



This heritage walk is produced by the project 'Discovering the Belgian Community in Royal Tunbridge Wells, 1914-19', a collaboration between the University of Kent and CREATE.

Working with University staff, volunteers have consulted archives in Brussels and London and researched in newspapers and other sources to build up a picture of the lives of the several hundred Belgian citizens who sought refuge in Tunbridge Wells and the surrounding area during the First World War. Following the German invasion of Belgium on 4th August 1914, around a quarter of the population fled the country to neutral Holland, to France, and an estimated 250,000 to Britain.



Mayor C.W. Emson by Paul Van Der Kerckhove

Here they were provided with homes, food, clothing, employment and schooling through the services of a national War Refugees' Committee working with voluntary Local Committees, such as the one set up by Tunbridge Wells Mayor Charles Whitbourn Emson.

The starting point for the project was a souvenir album presented to local sisters, Amelia and Louisa Scott by members of the local Belgian community on 21 July 1916 and signed by 170 people.

A hundred and one years later local residents and visitors alike can use this walk leaflet and the accompanying website <https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/rtwbelgians/> to learn the history not only of the wartime Belgian community in Tunbridge Wells but also of the women and men who – like the Scott sisters – gave a warm welcome to the visitors.



Tunbridge Wells Cemetery The refugees who never went home

In the Roman Catholic Section of the Cemetery (C5 and B6) are the graves of seven of the Belgian refugees, three children and four adults. Three are unmarked, but the memorials of Mme Denyn-Schuermans and her daughter Emma, baby Joseph Van Nuland, and Mme Rosalie Gebruers-De Pauw still stand.



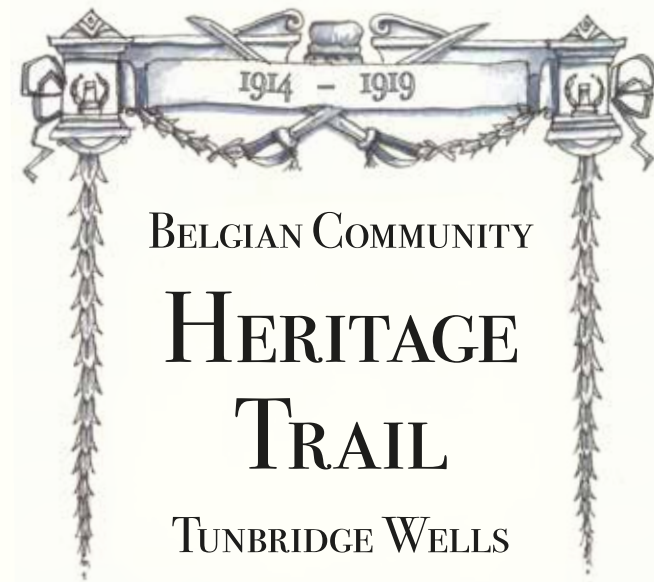
The research project was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council through the Gateways to the First World War Public Engagement Centre.

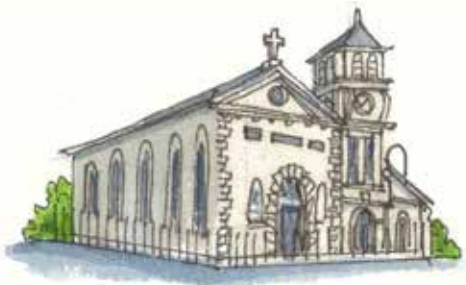


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1 Grosvenor Lodge, Grosvenor Road
One of the first groups of refugees lived here from October 1914.



2 Site of St Augustine's Roman Catholic Church, corner of Hanover Road/Grosvenor Road The spiritual home of most of the Belgians. Children attended St Augustine's School which was next door.



12 War Memorial



11 Town Hall
The bronze bust of Mayor Whitbourn Emson, a gift from the town's 'Belgian Colony', (see 13) stands in the lobby of the Council Chamber (viewable only during *Heritage Open Days*).



13 The Great Hall, Mount Pleasant
Where the bust of the Mayor (see 11) was presented on 22nd September 1915.

14 Tunbridge Wells Railway Station
The point of arrival for most of the refugees.



15 79 High Street
Site of 'The Belgian Shop'



18 King Charles the Martyr School, Chapel Place
Belgian children attended this and other schools.



Take the 285 bus from either the Railway Station or Monson Road to visit the Belgian graves at the **Tunbridge Wells Cemetery** at Hawkenbury (see over).

The Pantiles
Pantiles Tourist Office



3 Site of General Hospital, Grosvenor Road
(now a parade of shops) One of many places where refugees and Belgian soldiers received medical treatment.



4 Tunbridge Wells Opera House
The Belgians were given free tickets to performances here.



Across the road are **Dudley Road** and **York Road** where refugees were housed.



7 4 Lansdowne Road
Home of Amelia and Louisa Scott



5 Constitutional Club, 32-38 Calverley Road The Belgians' social club, the Club Albert, met in this building. Membership of the Club entitled them to free entry to film showings at the **Kosmos Kinema Picture House** next door at no.40.
To the right at the crossroads is **Monson Road** where apartment accommodation was provided.



6 Site of the Town Hall, corner of Calverley Road/Calverley Street
On 21st July 1916 the Belgians thanked members of the Committee, including Amelia and Louisa Scott (see 7) for their compassionate hospitality at a ceremony here.

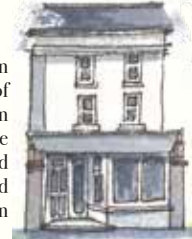
8 Calverley Park Crescent
Apartment accommodation was provided here, and Calverley Park was the scene of a number of events attended by the Belgian community.



9 St Augustine's Roman Catholic Church
Built in 1975. The impressive crucifix in the narthex is a memorial to the Fallen of the First World War.



10 18 Crescent Road
Clothing Depot run by the local branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies where donated clothing was collected and distributed to those in need at home and abroad.



16 Eye and Ear Hospital, 22 Mount Sion
17 Kent Nursing Institution, 18 Mount Sion
Belgian soldiers were treated and Belgian refugees worked, here and in other hospitals around the Borough.

