hissing, which greatly distracted from the piano and singing.

Electric light was now being employed in other areas of the town, for example along the parade and in St. Saviours Church. There were some that didn't trust the new electric light at all, including Mr. Langham who, at the meeting of the Local board on the 3rd of September 1883, accused the electric lighting of causing the lightning storm of the 27th August 1883.

On the 25th of August 1883 The Eastbourne Gazette published an account of a return visit to the Baths and its plant rooms. *"An interesting, and certainly very exceptional, point in the building now under notice is that a portion of the basement is set apart for the generation of electricity, for the illumination of the Park and Pavilion. On entering this portion of the premises, the first thing that strikes the visitor is the elegant setting of the boilers. Of these there are three, all of which have just been started after having been thoroughly new cased. They are so arranged that they can work together or separately. In point of fact, two are only absolutely required at one and the same time, the third being a reserve boiler, which, however, is regularly worked in its turn so as to keep each of the three in efficient and immediate workable order. During the day they are used to heat the baths ; and, after the closing of the baths at 7 o'clock, are available for their primary office of driving the dynamo-machines which evolve the electricity for the Park lights. The boilers occupy the left of the vault. In the centre, raised on a tastefully arranged square of brickwork, is the engine which drives the various laundry appliances - with the inevitable breakdown reserve, this time in the shape of a donkey engine. There are two sets of pumps, with an extra tank for the supply of the donkey engine. For the Baths the tank changes water at each tide. A distinctive novelty bearing on the renovation of water for the baths is a suction engine which works in a shaft, drawing down the cold water and sending back hot from waste steam received from the engines into the condenser. Here again every provision is made for an all but impossible breakdown, by means of a system of pipes which are one mass of taps. These once in position, any stoppage in the condenser simply involves the shutting and opening of valves for its immediate adjustment. We now come to the engine room. In this are four generators, two on each side. Advancing to the rear then facing the door, the nearest we observe on our left hand furnish the Incandescent Swan with which the Park is lighted, and the one beyond it the five lights for the rink ; the corresponding engine on the right hand supply the outside rink, and the two outer lamps of the Pavilion respectively. That for the outside rink is special, and the wires have been got in with all rapidity for the Flower Show to-morrow. This generator is available generally, and is left open for the connection of wires as required. The principle adopted is Siemen's, and the electricity is evolved according to demand, with accumulators ; being supplied direct, and only as wanted. Thus, when light is required, the engines are set to work, and produce an immediate supply : when they stop, the lights go out. It should be remarked that the boilers, which are in the charge of Mr. Harriott, were fitted by Mr. Mayhew, and have been lately raised by the instructions of Mr. Harriott two feet*

higher than they originally stood. Great praise is due to both in the matter of these boilers, the unprosaic appearance of which, with their bright-glowing furnaces, giving the place the air of some vast and well-ordered laboratory. They have lately received a complete overhauling and inspection, Mr. Harriott, Mr. Mayhew, and a workman having carefully gone over the whole of the interior. The result is a personal guarantee of their absolute reliability for the next ten years, mishaps having been placed by this simple expedient completely beyond the range of possibility. They are nominally of 10, 16, and 16 horse-power, and work engines by Tangye, of Birmingham."

The lighting was not the only facility that switched over from gas in the Devonshire Park at this time, the heating system also was dramatically altered so that it utilised steam generated in the Baths. For a description of this system, it is necessary to re-visit the Eastbourne Gazette's publication of the 11th of January 1882. *"Towards the close of the autumn it was discovered by Mr. G. A. Wallis that the Floral Hall and other parts of the Park premises were but inefficiently and unsatisfactorily heated by the hot water pipes. The result was that Mr. Wallis conferred with Mr. Harriott, the resident engineer, who is an old and valued servant of the Company, as to the best means of remedying the defect. Mr. Harriott instantly set to work and resolved to try the effect of steam in heating. After considerable trouble his efforts were successful, and by utilising the steam from the boiler at the baths he has succeeded in thoroughly warming the whole premises of the Company. The steam is conveyed in a main from the baths, across the road underground, the pipe making its appearance above ground under the Pavilion stage, the distance from the boilers to the Pavilion being 450 feet, and the steam passing through two swimming baths in its progress. It is then conveyed up to the artistes' rooms and right round the Pavilion Concert Hall, thence around the restaurant and smoking room attached, around the ticket office, and so on until no part of the establishment is without heat - neither the Floral Hall, the secretary's office, and the reading room, or the ladies' cloak room. The green-house, attached to the Park, is also heated by the same process, and by one pipe only, whereas two were used when hot water was employed. All the pipes are above ground so that the disadvantages attending the carriage of the pipes underground, as before, and which were notably obvious in the case of the rink, the floor of which was liable to be cracked, in places, from the subterranean heat, are altogether removed. By the new process the necessary heat can be suddenly produced in any part of the establishment, and as suddenly dispensed with when the occasion arises. The saving in expense to the Directors during the time the new process has been in working order is also a great point in its favour, independently of its thorough efficiency and successful development. The former heating, by gas and water, cost the company about £70 for a period of six months ; the present process only £19 10s. The figures speak for themselves, and it is rather difficult for an outsider to understand how such a saving could have been effected, without his making a close examination and going into details on there subject. To Mr. Harriott the credit of bringing the new process to so satisfactory a state is due, and it is needless to say that his efforts have been appreciated by the Chairman of the Company, Mr. Insoll, by Mr. Wallis under whose general instructions he acted, by the Secretary, Capt. Holman, and indeed, it may be said by all those who visit the Park and have been interested in the matter of the efficient warming of its buildings."*

Despite this, there were still complaints. The following December the Gazette printed a concert review of the Messiah, as performed by the Eastbourne Musical Society, that closed with a plea to the Devonshire Park Company to address the 'extreme discomfort' caused by the cold draughts within the Floral Hall. It is interesting that 130 years later and with more modern heating methods, if cold air hits the Floral Hall from a certain direction, it can be near to impossible to heat.

In Summer the Floral hall was cooled by cone shaped vents in the ceiling, the thinner end protruding further into the room and the the wider end, flush with the ceiling.

An extension to 'the season' was a much discussed topic locally in the 1880's, as it would be for many years to come. But by all accounts, Eastbourne was a woeful place when all the summer folk had departed. *"With the last notes of the 'Farewell Symphony,' some of the attractions have vanished from Devonshire Park. Julian Adams and his orchestra have separated until warmer weather will re-assemble them in the favourite*

resort. The lawn tennis ground is deserted, but the game can still be kept up within the precincts of the Park, even to the sound of music, for some of the orchestra remain during the winter. The majority of the Lawn Tennis players have gone, and we shall now behold fewer of those wondrous costumes, - those ravishing toilettes which shed so much splendour on a scene that rivalled everything exhibited by Continental Casinos....” (The Eastbourne Gazette 13 October 1880.)

There were calls to bring the beginning of the season forward to May, and to extend the engagement of the band in whole or at least in part into November. In fact, Eastbourne formed a Season Extension Committee, for the purpose of extending the season, chaired by George Ambrose Wallis. There was a heated backlash from Thomas Gowland, angered by the suggestion of a tax, who wrote a letter to the Gazette claiming that the Season Extension Committee was piloted by Wallis in order to feather his and therefore the Devonshire Park Company's own respective nests. In fact Wallis had been the second choice for Chairman, as the first choice, Dr. Jeffery, Chairman of the Local Board, had declined the position as he was recovering from a long illness. Thomas Gowland's attack on Wallis brought about great scorn upon him in the local press. Further ill feeling was gained when an opera company booked by Gowland to perform at the Devonshire Park had failed to appear, resulting in the audience having to go home soggy and unfulfilled on a very wet May evening in 1882.

A great obstacle to the extension of the Eastbourne season, was the lacklustre support given to town entertainments by the local population. *“.....this thought remind me again of the shabby way Devonshire Park is neglected during the winter months and the fashionable visitors had departed, and the subject is often one of remark among those who wish well to the town. Some of our leading residents, who never go near the Park to support the enterprising management and the wind entertainments, get, in the course of the season, considerable benefits from the very visitors for who the tennis courts of the park and park concerts are among the chief attractions of Eastbourne. The expenses of the Park are very great, and I think the residents should work wheel within wheel with an institution which so much increases our fame.”* (Eastbourne Gazette 25th May 1887.)

The Devonshire Park Directors tried various methods to garner more local support over the years, chief among those was offering such things as cheaper tickets to local households.

On the 11th January 1882, the Eastbourne Gazette described a visit to a winter Devonshire Park. *“The winter aspect of Eastbourne's well-regulated place of amusement and recreation - the Devonshire Park - is not at all so cheerless as one would be led to imagine. It is true the Lawn Tennis courts are deserted ; there is no echo of thrilling music from the deserted band stand which awaits the coming of the summer and of Julian Adams ; there are no dainty feet tripping over the sward, or through the tree-lined walks, and no muscular, flannel clothed forms of manly cricketers are visible, engaged in the splendid sport of bat and ball. Still, on one of those fine days we have had lately, which are better than those Mortimer Collins wrote of as “a mocking dream of summer lost” days, when, although it is the period of mid-winter, the sun sometimes shines as brilliantly and as benignantly as in the early spring, the Devonshire Park seems as attractive as ever. So attractive does it seem, in fact, when beamed on by the sun, that one can scarcely realise the fact that the season is not in full swing. There may be few people about, but the imagination could easily be induced to come to there conclusion that the Lawn Tennis players had merely gone home to luncheon or to afternoon tea. The aspect of the place is certainly different on a wet day, but then so is every place, especially at the seaside. Whoever knew a seaside place to be attractive in a steady downpour of rain or during the continuation of a drizzle which lasted from morning to eve?”* *“The interior of the Park, although the trees therein are leafless at this time of year, still contrives to display an abundance of colour which relieves the monotony of a winter landscape, and saves it from the air of tawdry shabbiness which distinguishes metropolitan “gardens” in the daylight. The Directors of the Park company, with their efficient secretary, Captain Holman, are always indefatigable in the endeavours to make the Park popular, not only to the visitors during the summer, but also to local residents and non-seasonal visitors, during the winter. In order to make the various parts of the Park which are used as comfortable as possible during the cold weather, a remarkable system of heating by steam pipes has been happily conceived and successfully carried out by Mr. Henry Harriott, the resident engineer, acting under the advice of Mr. G. A. Wallis the engineer to the Park*

Company. This, with the introduction of the electric light, scarcely leaves anything to be desired in the present arrangements of the Park, and one would have to travel far before he found a place where the comfort of patrons was more studied and better ensured. But of this more shall be said presently, after the various features of interest which the Park presents have been briefly described. It will be needless to go into details about these features which are already well known to residents and fairly so to visitors. But it will be no harm to introduce them one by one, in a brief manner, leaving it to those who are not already acquainted with the Park, to go there in order to judge more satisfactorily for themselves the truth of what is here presented to them in print. First comes :

THE RINK - Which is the chief place where amusements can be derived during the winter months. It is open every day, and is well patronised by some of the visitors who remain amongst us long after the summer season has departed. The Floral Hall, in which the rink is situated, is amply heated by the steam-pipe process ; all draughts are excluded, and, even in the coldest weather, the temperature is kept at an equal point throughout the whole building. On Wednesday and Saturday evenings, from 7:30 until 9:30, the rink is open to those who have not time to use it during the day, owing to their business engagements, and the Company engage professional skaters, from time to time, who give characteristic exhibitions of the rinking art to all who are interested in the happy substitute devised by cousin Jonathan, for ice-skating. An efficient band is also engaged which plays during some of the afternoons and evenings of the week, while the drinkers are performing their graceful evolutions on the asphalt.

THE BATHS - Next in order to the Rink comes another, and more important, kind of accommodation for the patrons of, and visitors to the Park. The Baths, owing to their construction and appliances are well worthy of a visit, and independently of their intrinsic usefulness, deserve to be inspected for their wonderful arrangement, and for the splendid manner in which they have been prepared. No expense has been spared to make them as comfortable, and as efficient in their working as possible. They are divided into three departments, the ladies' swimming bath, where Miss Laura Saigeman gives wonderful exhibitions in the natatory art during the summer; the gentlemen's swimming baths where the contests of the Eastbourne Swimming Club are held, under the supervision of Captain Holman, Mr. Wrangham, Mr. Edgeworth and other gentlemen, and the private baths for both sexes, which latter include a Turkish bath contrived in a most ingenious and efficient manner by Mr. Harriott. The open swimming baths, it must be remarked, can be used in winter, as the water is artificially heated by Mr., Harriott.

THE READING ROOM etc - Near the Rink is the comfortable reading-room which is well stocked with the leading London papers, the local journals and several bound volumes of the World, the Queen, and Truth. Around the room are placed easy chairs and luxurious lounges for the accommodation of readers. To this it must be added that the room is heated in the usual manner, just as in the Pavilion where concerts are held during winter, and the splendid billiard room and restaurant."

Compared to the summer season, the Devonshire Park in winter may have indeed seemed quieter. Though, it must be said that it was actually far from quiet.

On the 16th of November 1881 the Devonshire park company held its first Chrysanthemum show in the Floral hall. Spread over three days, it featured thousands of cut plants in vases that were arranged on tables. There were also displays of fruit and vegetables. This was successful enough that it was to become an annual event.

In 1881 the first Devonshire Park Association football game was played against New College, nowadays the site of Gildredge House school. Football was to gain in popularity throughout the 1880's and when the Devonshire Park took over control of the new Saffrons field in 1884, the football games held there were very popular and continue to be so today. In 1882 the Devonshire Park even tried, but failed, to field a team for a game of rugby football against the South Saxons.

There were other Winter Sports, in November 1885 Polo-on-skates was introduced. This first excursion was captained by H. Lillywhite who was the inventor of the game. It proved fairly popular, and a great Eastbourne and Hastings rivalry in the sport was born.



(Above : Polo-on-Skates being played in the Floral Hall.)

On the 20th March 1889, a Winter Sports event was held in the Floral Hall. It featured Tricycle and Bicycle races, skating races. Great amusement was gained in judging how well people could corner in the tight spaces. 13 laps of the Floral Hall constituted half a mile and there were 2 competitors in each heat.

Fair weather sports proved ever popular in the Park in the 1880's, especially tennis which seemed to go from strength to strength. There were more than a few voices that tested the water saying that cricket should perhaps cease to be played in the Park and tennis to take over completely.

Tennis had a great advantage over cricket in that it could be played at the same time by both sexes. On the 16th of September 1885, the Eastbourne Gazette printed, *"Cricket appears to be regarded with scant favour by the athletic youths who, attired in tennis jackets that would rival Joseph's coat in their variety of colours, and armed with the inevitable racquet, lounge about the Grand Parade until it is time to seek the Park and devote themselves to the sport of the idolatry."*

Cricket's days were indeed numbered at the Devonshire Park. The 1883 season was brought to an early close with more suggestions that cricket should be moved from the park altogether, supported by the local distaste for the practice of hitting cricket balls over the pavilion and into Compton Street.

The debate over a town recreation ground had been wandering back and forth now for years, with the names of various sites such as Oaks Cottage, Elphick's Field, and Southfields being bandied around before invariably being dismissed. In 1877, the eleven acres that comprised Saffron's field had begun to be mentioned at meetings of the Local Board. Saffron's field belonged to the Duke of Devonshire and was a place that many years in the past had been used as a town recreation ground. In 1884, the Duke, rather than grant the Saffrons ground to the town, granted it to the Devonshire Park Company for the purposes of cricket. This wasn't exactly what people were expecting, as illustrated by this Eastbourne Gazette piece from January 28th 1885, *"In the very natural elation of the inhabitants of Eastbourne at the prospect of the acquisition for cricketing purposes of so highly desirable a ground as the "Saffron's Field" some slight errors have crept into print. Reference to the advertisement issued by the Devonshire Park directors, announcing the gift, will show that His Grace the Duke of Devonshire has granted the field, not directly to the town, but to the Devonshire Park Club."*

To be known as the Eastbourne and Devonshire Park cricket ground, the subscription was to be the same as now paid by the Eastbourne Cricket Club, who had been given notice to leave their current Southfields ground. The Eastbourne Cricket Club was to organise the cricketing activities at the Saffrons while the Devonshire park Company would foot the cost of a new pavilion and the laying out of the new cricket field. In return, the Devonshire Park Company would receive the revenue from ticket sales. In the interim, while the new field was being prepared for the 1886 season, half of the cricket games would be played at Devonshire park and the other half at Southfields. The Devonshire Park Cricket Club and the Eastbourne Cricket Club *"were to be united on equal terms and the Dev Park Co. agreed to erect a pavilion and a high wall at a cost of about £20 000 and the expense of laying out and "maintaining" the ground."* (Eastbourne Gazette 28th January 1885.) This arrangement was to continue until 1889, whereupon the Devonshire Park Company decided to put the cricket ground up for rent at £100 a year. Eastbourne Cricket Club managed to take up the lease and by doing so became independent again for the first time in many years. Interestingly, they retained the Duke of Devonshire's Blue and Yellow colours.

Tennis was now the main sport in the Devonshire park, with thirty courts available and more trees planted in order to shield the games from the wind. The 1881 tennis tournament had thirty two entries, the winner receiving a silver cup valued at £5 5 Shillings, presented by Robert Insoll. Things moved up a notch in 1884, when, the first South of England Championship was initiated under the direction of the manager at that time, Standen Triggs. The first tournament being won by E.L. Williams.

Traditionally played in September, the South of England tournament is still played to this day.

"At Eastbourne yesterday two fashionably dressed young men, who gave their names as Peter Smith and George Jones, from Waterloo road and Maidenlane, Strand, London, were sentenced to each to 4 months imprisonment for picking ladies pockets at the Devonshire Park tennis contest at Eastbourne." - Pall Mall gazette 14th September 1888.

There were other new activities introduced in the 1880's such as a new game called "Denmark" or "Denmark" cricket, introduced in 1884. *"Many of our readers have noticed a rather curious structure standing in one corner of the cricket field in Devonshire park, surmounted by a red and white flag, and have doubtless been told that it is intended for the new lawn game of "Denmark," but very few have, up to the present time, been enabled to comprehend the mysteries of the game, although when played with spirit it is full of interest and of a very amusing character."* (Eastbourne gazette, 2nd July 1884.)

In 1888 the first ever Ringoal tournament was held in the Devonshire Park. This was a game that involved using two sticks to propel a wooden ring. Invented in Oxford, the game wasn't to gain great popularity.



(Above : A prize giving in the Devonshire Park. Standen Triggs is easy to spot due to his large beard.)

On the 19th and 20th of September 1898, the first Eastbourne Horse Show was held at Devonshire Park, organised by the English Horse Show Society. It was held on a roped off section of the cricket pitch, where a series of jumps was constructed. There was also a large grandstand constructed that could seat 1000 people. The event was very well patronised, despite the cloudy weather. A horse show would continue to be held in Eastbourne for the next 100 years, with Gildredge Park becoming its future home.

The Annual Bicycle Club sports continued to be popular in the 1880's, there was a 'Challenge Cup' that was originally a gift from the Directors of the Devonshire Park Company to the Eastbourne Bicycle Club in 1877. The first winner of the Challenge Cup was Stephen Bretton in 1877, followed by Charles Henry Hart in 1878. F.G. Bretton won in 1879, and Charles J. Flatman won in 1880 and 1881. Local man, C.S. Wadey was the Champion of 1882 and 1884 and H.G. Clark won in 1883.

"The Devonshire Park was never showed to better advantage than on Wednesday, when there was such a grand display of wheels. Even St. Swithin forbore his interruptions, although threats of showers were not wanting. It was emphatically the Eastbourne Bicycle and Tricycle Derby day and I heard the corner where the new Theatre, Opera House, and Racket Court are being erected, repeatedly dubbed, 'Tattenham Corner.'

Mixing among the crowd in front of the refreshment bar, one found the surroundings very much Epsom like.” (Eastbourne Gazette 1st August 1883.)

As usual Christmas was a very busy time in the 1880's. There would be traditionally be an enormous Christmas tree in the Floral Hall, and thousands of presents would be arranged upon long tables, waiting to be picked up by children that visited the Park. On the 28th of December 1881, the Eastbourne Gazette published an account of its visit to the Rink at Christmas, *“Local rinkers in the meantime have had abundant opportunities of enjoying themselves at the Devonshire Park, which establishment has its spacious rink crowded with amateur rinkers of both sexes daily and nightly. Indeed it is a matter of surprise to see the merry crowds who amuse themselves on the ‘Plimptons’ at the Floral Hall. Boxing Day, especially, brought out legions of them, and so thronged was the rink that it was wonderful how the skaters succeeded in carrying on their amusement without serious collision.”*

Rinking was still being enjoyed in the Park all year round and as the 1880's progressed, Eastbourne seemed to retain its interest in the activity, whereas, nationally, the popularity of roller-skating seemed to be waning. More and more, real ice skating rinks were becoming available, such as at Southport, where there was an ice rink, 200 feet by 100 feet. One of the articles in the Gazette on the 10th of September 1883 stated, *“I have been accustomed to be somewhat proud of Devonshire Park, but when I read of the doings at Southport, in Lancashire, I begin to think that Devonshire Park is getting behind the times. For instance, at Eastbourne, I have to be content with roller skates, when I desire to indulge in the delightful exercise of skating. In Southport, I could indulge in the real thing - not a make shift - all year round.”* *“The rink consists of a shallow sheet of water, permeated by a continuous line of metallic tubing, some miles long, through which circulates a stream of solution of magnesium chloride, cooled by artificial means.”*

Despite, there not being any provision for real ice, skating at the Devonshire Park would continue well into the 1950's. There was still the usual exhibition skaters to be seen, such as Crowther, who could be seen using rockets to propel himself around the Rink in 1880.

In early January 1882, a very popular decision was made to, once again, open up the entire floor area of the Floral Hall to Skating, whereas previously the skaters had to share the space with the band platform in the east end of the Hall.

In 1884 costumed skating galas, were all the rage and would continue to be so for years to come. These galas were essentially fancy dress balls on roller skates with prizes awarded for the best costumes exhibited.

“I was somewhat amused by an incident which occurred the other day in the Rink at Devonshire Park. A young gentleman and two ladies would persist in crossing the rink while skating was going on, although a notice is affixed announcing that such a proceeding is prohibited. One of the Company's officials refused to permit the gentleman to cross, which greatly excited his wrath, and he forthwith went to the Manager and reported the official for doing his duty. I am pleased to hear that the young gentleman received a snub from the Manager, which I trust will teach him better manners in future.” (Eastbourne Gazette 2nd of July 1884.)

The Prince of Wales visited Eastbourne on the 30th June 1883 to formally open the Princess Alice Hospital, Bedfordwell Pumping Station, the new East Parade, and the South Cliff western extension. The Royal party also visited the Devonshire Park for lunch. The Sussex Agricultural Express printed an article describing the visit on the 3rd of July 1883, *“On arriving at the Park, the Prince and Princess of Wales, and the Princess Elizabeth of Hesse retired to the handsome suite of apartments prepared for them under the direction of Capt. Holman, the well known secretary of Devonshire Park, while three hundred guests assembled in the Floral Hall, where a recherché repast was served. Here again the floral decorations were very tasteful. A band, conducted by Mr. Julian Adams, occupied the orchestra, and during the repast performed a programme of choice music. The Rev. Prebendary Whelpton had the honour of conducting the Princess of Wales to her seat at the head of the table, the Prince following with his Royal niece. During dessert, The Chairman (the Rev. Prebendary Whelpton) gave the “The health of her gracious Majesty, the Queen,” which was drank with enthusiasm.”*

In 1883, upon its incorporation, Eastbourne was to get its first Mayor. The elections were scheduled for 1st of November, with a new Mayor installed into office on the 9th November. There was no Town Hall in Eastbourne in 1883, so all Council business was conducted at the Devonshire Park Pavilion. It was here that the first Mayor of Eastbourne was appointed, the Gazette published an account on November 13th 1883.

“On entering the hall, we found a large crowd of our fellow townsmen assembled, which was considerably increased before the commencement of the ceremony. At the upper end of the hall, a spacious table was prepared, covered with red cloth, with a handsome border round the edges, around which was a sufficiency of seats to accommodate the Council and the necessary officials. On one side was a small raised platform, by the side of which sat the Acting Town Clerk (Mr. Kirkland) and his clerk. All other seats were vacant.

A few minutes before 12 o'clock, Capt. Holman, the official named in the Charter, took the raised seat and, having read the notice convening the meeting, called upon Mr. Kirkland to read the Charter of Incorporation. This is a rather long and somewhat tedious document, full of law phrases and references to various Acts of Parliament. At length, however, Mr. Kirkland finished the reading of this all-important document, which is the foundation of all the proceedings, and by which the future government of the town will be regulated.

While the Charter was being read, the seats around the table remained unoccupied. Dr. Jeffery flitted in for a few minutes, and after whispering a few words with Capt. Holman, immediately retired. Clustered round the



door, however, were the Councillors elect, doubtless on the tiptoes of expectation. When Mr. Kirkland had sat down, Capt. Holman rose and proceeded to read the result of the poll, commencing with the East Ward, and as each Councillor's name was read out, the gentleman named came forward and took his seat at the table, and each one was received with a hearty greeting from their assembled friends.”

This occurred till all 24 seats were occupied. After all the seats were filled Captain Holman called upon members to propose a gentleman to fill the office of Mayor. Dr. Hayman proposed G. A. Wallis as did Dr. Jeffery, who had only recently mended a rift with Wallis. No one else was nominated so. Holman declared that Mr. Wallis had been unanimously elected the first mayor. While Wallis was signing documents, Mr. Tomkinson left the room, returning with the scarlet mayoral robe. Captain Holman vacated his chair, which Mr. Wallis forthwith mounted

and the Captain then placed the robe on his shoulders to much crowd noise. Wallis then made a speech and announced that the Duke of Devonshire intended to present the town with a chain of office."

This was followed in early January 1884 by the first ever Mayor's Ball held in the Devonshire Park. The format for which has changed very little over the last hundred and thirty years. In the 1880's the format for Balls at the Devonshire Park involved the Pavilion being used for dancing and the Floral Hall being used for dining. On the occasion of the first Mayoral Ball, it took two hours for the carriages to unload the front of the building, each guest being met by Mr. and Mrs. Wallis before they entered the Pavilion for dancing. At 23:30, supper was served in the Floral Hall, after which, dancing was resumed till the early hours.

Since 1874 the management of the Devonshire Park had been in the hands of Captain Thomas Holman, but on the eve of the opening of the Park's new theatre it was announced that things were about to change. The Eastbourne Gazette reported on the 5th of March 1884 that, *"It is with extreme regret that I hear that the courteous manager of the Devonshire Park, Captain Holman, is about to leave the office which he so ably filled, almost since the opening of the Park and a place of public amusement and resort. During his lengthened connection with the Devonshire Park and Baths Company, Capt. Holman has won golden opinions from all who have come into contact with him, and it will be difficult to find another to so successfully fill his place."*

It is not clear as to why Captain Holman left, and it would be wrong to speculate without proper evidence, but there were a few interesting things that appeared during research.

In 1884 Thomas Holman was 48 years old, he was born in 1836 at Folkestone, Kent. In the last few years in his role as Devonshire Park manager, he lived just across the road from the Park at 10 Wilmington Square, with his wife Mary Louisa, their nine children and their five domestic staff. As well as serving as Secretary to the Devonshire Park, Holman was an insurance agent for the London and Lancashire Insurance Agencies and also Secretary at Eastbourne College, a job that was undoubtedly very demanding. At Eastbourne College he would have been responsible for collecting the fees paid by students to the House Masters, and for balancing the books. In 1884, the College suspected something was very wrong with the books and served Thomas Holman with his notice. They also brought in a London firm to thoroughly go over the books, which, upon completion were found to be in good order and no evidence of malpractice was found. This can't have been any solace for Holman as it was perhaps this loss of income that triggered the collapse of his personal life, with nine children, a large house and five staff to support.

On January the 7th 1885 the Eastbourne Gazette printed the following, *"CAPTAIN HOLMAN - At the Lewes and Eastbourne Bankruptcy Court, at Lewes, on Friday, Captain Thomas Holman, formerly Manager at the Devonshire Park, finally passed his public examinations, and an order to that effect was signed by the Registrar."* By 1891, Thomas Holman's wife, Mary Louisa was living in Worthing at her Mother's home with all of the children, while Thomas Holman, listed as a retired Captain, was registered as a visitor at a house in Beckenham that belonged to a family called Noakes. There is also mention of Thomas Holman in a bankruptcy case of 1891, with Holman owing £250 of a £300 loan made to him by a man named Augustus George Dempster. Dempster, at that time was himself going through bankruptcy, Holman's debt to him being described as one of the main causes of Dempster's insolvency in 1882.

It's possible Thomas Holman passed away in Islington in 1895, though it's hard to be sure. Mary Louise Holman, still living in Worthing, is listed as being a widow by 1901. Mary Holman died in a Worthing nursing home in 1934 at the age of 97.



The man, the Devonshire Park Company employed to assume the role of Manager, was a man by the name of Alfred Standen Triggs, born the son of a Chichester brewer in December 1847.

"I am given to understand that Mr. Standen Triggs, the newly appointed and energetic manager of the Devonshire Park, intends to endeavour by every means possible to popularise the Park and its surroundings, so as to make it still more the great centre of the amusements of the town." (Eastbourne Gazette 23 April 1884.)

Standen Triggs moved to Eastbourne with his wife, Jeanette and one year old daughter, Theodora. There were soon to be more children, with Grace Triggs born in July 1884 and two years later Harold Triggs in 1886. The family lived in a newly constructed house within Devonshire Park, called 'Moss Side,' named after their home on Brighton Road in Crawley. 'Moss Side' sat on the Western side of the Floral Hall, fronting onto Carlisle Road, and its rear facing the outside Rink. The provision of a house for the Manager may well have been as a consequence of the Captain Holman bankruptcy, a house, family and staff being of great expense. 'Moss Side' was to be a perk for the Park managers until its demolition in the 1960's, the last piece, its westerly wall, disappeared in 2018 with the destruction of the Gold Room (Concert Room) lift shaft and old projector room.



(Left : The Outer Rink and the new house, 'Moss Side' which can be seen to the right.)

Standen Triggs wasted no time in making his mark, and one of the most popular things he was to introduce were the Illuminated Fetes, modelled on the Venetian fetes recently seen at South Kensington. Triggs engaged the services of James Pain, a pyrotechnist, for the purposes of illuminating the Devonshire park fetes. The first one occurred on August 8th 1884, a description appeared in the Eastbourne Gazette on the 13th August : *"Beautiful as the Park always is at this time of the year, its appearance between the hours of eight and eleven on Wednesday evening the most enchanting. The atmosphere and temperature were most favourable for the illuminations. It was estimated that no less than 3,500 persons were in the grounds at one time, all of whom appeared gay, happy, and enchanted with the surroundings. The effect of the illuminations was novel and pretty ; the trees and shrubs in the neighbourhood of the garden portion of the Park were*

adorned with variegated lights, which caused the beautiful foliage and flowers to appear in varied hues. The music stand was charmingly adorned, and the illuminated initials "J.A.," which were so conspicuous at the back of the orchestra, was a compliment to Mr. Julian Adams which met with the general approval of the large audience. The view of the whole scene from a distance was most charming. The aspect of the sea of faces in front of the music stand, of fashionable attired ladies and gentlemen standing or promenading amongst the coloured lamps, which were swinging in the air, and the weird appearance of the artistic flower beds, formed a grand and exhilarating sight which will not fade from the minds of those present for some time to come. We need hardly add that the musical arrangements were of the highest order, and that the programme contained selections from the great composers, which were rendered in that faultless manner for which Mr. Julian Adams and his band are famous. With such delightful surroundings and such lovely music the time passed pleasantly, so pleasantly that a large majority of the company remained till eleven o'clock, the band continuing to play up to that time, and even then it seemed they separated with regret. The open air band stand was almost entirely enveloped with trees, ferns and palms. A number of rustic stands filled with Japanese plants, together with the subtropical and carpet beds, contributed much to the general beauty of the scene. The whole of this, as well as the floral decorations in the Floral Hall and vestibule of the theatre, were carried out by Messrs. Scott and Co., the well known florists of this town, and reflected upon them the greatest credit. It will be seen from advertisement in another column that the next grand fete will be held on Monday evening next. The arrangements are to be on a much larger scale, and nearly the whole of the Park will be illuminated. Other fetes are to follow, in connection with which there will be a grand display of fireworks." "The ornamental gardens of the Park were illuminated with an immense number of variegated lights. Cards had been suspended over and around the foliage at the garden end, on which the lights were placed, the parterros and lawns were studded with miniature lamps, and the front of the music pavilion illuminated."

The illuminated fetes were very popular and ran for many years, and fireworks displays continued until the threat of a burning Winter Garden stopped them in 1949. An accusation that a Chinese balloon originating from the Devonshire Park had set fire to a haystack and threshing machine in Star Lane, Alfriston in September 1889 was strongly denied by the Company.

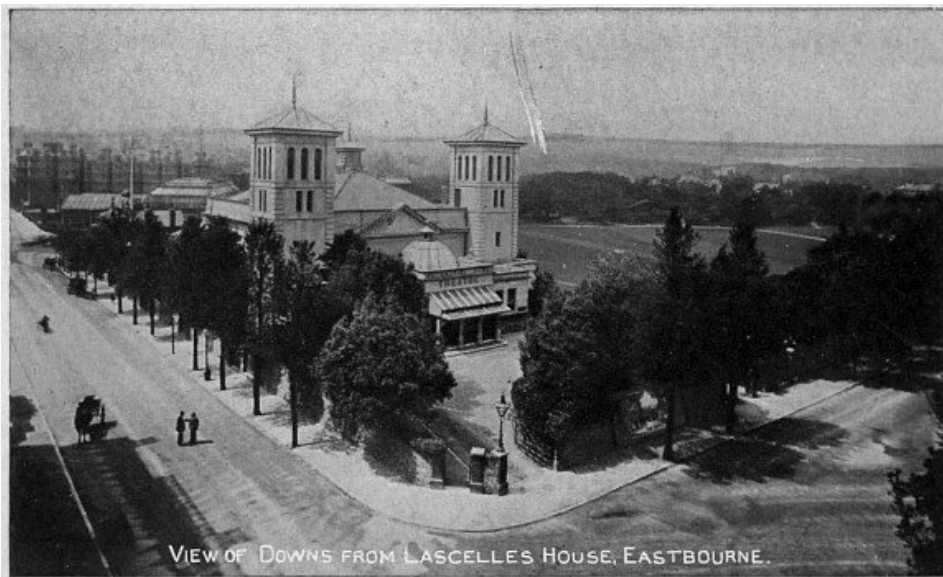
As the 1880's got underway and Eastbourne continued to grow, there were more and more calls for a theatre, *"The evenings especially hang heavily on their hands, and no institution devised by man is so calculated to fill up the void as a well-conducted theatre. The public rooms in the town are utterly unsuited for dramatic performances; the stage being ridiculously small, and the bulk of the audience being quite unable to see what is going on. Under such circumstances, even the best player lose all effect, and the result will be disappointment and annoyance. Devonshire Park is the chief place where a first class entertainment is provided daily, and it is imperatively necessary that some alternative amusement should be supplied, if Eastbourne is to draw the increasing number of visitors required by the rapid growth of buildings."*

(Eastbourne Gazette 19 Oct 1881.) This was followed on the 28th of December 1881 by another plea in the Gazette, *"Perhaps the Devonshire Park Company might be inclined, in time, to add to the numerous attractions of their splendid place of entertainment a small theatre of the bijou type. They have already shown a great amount of enterprise in adopting electric light at the Park, and no one knows what else they may do in time, as the town increases. If they establish a little theatre, the people of Eastbourne will then be able to see a Christmas pantomime not far from their own doors instead of being obliged to go to the London or Brighton theatres."*

"The New Theatre - "The Sussex Times has the following prophecy ;- "a theatre is at last likely to be built at Eastbourne - but with the experiences of the Devonshire Park, the new hall, and the pier, it cannot be said that such a place of entertainment is either wanted or desirable, or that it has any chance with what ever of being remunerative." - (Eastbourne Gazette January 31st 1883.)

In the end there were to be two voices to answer the call, The Devonshire Park Company and also the Season Extension Committee, which one came first is hard to pinpoint. "Mr Phipps' Theatre: The Sensational Story of Eastbourne's Royal Hippodrome" by John Pick and Mark Jones is recommended reading. Pick and Jones relate how the Season Extension Committee, approached the theatre architect, C.J. Phipps and asked for help in designing and gaining investors for the building of a theatre in Eastbourne. The Local Government could little afford to build a theatre as the expense of building the Town Hall had required the acquisition of loans. According to Pick and Jones, the Duke Of Devonshire showed little interest in a theatre, believing that the Devonshire Park offered ample provision already. In the Autumn of 1882, after much searching, Phipps acquired a site near the Mutual Improvement Society building in Seaside Road, in the East end of the town. Plans were submitted to the Local Board on Dec 23rd 1882 but were rejected on the 7th in order that they go should before the building committee first. Once the plans were approved, the existing Villa was demolished and construction was soon underway with an early August 1883 opening date promised.

Who had planned a theatre first discussion was debated in the local press. *"When the fact that a theatre was about to be erected at Eastbourne was first made public, it reached my ears that the Devonshire Park Company was considerably taken aback. It appears that some alterations of a rather extensive character were in contemplation, and that these actually embraced the building of a theatre."* (Eastbourne Gazette 28 Feb 1883.) Then a month later, again in the Gazette, *"I am assured that it is not because the new Theatre is being erected in Seaside road that the Devonshire Park company have commenced the building of a Dramatic Hall at the Park. It is a fact that for some two years or more plans have been in existence for a*



VIEW OF DOWNS FROM LASCELLES HOUSE, EASTBOURNE.

building in addition to the Pavilion in which dramatic performances can be given. Within the last few days the shrubs and turf have been removed from the portion of the Park eastward of the Floral Hall, and preparations have been in progress for erecting a substantial brick and stone building which will be available for use when the concerts have to be given in the Floral Hall when the weather is

unfavourable for al fresco performances. This has long been felt by the Directors to be a growing necessity. It is simply impossible that the Floral Hall and the Pavilion can be simultaneously used for entertainments with any degree of comfort to the two audiences assembled at the same time. I am unable to give a detailed description of the proposed new building, but from what I can hear it will be about 100ft in length, exclusive of a racquet court at the east end. It will cover nearly the entire space between the Floral Hall and the lodge gate at the corner in Hardwick Road, from which thoroughfare it is proposed to have a new entrance, with a carriage drive to the Theatre. The works will be expedited so as to have the building ready for the approaching summer or early autumn, and thus one more help will be given to season extension." (Eastbourne Gazette 28 March 1883.)

As promised, the partnership of Loveday and Phipps successfully opened the Theatre Royal in Seaside Road on the 2nd August 1883, but it wasn't till the following March that the Devonshire Park Theatre opened its doors, The Gazette published a description of its visit on the 14th of March 1884, *"The new Dramatic Hall is approached by a carriage drive from Hardwick road. Ascending two or three steps we reach the entrance*

hall, which has a domed roof; in the centre is a small sun light which illuminates the whole area. On each side of the hall, which we may here mention is handsomely carpeted, are one or two small retiring rooms and on one side the ticket office. Ascending another short flight of steps, the corridor branches off in two directions, one leading to the orchestra stalls and the other to the balcony stalls. All fear of draught is avoided by portiere draperies. We notice just with the draperies a handsomely fitted buffet and restaurant, and in another part a snug smoking room for gentlemen, handsomely furnished with lounges and settees. On the ground floor are the orchestra stalls, 211 in number, while above are the first circle seats. Each seat is a comfortable arm chair, covered with damask in cream and old gold, with cushioned arm rests and moveable seats, in the same style as her Majesty's Opera House, the Haymarket, and other fashionable theatres in London. All the fittings have been supplied by Messrs. Maple of London, whose practical knowledge of the requirements of such places from long experience has been found very valuable. We might mention also that before deciding upon the form of the seats and the most desirable covering, some of the directors made a personal inspection of the principal London theatres, and selected those which they thought most advantageous. The Pit is behind the orchestra stalls and is somewhat contracted. It will only accommodate about 150 persons. The seats are separated from each other by iron partitions. Above the first balcony is a second, which will serve as an amphitheatre or gallery, and is a most commodious and extremely comfortable part of the house. Owing to the excellent arrangements of the interior, the whole of the stage will be visible from every seat in the house. There are no side galleries, customary in most theatres. In the centre of the roof is a sunlight, from which pear shaped medallions radiate, bordered with gold. The ground is a light silver grey, enlivened by light crimson or lake. The front of the balconies are decorated in the same style, and the whole building has a most chaste and elegant appearance. There is a handsome buffet for the pit and amphitheatre, quite distinct from



the stall buffet. The pit and the amphitheatre have separate entrances at the sides of the building, and every arrangement has been made to enable the house to be cleared in a few minutes in case of fire. All the staircases and approaches are fire-proof, and water is laid on in every part, which can be made available at a moment's notice. In fact every precaution has been adopted to make the Hall in all respects as safe from danger as possible.

Leaving the front of the stage, we pass through some fire-proof doors to the mysterious regions below. Here we find ourselves in a perfect labyrinth of peculiar machinery, used for dramatic purposes - traps to send sprites flying into the air, or to raise fairies to earthly regions. The floor is called a metyzanium floor, which enables the scenes to be worked on the rise and fall principle, - that is, when a change of scene is desired, part can be made to rise while another part is sinking. All the flats are ready, but the scenery, we are informed, has not yet been painted, so we are unable to describe what the drop scene will be, but the proscenium stage curtain is composed of a beautiful satin fabric, hanging in folds, which has a very pleasing effect. The building is lit with gas, and both the sun and foot lights are constructed on the flash principle, so that in an instant the Theatre can be bathed in light or shrouded in darkness. The orchestra will be placed in the usual position, and not partially under the stage, as it is found that this deadens the sound. Behind the stage is a commodious green room, and a number of commodious dressing rooms, all carpeted, and properly furnished, for the convenience of the ladies and gentlemen engaged on the stage.

In the same range of buildings a convenient covered racquet Court has been erected, with a small balcony for visitors, this will give an opportunity for gentlemen fond of this game to indulge therein at all times, irrespective of the weather. The lower part of the court is utilised for offices for issuing lawn tennis tickets and for keeping bats and balls required in that game.”

“The older part of the building is being put in a thorough state of repair, and will, where required, be newly decorated. The kitchen has lately been fitted up with some patent gas cooking stoves, which will enable the Company to supply banquets or dinners for any number of diners that may be required. At the present time, the spacious billiard room, fitted up with three excellent tables, is closed, and the Directors have not yet decided to what use they shall devote this apartment. It is greatly to be regretted that this room should be closed, as billiards is such a popular game among gentlemen. The reason giving for closing the room is want of patronage, but we are convinced that under proper management there need be no complaint of this kind.”

There was another Gazette article about the Company’s new theatre, published on the 25th of June 1884, *“The entire colouring of the theatre is rich and warm. It is treated in tones of brown gold, the seats covered with a rich brown gold silk brocade, and producing a most beautiful background to the ladies’ dresses. The tableau curtain - next to which Mr. Irving delights our eyes at the Lyceum - is the most magnificent we have ever seen. It is of rich gold coloured silk plush, made to divide in the centre, and it festoons on either side, forming in this position a fine and appropriate framing to the proscenium arch.”*

One of the Drop Scenes of the new theatre was a depiction of Hurstmonceaux Castle in a rustic frame entwined with ivy, there was also a garden scene complete with statues and fountains and other options, one featuring a house interior, another a rural view and one a street scene. These were painted by Mr. A. Callcott of Her Majesty’s Theatre. There was also stock scenery painted by Mr. J. Rutland of the Alhambra Theatre and W. H. Wood of the Strand Theatre. The upholstery, tableau curtains and fittings were courtesy of Messrs Maple & Co. and the auditorium decorations, including the ceiling and proscenium were by C. M. Schmidt of Holloway under the direction of Mr. Knight. The stage equipment was provided by Messrs. Wood and Lawes and the theatre orchestra was to be provided by Trumpet-Major Gritton of the royal artillery.

The new theatre opened on the 1st of June 1884 with speeches by Henry Currey and Standen Triggs, then followed by performances, although it appears that works weren’t quite complete as the venue closed again at the end of the month for further works. The Era of the 7th June 1884 published an account of the opening event, *“the most brilliant auspices the new thespian temple was opened on Monday evening. The house may literally be said to have been crowded from floor-to-ceiling with a fashionable and critical audience. The honour of giving the opening performances had been according to Mr G. M. Wood’s Garrick Comedy company, and the selection turned out a very happy one. The program opened with a comedietta entitled ‘The Day After the Wedding,’ and next came ‘An Original Address,’ which was spoken by the author, Mr. G. M. Wood. This gentleman performs the duty imposed upon him in an admirable manner, the address is being well-written and exceedingly appropriate for the occasion. After this followed the play of the evening, Mr. G. M. Wood’s version of David Garrick, which was well gone through and cordially approved.”*

The Eastbourne Gazette published a detailed account of the opening speeches on the 4th of June 1884,

*“ ‘Friends, Countrymen and Lovers’ - so Brutus tried
To stem an angry human tide ;
More pleasing task is mine, when smiling faces
The prologue usual in these cases.
First Eastbourne, Empress of the South!
To sound her praises, I must open my mouth.
The boulevards are e’en a Frenchman’s joy,
I hear him say Mon Dieu je suis chez moi.
Her shady trees, the German’s heart must win, then
Recalling happy days unter der Linden
Improvements march so rapidly apace
In Seaside ‘Derby’s’ Eastbourne wins the race.
Obliging tradesmen, civil, not too dear;*

Most visitors, I think experience here.
 Hotels, I don't know where you'll beat them.
 Churches, at every step you meet them.
 You're soon to have, I hear, a new Town Hall,
 Where justice holds the scales, and mirth her ball
 Receptions worthy, to some Royal guest,
 Or public meetings, rights or wrongs to test.
 Your town has now obtained her civic right,
 And marshalled by a "Wallis" to the fight
 With all her sister sea-girt towns shall vie,
 Health, honour, progress, liberty, her cry.
 Eastbourne in Parliament must represented be,
 And her first Mayor, perchance, her first M.P.
 In singing praise, i'll run a gamuet higher,
 And name his Grace the Duke of Devonshire.
 No prouder monument can tribute to pay,
 Than simply, Eastbourne of to day,
 Park, Baths, Pavilion, and last not least,
 This thespian fane, dramatic taste to feast.
 If Theatres you search from pole to pole
 'Twere hard to find a better on the whole,
 (Voice from the audience :- "No Boxes. ")
 Eh, what was that remark, not very clear;
 It sounded like a 'box' upon the ear.
 No boxes, friend Caviller, your remarks de trop,
 When built, they're seldom let you know.
 Whilst from the circle they impede the view,
 At least, their absence will be something new.
 Here comes the Architect, I need not name him.
 It rests with you to praise or blame him.

(Mr. Currey entered.)

Upholstery and fittings are by 'Maple'
 A guarantee there will staple,
 Tasteful and elegant, they're here to bow,
 Your kind approval they'll gain, I vow.
 (Enter Mr. Maple's representative).

Walls, ceiling, and, I know not what decides,
 From brush of 'Schmidt' your verdict bides,
 Act drop by Callcott, scenery by Rutland,
 Both show the cunning of an Artists hand.
 On the gas arrangements I'll throw no light on,
 It has done that - and that's a bright one,
 A. Standen Triggs, now bashfully appears.

(Enter Mr. Standen Triggs.)

I knew he'd meet with hearty cheers.
 His arduous task, though ended, now begins.
 A paradox, 'tis true, and for his sins
 Condemned to cater for the public taste.
 He smiles his thanks, and Lee's in haste,
 The edifice complete - the work to crown,
 Your manager has kindly brought us down ;
 Right modestly our task then we begin,

*Trusting, that's by our efforts we may win
Encouragement, as each puts forth his skill,
To gain your favour and your kind good-will*

At the places indicated in the above the gentleman named came on the stage and bowed their thanks, and were all received in the most laudatory manner. The play of 'David Garrick' was and Then proceeded with, the leading character being taken by Mr. G. M. Wood."

The billiard room had been proving to be a very popular asset to the Devonshire Park and was reported to be very well patronised up until its closure in 1884. In 1882 a competition had been held for the prize of a new cue made by Thurston & Co of London. This was won by a Mr. Jennings, who beat his opponent Mr. Davies by 24 points. This was an improvement on previous events, such as an exhibition game in July 1880 where the then Billiard Champion, named Roberts, didn't even show up.

Soon after assuming the role of Manager, it became apparent that Standen Triggs and Julian Adams were not getting along too well, and it was announced in the press in October 1884 that Julian Adams was on the verge of retiring due to health reasons. Further more, it was printed on the 3rd January 1884 that Adams had been seriously ill though was recovering. Adams was soon well enough to hold off his reported retirement and resumed his role as Musical Director. The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News of the 22nd August 1885 printed, "*Mr. Adams' concerts in the Floral Hall at Eastbourne are now in full swing, and attract big audiences. Mr. Adams has got the best of the fight with the Directors of the Devonshire Park Company, some of whom wanted to do away with the time honoured conductor and his artistic band.*"

On the 5th of October 1885 Adams concluded his last concert of the season at the Devonshire Park. Standen Triggs, not wanting the Floral Hall entertainments to cease, immediately engaged another band to play in the Floral Hall every evening. This band was under the musical direction of Mr. Joseph Clements, and was augmented by two first class vocalists as well as Okita, a lady illusionist. Joseph Clements continued in the role of Musical Director for the 1885 season, but later in that year, Clements obtained the role of Band Master for the Cheshire Yeomanry, a role he had previously been associated with.

On the 24th February 1886 the Brighton Gazette reported "*the arrangements for the approaching season at the Devonshire Park have not yet been officially notified, I understand on the authority of a contemporary who, owing to a peculiar combination of circumstances ought to know that it is not probable that Mr. Julian Adams will wield the baton there again.*" The Brighton Gazette then reported that the Directors of the Devonshire Park had appointed a new musical director for the coming season, Mr A. Kettenuus. Kettenuus was previously a conductor at the Gaiety Theatre and Concert Master at the court of the Grand Duke of Baden.

What was to follow in early 1886 was a very public argument in the press between the Devonshire Park Company and Julian Adams.

On the 24th of March 1886 a letter from the Devonshire Park Company appeared in the Eastbourne Gazette. "*Sir, - the directors of the Devonshire Park Company desire to state briefly a few of the reasons why they are unable to enter into any further negotiations with Mr. Julian Adams. They would've greatly preferred not having to make such matters public, but there has been such an amount of indignation and virulence expended for many weeks passed in a certain local paper, on what it has been pleased to call the unhandsome treatment of Mr Adams by the Park Directors, that they feel their further silence might be misconstrued and they had, therefore, to state the following facts. In the Eastbourne Chronicle, of April 4th, 1885, a letter and a short article appeared, conceived in a most hostile spirit to the Park Directors and their management. From internal evidence and from other circumstances, the directors had reason to believe that Mr Adams wrote the letter and inspired the article, but, unwilling to act without giving him an opportunity of offering explanation, the chairman wrote to him, saying he could hardly believe that he (Mr. Adams) "would give his countenance to any remarks conceived in a spirit of hostility to the Devonshire Park Directors, as they had always encouraged the most kind and friendly relations with him."* To this Mr. Adams replied, and

positively denied either having written the letter or having inspired the article, and asserted that he knew nothing of either. In addition to this the Chairman wrote to him, as a friend, and Mr Adams again solemnly reasserted his complete innocence of the whole affair. The Directors need not express a surprise and indignation when the letter, which Mr Julian Adams had repeatedly and solemnly stated he knew nothing of was placed in their hands and was in Mr Adams's handwriting! Since that time also a letter from Mr Julian Adams to the correspondence of another local paper has been placed at the disposal of the Directors. In this letter Mister Adams continues his eccentric animosity to the park company, and among other things says, "I do not think of having anything more to do with the Devonshire Park Company," and adds "I shall probably take my band to Brighton next year, 1886, for a series." After this plain statement of facts the Directors of the Park do not think it can be necessary to say why they cannot enter into any further communication with Mr Julian Adams. For the directors of the Devonshire Park Company, Robert Insoll, Chairman."

This was followed on the 31st of March 1886, by Julian Adams' reply.

"Sir, Mr. Robert Insoll, on behalf of the Devonshire Park Directors, has at length and been constrained to publish a statement in defence of their conduct, which has elicited an expression of indignation from many of their best patrons. Mr. Insoll says, "they desire to state briefly a few of the reasons why they are unable to enter into any further negotiations with Mr Julian Adams. They would have greatly preferred not having to make such matters public." This I think will be obvious when the facts are better known, and it is therefore curious that "they feel a further silence might be misconstrued." So far as I am concerned, it isn't this very misconception on their part of the Park Company that makes me glad of the opportunity they had given me of entering into certain details of their past transactions with me. I have read carefully this statement as published, but I can only find one of the "few reasons" given, and that one I will now explain, and leave the public to judge the whole affair. First, allow me to say that during Capt. Holman's time as manager, everything went smoothly, and I was not interfered with in the management of the concerts, but when Mr Triggs was appointed in 1884, I discovered that I was being placed in a false position, for it was evident that he was anxious to control all the entertainments, both musical and theatrical. One of the first things I had to complain of was that my concerts were not advertised in any of the newspapers, whilst notices of the theatre were inserted, and larger bills posted. Finding that Mr Triggs was trying to set off the theatrical entertainments against the musical, by making the latter a failure, I requested Mr. G. A. Wallis and Mr. Insoll to allow me to resign, they being the only Directors with whom I had ever made arrangements. They should mean that it was "only an oversight of the new manager," and all would be rectified in future. Other matters of complaint I had to mention, but I found I was only nominally the Musical Director, and, although responsible to the public, and the obstructive tactics continued. This was the season 1884, and I have already explained in my letter to the review of the fifth instant the singular or alteration in the vote of thanks sent to me by the directors at the close of 1884. Early in the year 1885, Messrs Wallis and Insoll called upon me to arrange as usual for the season, when I alluded to the circumstances, and informed them that, as Mr Triggs desired to be sole manager, and had actually engaged a party of vocalist for a ballad concert to be held in the theatre (artistes that I had previously introduced at my concerts), I declined to accept the appointment again, unless I had a new agreement to prevent the manager from interfering with my department. I think the public should know there are only about eight shareholders (and they are nearly all Directors) in the Devonshire Park Company, but everything appears to be left to Mr. R. Insoll, who again leaves all to the Manager; and Mr. G. A. Wallis informs me that "I must excuse him expressing any opinion bearing upon any business matters between myself and the Board of Directors as his "engagements" during the last season prevented him attending the board meetings. Now for the one reason why they are "unable to enter into any further negotiations" with me. The Directors having accepted my new agreement for the season 1885, and Mr Insoll having assured me that no interference by Mr Triggs would be allowed, an adverse advertisement appeared in the Chronicle April 4th in that year, stating that "the Park Orchestra, Mr Joseph Clement, Conductor," would play selections of "high-class music" to gymnasts, roller skaters and acrobats! I being well known as Musical Director at the park for some years, I thought Mr Clement and band of four musicians would be a great disappointment to strangers visiting Eastbourne who expect to hear "high-class music" as advertised, but which could not be given with such a band. I therefore prepared a letter of criticism

of the managers announcement, into of my own reputation, and to explain that the so-called "Park Orchestra" was not my orchestra, which had been heard in previous years. But after consulting a friend, who quite agreed with the opinions expressed he advised me not to publish it, my object is not to give the Manager (Mr. Triggs) an opportunity of saying that I had publicly reflected on his mismanagement, or publicly to criticise an institution of which I had been appointed as a Director for the coming season. This was my only reason to not having my letter published, but the matter was not allowed to pass without a protest from several visitors who had been deceived by Mr Triggs' advertisements, and many letters would have been sent had I not used my influence to prevent it. But one, - a local musician - Mr. S. G. R. Coles, considered (as I did) that it was an insult to artistes to lead the public to believe that "high class music" was played to acrobats etc, and he declared that he would write to *The Chronicle* himself. On his representations and solicitation I allowed him to take a portion of my letter as a private M.S. merely to read and not for publication, as I had already decided not to do so. It appears that he did not write any letter himself but possibly to save time and trouble, he thought his friend the printer at the *Chronicle* office, would accept it for the Editor as from a correspondence for all this, be it understood, without my knowledge or consent, and I may add that it was not even signed by me, being only a portion of my letter. The public will now see that at the time (April 1885) when I wrote to Mr. Insoll that "I did not write the letter, nor inspire the article," these words were perfectly true according to my knowledge, as I was not aware until long afterwards that Mr Cole's had handed my manuscript to *The Chronicle* office, instead of using it as private information for the letter he proposed to right himself. But Mr. Insoll goes further and says that I wrote to him the words "knew nothing of it either." I must challenge him to produce proof of this, as in the correspondence between myself, Mr. Insoll, and the Directors, arising out of this matter, I never concealed the fact that I fully endorsed the view put forward in the letter published, and I also claimed a full right to give my opinion on it to anyone who might ask me. That there may be no doubt on this point, I will give an extract from a letter from the directors, which will clearly show the position I took up :-

Devonshire Park and Baths Co. Limited

Eastbourne, April 11, 1885. To Julian Adams, Esq. dear Sir, - "I am instructed by the Board of Directors of this Company to inform you that the letter and article which appeared in the Chronicle of the 4th inst. together with the correspondence between yourself and their Chairman, were laid before them, and they regret to find, notwithstanding the fact that you inferentially disclaim any connection with the would be damaging letter, it is never the less abundantly clear from your letter of the seventh inst." (to Mr. Insoll) "that you do sympathise with and endorsed the observations of that anonymous writer etc. Yours faithfully, J. W. Pollock. Secretary."

*I was also requested in this letter to answer several questions. The Directors making an implied threat that on my failing to do so to their satisfaction "all further negotiations would be suspended." I declined to answer any questions, and informed them that I had already said all I intended to say to the Chairman. And I remembered them that my engagement had long since been ratified and my arrangements made, and that I would insist on their carrying it out. Sometime after this, Mr. Insoll proposed to take my band off my hands! But I declined this modest offer, as it would enable the Manager to make it appear to the public the same as in previous years, - minus my services - and after I had already been announced in the season as usual. It is not necessary at present to enter further into the artful attempt made by the Directors to back out of the engagements made with me last season, but the immediate result was that the manager "boycotted" *The Chronicle*. And to get a return of his patronage, the letter was sent to Mr Triggs, who actually had it photographed (!) to be able to show that it was my handwriting. I will only just briefly notice the letter of Mr Insoll says he has received from "the correspondence of another local paper." I distinctly deny that I ever wrote a letter which in any way continued my so-called "eccentric animosity to the Park Company," and I challenge Mr Insoll to prove his statement. What I wrote was simply a business communication, and written after I had made up my mind to have nothing more to do with the Park Company unless I could be treated in a fair and straightforward manner. The handling of this private business letter to the Directors is, I suppose, another instance of the honourable manner in which some Eastbourne local papers treat their business correspondents in order to gain some pecuniary benefit. In conclusion, I will ask two questions. What will*

the public think of the conduct of The Chronicle in handing over the letter to Mr Triggs without my knowledge, for the poultry motive of getting back the Park advertisements? What do the public think of Mr Insoll and Directors for allowing such a bargain to be made, and, further, adopting the extraordinary course of having the letter photographed and exhibited to all who enter the Devonshire Park? Yours, etc Julian Adams."

Julian Adams died at Eastbourne in May 1887 and is buried in Oklynge Cemetery.



On Monday the 6th August 1888, the first two concerts by the Devonshire Park Grand Orchestra were held, conducted by Norfolk Megone. Megone, founder of the Meistersingers Orchestra and the Strolling Players Orchestra, was to conduct the summer season concerts at Eastbourne for many years to come, piloting the Orchestra through its metamorphosis into the Municipal Orchestra. Megone had been Conductor at the London National Sunday League Concerts and also directed the music at the Hotel Cecil. In 1890, Norfolk Megone and Standen Triggs became embroiled in a copyright case with an organisation that represented French composers. It was alleged that the Devonshire Park Orchestra had played music without the permission of the copyright holders, a case which had also been similarly brought against Brighton's West Pier Orchestra, where Megone would hold his last Musical Director job in years to come.

On the 1st May 1895, the Eastbourne Gazette reported "*We regret to hear of the death of Rene Megone, aged three and a half years, who expired in St. Thomas' Hospital, last week, from the effect of burns. The poor boy was the son of Mr. Norfolk Megone (conductor of the Devonshire Park Grand Orchestra), and was discovered with his night-dress in flames. Mr. Megone extinguished the fire and sustained some injury in doing so.*"

Norfolk Megone died in London in December 1922 at the age of 62, probably the Devonshire Park's most fondly remembered Musical Director.

Entertainments continued throughout the 1880's much as they had in the previous decade. There were some familiar acts returning for repeat visits and also some new ones. The new theatre was immediately put to



good use, with good some sized audiences. On the 4th September 1889, The German Reed performance at the theatre was so well subscribed that a number of people who had been deposited from their carriages at the Devonshire Park found themselves unable to obtain tickets and had to walk home.

On the 2nd of November 1883, Oscar Wilde gave a lecture at the Pavilion entitled, "Personal Impressions Of America." The Stage printed, "*At Devonshire Park, Eastbourne, on the 2nd, Mr. Oscar Wilde gave his lecture, 'Personal Impressions of America' and greatly amused a fashionable audience by a humorous description of a Chinese theatre in California.*"

There were other talks and lectures, from explorers to mind readers, and in February 1899, Charles Dickens, the son of Charles Dickens, appeared at the Pavilion, reading some of his father's works.

Winston Churchill gave an illustrated lecture at the Devonshire Park Theatre on November 19th 1900 detailing his experiences in the South African War, entitled 'The War As I Saw It.' During the lecture, which was sold out, Churchill pointed to a map of South Africa and said, "This Ladies and Gentlemen is South Africa, take a good look at it. It belongs to us!" This was met with applause and laughter.

There was a lecture from Captain Scott entitled, 'Farthest South' in the Devonshire Park Pavilion on November 24th 1904 covering the 1901 Antarctic expedition, featuring photographs that were shown utilising "the oxyhydrogen light."

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was also a visitor to the Devonshire Park, providing a lecture on the Great War on May 15th 1915.

In the Floral Hall, Poole's World Diorama could be viewed in 1884. This was a touring show that comprised of large painted scenes from around the world, these were rolled along in front of the audience on 80,000 feet of canvas while an orchestra played.

There were the Grand Military Assaults at Arms held in the Floral Hall, including one from the Royal Horse Guards, on Easter Monday in 1884. The Floral Hall was utterly crowded for both shows with people hoping to see displays of cavalry sword exercises, boxing, horsemanship and sword feats such as catching a lemon on the edge of a sword. At times whole regiments would be billeted in the Park, using the space while they were on manoeuvres in the area. There were also equine circus shows, art sales, great political debates including riotous liberal speech competitions.

In 1881 there were disagreements with local tradesmen, stemming from the fact that the Devonshire Park Company ordered most of its supplies from London and not from local suppliers. It appears that this was addressed, as artefacts found during building works in 2018 feature many local businesses, such as The Eastbourne Commercial Wine Company of Terminus Road and the Colonnade, Fry & Co and South Coast Mineral Waters, who were both regional drinks suppliers.

(Left: An Eastbourne Commercial Wine Company bottle, found in the Floral Hall.)

A storm hit Eastbourne on the 11th September 1885, sinking a ship called the 'Skylark,' it also blew down the Devonshire Park's tennis marquee.

On the 24th October 1882, another large storm battered Eastbourne, causing damage to the Park area. Some scaffolding erected on some houses facing the Park was completely wrecked, there was also damage to some of the Park's trees and also to the Rink's Billiard Room, which was so shaken that it had to be shorn up.

There was even once an earthquake that hit Eastbourne, disrupting a Miss Mary Strachane's performance in the Devonshire Park Pavilion.

In September 1885, bad weather caused disruption to the final of the South of England Championship, the result of which was that Standen Triggs had to improvise an under cover tennis court in the Floral Hall for the final. One of Standen Triggs' first acts in his role as General Manager had been to found the South of England Tennis Championship, an event that still runs to this day in the Devonshire Park. It was adapted from the existing Devonshire Park tournament that had been running since 1882.

"An elderly woman, apparently well educated, and of good position, called upon Mr Standen Triggs, the manager of the Devonshire Park, about a week ago, and expressed her desire to engage in the lecture room for a kindergarten entertainment, to take place on Saturday afternoon. Mr. Triggs let her have the room on condition that she paid for the hire of it before the entertainment took place. By her own personal canvassing she succeeded in disposing of a large number of tickets, representing to several that the proceeds would be devoted to the relief of a lady who had being a teacher of the kindergarten system, but who was now ill and in distress. This appeal to the sympathy of school managers and principles resulted in there being induced to take, in some cases, as many as 15 tickets, about 200 in all being sold. At the time appointed, several schools, and ladies and gentlemen, applied for admission at the park, and were informed that no real hiring of the room had taken place, the woman having failed to fulfil her part of the contract, although she was on the premises. The affair altogether appeared to be inexplicable. Much indignation was expressed by those who had been hoaxed. In the evening a number of indignant ladies, who had been purchasers of tickets, assembled outside the house in Cavendish Place, where the woman had been lodging, but no satisfactory result was obtained." (The Eastbourne Gazette 18th Feb 1885.)

The Baths and Bathing were continuing to be popular throughout the 1880's, with reports in the local press that the Baths were "literally swarming with the votaries of natation for hours." (Eastbourne Gazette 4th April 1880.) On the 25th of August 1883 The Eastbourne Gazette published an article on the Baths. "The

(Above: The Music Garden and Sycamore Grove area.)

Baths, the entrance to which is from Carlisle, are uniformly designed as to the ladies and gentlemen's departments. The entrance is direct from the road, there forming no steps. This is a most enviable feature,



and, with the width of the aisles between the bath-rooms, one distinctive of Eastbourne ; the advantage being that ladies and gentlemen may, if they so wish it, be wheeled into their baths on chairs. This is no slight consideration, as more than one invalided visitor were able to testify. The interior of the bath-rooms, their fittings up and so forth, is choice and ornate ; the spaciousness of each, about double what obtains in other establishments, being withal so artistically furnished, is as to impart a pleasing air of coziness. The Swimming Baths are approached down a series of lofty carpeted corridors, tastefully designed, and communicating by broad commodious staircases. They are each 160 feet long, and 32 feet wide, and furnished at each end with shower baths. At one end is a carpeted platform, with seat and spring board ; the aspect of the whole thing being irresistibly inviting. These, as well as the private baths, has been arranged in all of their many little conveniences with consummate thought, and utter disregard of outlay. By no means the smallest of these elsewhere unconsidered details is that of the towelling provided. Here again at the risk of being considered objectionable by our seaside neighbours, the mind naturally reverts to Brighton and Hastings, and is forced to concede admiringly that the laundry arrangements of our own baths to throw into the scales a "whopping-balance in favour of Eastbourne." Taking a towel hap-hazard from the snow-white pile laid on a side table, we could not help burying our face in the fleecy mass, with the effect that for about half an hour afterwards we felt curiously conscious of having sea weeds whisked about our nose. This may savour of hyperbole, but if any should chance to think so a personal experiment with the towels turned out of the Baths laundry would speedily put them right. The secret lies not simply in the towels etc, being conducted through the washing stages by the agency of powerful machinery, but in the means taken for their drying. This, thanks to Mr. Harriott, to whom we must apologise for the necessitated repetition of his name, is conducted on an open outer space at the side of the building railed off, and so arranged as to catch the ozonised sea-breezes. A peep at any time over the railings would amply repay the trouble. The enterprising and conscientious manager has had a hard fight to keep this spot for the purpose mentioned, as strenuous efforts were made to secure it for shops, but through his firmness happily without success. The towelling forms one of the greatest features in public baths, and too much credit cannot be given all round to those engaged in bringing it to such perfection. On leaving the building the thought occurred of the disproportionate waste of time and funds in the patenting and working of so-called improvements, when a little exercise of common sense and honest attention to minutiae have sufficed to render the Devonshire Baths a model, which many of our sister watering places might appropriate with some profit."



A year earlier, on the 24th of July 1880 an innovation had been exhibited within the Baths, a new type of diving apparatus, which was manufactured by Henry Fleuss and Duff. A gentleman named Captain Baker was tasked with demonstrating the equipment by way of performing underwater feats and by answering any questions that people had. The equipment consisted of a rubber mask connected to a breathing bag and copper oxygen tank, claiming to afford the user up to three hours in breathing capability.

The female swimming instructor for the Baths was Laura Saigeman, real name was Tait. Born in Littlehampton on April 8th 1857 she became a swimming instructor at Brill's Baths in Brighton at the age of 14. She had a very successful career as a competitive swimmer, holding the title of Lady Champion Swimmer of the World and, on three occasions, Lady Champion Swimmer of England. One of her greatest rivals being Lady Agnes Beckwith. Saigeman was employed by the Devonshire Park Company as Swimming Mistress in 1879 and stayed there for 21 years until 1900. From there, while still residing in Eastbourne, she became a lifeguard at the St. Leonards Warrior Square Bathing Station and stayed in that position until her death in 1925, having taught many hundreds of people to swim including many from

the ranks of the rich and famous.

"A challenge to Lady Swimmers.

Miss Laura Saigeman writes :- My attention has been drawn to a letter in your paper signed "Peter Johnson," offering to stake a sum of money for the Lady Championship to be swum for. I consider, having beaten Miss Beckwith, who was reckoned the Lady Champion, that I am now Lady Champion, and am prepared to swim any lady in the world any distance, either in the sea, river, baths, or still water, but I will not swim for any money. - Yours faithfully, Laura Saigeman, Lady Champion Swimmer of England, and Lady Swimming Instructress the Devonshire Park and Baths Company, Eastbourne." - (The Sportsman 6th September 1890.)

Three years after Saigeman's declaration appeared in print, she did race for money. On the 31st of October 1883 a one mile race was scheduled between Laura Saigeman and the fifteen year old Teresa Johnson of Leeds at the Devonshire Baths. Saigeman's title of Lady Champion Swimmer of England being at stake. The prize money was £200, Saigeman and Johnson putting in £100 each of their own money. The race was held in the gentleman's bath at 3 o'clock. Unfortunately for Saigeman, she lost the race despite a spirited effort, declaring at the conclusion that it was to be her last ever competitive race.

The Gentleman's instructor at the Baths at this time and for 55 years was Professor Harry Diplock, affectionately known as 'Dippy.' Harry was born in 1862 in Meads, Eastbourne and started work at the Devonshire Baths in 1882 and previous to that he worked for John Hounsom, who was a bathing machine proprietor. During the four years Dippy worked on the bathing machines it was said that he saved 21 people from drowning. These were not to be the only lives he saved during his life. He would say that during his career he taught 11,000 people how to swim, this number included a great number from European aristocracy, including the ex King and Queen of Portugal, he even taught Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his wife, receiving a signed book in gratitude. Diplock and one of his sons also taught Joyce Cooper, an English swimming champion at the Devonshire Baths. Three of his and his wife Sarah's, seven sons followed his career path and became swimming instructors in the Baths, one appearing in swimming demonstrations as early as the age of three. It was these seven sons that resulted in the Diplock family becoming particularly well known in Eastbourne, as six of them served during the Great War, three of them dying as a consequence and another two dying in service later on.

Dippy's son Stanley Diplock (b.1894), was also a professional swimmer in the Baths, during the Great War, he joined the Royal Field Artillery, 187 (Fulham) Brigade as a driver. He was wounded during the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and was discharged "Physically unfit" in 1917, sadly succumbing to his wounds on the 25th March 1919.

Another son, Harold Diplock (b.1896), who was also an assistant swimming teacher at the Devonshire Baths, was killed while serving in the Royal Sussex Regiment in April 1916. Harold was a runner for Captain Cooling, and while talking to Corporal Rouse and an officer outside of the Captain's dugout, they were hit by a German rifle grenade and all killed.

Redvers Buller Diplock served in the navy in 1918, he was also a swimming instructor at the Devonshire baths. He and his father performed the Monte Christo act together, which involved being tied up in a sack and dropped from the ceiling of the Baths into the pool and then managing to escape. How Redvers got his name is interesting, one of Harry Diplock's brothers, George, had served aboard the HMS Powerful during the South African War. He'd been involved in the siege of Ladysmith, which lasted 118 days from November 1899 to February 1900. The siege was eventually lifted due to military action by General Redvers Buller. Dippy's son, Redvers Buller Diplock, was named after this general and upon his joining the navy, he also served for a while on the HMS Powerful during 1918.

After the siege of Ladysmith was lifted, George Diplock returned to Portsmouth on the HMS Powerful, and during a days leave, travelled by train to Eastbourne to see his family. Unfortunately, due to train timetables and having report back for duty, he was only able to stay in Eastbourne for 22 minutes before having to get the returning train. Family, friends and well wishers went to the platform to see him, this included the Mayor and a good number of Councillors to which George Diplock spoke for a short while. Harry Diplock, his wife Sarah, his sister and two brothers, Walter and John, travelled from Meads to the station on the horse drawn Omnibus, which was decked out in red, white and blue for the occasion. The Mayor, Key, upon shaking George Diplock's hand and said, "I thought I should just like to come and shake hands with you. We are all so very proud of you."



Harry Diplock, Dippy's oldest son, joined the navy in 1907, and it appears that he died at home in 1923 from wounds sustained when his 'Q' boat was blown up. Although, this isn't too clear.

Another son, William Charles Diplock (b.18.3.1892) served in the Howe Battalion, he died on the 4th June 1915 at Achi Baba, Gallipoli while serving in the navy. His body was not found immediately and it was a long time before anyone knew of his death.

The last son to mention is Hedworth Lambton who was killed in a minesweeper off of the east coast of Britain during 1940. He was named after the Admiral that led the naval troops at the siege of Ladysmith.

As his sons were fighting abroad, Dippy was doing his part in Eastbourne. When the fleet was anchored off of Eastbourne in July 1914, Harry Diplock, Alderman Harding, Town Clerk H.W. Fovargue and Dr. Turner were heading out towards the fleet on board a Pinnace from the ship Colossus. When from a nearby skiff, a

woman fell overboard and was clinging to the side of a small boat, Dippy and another sailer dived in and swam the forty yards in order to rescue the woman, which they did, conveying her, once rescued, from there to the Colossus.

Harry also served as a fireman and was awarded a silver medal by The Society For The Protection of Life From Fire for saving an old lady from fire in Lascelles Terrace.

On March the 18th Dippy was on his way to work at 18:45 in the eve, and while in the vicinity of Lascelles Terrace he happened upon a scene, the Herald printed the story in his own words, "I happened to be just outside when a lady came running across the road, she told me that a bedroom was on fire, and I at once telephoned for the fire brigade. There were only ladies in the house at the time, and one of them said they were all safe except an old lady - a miss Hill, aged 84 - who occupied the bedroom in which the fire had broken out, and who was thought to be still in bed. I rushed up into the room and through the smoke saw a large bed in flames. Thinking this was occupied by the lady I went over to it and threw a wet blanket on to the flames and got onto the bed to try and find the woman. She was not there, and being forced by the density of the smoke to retire, I went back to the waiting women and said that the bed was unoccupied. I was then told that she was sleeping in a smaller bed, and I at once returned to the room, across which it was now impossible to see owing to the smoke. I groped until I found the bed, but here again was unsuccessful. There was no one on it."

Dippy returned to the room a total of five times and eventually with the aid of a flash-lamp he had acquired from Special Constable H.G. Briggs, who had just arrived on the scene, he found the lady in the corner of the room on an upended chair.

The silver medal was presented to Dippy at the Devonshire Park Winter Gardens by the Mayor, who happened to be on the boat in 1914 when Dippy dived in to the sea to save the drowning woman.

Dippy had joined the fire brigade 20 years previously and was a Reel Foreman at the Meads fire station. "My worst job was the Enys road fire a few years ago, in which the house was set fire to by a man who murdered his wife and three children and afterwards committed suicide. It was a nasty job and one I shall never forget." He also competed nationally as a member of the Eastbourne Life Saving Team and was a football coach at Eastbourne Town Football club for roughly 20 years. He also once swam from Eastbourne to Bexhill, and would've made it to Hastings had not the weather turned. At the Eastbourne Herald children's parties at the Winter Gardens he played the part of Father Christmas for twenty years and appeared on the BBC's "In Town Tonight" show in January 1936.

Every year there was an event that was known as a 'Dippy's Benefit' at the Baths, which one can assume aided Dippy financially. These benefits consisted of swimming entertainments and were very popular.

Dippy on the chute boys
 What will people say
 Chuting down so swiftly,
 What a jolly day.
 Down in half a slap bang
 Wet from top to toe,
 That is how they chute'em
 At the Park Baths Water Show. (Eastbourne Gazette 12-8-1896)

Dippy died due to ill health in 1936 and was buried in Oklynge cemetery with a fireman's funeral.

An article in the Eastbourne Gazette on the 5th of September 1900 referenced Pain and Sons fireworks from the illuminated fete of September 1st, "*We can speak for one that came down through the crystal roof of the Floral Hall, and caused a sensation to the few who were within.*"

In 1884, upon the advice of Miss Sotheby, the author of “Fertilising Mosses,” the considered unsightly plastic plants in the Floral Hall hanging baskets were replaced with Dumeanil moss. This was followed over the next few months by a redecoration of the Floral Hall, “By the way I may state the Floral Hall has been thoroughly cleansed and re-decorated. The beauty of the place is considerably enhanced by the addition of some fine shrubs and flowers tastefully arranged about the building. The orchestral Platform has been improved, especially the back part, three large panels having been painted by Mr. Douglas of the Standard Theatre, London, representing ferns and tropical plants. Mr. Standen Triggs has also improved the means of ingress and egress by the removal of the post office and booking office at the entrance.” (Eastbourne Gazette 7th July 1886)



(Above : The Outer Rink is here used for as a catering area. It’s interesting to note the cracks in the skating surface.)

In 1889, Standen Triggs designed a new tennis house for the Park, replacing the marquees that had previously served in the purpose, “The new lawn tennis house overlooking the tournament tennis grounds of the Park is now approaching completion. Constructed of wood, and built according to a design drawn by A. Standen Triggs (Manager of the Park), it is in the form of a Swiss chalet. There will be an office for the booking of courts, and dressing accommodation for ladies and gentlemen.” (Eastbourne Gazette May 15th 1899.) This was joined by 1892 by the Swiss Chalet, which served as a refreshment provision. In 1893 the Devonshire Park brochure described the chalets, “beside forming picturesque features in the lovely general view of the Park obtained from the Eastern Terrace, still continue, in the capacities of Lawn Tennis House and Tea House respectively, to minister largely to our visitors’ comfort and convenience. A Ladies’ Room and private lockers, hireable by the week or month, will be found in the Tennis House, and in the neighbouring Chalet, Afternoon Tea is served in broad for renders commanding pleasant prospects all around, while upper-storey is available at short notice for private parties, large or small, for whom also the tennis courts on the Upper Lawn can be set aside and Garden Parties can thus be given with great facility and many special advantages.”

Both chalets were knocked down in about 1907 and the current tennis house constructed.



(Left : The Tennis House and Swiss Chalet)



(Above : Tennis House advertising ices for sale and character readings by Annie Oppenheim.

In June 1890 Standen Triggs departed on a trip which saw him visiting pleasure resorts in Germany, Italy and France. Upon his return, he continued upon his series of ambitious changes to the Park.

In 1891, Standen Triggs acquired the Pacific and Orient Pavilion from the Naval Exhibition at Chelsea. This Pavilion was soon renamed as The Indian Pavilion, the name for which it was to hold until its demolition, to make way for the Congress Theatre, in the 1960's. It sat roughly where the Towner Art Gallery sits today, its frontage roughly following the line of Old Wish Road as it entered the park in years gone by.

This description is taken from the Devonshire Park brochure published in 1895, "*it was erected on its present site in 1892, having been purchased in the preceding year from the P. & O. Company, for whom it was originally designed by Mr. T. E. Collcutt, the well-known architect of the Imperial Institute, and first erected at great cost, at the Royal Naval Exhibition, Chelsea, in that year. It is a handsome building of oriental character and forms a striking and picturesque object, when viewed from the Broad Walk, with its minarets rising above the umbrageous groves of Sycamores and other trees that embosom it on either side. For the cricketers and lawn tennis players it provides lofty and commodious dressing rooms and an excellent modern lavatory, and to the general public it offers an extensive refreshment saloon, with windows overlooking the*



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Music Garden for the summer concerts, a well-fitted bar, and a noble Veranda for viewing Sports, Fetes, Firework Displays, etc., while in addition to these it contains a grand central, octagonal hall, lighted by a lofty domed roof decorated in a chaste and elegant style and forming a perfectly unique chamber which has already proved most useful for a variety of purposes, social and artistic, such as soirées, receptions, "Cinderellas," etc. Behind the central hall is a supper room, upwards of 30 ft. in length. Applications to reserve dates for the whole, or any portions of the Indian Pavilion, should be made direct to the Managing Director."

(Above and below : The Indian Pavilion in situ within The Devonshire Park.)

A builder by the name of W. Backhurst from Eastbourne was contracted by Standen Triggs to collect the



building from London and reassemble it on the site of the old thatched pavilion in Devonshire Park. This didn't quite go as smoothly as hoped, as described by the Eastbourne Gazette on the 4th of November 1891, "**SHOCKING ACCIDENT TO EASTBOURNE WORKMEN.** - the contract for the removal of the P. and O. Pavilion from the Naval exhibition to the Devonshire Park was received by Mr. W. Backhurst, builder, of Langney-road and Cavendish-Place. Accordingly he sent up some of his workmen to London: and on Wednesday three of them met with an accident involving very grievous

injury. It would seem that Thomas Boyes and William Worsfold were each seated on the edge of a plank in the down forming the roof of the central hall, Edward Sayers had occasion to go down to shut a door, and he stepped on the board which broke into three pieces. The three workmen fell from a height of 25 feet and had to be removed to St George's Hospital. Boyes, a carpenter of middle age, with a wife and family, lives at Norway. In addition to having some ribs broken, he had his collar bone broken. Sayers, who is about 26 years of age, and married with a family, lives at Warrior Square, and is a fisherman and bricklayer. He is said to have fractured the bone of the skull. He also sustained a cut across the cheek, upper lip and ear; and he also had a number of teeth knocked out. Worsfold, a carpenter, an elderly man living at Norway, fractured one of his legs midway between the knee and ankle. The unfortunate men are expected to recover, but apart from the suffering they are undergoing the loss caused to them by their being incapacitated for labour will be serious."

The Eastbourne Gazette May 11th 1892, *"the pavilion of the Peninsular and Oriental steamship company at the Naval exhibition was purchased by the Devonshire Park company, and has been re-erected by Mr. Backhurst on the site of the old cricket pavilion. With its red tiled roof and four minarets, the structure is most picturesque: we gave some account of it at the time it was bought."*

An excerpt from "Flying Visits" (1892) by Harry H. Furniss adds some colour, *"I happened to look in at the Pavilion just as the courteous manager, Mr. Standen Triggs, had returned from London, his countenance wreathed with smiles, the cause of which I was soon to learn. "Next time you come to Eastbourne, Mr Furniss, you will see a wonderful addition to the Park, for I've just bought the P. and O. Pavilion at the Naval Exhibition." "Good Heavens!" I said, "are you promoting a scheme for enlarging the pier, and are the P. and O. Steamers to come and go to and from the new Eastbourne Docks?" He had no time to reply, for he was off again, this time, perhaps, to purchase the Alexandra Palace for transportation to East-bourne, wherein to hold an exhibition of white elephants, or to make a bid for the tower which is to out-Eiffel Eiffel, at the World's Fair at Chicago."*

The P & O Pavilion was not the only thing Standen Triggs tried to acquire from the 1891 Naval Exhibition, it was reported that Triggs had also tried to buy a full sized replica of the HMS Victory for £4000, the outcome of this unfortunately is unknown at this time.

In 1891 improvements to the Music Gardens were laid out by local gardener and florist G. T. Scott, to designs drawn up by Standen Triggs. In the 1895 brochure, the Music Garden was described, *"herein is situated the Band Kiosk backed by a dense umbrageous growth and flanked with multicoloured foliage and trees and shrubs, quaint rockeries and rock plant, sub tropical palms, yuccas and dracenas and (a much appreciated continental feature) a "Closerie de Peupliers," beneath the light shade of which the afternoon concerts can be heard with an increased delight."*

In June 1897 a terrace was constructed beneath the poplars in the music garden, which would afford additional seating. The Northern terrace was also widened for a sheltered walk. The Broad Walk, which was a path that crossed the Park from the rear of the Floral Hall was extended all the way round the edge of the lawn. A Bicycle academy was also formed, with lessons being given to both sexes within the Floral Hall and the on Outer Rink.

In early 1894 the Pavilion Concert Room was redecorated by Messrs. Schmidt of Holloway, under the direction of Standen Triggs *"whose aesthetic taste suggested the designs, which have produced so fine a result. The main colours are pale blue and buff, in various shades, relieved by crimson, sparingly, but most effectively, introduced. The walls and roof are chequered out in panels, proper proportions being observed, and around the building are a series of crimson tablets, bearing, in gold letters, the names of distinguished poets and painters, and the leading musical composers, of ancient and modern times."* (Eastbourne Gazette 18th April 1894.)



The 1895 Devonshire Park brochure supplies a description, *“Adjoining, but placed on a higher elevation than the building last described, is the WINTER CONCERT HALL and BALL ROOM, for which latter purpose it has of late come largely into favour. In the early part of last year extensive alterations and re-decorations were affected in the spacious Chamber (whose full dimensions are 110 feet b 44 feet), with the result that, as a “Dalle des Fetes,” it stands 2nd to none in the County. The sides of the hall have been filled with ornamental panels tastefully decorated with light classical designs in harmonious colours. Smaller panels below there in letters of gold enclosed in suitable framing the names of the great musicians whose works are heard from time to time in this commodious and beautiful Concert Hall, and these are supplemented with the names of a number of distinguished poets and painters also dear to the lovers of art.” “....”*



(Above) : Standen Triggs, with the white beard, attends the Eastbourne Photographic Society Exhibition in the newly decorated Concert Room (Below) : Photographs copyright Seaford Museum and courtesy of Kevin Gordon.

“The ceiling is a delightful harmony of delicate tints relieved with gold. These decorations were designed and carried out under the direction of Mr C. M. SCHMIDT, of Holloway. The general effect has been not

only to make the pavilion quite an ideal chamber so far as brightness and attractiveness of aspect are concerned, and the acoustic properties, good before, are still further improved, so that it is safe to say that nowhere in the kingdom can music, either vocal or instrumental, be heard to better advantage. Another improvement consists in the removal of the old cumbersome gas Sunburners and the substitution of elegant electroliers which gave a pleasant and efficient light and I'm more in keeping with the surroundings.

In addition to its use as a concert hall, the pavilion is available for various social re-unions, and especially for Balls, for which latter purpose it's excellent floor of oak parquet inlaid gives it a distinct advantage.

Well the comfort of the public and the taste for the beautiful have been thus consulted special attention has been given to what is an even more important matter, namely, their safety. The public part of the pavilion is now provided with no fewer than five doors all



opening outward - some of them double swing doors - well communicating with the stage are two additional exits, in all no less than seven means of egress, more than ample for any emergency that can arise. In addition to this the two pairs of swindles in the best of you are fitted with a newly invented "panic bolts" as used at the Queens Hall, Langham Palace, London, which are so ingeniously contrived and although firmly secured as regards entrance from without, they instantly give way to a comparatively slight pressure from within and once open remain so."

It was recently determined that, at the time of writing, some of this 1894 decor still survives to some extent behind the current plasterwork which was erected in 1910 by J.W. Woolnough.

In 1895 a new floor was added to the reading room as well as the installation of incandescent gas light. The reading Room was described in the 1895 brochure, "near to the principal entrance to the Floor Hall, provides Subscribers with a supply of London and local, daily, weekly and illustrated papers. Recent improvements to this room comprise the installation of Incandescent Gas Light and a new covering for the floor. The comfort and convenience of readers is earnestly desired by the Management and this it is endeavoured to obtain without over stringent methods, the papers not being attached to high reading stands as in some rooms or inserted between heavy wooden holders as in others, but it is obvious that in this connection the greatest comfort of the whole body of readers can only be obtained by the cooperation of the readers themselves."

A Pheasantry was listed as an attraction in 1895, augmenting the Pea Fowl which were introduced in 1891, "located on the wooded slopes between the Upper and Middle lawns, at present contains representatives of the following species of the genus Phasianus and allied groups," "some of these



interesting and beautiful birds have been bred in the park, some have been purchased from the Royal zoological gardens, Antwerp, and others again have been presented.” (1895 Park brochure.)

At the entrance to the Floral Hall, the covered carriageway had now been covered in, creating a new Portico and Crush Hall. The 1895 brochure describes the changes, “*at the principal entrance was an addition of last year. It forms a handsome approach to the new Institution generally and has been found to add largely to the comfort of audiences both assembling and dispersing. The greatest safety and convenience of the public coming to and going from the Park has this year been still further assured by the erection, by the Town, of a crossing refuge opposite the main entrance, well lit at night and connecting, by three paved ways, the Park with the opposite side of Compton Street and Carlisle Road. The new CRUSH ROOM is decorated in a light and attractive style. The ceiling is panelled and adorned with tasteful traceries in pale blue and gold. Hanging baskets of flowers and handsome foliage plants disposed around in enhance the general effect of a really noble hall, which is lit at night by the electric light, installed in quaintly designed hanging lamps of*

beaten iron and amber glass. The Mosaic pavement with its handsome border and the Arms of the DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE boldly displays thereon, was designed by Messrs. DE GRELLE and HOUDRET, executed by Italian workmen specially engaged for the purpose, and is worthy of notice. Extending along the whole front is a projecting hood, beneath which visitors can alight in comfort from the carriages. The entire length of the hood is ornamented with a richly coloured fascia of stained glass which is brilliantly illuminated at night by electric light.

The Inner Entrance Hall - is next reached and therein we may note the booking office where are issued various kinds of subscription tickets, annual and short-term, also tickets for concerts and entertainment and hear information on “Park” matters generally may be obtained.”

An area of this “mosaic pavement” can still be seen at the time of writing after it was uncovered in the preparations for the most recent refurbishment. This area is at the top of the stairs leading to from the Floral Hall. The Portico section of mosaic has been replaced, probably in the 1910 alterations and possibly due to the inclusion of vestibules, evidence for which can be seen in the recently uncovered Portico floor.

Another feature in the Park that survived until fairly recently was the Baldaquin, which overlooked the Park from the Eastern Terrace. It was built by James Hookham for the Eastbourne Workmen’s Exhibition of June 1895. While construction was underway an accident occurred, “*While Mr. James Hookham (plasterer, Devonshire-place) was*



eventually became the landlord of the Lion Inn, Lion Lane in Eastbourne. On the 10th of November 1940 the Lion Inn was hit during a three plane Luftwaffe air raid on the town. Upon hearing the bombs falling, Emma had taken refuge under the stairs while Charles had been down in the cellar. Both Charles and his wife Emma were buried in the rubble. They were eventually dug out by P.C. Horace Goad, firstly releasing Emma, who was conscious but injured, then Charles who was badly injured. Charles died of his injuries later that day at St. Marys Hospital.

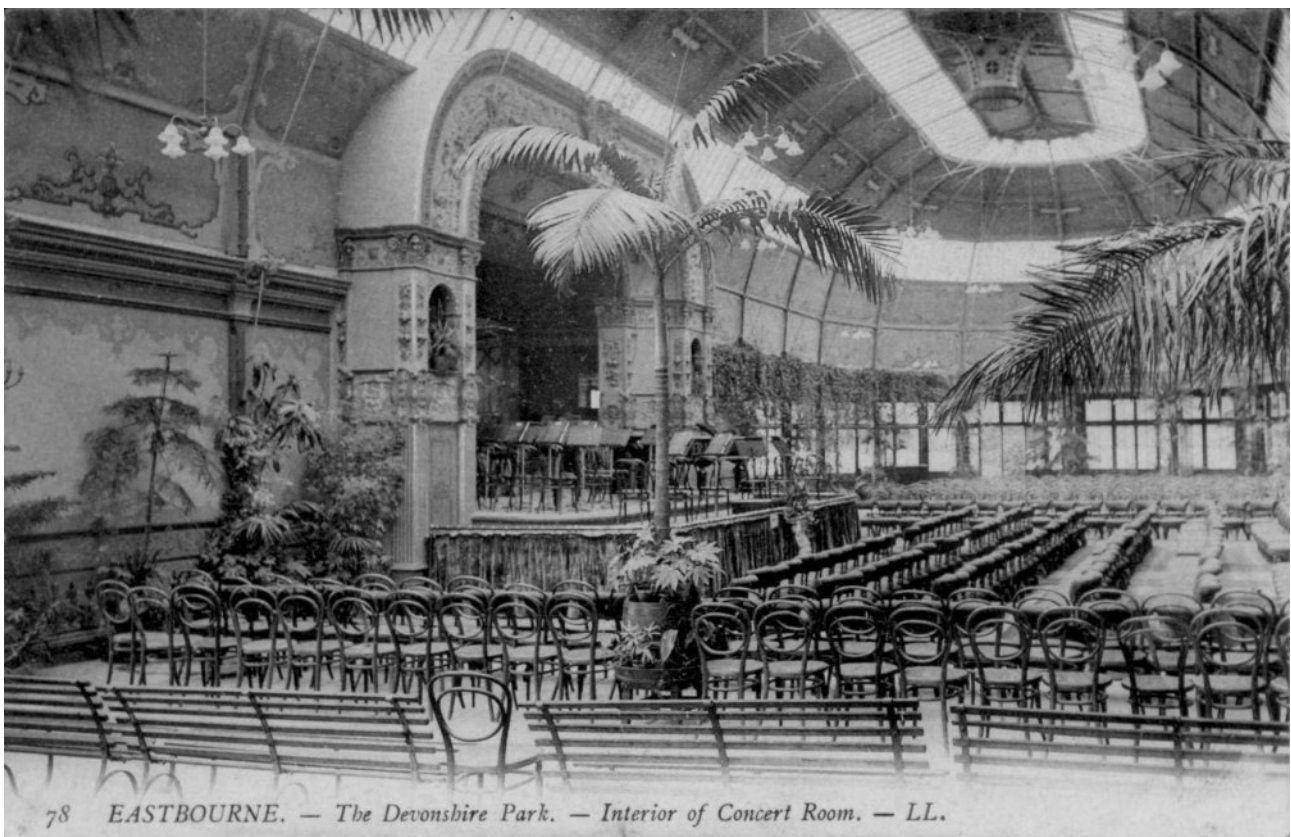
On the 11th May 1899, the Floral Hall closed for a month for some major alterations. This would see for the first time, a stage built on the northern side of the Hall and signalled the end of the skating rink days. Eastbourne's Rink was about to become the Winter Garden. The changes are best illustrated by an Eastbourne Gazette article dated 11th May 1899, "*A WINTER GARDEN - IMPROVEMENTS AT THE DEVONSHIRE PARK - THE FLORAL HALL TO BE REDECORATED. - A SPLENDID PROSCENIUM. - ACCOMMODATION FOR SMOKERS. - Although the work now in progress at the Devonshire Park involves no structural alterations it will cost a considerable sum ; and when it has been completed the floral hall will have been transformed into a winter garden which will be a most delightful place of resort in those months during which outdoor promenade Music cannot be enjoyed. Without being over sanguine we cannot help thinking that the expenditure now been incurred will yield a rich return in due season. The Managing Director of the Park (Mr. A. Standen Triggs) and the other members of the Board have given the scheme the most careful consideration. They are doing even more than could have been justly asked of them ; and if the inhabitants have an eye to the interests of Eastbourne they will in their turn do their utmost to show their appreciation in a thoroughly practical form. A substantial increase in the number of annual subscribers would not be unwelcome.*



The floral hall accommodated an audience numbering fully 2000 on the occasion of a recital given by the celebrated pianist Paderewski ; and additional space is being afforded by the demolition of the partitions corrected at one side of the structure - a miniature crystal palace - to form a room for the storage of roller

skates, a bar, and an office for the managing director. The skater has already ceased to exist ; the partitioning front of the bar has disappeared ; and the office will soon be demolished. The hall, which is 160 foot long and 75 wide, is to be shut off from the turnstiles at the entrance by double doors. These will not only exclude drafts, but will prevent the audience from being disturbed by the sound of the clicking of the turnstiles. Directly opposite the swing doors there will be a splendid proscenium. The arch will be constructed of fibrous plaster. The handsome columns with their caps and panels will be in the French renaissance style ; anti-art above will be enriched with a broad freeze of Jacobean ornamentation. The platform to the orchestra and vocalists will be 36 foot wide and will extend back a distance of 24 feet. A plaster "cove" will be formed to improve the acoustics. There will also be a retiring room to the members of the orchestra. The platform which formally stood at the end of the whole the theatre has already been removed. The decoration of the remaining portion of the interior will be of an effective character. Existing narrow panels will be covered over by canvas stretched on timber frames and stencilled in the renaissance style. The glazed portion of the roofing will not be interfered with ; but cornices placed below the glass lights will serve eight double purpose. Not only will they be ornaments to the building, but will be provided with gullies to catch any intrusive rainwater.

On each side of the proscenium there will be a dado intended to give this part of the wholly finished



78 EASTBOURNE. — The Devonshire Park. — Interior of Concert Room. — LL.

appearance and screen addressing boxes. The match boarding outside the reading room will also be suitably treated ; and the columns and other supports will receive due attention from the decorative artists employed. The hall will be divided by a glass screen ; and ample space will thus be set apart for smokers, who will be able to enjoy their cigars and cigarettes and can see and hear what is taking place on stage. In one corner a space 42' x 12' will be divided into cosy alcoves provided with settees and tables at which refreshments may be enjoyed. The bar will be removed to the space now occupied by the Managing Directors office. There will be a spacious promenade ; and the central space will be occupied by chairs and those audience of desire to be seated.

The bulk of the work has been entrusted to Messrs. Peerless-Dennis and Co. Who have shown by the rapidity with which they are erecting the scaffolding that they are determined to maintain their reputation for

expedition in everything they undertake. The designs have been prepared by Mr Henry Ward, the well-known architect of Bank Buildings, Hastings, who plans the handsome new bar recently completed. The whole improvements will be carried out under the supervision of Mr. Standen Triggs, who is expected to return very shortly from a brief holiday in Wiesbaden and other resorts in Germany. It is hoped that everything will be completed by the end of June.

The Eastbourne Gazette published a further description on July 5th 1899, "*within a few short weeks the interior of the Floral Hall at the Devonshire Park has undergone a remarkable change ; and the improvements which have been made have converted it into a lovely summer and winter garden, an ideal place for concerts at times when the weather does not admit of there being given out of doors. In carrying out the ideas of the Managing Director the architect (Mr. Ward, of Hastings) has displayed admirable taste and judgement ; and well-known local firms and justly entitled to credit for the expedition with which the work has been carried out. Passing through the turnstiles at the main entrance visitors find before them two glass doorways which open noiselessly and give admission into the Hall, the western half of which is allotted to those who desire to smoke or do not object to smoking on the part of the neighbours. In the remaining portion of the auditorium the worship of my Lady Nicotine is rigidly tabooed. Frequent coffee, tea, and other light refreshments are served at small tables what is styled the continental fashion. Waiters passed silently to and fro to fulfil the behests of those who need the services. many of the frequenters of the park in times past*



(Above : The new Portico.)

found it something of a hardship that whenever the orchestra concert was given indoors they were compelled to forswear their cigarettes ; but in this grievance is now a thing of the past. The glass screen which separates the smokers from the non-smokers does not interrupted view. The fashionable audience at the Floral Hall is in itself a goodly spectacle, especially in what Mr. Standen Triggs calls "The High Season," when Eastbourne has many visitors who dress with conspicuous elegance and have a full share of those beauties of form and feature without which the richest apparel is of no avail.

A notable feature of the new summer and winter garden is the stage, the handsome proscenium having artistic mouldings and rich binding. There is ample room and verge enough for the musicians. The opinion has been expressed that a larger stage would have been better ; but its dimensions are quite sufficient for the purposes to which it will be used.

The electric lighting, which may be described without exaggeration as remarkably brilliant and effective, was carried out in a few days by Messrs. Simmons and Winfield, of Terminus road. 21 flame lights in twisted lamps have been affixed to the proscenium, the orientation of which they thrown into relief. There is an equal number of head-lights above the stage ; the foot-lights will be used on the occasion of the variety entertainments would begin in August. The bar (enlarged and greatly improved) and the entrance vestibule are illuminated with five light copper electroliers. New lamps have been affixed to the 16 200-candlepower Sunbeam lights which shed their radiance all over the hall.

Giant palms, tree ferns, and a bright array of flowers and plants had been provided by Mr G.T. Scott, florist, of Gildredge-road and Upperton-road.” “In front of the columns around the hall of various plants and creepers, including the blue gum and the variegated hop. In front of the stage is a large group of plants and flowers, including several fan leaf palms, a beautiful tree fern, and white and pink hydrangeas. The china statuette (a figure of boy) has a basket, which was filled on Saturday with roses - crimson, yellow and pink. Suspended around the whole casquets containing geraniums, variegated grass, and trailing plants. In short, elegance and comfort are conspicuously evident in all the arrangements.”

The Stage, a periodical, also published some details of the works on July 6th 1899, “*the main scheme of decoration consists of blue, pink, orange, grey, and gold, on a cream background. The arched roof is divided into six sets of panels ; the two highest of these are mainly of a sky blue shade, while the remainder are of a cream tint artistically treated with the colours mentioned, the festoons of pink roses and the pretty great fracture being especially pleasing. The stage now faces the main entrance, and is enclosed in a very handsome cream toned proscenium of fibrous plasterwork, ornately gilded. The arch is draped with plush hangings, as is also a small opening on either side, through which the numbers of the terms in the variety entertainments, starting on the 31st inst., will be seen. The floor of the stage has a considerable rake and is fitted with two movable raised platforms for the orchestral performances, while the top of the back wall is curved round to meet the proscenium, in order that all the sound make a projected into the auditorium. This*



(Above : The new Portico. This was previously the covered carriageway.)

wall is painted to represent tapestry curtains blue ground. Two dressing rooms have been provided on the O.P. side, while on the Prompt side a spacious band room and a small conductors room are to be found. The decorative work on each side of the proscenium is carried out into shades of terracotta, in imitation of an oriental fretwork screen and a low balustrade. An orchestra well has been built in front of the stage with which it is connected by a concealed door on the Prompt side. In addition to the excellent seating accommodation, a spacious promenade extends round some three parts of the building, the portion reserved the smokers, which is approached by the westernmost after two massive pairs of swing doors, being separated from the smoking part by a handsome glass screen."

The question of music provision in the town and in the Park would be another subject that would be bandied about for many years, and would lead to the formation of the Municipal Orchestra under the direction of Theo Ward and later the formation of Duke of Devonshire's Orchestra.

Theo Ward was educated at the Royal Academy of Music, later becoming the Musical Director of the Criterion Theatre for about three years. After that, Ward travelled to India with Mrs. Brown Potter and Kyrle Bellow's Theatrical Company. Upon returning to England he spent four years as Musical Conductor at the Princess Theatre and at some point was also Musical Director at Blackpool Winter Garden. Theo Ward was

recommended to the Devonshire Park Company by Norfolk Megone in the late 1890's, and as a result worked at Devonshire Park till 1907, which was when the Duke of Devonshire's Orchestra was formed.

In 1899, The Devonshire Park Company entered into an agreement with the Pleasure Grounds Committee and the Local Council which identified that the interests of the town and the Devonshire Park were very similar in nature and that it would serve both parties if a band was formed that would serve both concerns. The Eastbourne Gazette described the arrangement on March 22nd 1899, *"This long felt want is about to be supplied. Under the proposed arrangements the Floral Hall at the Devonshire Park, now used chiefly as a Skating Rink, will be converted into a Winter Garden. The proposed band will consist of twenty-eight performers in the summer and twenty in the winter. On the sea front they will play as a military band ; and at the Park they will appear as an orchestral band. We hear that Mr. Turner (conductor of the Scarborough Spa Band) is likely to be appointed Bandmaster."* *"The Devonshire Park propose to allow the Corporation a liberal share of the takings at the band performances there."* *"during July, August, September, the new band will not play at Devonshire Park at all, but will be entirely at the disposal of the Corporation. Consequently it will perform on the seafront two or three times a day.*



The East Enders will have such music as they have rarely heard before in their bandstand. During the other nine months of the year the band will play once-a-day on the seafront, and once at the Park."

The Stage published more particulars on 29th of June 1899, *“Mr. A. Standen Triggs, the energetic managing director of the Devonshire Park, Eastbourne, has just issued a neatly-printed and artistically-illustrated circular setting forth his principal arrangements for the forthcoming season. On and after Saturday next, in the evening of which day Mr. Theo. Ward and the Municipal Orchestra will give their inaugural concert in the remodelled Floral hall, orchestral concerts will take place either in the Floral Hall, the Pavilion, or the Music Garden, every weekday throughout the entire year ; in July, August, and September by Mr. Norfolk Megone and the Devonshire Park Grand Orchestra ; and throughout the rest of the year by the Municipal Orchestra. The Devonshire Park Orchestra, including many first class soloists, will play twice daily from Monday next for three months ; popular vocalists will appear in there evening concerts, and soloists of repute at the Thursday classical concerts ; while from the end of July onwards a carefully arranged series of popular variety entertainments will conclude each evening’s performance. Illuminated fetes and firework displays will take place weekly.”*

There were inevitably teething troubles. Standen Triggs wrote a letter to the Mayor in July 1900, *“Dear Mr. Mayor, - At the conclusion of our first nine months joint account, I feel that I must send you a few lines to express my general satisfaction with the way in which the Corporation’s part of the contract has been carried out by Mr. Ward and the members of his band. With the memorandum of our agreement made the 13th day of June, 1899, lying before me, I am unable to say that the Corporation have fulfilled their part of the agreement in an absolutely perfect manner ; clause eight has not been fully complied with. The Corporation did not obtain a band of efficient musicians to start with, and our interests suffered very much during the first quarter from the number of inefficient musicians with which it was attempted to give performances of a distinctly superior character.”*

There was dissatisfaction in the Town too as reported by the Eastbourne Gazette on the 17th April 1901 where Councillor Reuben Climpson was quoted at a council session, *“I was asked by a visitor who was here in August, 1899, what had become of the excellent military band which played in the Eastern Band Stand. I could only answer him in sorrow that some of our members on the Council turned Judas and sold it to the rich at the West End.*

The visitor then wanted to know the result of the change. I told him that it had been disastrous to us at the East End, for we have had an empty bandstand for nearly two years. Now and then the rich West Enders condescended to send us a little music, mostly in the afternoon when our visitors wanted an after dinner nap. He then wanted to know the result of the one big band. I gave him an explanation. I said, “You know the Devonshire Park Baths and the Theatre belong to a Company, their shares capital being 7,233 shares of £10 each. No less than 4,067 shares belong to one man. Most of the remainder belong to about ten others, amongst them, I believe, there are four lawyers. You know, when you were here in 1899 we had two good bands of 20 performers, and a bandmaster to each, that is 42 musicians in all. It was thought by some in the Council and others out of it at the end of the 1899 season that it would be a good thing to have one good large band to play on the sea front during July, August and September, and then to arrange for it to play in the Devonshire Park Floral hall in the afternoon for the remaining nine months of the year. An agreement was entered into that the great big band should be from 18 to 21 performers, to play two hours each afternoon, but not Sundays. The people here don’t like Sunday bands. The result expected by the promoter of this great band was that it would make a winter season. It has done nothing of the kind. A few extra swallows do not make a summer.”

Everything was ironed out eventually, what looked like a sunken idea in 1901 was back on in 1902 and Eastbourne had its Municipal Orchestra.

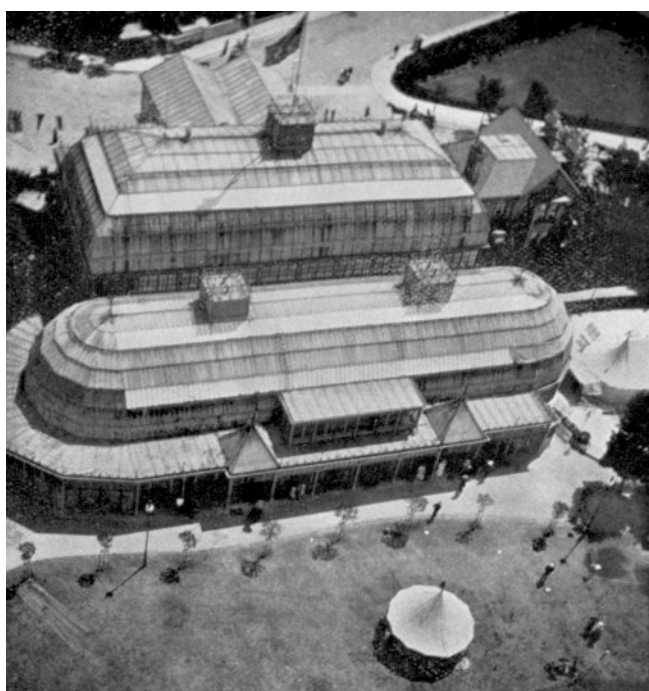
One of the most famous members of the Municipal Orchestra and later the Duke of Devonshire’s Orchestra was John Wesley Woodward. John Wesley was a very highly regarded cellist and brother of the well known tenor of Magdalen College, Thomas .W. Woodward. Spoken of with the same admiration as P. Tas and Theo Ward, Wesley Woodward, as he was known in Eastbourne, was very active locally, not just at the Devonshire Park, but also performing with the Grand Hotel Orchestra. In 1910 he left Eastbourne and joined the band of the RMS Olympic and later took on another job on a new ship, the RMS Titanic. Famously, the Titanic was to hit an iceberg and sink while crossing the Atlantic in 1912. As the Titanic sank, Woodward was one of the


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Gives CONCERTS, assisted by favourite London Concert Artists,
 throughout the year.

musicians who stood on the deck and continued to play, “*So far as can be gathered from careful enquiry, ‘Nearer my God, to Thee’ and other hymn tunes were, as reported, played for some time. Then the music changed to something lighter (which would explain Bride’s statement about the ragtime he heard) and continued until about ten minutes before the end. As they played, the bandsmen are said to have tried to fix on life-belts. It may well be, indeed, that it was not until they were flooded out that they gave up their heroic and self appointed task.*” (The Times 22nd April 1913). Woodward has a memorial in Eastbourne that was unveiled by Madam Clara Butt, a regular visitor to the Devonshire Park, it can be seen today at the Western end of the Eastbourne bandstand.

(Above picture : The Duke of Devonshire’s Orchestra. John Wesley Woodward was one of the cellists.)



(Left : Photograph taken by Henry Evenden from the Carnation Balloon, in 1895.)

“*Picture to yourself, gentle reader, the rapture to be experienced by a soaring soul in being able to*

ascend some 700 feet skyward, an altitude exceeding that of Beachy Head and nearly twice as great as that of St. Paul's Cathedral. 'The Carnation' captive balloon has been brought to Eastbourne by Messrs. C. G. Spenser and Sons the well known aeronauts, of Holloway, London. It is not, as some may have supposed, a mere toy. On the contrary it holds some thirty two thousand (32 000) cubic feet of gas. By arrangement with the manager of the Gas Company (Mr. John Hammond), who is always ready to meet any reasonable requirements, a six inch iron pipe has been carried from the 12 inch main into the Park grounds."
Eastbourne Gazette 1st June 1895.)

As far back as 1897 when the Town Clerk wrote a letter to Standen Triggs, there were suggestions that it would be a good idea for the town council to buy the Devonshire Park. In 1900 the Corporation were considering the idea on purely business lines but it wasn't until 1912 that the proposals began to gain momentum. There was a vote in Council, decided by 24 votes to 11 in favour of a bill to promote in Parliament a potential purchase. It was also suggested that a poll locally would be taken as it was expected that there would be opposition. *"The property, for which £110,665 is asked, includes the theatre, the Floral Hall of 2000 seating capacity, the Pavilion, Baths, a public house, and eight shops. The Duke of Devonshire promises to give the town £10,000 of his share of the purchase money on condition of having two representatives on the Managing Board, and a further gift of the interest on a further £12,000 on the further condition that the proceeds of a penny rate are devoted to music."* (Derby Daily Telegraph, 16th November 1912.)

The 1912 town poll failed 2965 votes to 2543 votes with a turnout of 9394.

The urgency of the situation was heightened in 1913 when there was talk from the Company's direction threatening to close the Devonshire Park in the winter months. It was felt that this would have financial implications throughout the town. The Eastbourne Gazette printed this excerpt from a Council meeting on the 12th of November 1913. *"His Worship referred to the Devonshire Park purchase scheme and said - "if any unwillingness to support the purchase still rests on the belief that the Duke of Devonshire will never allow it to be closed it is time that belief was dispelled. The Corporation knows that the Duke is in entire accord with the Directors in their decision to close the Park during the winter months ; and it will certainly be closed in the winter if it remains in the hands of the Company. Let me say one word more in conclusion. We must not for one moment suppose that a second refusal to purchase the Park will finally end this vexed question. It will come up year after year at the approach of winter. It can be disposed of only by the acquisition of the Park by the Corporation once and for all. (Applause.)"*

In November 1913, the Park Company decided not to close during the winter months and another public vote was scheduled for early 1914, which also failed, 3468 votes to 2773.



The outbreak of World War One put a temporary halt to any further movement towards a Devonshire Park purchase by the Eastbourne Corporation.

“People walking in Seaside Road on Saturday night were startled by a sudden apparition in the sky. They ran, and the police threw down their Macintosh capes and also ran, until it dawned upon some that they witness no apparition after all. Similarly with Poe’s good Dutchmen the object was nothing more than a balloon, one from the firework display at Devonshire Park.” (The Eastbourne Gazette 14th august 1901.)



| PROGRAMME (all Leap year Dances.) | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. POLKACuckoo | 1. Shears |
| 2. VALSE C., My Sweetheart | 2. J. J. |
| 3. SCHOTTISCHE, Pretty Lips | 3. J. J. |
| 4. VALSE Dorothy | 4. Shears |
| 5. LANCERS Iolanthe | 5. J. J. |
| 6. VALSE La Gitana | 6. J. J. |
| 7. CALEDONIANS, Marriott's | 7. J. J. |
| 8. VALSE La Gondolier | 8. J. J. |
| 9. QUADRILLE Mikado | 9. J. J. |
| 10. VALSE..... Fairy Voices | 10. J. J. |
| 11. PAS STYRIAN | 11. J. J. |
| 12. VALSE Pres de Toi | 12. J. J. |
| 13. CALEDONIANS Cootes | 13. J. J. |
| 14. VALSE..... Bitter Sweet | 14. J. J. |
| 15. ALBERTS Selection | 15. J. J. |
| 16. VALSE Swinging | 16. J. J. |
| 17. LANCERS Margate | 17. J. J. |
| 18. PAS STYRIAN | 18. J. J. |
| 19. VALSE COTT., Ruddigore | 19. J. J. |
| 20. SCHOT., Burnham Beeches | 20. J. J. |
| 21. VALSE..... Estudiantina | 21. J. J. |
| 22. CIRCASSIAN CIRCLE | 22. J. J. |

(Above: A dance card from the Leap Year Dance, 1888.)

At the Devonshire Park Shareholders meeting held on the 19th March 1903 discussion turned to the redecoration of the Devonshire Park Theatre. It was felt something needed to be done to halt the continued fall in profits, although this was partly blamed on the postponement of the Coronation.

The Theatre was set to reopen after its refurbishment on July 31st 1903 with work concluding on July 20th. Frank Matcham, the famed theatre architect was in charge of the refurbishment and Joseph Martin was the contractor who had thirty to forty men employed on the works. *“Workmen perched on long ladders - one has about a hundred “rounds” - have been engaged in renovating the exterior by a process of cement washing. The porch at the main entrance is to have a projection which will give increased shelter to people entering or alighting from carriages ; and on the side of the Theatre facing the Park grounds, a luxurious foyer is being constructed. This takes the form of a balcony (roofed and enclosed by windows) 40 ft. long and 13 ft. wide. Situated on a level with the balcony stalls, the fire exit is easily accessible from these stores and also from the boxes and orchestra stalls below. This addition to the Theatre is bound to be immensely appreciated, for it is only another indication of the determination of the management that what ever is done at the Park shall be done in superior style. The construction of corridors at the side of the building - on the ground floor - will enable the seats in August of stalls and the pit to extend the entire present width of the house. A handsome new proscenium will be constructive with alabaster columns ; and alabaster will also enter into the decoration of the front of the four new boxes. Separate entrances to the gallery and other circle of being provided ; the refreshment bar accommodation is being improved ; and the posters and decorators*

will exercise their skills to the utmost to give the Theatre and elegant and handsome appearance.”
(Eastbourne Gazette 17 June 1903.)

James Nagle and Ernest Turner were two of the men contracted to carry out the refurbishment works at the Theatre. Temptation seems to have got the better of them as they snuck off with two bags of black curled fibre, taken from the Dress and Upper Circles at the end of May. These were then sold to Henry Wood, a rag and bone merchant and ex town crier for sixpence, that was then spent on beer. Both were sentenced to ten days in Lewes Gaol.

The works were completed on schedule and a grand re-opening event was held, documented by the Eastbourne Gazette on the 5th of August 1903, *“that is distinguished artist, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who honoured Eastbourne by coming here with the full London company from Sir Charles Wyndham's new theatre to re-open the Devonshire Park Theatre on Friday night, may be described without flattery or exaggeration is one of the greatest actresses of this or any other age. In one respect at least she resembles Mrs. Siddons, of who it was said by Dr. Johnson that wherever she went there were no seats to spare. This was the case at the Park Theatre. Every seat was occupied ; in the multitudinous electric lights - a new and welcome feature - shed their soft radiance on an animated scene. The occupants in the boxes, the orchestra stalls, and the dress circle were in evening dress, the toilettes of many of the ladies setting off their charms to the greatest advantage. The tint of red (rose du barri) with which the seats in the fashionable parts of the Theatre are upholstered gives to the Playhouse an air of warmth and brightness which was formerly lacking. The front of the two tiers of balconies - the dress circle and the upper circle - and other parts of the house are richly decorated in cream and gold. The columns of the proscenium are of alabaster ; and the rounded marble columns which ornament the front of the other boxes - there are two boxes on each side of the house - are exceedingly handsome. The occasion may be described as a historic one.”* *“the evenings proceedings commenced with the playing of the National Anthem by the excellent Orchestra directed by Mr Joseph Clement, all the audience standing. The Mayor (Councillor C. O'Brien Harding) then walked onto the stage, and was cordially greeted as he stood facing the footlights, and standing just in front of the rich rose red curtain. His Worship said : Ladies and gentlemen, little did I think a year ago that within a few months I should be on the stage - (laughter) - not only on the stage where you look to be in the part of light and looking upon darkness all around, but that I should have the pleasure of having light in the audience as well. You have the honour to be in the light this evening as well as the artists.”* *“Continuing his speech His Worship said - I have been asked to make a few remarks with regard to the house, and I promise you they shall be few. I think it requires little circumspection to see what a marvellous change has taken place in this Theatre. I think everyone will allow that they are now in a most beautiful house, fit for any company to come and give us an entertainment in and also for any gathering to come here as an audience (applause). I think we in Eastbourne do not fully realise how the Park Company have popularised this town by the way in which they worked here to provide amusements for the people who either come to live or sojourn in Eastbourne ; and I do trust, because we must be fully aware of the enormous expense that such a change as this must've involved, that henceforth the town will do their level best to support the Devonshire Park and Baths Company (Applause). Where would Eastbourne have been if this company had not existed? It is a great question, in my mind, whether it would have come to the forefront as it has but for the enterprise which has provided us with high-class amusement. Where should we be without our regular concerts twice a day during the season and once a day during the rest of the year? Where should we be without our Lawn Tennis tournament and our Croquet Tournament? I believe that regularly every year we shall have one of the best dog shows to be found in the country. (Loud laughter). Well, it now remains for me just to call on the Managing Director (Mr. Standen Triggs) to introduce you to the architect (Mr. Matcham) ; and, when you have seen him and have also seen the effects produced here, I'm sure you will say that it is difficult to match him. (Laughter.)*

MR. STANDEN TRIGGS REVEALS A GREAT SECRET. Mr. Standen Triggs, who was heartily received, said :- *Ladies and gentlemen, on Saturday evening, April 25th, two nights after the never to be forgotten*

birthday of the Immortal Bard, whose counterfeit presentment we have enshrined above, we rung down the curtain in the old Devonshire Park Theatre on an excellent performance, I may venture to say, of the classical play "Lagomar," presented by the talented daughter of a much esteemed and much regretted brother Manager, Mr. Michael Gunn. And now within a short period of three months we've invited you here to see the curtain raised again on Mr. Pinero's masterpiece by the eminent artist his name is before you and his fame has extended over both hemispheres (applause). I trust that you, like myself, will have many pleasant reminiscences of the old Devonshire Park Theatre - De mortise nil nice bonus. I remember that over 19 years ago on a certain Whit-Monday, I had the honour opening this house by the presentation of Mr George Murray Wood and his company of "Davy Garrick." I also chuckle sometimes when I remember - I don't think I ought to tell you this, but I will tell you as absolutely a great secret (laughter) - that, perfectly disguised, I played the Demon King in the first Christmas pantomime (laughter). Well, a great many tides have evidence flowed on our shores since that time and many distinguished artists and many great players have been presented on these boards ; and now we come to the time when the Directorate of the Devonshire Park, having seriously considered the matter, decided that the time had arrived to entirely renovate this temple of the drama, and I think you will admit that they were not altogether ill-advised when they called into consultation that facile princeps of theatrical architects, Mr. Frank Matcham, under his magic wand, I



I might also say, the transformation scene which you behold tonight has been effected.

Proceeding, Mr. Standen Triggs said - In such a work of reconstruction and re-embellishment there are many anxious moments. There are anxious moments for the architect and for his skilled assistants ; there are anxious moments than those responsible for the structural alterations ; for the decorators, for those who control the plaster decoration of the place, for the various artists as well as for the furnishers and many others ; but there is hardly a more anxious moment than the one that comes to the Manager when he appeals to the house, as he does on the present

occasion, to ask you if our efforts meet with your kind approbation? (loud applause). I thank you very much indeed. I trust that the alterations which we have made have in every case being improvements ; and when I allude to the Architect I also wish to include with him in various contractors who have so ably carried out his designs. (Hear, hear). I allude to Mr. Joseph Martin, who has executed the structural alterations ; I lead to Mr. De Jong, who has great experience in theatrical decorations ; I lead to the well-known local firm of Messrs. Pearson, Limited, to whom you owe this installation of light, one of which you all, I am sure, appreciate ; and I allude also to others connected with the seating and carpeting. I think the efforts of all those will have met with your approval. (Applause). I trust in our alterations we have made no mistakes, and that we had not removed any of those features which you would have been glad to see retained.

Mr. STANDEN TRIGGS went on to say - I remember a great many years ago I was travelling in the Western States of America. I heard a tale of a certain miner who had come down from Colorado, having made a pretty good pile there, and he went to 'Frisco to taste some of the sweets of civilisation from which he had been debarred.

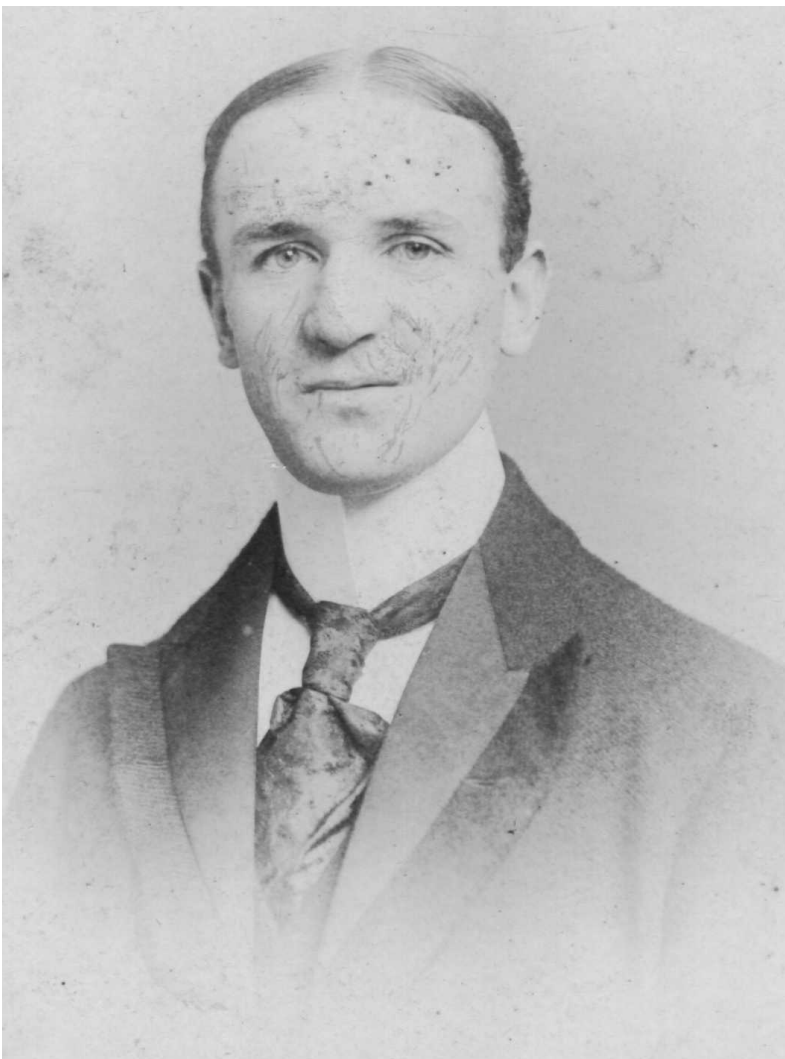
A voice - Encore!

Mr. STANDEN TRIGGS - on returning to the mining camp, he became an object of considerable curiosity to his friends he replied him with various questions as to what had been done in a certain Theatre he had visited in San Francisco. They asked him. "Have they put new boxes." Yes ; they had had new boxes. Had they enlarged the drinking something? Yes ; (laughter) ; that was also enlarged. Had they made other additions in the front of the house? Yes ; that had been done. Then a more interested friend than the others said, "what about the acoustic properties?" "the acoustic properties?" said the Miner. "Yes ; what about the acoustic properties?" replied the questioner. "Oh," said the Miner - not to be beaten - "they have painted them all out." (Loud laughter). Now, ladies and gentlemen, I venture to hope that when I introduced the Architect to whom we owe all these many changes, you will find that he has not detracted from any of the previous advantages of this house and that you will give him a hearty welcome and recognition of his efforts. Therefore it is with great pleasure that I introduce to you, Mr. Frank Matcham.

A PRINCE OF THEATRE-ARCHITECTS.

Mr. MATCHAM - Ladies and gentlemen, I am not going to inflict a speech upon you, especially after the fluent manner in which the Mayor and Mr. Standen Triggs have addressed you, but I must thank them for the kind and flattering remarks they had made about me, and also thank you for your kind appreciation. In conclusion, allow me to join with you in wishing every success for the new theatre.

Then play commences of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" by Pinero. Starring C. Aubrey Smith and Mrs. Patrick Campbell."



On Boxing Day 1907 the Devonshire Park Theatre was leased to Messrs Murray King and Clark, an arrangement that existed for 28 years. King and Clark's association with Eastbourne stretched back to when they were engaged by Standen Triggs to supply entertainments on occasion, not only within the Devonshire Park but at the Town Hall also.

The first aeroplane seen in the air above Eastbourne was observed in mid April 1911. The pilot, Mr. O. C. Morison approached the town from Shoreham airfield, a westerly direction, circling and finally descending to land in Devonshire Park. Unfortunately, telephone cables that traversed the Park were not noticed and Morison collided with these, and also with a tree near the Tennis House. Morison was uninjured and was able to stand next to his upturned aeroplane, signing autographs and chatting to Park patrons. *“I knew the Park, having been here two or three years ago ; and my recollections of it was that it was a spot convenient in every way. Unluckily, I did not know of these telephone wires.”* (Eastbourne Gazette 19 April 1911.)



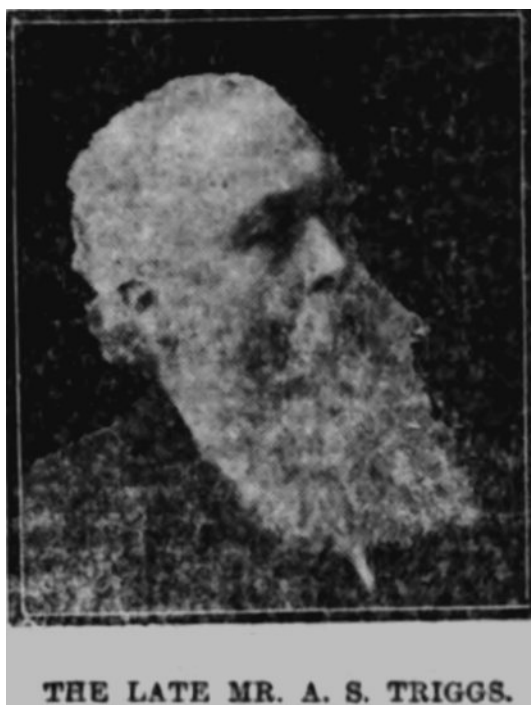
(Above left: Morrison’s Aeroplane in the Devonshire Park. Above right : An early aeroplane soars above the Devonshire Park Theatre towers.)

In 1906 after more than twenty years service, Standen Triggs retired and the Triggs family returned to their house in Purley. A framed illuminated address was given to Standen Triggs by the Devonshire Park staff, which gives some measure of their opinion of him. The inscription reads, “Eastbourne, December, 1906. To A. Standen Triggs, Esq. Dear Sir.- We, the undermentioned ‘old members’ of the the Devonshire Park and Baths Co.,Ltd., beg your acceptance of this address and record of our service, as a token of the regard and esteem in which we have held you during the twenty three years you have been our respective chief: F.Baker, 28 years service ; J. Clement, 28 years ; J. Kay, 28 years ; J. Venus, 25.5 years ; H. Diplock, 23 years ; S.

Daw, 22 years ; G. Gold, 19 years ; Segt. Goff, 18.5 years ; W. Lelliott, 15 years ; A. Hedges, 14 years ; E. Mockett, 13.5 years ; H. Mewett 13 years ; H. Bays, 11.5 years ; H. Streeter, 11.5 years ; W. Maddocks, 9.5 years ; E. Rich, 9 years ; E. Allen, 7.5 years ; F. Webb, 6.5 years.

Standen Triggs sent a return letter, dated February 1st 1907. "Dear Mockett, I was in due receipt of your letter of the 30th ult., and yesterday afternoon the case advised came safely to hand. The receipt of the beautifully illuminated and happily worded address has afforded me most sincere gratification : and I desire through you to return my cordial thanks to all the old members whose names appear at the foot thereof. I hold them one and all in very kind remembrance for their many years of good and faithful service, and shall always be pleased to hear of their advancement and success. I should also like a word of thanks and appreciation to reach the artist for the excellent taste and execution displayed in his work. I am proud to give it prominent position in my new home. Kindest regards to the whole staff. Yours very truly, A. Standen Triggs.

Standen Triggs died aged 63 on the 23rd September 1910 after a nine month illness.



"At a quarter to five o'clock on Friday morning Mr. Alfred Standen Triggs died at Moss Side, Purley, near Croydon, where he took up his residence on relinquishing the position of Managing Director of the Devonshire Park and Baths Company. Mr. Triggs, who was in this sixty third year, had been seriously ill for nine months ; and a few weeks ago we were grieved to learn that there was no hope of his recovery. After twenty four hours' unconsciousness he passed away peacefully.

The first manager of the Devonshire Park was Captain Holman, who is remembered with affection and respect by many of the older inhabitants. We have before us a local newspaper dated March 18, 1884, which pays a tribute to his efforts to maintain the prestige of Eastbourne as a fashionable resort. Mr. Triggs was appointed to fill the vacancy; and he served - first as Manager and afterwards as Managing Director - for twenty three years.

Born at Chichester on the 7th of October, 1847, Mr. Triggs travelled extensively during his early manhood. He lived for

three years at Accra on the west coast of Africa; he was at Shanghai in China for five years; and he also visited the United States and Japan.

Mr. Triggs had had considerable business experience before he came to Eastbourne twenty six years ago ; and throughout his sojourn here he was brought into contact with a very large number of visitors and residents, occupying as he did a semi public position. A masterful man, he was not easily influenced by those who sought to put before him proposals more or less carefully thought out; and, while we have no wish to enter upon the general question of the administration of the Park, it is only fair justice to place on record the indisputable fact that Mr. Triggs steadfastly bore in mind the vital importance of maintaining the reputation of Eastbourne as a high-class watering place. With regard to the important, carefully planned, and costly improvements which had lately been carried out we may ask the search in question whether it would not be most difficult to find any private capitalist who would have the courage to enter upon such an expenditure?

The Devonshire Park, the Baths and the Theatre were under Mr. Trigg's control, and he was allowed a free hand by the Directors and Shareholders. During what he was the first to term the High Season - August and September - the music at the concerts in the grounds and the Floral Hall was supplied for many years in succession by Mr. Norfolk Megone's Grand Orchestra. The illuminated fetes attracted large and fashionable gatherings ; and the great week of the year was that devoted to the South of England Lawn Tennis Tournament which has now become the largest in the world. Mr B. C. Evelegh (the handicapper and referee),

who died a few months ago, was long associated with the management of the Week. The Croquet tournament was inaugurated during Mr. Triggs's management. In addition to the high class concerts given in the Pavilion, roller skating assemblies and galas were held in the Floral Hall in the winter months. In the Theatre performances took place throughout the year ; and the annual visit of Mr. Edward Compton's English Comedy Company was always a source of great pleasure to Mr. Triggs, and indeed all local playgoers. A few years ago the Theatre was enlarged and redecorated at a cost of some thousands of pounds, the most striking additions being the alabaster proscenium and the new boxes with their handsome marble columns. When the building was reopened a memorable performance was given by Mrs. Patrick Campbell and her company who appeared, if we remember rightly, in that epoch-making play, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. Mr Triggs was also mainly concerned in securing for the Devonshire Park one of the greatest ornaments - the Indian Pavilion, which was originally constructed for the Naval Exhibition in London and was afterwards pulled down and re-erected at Eastbourne on a site previously occupied by a less pretentious structure.

Mr. Triggs possessed marked ability in more than one direction. As an amateur actor and vocalist he took a leading part in performances of the very popular operas of Gilbert and Sullivan. One of his most successful roles was that of the Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance*, in which Councillor John Easter (the Sergeant of police) also distinguished himself. Mr. Triggs was slightly below middle height, but he was strongly built and had a fine stage presence ; his bearing was always marked by dignity. There "Learned Judge" in *Trial by Jury*, "Dr. Daly" in the *Sorcerer*, "king Hildebrand" in *Princess Ida*, and "Devil's Hoof" in the *Bohemian Girl* are among the picturesque and striking impersonations by which he will be remembered. After the outbreak of the war in South Africa, a memorable concert was given one Saturday night in the Floral Hall by the Municipal Band under Mr. Theo Ward ; and great enthusiasm was evoked by Mr. Triggs's spirited recitation of Rudyard Kipling's poem "*The Absent-Minded Beggar*," with its well-remembered refrain :-

*Pass the hat for your credit's sake,
And pay! Pay! Pay!*

Mr. Triggs was an able and vigorous speaker ; and at public dinners he sometimes contributed very effective recitations. Most of his holidays were spent on the Continent. On one occasion he attended a representation of the Passion Play at Oberammergau, and on his return he dictated to a representative of the Eastbourne Gazette a deeply interesting account - occupying two columns - of the remarkable performance he had witnessed. Mr. Triggs contributed to this paper a very touching and ably written tribute too the late Mr. Henry Evenden, who was killed by a fall from his horse.

Mr. Triggs was, we believe, a Conservative ; but he never obtruded his political views on those around him. Although he was well qualified to take a prominent part in local affairs, Mr. Triggs never sought to obtain a seat on the Town Council or any other public governing body ; and he held studiously aloof from local controversies. At the same time he was willing to be of service when invited to help, and he took an active part in organising the April Fete Week, with its *Battle of Flowers*, which was the great feature of the late Mr. J. A. Skinner's Mayoralty in 1885.

Mr. Triggs leaves a widow, one son, and two daughters. His chidden inherited his taste for music, his son displaying considerable talent as a performer on violoncello, while Miss Grace Triggs has met with great success as violinist." (Eastbourne Gazette 9-21-1910.)

Edgar Allan Brown became the next General Manager, serving in the position for 15 years.

Between 1908 and 1910, the Winter Gardens were refurbished to the plans of J. W. Woolnough. These works, by builders Peerless, Dennis and Co. were extensive. It involved the building of a new stage and the whole middle section of the building essentially being replaced. These works introduced the main staircase that can still be seen today. This lead from the entrance foyer down to the Floral Hall. The offices and

refreshment rooms that used to lead off of the corridor at this point were removed, with resulting space added to the appointment of the Floral Hall. There were new refreshment bars created at either end of a new Crush Hall, one for the sale of alcohol and one to be used as a tea room, the site of today's Bistro Bar. There was also a new roof, complete with a Woolnough designed mechanism that allowed for the opening of windows situated around around the entire circumference. The motors that drove this mechanism were removed in 2004.

Where previously glass doors had allowed access to the outside rink there was now a new apse created, mirroring the 1875 apse on the Eastern end of the Floral Hall. The main idea in the creation of this new apse was to allow access through to the Park without disturbing any musical performances that might be going on.

The iron columns that were removed when the new stage was constructed were repurposed to this new western apse and can be seen today, augmented by enough wooden pillars to make up the deficit. In fact a great deal of material was repurposed in the refurbishments, for example some original material and colour schemes can still be found backstage in the attic above dressing room three. Other material was used to construct the two fire exits that can be found backstage also.

The new colour of the Floral Hall was white with the bottoms of the pillars painted a dark green, this was complemented by green and white garden seats. In advertising it was boasted that the venue now had a three thousand people seating capacity. Although, with experience it's hard to imagine how this was achieved, two thousand being a more attainable figure.

The new plaster work was supplied by Boenbinder of London and the three new Electroliers in the Floral Hall were supplied by Caffyn Brothers.

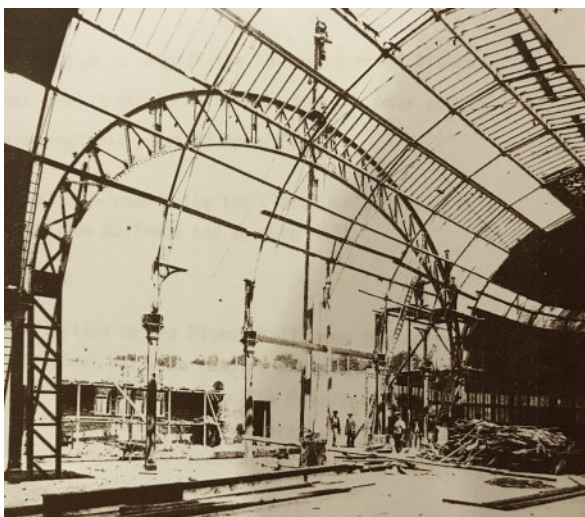
A separate band room was also constructed leading off of the Eastern apse, although it appears that this was not in existence for very long. Perhaps the extensions for the Devonshire Park Saloon required its demolition. In this area today, is a room, intriguingly called the 'Skate Office.' This houses the original rear of the Devonshire Park Saloon and sits below the current day higher level of the pub's seating area.

Further 1910 refurbishments included the removal of the partitions and doors in the Portico area. The iron pillars were removed and replaced with I-beams allowing support for the ceiling above the new marble staircase. The ceilings were lowered, and new vestibules were now installed at angles across the new lobby. The original internal doors for these are the current external doors of the Winter gardens. At the top of the stairs turnstiles were sited, evidence for these can be found cut into the 1870's mosaics that are located there.

Up in the Concert room the old decor was covered up with ornate Edwardian plaster work with a white colour scheme and raked seating was installed. This room would soon become a Cinematograph and Picture House, the ticket counters could be seen, until recently, on either side of the stairs heading up from the lobby.



1067. THE FLORAL HALL. DEVONSHIRE PARK EASTBOURNE.

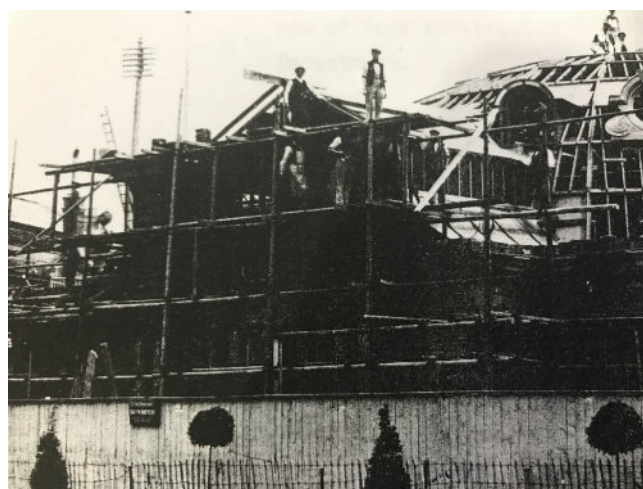


In 2018, one of the ticket office doors was relocated to the Hippodrome Theatre.

Out in the Park there were changes too, with a new Woolnough designed bandstand built in the Music Garden, replacing the old one. This was built by Mr. Dunlop and designed so that an orchestra could be heard in more areas of the Park than previously. This bandstand, was to be obscured in the future by further architectural additions. It survived until 2017, whereupon it was demolished to make way for new conferencing and tennis facilities. When the bandstand was demolished, pieces of broken blue and white china were found, with the words, "Devonshire Park" still

visible. These were probably the middens for the old thatched Pavilion that was located near to this area, where 140 years ago a Policeman hid himself in the ceiling in an attempt to catch a thief.

"The go-ahead policy which is characterised the labours of the directorate of the Devonshire Park and Bath company, Limited, since the appointment, some four years ago, of Mr Edgar Allan Brown to the position of Manager and Secretary, and which has resulted in the reconstruction and redecoration of the Pavilion, and possessing a reserve fund of some £6300, built up entirely out of profits, reached a further most important stage on Thursday night



last with the reopening of the Floral Hall, which has been enlarged and entirely rebuilt by the local firm of Peerless, Dennis and CO., Limited, from the designs of Mr. J. W. Woolnough, and now accommodate with comfort an audience of 3000 persons, each of whom will have an uninterrupted view of the stage, which is large enough to take any kind of performance. The hall is reached from the magnificent front entrance by descending a white marble staircase, and is decorated entirely in white, thus forming an eminently fitting background for the artistic natural floral effects which give the hall its name. All the beautifully designed decorative work is carried out in fibrous plaster. The lighting is on a most lavish scale, and the stage, of which are provided comfortable and well appointed artists' rooms, is illuminated in a very effective and novel manner. All modern conveniences have been included. The tea room has been enlarged to 3 times its former size, a well-equipped saloon bar has been provided, as well as reading and billiard rooms, and the lavatory and



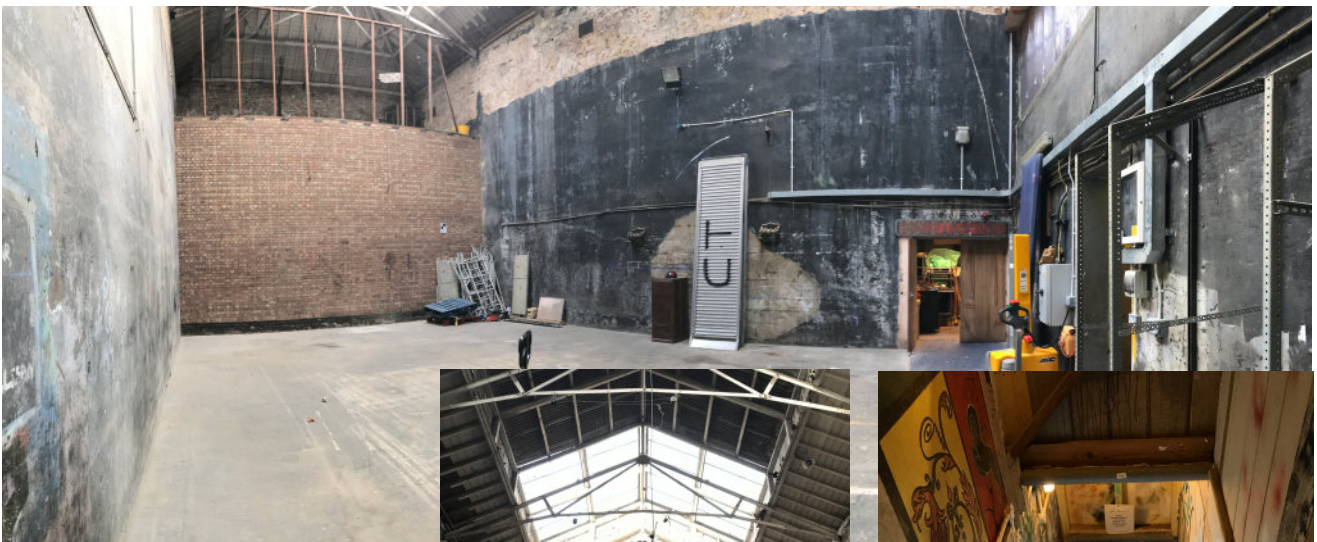
cloakroom accommodation has been enlarged and modernised, while a magnificent promenade will be not the least appreciated feature of what is now one of the finest halls on the South Coast. A fine rinking floor of a very large area has been constructed, and a first class military band will play for skating throughout the winter. The opening concert was given by Mme. Kirkby Lunn, the Westminster Singers, Mr. Harold Ketelby (solo violin), and the Duke of Devonshire's Eastbourne Orchestra (conductor, Mr. P. Tas ; leader Mr. William J. Read), while the future arrangements including appearances of Mme. Melba, Kubelik, Pachmann, Herr

Moriz Rosenthal, Herr Fritz Kreisler, M. Mischa Elman, Sousa and his Band, the Eastbourne Choral Union, and the best London orchestras and Guards' bands.” (The Stage Sept 1st 1910.)

Over in the Baths, there was also refurbishment. Mixed bathing had been introduced for the first time and family groups were to be allowed to swim together between 11 and 13 o'clock on Wednesdays. There were strict rules in regards to attire. Men were required to wear bathing drawers as well as a university costume and females would need to have their attire approved by the Matron of the Baths.

In December 1913, the Racquet Court that sat at the rear of the Devonshire Park Theatre was converted for use as “Life Targets.”

Opening in January 1914, entrance was gained via Compton Street, and once inside visitors had the opportunity of using a rifle to fire live rounds at moving targets which were projected via a Cinematograph. Sixpence would acquire you nine shots, which could be fired at films of wild animals and other interesting scenarios. At the outbreak of World War One, reduced rates were offered to members of the armed forces and it became a popular hangout for the new recruits of Kitchener's army. *“Cinematograph pictures are shown on a screen, and the animals (lions, tigers and others) move about amid natural surroundings. The marksmen at the firing point take aim and fire. When the bullet hits the picture the picture stops for a sufficient time to indicate with the utmost clearness - by means of a flame-coloured mark - where the shot has taken effect. The practice is exceedingly valuable and must have inspired many of those who took part in it with a grave doubt as to whether they do not need to become very much more proficient before they can undertake to bring down a tiger even at a distance of twenty or thirty yards! Motor-cars dashing along at top speed, and giant ostriches also provide targets which ensure very exciting shooting. The repeating-rifles used are easily manipulated ; and we observed on Saturday that ladies were joining in the shooting. Those who desire to be merely onlookers can watch the sport from a very comfortable gallery where they can smoke their cigarettes and find seats in a lounge when they desire to rest or converse.”* The Eastbourne Gazette January 14th 1914.



(Pictures : The Racquet Court in recent years. The brick section was an intrusion from the Buccaneer pub in order to accommodate increased toilet facilities.)



When War was declared in 1914, *“the Orchestra was under the leadership of Monsieur Etchecopar, and there were four other Frenchmen in the orchestra. On the Sunday evening these gentlemen were compelled to sever their connection with Devonshire Park and return to Paris to rejoin the colours. A storm of cheering broke out after Mr. Norfolk Megone had made a brief speech, and the concert ended in further wild scenes of enthusiasm. There were loud calls for the “Marseillaise,” and this was played after the National Anthem, with the audience standing and joining in the singing.”* (Eastbourne Gazette 8th August 1934.)

Marcel Etchecopar became leader of the Devonshire Park Orchestra in 1913 and returned to France in August 1914 at the outbreak of war, along with fellow musicians, Georges Drouet, George Cleton and M. Morel.

We’ve learned previously about the sons of Dippy in a previous chapter, but more than fifteen other Devonshire Park staff were to leave the Company and join the war effort, their absence causing a great many operational difficulties, though at the same time a great amount of pride within the organisation.

One of the gate attendants at the Devonshire Park was Thomas Craddock Brown. Brown had previously served as a Sergeant in the Royal Artillery with 38 years service. Brown rejoined the army on the 10th of November 1915 as a Company Sergeant Major of the Royal Garrison Artillery aged over 60. He served until the 5th of November 1917 whereupon he was classed as physically unfit for service and discharged.

Ernest Alfred Cecil Harris was born in Newhaven in January 1893. He was employed as a cloakroom attendant at the Devonshire Park. During the Great War he served with the 7th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment and was killed in action on the 17th of September 1915.

Herbert John Bays started at the Devonshire Park in 1894 as an Uniformed Attendant and Skating Engineer. In 1911 he was promoted to Superintendent. During the Great War he served as a gunner with the Royal Garrison Artillery. As a result of his service in with the Artillery, his hearing had been badly effected and on the 17th of July 1917 he reported to a casualty clearing station at Ypres with inflammation in his middle ear. He spent a week in hospital and eventually returned to serve with the Labour Corp. After the War, Bays returned to work with the Devonshire Park Company, retiring in 1945. He was soon to return to the Park and joined Edgar (Tommy) Mockett working at the Devonshire Park Saloon.

Edgar William Mockett, started as an office boy at the Baths in 1894. On his first day Laura Saigeman, the swimming instructor entered the office and said, “give me change for a shilling Tommy.” The name stuck, from then on Edgar became know as Tommy Mockett.

As well as seemingly to find its feet in the 1880’s and 1890’s, it wasn’t long before the glory days began to diminish and with them the Devonshire Park also suffered a series of significant human losses.

On the 11th of May 1882, the Park and Baths were closed for the internment of Lord Frederick Cavendish, the Duke of Devonshire’s son. Lord Frederick Cavendish was murdered in Dublin on the 6th of May 1882 on the very day he took office as Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He and Mr. Thomas Henry Burke, the Permanent Under Secretary, were murdered by a group of four men from the Irish National Invincibles. This became known as the Phoenix Park killings.



On New Years eve 1884 Lady Fanny Howard, the Duke’s Sister was reported to be ill with bronchitis following a visit to her brother at Chatsworth, she died at Compton House a year later on the 30th December 1885.



On the 21st December 1891, the 7th Duke of Devonshire, William Cavendish passed away at Holker Hall at the age of 83, this followed a seizure he’d had two weeks previously.

George Ambrose Wallis died at Fairfield Court on the 20th of December 1895, aged just 55. For some years he’d suffered bad health, with Diabetes being listed as one of his ailments. Wallis had caught a chill while in



London on December 10th 1895 which had worsened, eventually leading to his death. The Eastbourne Gazette printed an obituary on the 25th Dec 1895 - *“He took a prominent part in planning and directing the extensive improvements which have rendered Eastbourne a watering-place of world wide reputation. The land now forming the Devonshire Park was at one time an allotment garden and a swamp. Mr. Wallis was quick to perceive that it might be turned to good account: and it was levelled and laid out until what was once a desolate place was made to blossom”* “-“ *“It was, in fact, transformed into one of the most agreeable resorts to be found in any watering place, its proximity to the sea rendering it ten times more valuable than a far larger park in some remote situation would have been. Mr. Wallis showed great skill and judgement in designing the Devonshire Baths. A considerable amount of excavation was necessary. The Baths are below sea level, and Mr. Wallis arranged for a pipe extending into the sea. So at high tide the water rises and fills the baths ; no pumping is necessary. When the baths are full a valve is turned, and any further inflow is prevented. The*

same pipe serves to empty the baths.”

George Ambrose Wallis is buried at Oklynge Cemetery near his brother, William Lumb Wallis who passed away in 1933.



Henry Robert Whelpton, the first Vicar of St. Saviours Church, Eastbourne is buried opposite George Ambrose Wallis. He died in 1902. One of the Directors of the Devonshire Park Company, he was also a member of the Eastbourne Burial Board, The Eastbourne Natural History Society, The Eastbourne Mutual Improvement Society and also helped to raise funds for the construction of the the Princess Alice Hospital.



Nearby, is buried John Henry Champion Coles who died in 1915. Champion Coles was born in 1832 and arrived in Eastbourne in 1856. From 1859 to 1883 he was Clerk to the Local Board, whereupon, after Eastbourne’s incorporation, he held the role of Town Clerk, and from 1887 till 1911 he held the role of joint Registrar and High Bailiff of the Eastbourne County Court. Coles was a Solicitor by trade, becoming involved with the Devonshire Park Company from 1873, his services were often utilised in obtaining many of the licenses the Devonshire Park required annually. He became a Company Director in 1878, Vice Chairman between 1894 and 1898 and Chairman from 1898 till 1906. He was also very active in other walks of Eastbourne life, being one of

the original committee members for the Eastbourne Cricket Club in 1867, Secretary for the Eastbourne Pier Company in 1877, Secretary of the Gas Company, Secretary of the Hailsham Cattle Show, Clerk to the Eastbourne Burial Board, Vestry Clerk of Eastbourne between 1856 and 1915, Clerk of the Peace of

Pevensey, a member of the Eastbourne Choral Society, on the council at Eastbourne College and a founder of the Princess Alice Hospital.

Robert Insoll passed away at his home, "Old Orchard" on the 1st Feb 1898, after an attack of influenza. He is also buried at Oklynge Cemetery.

Robert Insoll, came to Eastbourne in 1851 from Lewes. He served as farm and land Steward for the Duke of Devonshire for 25 years (James Berry was Surveyor and Architect previously to Insoll.) In his career he was an Eastbourne Pier shareholder, Director of the Artisans Dwelling Company, a Director of the Eastbourne Gas Company, a shareholder in the Water Company, Chairman of the Directors of the Devonshire Park and Baths Company and a member of the Local Board. Insoll established the Eastbourne Harriers and was a founder of the Eastbourne Cricket Club. He owned a farm and property in Old Town, and his house, The Old Orchard, was pulled down a short time after his death to make way for shops on Grove Road. He had had a paralytic stroke in 1887 and as a result, walked with a bowed countenance.

The first Chairman of the Devonshire Park Company was Richard Pidcock, a solicitor from Woolwich, he moved to Eastbourne in 1851. As well as in Woolwich, he had offices in Pevensey Road and later offices at the rear of what is now the London and County pub in Terminus Road. Pidcock was also a Freemason and a Major in the Woolwich Rifle Corp. He was described as a kind and gentle man and on the 6th of March 1894, in commemoration of Pidcock's death which occurred on the 2nd March 1894, the Devonshire Park and all the buildings within were closed for a day.

Henry Currey who is arguably the single most important person in the history of planning in Eastbourne, passed away in 1900. He had a great hand in designing many of its buildings, the Winter Gardens and the Devonshire Park Theatre being amongst them.

1910 onwards

Over the next one hundred and twelve years the story of Eastbourne's Winter Gardens and Devonshire Park continued, and it is very tempting to widen the focus of this piece to include this next set of years. I'll leave that task to the next 'me' who finds themselves scratching their chin and looking up in wonder in the Floral Hall.

As we've seen, times, tastes and society were moving so quickly that the Winter Gardens was destined to struggle to keep up. Over the next few years the question of the purchase of the Park by Eastbourne's Corporation was periodically fielded, even going to public vote on more than one occasion. Eventually, it did happen and today the Devonshire Park and Winter Gardens reside under the control of Eastbourne Borough Council. In the early 2020s, a staccato series of renovations have been undertaken within the Park. I've seen a great deal of the site's history demolished or confined to a skip over the last four or so years, all of which has been sad to see.



As an employee at the Devonshire Park for twenty two years, I learned a great deal about the site, from people who'd worked there for many years and also from personal research. I became 'that guy,' the one that every old building seems to have.

When the Park shut down for renovations in around 2018, I decided to spend some of that time writing down the things that I have learned about the building and the people who have passed through it. Despite its inevitable inaccuracies and literary shortcomings I hope this work will be of interest to some, and if you get the chance, have a seat in the Floral Hall sometime and imagine the echoey sound of skates, laughter and Adams' musicians, combine that with the smell of dust, oil and coffee and foliage. Thank you for picking up these words and spending a little time with them, you've helped the stories of this Park and some fascinating people be told for a little longer.

D. Davies

May 2022

