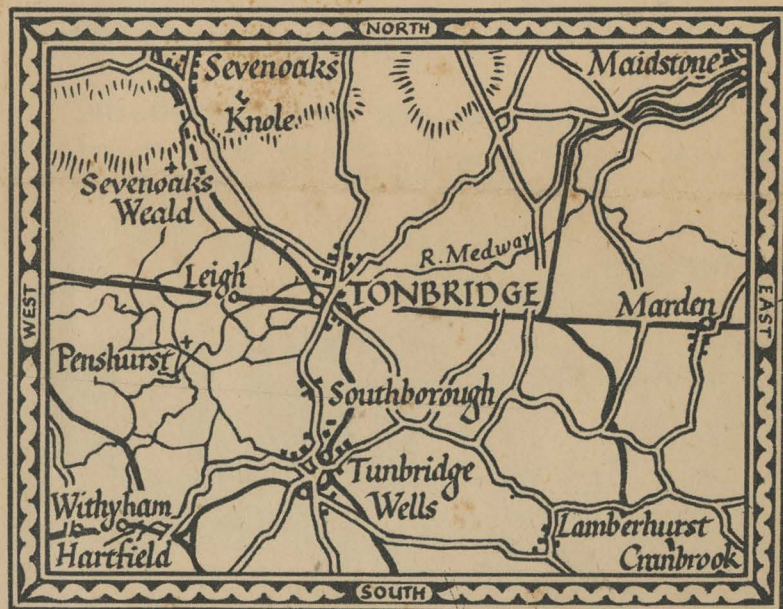


to the north and those of Tunbridge Wells to the south. All round about are places of the greatest natural beauty and historic interest. Penshurst and Knole, two of the finest old manor houses in the country, are within six miles. Tunbridge Wells with its famous waters and its breezy commons is five miles away. Tonbridge itself boasts an ancient castle with a history that goes back to Saxon days.

Situated as the town is at a junction, both of main roads and rail, access to all parts of Kent is easy. There is railway communication direct with the coast from Hastings to Margate, and westward, without touching London, to Guildford and Reading. The main road from the West to Maidstone and Canterbury meets the London-Hastings and Eastbourne road, in the town.

Sport of all kinds is to be obtained in the neighbourhood. Four packs of hounds meet near by. The river provides boating, fishing and bathing, and there is golf and tennis and, of course, the County Cricket to be seen on the famous Angel ground.

Tonbridge is an unusually convenient centre for the holiday maker, within an hour by rail—and little more by road—of London, yet a typically peaceful old Kentish market town amid a country of hop-fields and wooded meadows.



Scale



5 Miles

Further particulars can be obtained from the Manager of the "Rose and Crown," Tonbridge (Tel. 128), or from Trust Houses, Ltd., Shorts Gardens, London, W.C.2, from whom other leaflets of this series may be had upon application.

The R.A.P. Co. Ltd., London, E.C.4.

TALES OF OLD INNS

No. 17. The "Rose and Crown" at Tonbridge



THE "ROSE AND CROWN," TONBRIDGE.

THERE is something comfortably solid about this typical old English inn; a well-to-do air that comes of years of peace and prosperity. Its unostentatious early eighteenth century front—of chequered blue and red brick—facing Tonbridge High Street, is but the modern mantle of an older house. Within, the *Rose and Crown* betrays in many ways a Jacobean if not an earlier origin. There are great oak beams, and remains of seventeenth century panelling about the house which tell of the building's true age. And in the cellars is the stonework which suggests that probably the seventeenth century building replaced a much earlier one.

But as an inn, the tale of the *Rose and Crown* almost certainly begins with the rise to popularity of that "spa," but five miles away, which bears the town's name. When the nobility and gentry began to flock to Tunbridge Wells in the first part of the seventeenth century, there was little accommodation for them nearer than Tonbridge. And many inns arose in this Kentish town at that time.

In Tudor days, and earlier, according to local tradition, there was but one

hostelry fit to house gentlefolk in Tonbridge, and that, the picturesque old *Chequers* almost opposite to the *Rose and Crown*. But at the beginning of the coaching era the *Rose and Crown* had already achieved that pride of place which it has never since lost.

And this perhaps is partly due to the fact that "from time immemorial" this house has been the headquarters of the Masters, Wardens and Court of the Skinners' Company upon the occasion of their annual visit to Tonbridge School, a foundation of that worthy Skinner Sir Andrew Judd, a native of Tonbridge, in Edward VI's reign. Judd left the school as a sacred trust to the Skinners, and each year they pay it an official inspection.

The *Rose and Crown* is a jolly old house, once, as you may see from the street, a good deal bigger than it is to-day. You enter into a spacious hall, recently enlarged by throwing into it a smaller room on the left. The hall contains a few panels of Jacobean oak discovered during modern restoration. Facing you is a big glazed cupboard of comparatively recent origin, in which are displayed some fine specimens of Staffordshire blue and white pottery of ship design, some old glasses and decanters, remains of the former coffee-room equipment of the house. And this case hides the splendid old staircase, which once led straight into the hall. You can see clearly where the final turn of the stairs towards the entrance has been diverted.

One of those scarce old coaching, or "Act of Parliament" clocks, still keeps good time on the wall to the right, and the hall contains an old gate-legged table and a fine Georgian sideboard. Other good specimens of early furniture—two excellent chests among them—are scattered about all over the house.

Upstairs, sturdy beams of age-blackened oak tell of the original design of the building—probably a gabled half-timbered edifice. One room still retains its old Jacobean panelling, discovered under modern wall papers not so very long since. Room No. 17 is that assigned for generations past to the Master of the Skinners' Company. Its windows give access to the top of the porch over the entrance to the inn. And from the balcony so provided, the Master each year acknowledges the cheers and greetings of the Tonbridge boys, who, following an old tradition, always assemble early in the morning of "Skinners' Day"—the last Wednesday in July—to give him a hearty school welcome.

Among the relics of the house are some old labels inscribed with the titles of the principal officers of the Company, which were in old time hung upon their room doors. The Court of the Company used at one time to ride all the way from London to the *Rose and Crown*. In later years they took train to Sevenoaks and drove from there. But now they come to Tonbridge by train, although they still finish their journey in horse-drawn cabs, scorning the modern petrol engine.

The *Rose and Crown* was a busy place in the coaching era, as its long range of stables—now garage accommodation mostly—clearly shows. On the main road from London to Rye, Hastings and Eastbourne a fine array of coaches pulled up at its door each day. From the *Golden Cross*, the *Bolt in Tin* and the *Belle Sauvage* the coaches used to make the journey, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in about five hours. But this time was reduced a few years later when the "Royal William," the "Express," the "Paragon" and the "Regulator" would come swinging through the High Street on their way to and from Hastings.

A big private posting trade was done here too, and most of the persons of note travelling to "The Wells" used the house. Queen Victoria as a girl was here with her mother the Duchess of Kent. In fact the Duchess, who was frequently at Tunbridge Wells, must have given her patronage to the house, for her arms are still displayed, side by side with those of her husband, over the entrance porch. And it is recorded that Queen Victoria, after she had ascended the throne, stopped here to rest while her carriage changed horses, during a journey to Hastings.

In more recent times the *Rose and Crown* had a popular landlord in the late Tom Pawley, one time Secretary of the Kent County Cricket Club, and much great gossip of the national game went on in the cosy old-fashioned bar, which most of the giants of cricket in the last few decades must have known well.

The old house still keeps its prosperous bustling atmosphere of a thriving coaching inn. True, few travellers come now with horses to clatter through the big archway into the stable yard—on one side of which, by the way, is a pleasant walled garden which provides much produce for the table—but all motorists know and use this cheerful hostelry, for it is almost exactly the half-way house between the metropolis and the coast.

For the best part of three centuries the *Rose and Crown* has offered hospitality to travellers on the Kentish roads, and it shows no sign of weariness or decay yet.

TONBRIDGE AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

The ancient town of Tonbridge, thirty miles from London, lies amid typical Kentish scenery, in the pleasant Medway Valley, with the uplands of Sevenoaks



ENTRANCE HALL AT THE "ROSE AND CROWN."