

# Epsom Civic Society

Shaping the Future, Safeguarding the Past

NEWSLETTER No -130- WINTER 2011

## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

### HOOKFIELD (PART TWO)

In my last article I described the first house at Hookfield which passed through various hands from the date it was built in the 17th century until the Rev.R.R.Knipe sold it in 1858 shortly before his death in Bath in 1859. The house was acquired by James Levick of West Hill House. He was a colonial merchant operating in partnerships established in Australia and South America and he bought the house with the intention of pulling it down and building 'a large and commodious mansion' in white Suffolk brick on a site higher up the hill. Part of the red- brick wall around the earlier building was retained and survives to this day. The house was duly built (as pictured) but in 1867 James's wife Averilda died at Hookfield Grove aged 48 and the house was sold to Isaac Braithwaite. James Levick moved to Hill House, Streatham Common and remarried in 1870. He migrated to Australia in 1871 and, described as formerly of Hookfield, Epsom, died at Hunter's Hill, Sydney in 1884 aged 68.



Hookfield Grove

Isaac Braithwaite, a partner in Foster and Braithwaite, Stockbrokers of London, had married Louisa Masterman in 1840. She died in 1886 having had 5 sons and 4 daughters. Isaac died at Hastings in 1890. Basil Braithwaite who was born in 1845 inherited Hookfield Grove. He had married Rosamund Augusta daughter of Augustus William Gadsden of Ewell Castle, Ewell in 1872. Basil who was Deputy Lieutenant of Surrey died in 1918. The house was offered for sale by Basil's Trustees and was said to consist of 15 bedrooms, two bathrooms, two dressing and 5 reception rooms, large entrance hall then used as a billiard room, handsome winter gardens etc. together with lovely gardens and parkland, farming, stabling, garage lodge and cottages-44 acres. In addition there was White House Farm with Murrays Meadows-60 acres of pasture land-this real estate lay to the south of the railway, behind The Elms and Abele Grove, with access to the Dorking Road. Subsequently Basil Braithwaite's Trustees conveyed Hookfield Grove to Walter Purdy of Wandsworth Common and in 1932 Henry and John Roll, builders of High St. Epsom, acquired the mansion house with 44.5 acres of land for £25,000. Walter Purdy moved to Ashted . In 1937 the area was developed and the old mansion became Hookfield Park Hotel which was advertised as

'Epsom's Best Residential Hotel' in about 4 acres of lovely grounds. Some friends of ours held their wedding reception there in 1956 but later in the 50's the building was demolished and Lindsay Close was built. 1 Hookfield the former lodge to Hookfield, survives and the former stable block, 23-25 West Hill has been converted for residential use and named Hookfield Mews.

I am grateful to Brian Bouchard of Leatherhead and District Local History Society for most of the information contained in this article.

Our display in the Ashley Centre attracted quite a bit of attention and 50+ new members. We pictured some of the 'eyesores' in the town. Most of these could be improved with no great effort and we will continue to press this point.

The Epsom Civic Society Committee wish all of our members a Happy Christmas and a good New Year in 2012.

**Harry Corben**

## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

*3-4 Pitt Road:* Planning permission has now been given for the revised proposals I described last time. We had commented on the boring simplification of the elevation to Rosebery Avenue, and a condition has been included requiring details of the elevational treatment of this flank wall to be submitted for approval. The building of the similar block on the corner of College Road is now substantially complete and is giving rise to varied comments on the success of the design

*Cedar Lodge Stables, Headley Road:* The application to remove the 1983 condition restricting the use of the dwelling to racing stable purposes was unanimously refused at the October Planning Committee.

*The Comrades Club, The Parade:* I mentioned last time that a revised scheme had been submitted for approval. We wrote at some length saying that our primary concern is to preserve the character of The Parade as one of the most attractive roads in the town centre and to minimize the adverse effect of any development. We approved a set back from the pavement we had asked for but were greatly concerned about vehicle parking and traffic and we again seriously criticized the applicant's Transport Study. The height had been reduced and it was claimed to satisfy the new requirements of Plan E, but we still thought it too high. At the September Planning Committee the scheme was recommended for approval but a residents' representative said forcibly that not enough time had been allowed for all the aspects to be adequately studied. There was a long debate when this point was supported and many objections aired. A decision was deferred for further discussion with the developer. I understand that a further revised proposal is awaited and is likely to be put to the January Committee.



The Comrades Club (centre).  
The courts buildings are no longer standing

*McCarthy and Stone, Waterloo Road:* As expected, this application was resubmitted following the earlier refusal on the grounds that no affordable housing was provided and that only £79,000 was offered in lieu of off-site provision, instead of the “appropriate” amount of £1.5m. The only difference in the revised application is the increase of this amount to £200,000 +5% monitoring fee. The increase was stated to be made on grounds of commercial expediency and in order to release the site for development; it would result in a lower profit for the developer. At the time of going to press the outcome was not known but I would expect permission to have been given.

*Financial Viability in Planning:* As there are not so many individual reports to make this time, it may be of interest to say a few words on the subject of viability, which was the issue in the case of McCarthy and Stone. It arises in this sort of case when the developer claims that the finances of the scheme do not leave any margin from which to comply with expensive conditions or make large financial contributions. The calculation is always a bit “iffy” because it entails estimating the cost of the land, construction and finance, the length of time before the development is completed, the value of the finished article in several years time, the margin of profit for the developer and the risks involved. Each one is by no means easy to estimate and if any of them change during the period of development, as they may well do, the result is different, possibly by a substantial amount. The developer will submit a viability study to demonstrate that he has little margin to afford the planning requirements, and the planning authority will take advice from a valuation consultant to check the figures but there always remains an element of doubt.

The really interesting point at the moment is that the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has issued a draft of Guidance Notes on Financial Viability in Planning which will become the standard work on the subject. Even more interesting is that our Council’s valuation consultant is a member of the Working Group preparing the report. This gives us a little more confidence in the outcome of such cases.

**Alan Baker**

## **CONSERVATION**

I was surprised when looking at my log to find that I have already looked at 59 applications this year (ie since our AGM). These have generated fifteen letters, a few of which may have been helpful in influencing the Borough’s decision. As I have mentioned before, most of the applications relate to relatively minor matters, such as small extensions or replacement windows, but I described in the last newsletter an application relating to the demolition of a length of the listed wall in Chalk Lane near Lavandou Stables. Alas, approval was given and I find it difficult to comprehend how this could be done. The quality of decision making affecting these things seems to be quite extraordinarily variable, and Planning Inspectors, and others, appear to be able to override planning policy decisions made on the community’s behalf with no right of appeal. Perhaps the Localism Bill might give us an ability to have a greater input, although the Draft National Planning Policy Framework has some worrying features. Please read the piece about the Blue Sky Day for more on this.



The listed wall runs along the right side of the grey-roofed stables partly surrounding the yard where new housing will be built

The Task Group looking at street furniture for the centre of the town has nearly completed its work. A formal proposal will be put to the relevant committee with its detailed recommendations probably early in the New Year. It will include proposals for a uniform style of seats, litter bins etc including their colour, and where they should be placed. One of the objectives has been to find a way to give the town centre some individuality by emphasising the Borough's special relationship with the horse racing industry as well as to improve the environment and appearance of the town centre. When the final report is complete we will give more details in the Newsletter. I hope that your representative's contribution will have helped the Group to have come to a satisfactory conclusion – time will tell!

We are still moving forward with our ideas for an award scheme. In the last Newsletter, I said that I hoped to be able to present some concrete ideas in this edition. Alas, the best laid plans of mice and men.....

**Rob Austen**

## **BLUE SKY DAY**

Unfortunately, we felt we had to cancel the last suggested date through lack of support. We only had seven members who wished to attend and this was just not enough to make the thing work. It was suggested that people are unwilling to give up a Saturday, so we have rebooked Christ Church Hall for the evening of Thursday 8th March. Please put this date in your diary and make an effort to attend. We have a membership well in excess of 1800 – just 2%, one in fifty, would make a reasonable group of 36, although we would like to see nearer 100.

This is an important event at which you can influence how the Society moves forward. The Localism Bill may put more opportunities in our hands to influence the development of planning policy affecting the Borough. Policy means what goes where, how high it can be and so on. All our members have views about this, so come and tell us! The Draft National Planning Policy Framework will also impact on how we go about things, and we will endeavour to let you know about both these important initiatives by the Government. In addition we would like to hear your views about how you feel the ECS should go about its work. We need feedback from our members to know if we are doing things as you expect -without this we cannot claim to have the democratic mandate we need to assert that we represent your views when we write to or meet with the planners.

**Rob Austen**

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Our display at the Ashley Centre in October was a great success. Not only did we recruit 58 new members but also had the opportunity to speak to many of our existing members. Our theme of civic pride in our town was very well illustrated by many excellent photographs taken by Geoff Stone and Malcolm Boyd. Thank you to everyone who manned the Exhibition and to those who visited it.

**Ishbel Kenward**

## **COMMITTEE MATTERS**

I am pleased to report that Margaret Hollins has been co-opted onto our committee. Margaret is a solicitor and is Deputy Head of the Department of Urban, Environment and Leisure studies at the London South Bank University. We very much look forward to using Margaret's knowledge of legal and planning affairs.

I also have to report that Angela Clifford, who has been our valuable Minutes Secretary for many years, has said that she wishes to relinquish the position at the AGM. This will be a golden opportunity for someone to step into this position. It would mean attending committee meetings

and taking minutes, but also contributing to the business of the committee. Anyone interested in volunteering for this position should contact me as soon as possible.

**Malcolm Boyd**

## **DOWNS**

### *Consultative Committee Downs tour.*

Our first stop was the ‘scrapes’ – areas of grass scraped off to expose the underlying chalk – part of the management plan to establish and maintain areas of kidney vetch which is the food plant of the caterpillar of the small blue butterfly. The adults will also feed on bird’s foot trefoil. This butterfly is nationally endangered and thus merits efforts to encourage it. The scrapes are amongst the longer grass east of Downs House and immediately south of the racecourse. If you walk there in June, you may be lucky enough to see this special species flying and feeding. Next we walked along the ‘permissive horse ride’ (only for riders) across Juniper Hill. There is some confusion as cyclists are treating it as a bridleway – shared by riders and cyclists - as a Surrey County Council map has it so designated. The Conservators will discuss this confusion at a future meeting with a view to possibly changing the designation. Lastly Rupert Trevelyan, MD of the Racecourse showed us the area he hopes to be allowed to level – as mentioned in the autumn newsletter. The area is about the size of a football pitch, so does not incorporate the whole of the enclosure. The tour finished at 7pm.

A postscript! I have heard it said that the Conservators plan to ban dogs on the Downs. This is emphatically not so. The hope is to encourage responsible control of dogs and thus avoid incidents of horse worrying by dogs. The rider, horse and dog are all at risk – horses from being spooked, riders from being unseated, and the dogs from being kicked. The Downs are privately owned, not common land, and the Downskeepers work hard to enable everyone to enjoy them, but are often subject to abuse when remonstrating with the public.

### *Conservators meeting 17th October 2011.*

Naturally enough, financial constraints are having an impact and it is not possible for all the desired maintenance to be undertaken – priorities have to be set. Work on the all weather tracks has been done, but the hack track at the bottom of Six-mile Hill still needs attention and a Capital Bid has been submitted for this.

Concern has been raised by the trainers about the designation of the original horse margin along Langley Vale Road which is now a bridleway and means cyclists may use it. Not all cyclists are aware of the likelihood of meeting highly strung racehorses and riding accordingly. Surrey County Council is to be asked when the designation was changed.

Approval in principle was given for a Diamond Jubilee Beacon lighting ceremony on the Downs in June 2012. The event will be run by the Scouts. No actual application has been received to date.

The designation of the permissive horse ride across Juniper Hill will not be changed. Surrey County Council will be informed of the error on their cycle paths map (see above).

It was decided not to pursue the issue of a Notice of Repair to SCC about the surface of Ebbisham Lane as the cost could escalate if the notice was ignored.

Subsequent to the meeting a public exhibition held on 7<sup>th</sup> November of the plans to level part of the Lonsdale enclosure including the demolition of the Lonsdale stand was attended by several members of your committee and we could see no reason to object. **Angela Clifford**

**TALK BY PROFESSOR PAUL COYLE**, Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Creative Arts  
3rd November 2011.

The university has five campuses – Epsom, Farnham, Canterbury, Maidstone and Rochester, each specialising in different topics. The College started 150 years ago and became a university in 2008. Epsom and Farnham cover art, design, fashion, textiles, journalism and photography, marketing and management. Other subjects are covered elsewhere.

Professor Coyle's main responsibility is for the Epsom and Farnham campuses and the 1500 students (75% female, 25% male) and 100 teaching and ancillary staff. His particular interests are creativity and how students progress using the management and financial skills they have been taught. He is particularly proud of the £6million new teaching block in Epsom – built with all possible 'green' credentials. The first foundation degree in hand embroidery in the UK has been established in collaboration with the Royal School of Needlework. In 2007, 89% of students did further studies or had jobs or set up in business. Karen Millen – a very successful fashion designer - graduated in Epsom and set up business in 1981 with a £100 loan. She continues to maintain links with the university. Zandra Rhodes is a very supportive Chancellor, and through other alumni the University has links with South Africa and India to mention but two countries. Tony Hart, Tracey Emin, Darren Welsh – animator of The Meercats – Gharani Strok (has dressed Madonna and Nicole Kidman), Myrto Stamon – now resident in Greece, Julie Coakley, Susie Templeton and Professor Magdalene Odundo all have roots in or links to one or other University campus.

Epsom benefits economically from being a university town. Students spend on accommodation, day to day living and entertainment. Professor Coyle is keen to enable graduates to have local 'start-up' facilities which will encourage them to settle in Epsom and bring diversity to the town.

This is only a brief description of a most interesting and enlightening talk. In answer to numerous questions, we learned that in 2012 the university hopes to offer evening and week-end courses to the community; mature students are admitted. All applicants have to produce a portfolio of work and convince the appropriate staff that they really are set on studying the subject. Although local living costs are high, because the Epsom campus offers very specialist subjects and so is always heavily over-subscribed, a drop in numbers is less likely than in universities offering more general subjects.

Professor Coyle is very keen to involve the university more closely with the town and to this end took notes of several ideas put forward by members such as displaying work in the Ashley Centre, commemorating Norman Birch (a former member of staff) in the new building, decorating the hoarding in the Upper High Street, using empty shops to display design/fashion.

**Angela Clifford**

## **BUFFET SUPPER**

Friendship, food and flowers were the keynote of the annual Buffet Supper this October at St. Joseph's Church Hall. Sadly not every guest could come along at the last moment but the 86 members and friends who were there had a delightful evening. Also it was a pleasure to welcome our Mayor, Mrs. Sheila Carlson, and her son as our guests.

As the "new girl" I greatly admired the efficient preparation and help of all the ECS Committee and members. The bar was run by Tony Smith, tables and chairs out of the cupboards and arranged at breakneck speed with help from Howard and Theresa Park, flowers by Audrey Simpson - the winners on each table were delighted with their orchids. The menu was delicious and everyone had plenty to eat provided by Carolyn and Sara of The Food Studio.



The Mayor and her Consort, with Chairman, Vice chairman and their wives



The Downsmen

Our entertainment was from the barbershop-style singers of eighteen gentlemen in white dinner jackets conducted by Lisa, young enough to be their daughter. Their musical programme was lively and varied and entertained us all for an hour. I enjoyed myself and hope next year's October occasion will be as well supported.

**Sheila Wadsworth**

### **RACECOURSE VISIT**

The racecourse and stands looked at their best in the Indian-summer sunshine for our ECS visit on the morning of Thursday, 29th September. 46 members gathered following our talk from Rupert Trevelyan, Managing Director of Epsom Racecourses, and arranged by his Personal Assistant and Office Manager, Caroline Beaumont.

We assembled in the Downsview Suite in the Duchess stand with delayed coffee but delicious, plentiful biscuits and met our two knowledgeable guides, Sue Higdon and Alison Vezey. They clearly told us the rules of racing and the site's history, particularly about the Derby. Primarily we visited the Queen's Stand, seeing various rooms - weighing, press, stewards' (small with numerous television screens which must make it incredibly hot during racing), dressing for the jockeys with their valets (pronounce the "t"), also the Royal Box and the Sheik's. Outside we saw the winner's enclosure and the presentation podium.



Visit to the Queen's Stand and the Duchess Stand



On the balcony



The jockey's room

The visit really helped us appreciate the link of the town with its racing past, present and future. I found the Derby's promotion this year really enticing and fun and recommend the August Epsom Trainers' Open Day to give a greater insight into the workings of the local racing stables and to admire their superb horses and facilities.

**Sheila Wadsworth**

**TALK on 3rd November 2011.**

Professor Paul Coyle gave a very interesting talk about The University of Creative Arts (UCA) and his own career which was well attended (59 tickets sold). Details of his talk appear elsewhere in the newsletter.

I would like to thank Sheila Wadsworth who took over running the events from me for doing such a splendid job. Everyone enjoyed the Buffet Supper and the 2 outings. Long may she continue to organise these social occasions which are appreciated by our members.

**Joy Furness**

**NEWS ITEM**

Members might like to know that the planning application to convert the Ladas pub into three two bedroom flats and one single bedroom flat has been approved.

**Editor**

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Visit to the Bluebell Railway and National Trust Sheffield Park Gardens on probably Thursday 3rd May 2012. Further details in the Spring Newsletter.

Annual General Meeting: Thursday 19th April, 2012

Ian West's walkabout: Sunday 24th June, 2011

It is with sadness that the death of Tom Dethridge is reported. Tom had been an active member of the committee for many years and filled the positions of Hon Secretary and Chairman with distinction. He had a wide knowledge of Epsom and its buildings. In his later years he provided the text of the two popular Heritage Walking Trails produced by the Society. He will be greatly missed by his many friends.