

# Epsom Civic Society

Shaping the Future, Safeguarding the Past

NEWSLETTER No -131- SPRING 2012

## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

### AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY VISITOR

Probably my favourite radio programme 'Desert Island Discs' celebrates its 70th Anniversary this week and this gives me the excuse to write about a famous author.

Born in London in 1652 as Daniel Foe he wrote the story of Robinson Crusoe. Known to every school child the novel is notable for being one of the earliest written in England and with Richardson he is known as one of the proponents of the novel in this country. Daniel added the aristocratic 'De' to his name and on occasion claimed descent from the family of De Beau Faux. His father was a tallow-chandler and a member of the Butcher's Company. Daniel left school at about 18 and went into the hosiery business.

Daniel traded widely in Europe, joined the ill-fated Monmouth Rebellion and gained a pardon, became a close ally and secret agent of William III. He was arrested for debt and one of his publications caused him to spend time in the pillory but he still found time to write Captain Jack, Moll Flanders and Roxana and in 1724 he started a three-volume travel book, Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain 1724-27. The tour included Darking (sic) where the market was famous for poultry and the Darking Capon, Rygate (sic), Banstead Downs where 'on public race days they are covered with coaches and ladies'. Four miles over the Downs he came to Epsome in the month of July 'when the town is full of company and all disposed to mirth and pleasantry'. 'Tis all rural, the houses are built at large, not many together, with gardens and ground about them; that the people who come out of their confined dwellings in London may have air and liberty, suited to the design of country lodgings'.

'You take lodgings and the morning after you are welcomed with the music under your chamber window; but for a shilling or two you get rid of them, and prepare for going to the wells'. 'You become a citizen of Epsome for that summer, you drink the waters or walk about as if you did; dance with the ladies, though it be in your gown and slippers, have music and company of what kind you like, for every man may sort himself as he pleases'.

Daniel obviously enjoys his stay in Epsome and comments 'tis very frequent for the trading part of the company to place their families here, and take their horses every morning, to London, to the Exchange, to the Alley, or to the Warehouse, and be at Epsome again at night'.

As he departed over bad roads for Kingston and thence to Oatland he suggested that 'in winter this is no place for pleasure and Epsome is not (like Hampstead or Richmond) full of company in the winter as well as the summer'.

**Harry Corben**

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

*The Comrades Club, The Parade:* My previous report took us to the deferment by the September Planning Committee of a decision on the revised scheme for the demolition of the existing Club building and the erection of a four-storey 82-bed Travelodge and new Comrades Club facilities. An amended application was duly made and went before the January Committee. Further revisions included the reduction of the number of bedrooms to 77, the replacement of a four storey gable adjoining the Town Hall with a single storey conservatory, and the slight increase in height of the ridge of the building to screen the roof level plant room. We wrote maintaining our objection to the bulk and height and to the effect this would have on the character of The Parade. Even more importantly we objected to a proposal that vehicle access would be arranged through the passage way from The Parade adjoining the Town Hall, so that hotel guests could park in the Hope Lodge car park. This was said to be a keyed access for guests who had not seen online instructions to go via Church Street, but we thought that once available it would be widely used. The Committee debated for three hours; there were many objections to the design but proposals to refuse were not supported. In the end a decision was again deferred because detailed agreement on the property aspects of access from The Parade over Council land had not been settled. The way this will be minuted is yet to be seen.



*Cedar Lodge Stables, Headley Road:* This came back to the January Planning Committee with a new application to amend the use conditions instead of removing them. The Committee agreed to revised conditions that the premises be used for livery/equestrian/racing stables purposes only and that occupation of the dwelling be limited to a person employed in the operation of the stables.



*McCarthy and Stone, Waterloo Road:* The development of this site for 32 retirement apartments was duly approved at the November Planning Committee but we have recently objected to a proposal for advertising hoardings and “tower signs” because of their height and undue prominence. This new application has now been refused on these grounds.

*Pickard House, Upper High Street:* This empty office block, opposite the Iceland site in Upper High Street, had planning permission in 2008 for a two storey rear extension. Following the refusal of permission for redevelopment as a student hostel last May they sought a renewal of the 2008 permission. This would be contrary to the preference in Plan E for a comprehensive development, but we thought it difficult to find an adequate reason to seek refusal. We now see that permission has been refused at the end of January. We are still hoping that a satisfactory redevelopment proposal will come forward.

*Epsom Downs Racecourse:* This application was for the demolition of the Lonsdale Stand – an old and redundant structure in front of the grandstand – grassing over the site, and the levelling of the land in Tattenham Corner Road where marquees are erected for the Derby. The Conservators had not objected. We thought the work would be an improvement in visual amenity and raised no objection provided proposed concrete steps were carefully designed to blend satisfactorily with the landscape and that the winning of chalk from other sites should be carried out in a way to ensure no adverse ecological effect and not to interfere with proper uses of the Downs.

**Alan Baker**

## CONSERVATION

The score has now risen to 83 applications investigated and 20 letters written about various issues. As I have mentioned before, these relate mostly to residential properties, so I don't like to give details here. There are a couple of matters to bring to your notice, one of which actually does relate to a proposed house.

The first case relates to the application to build a house in the garden of 168 Manor Green Road, on the northern edge of the Stamford Green Conservation area. Firstly, I have to confess that this is not an application about which I wrote to the Council. The proposed relatively modest chalet style house in a large back garden seemed to be such an improvement on the original application for two quite large and conventional houses that I felt there were not sufficient grounds for the Society to write in opposition. I was wrong. The Council refused the application, saying: 'The proposal represents an unacceptable form of backland development that would, for the most part, be contrary to the prevailing pattern of existing development in the immediate locality and would represent an intrusive element in the rear garden scene, reducing the sylvan nature of the area and eroding the sense of openness.....'. The applicant appealed, but the appeal was dismissed on 23 January.

The Planning Inspector in essence agreed in part with the Council's reasons for refusal, stating in his decision letter that 'the proposal would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the Stamford Green Conservation Area and its setting and would thus conflict with the aims of the Local Plan policies ...'. Interestingly, he felt the design of the house was in many ways acceptable in that it would not overlook its neighbours and that 'some care has evidently been taken to minimise its apparent bulk.' However, he also added that 'the new building would appear both intrusive and incongruous in the street scene.'

This case is very important for the Society in that it will provide a precedent to refer to in resisting future backland developments. It is worth adding that under the previous government I feel this appeal would have been less likely to have been dismissed. This is because gardens had been classified as 'brownfield', ie targets for development and was partly instrumental in my decision not to write. Fortunately one of the first actions of the new government was to reverse that extraordinary classification.

The second case I felt should be included here is an application relating to The Card Factory and the Halifax on the corner of the High Street and Ashley Road. Both units are owned by the owners of the Ashley Centre and it seems that their leases will soon expire and both will be taken by the Metro Bank. While having some concerns regarding the future of this branch of the Halifax, I was most concerned by the proposed new shop front, which I felt was simply appalling – garish blue and red and extending round the entire perimeter of the building. Whilst not losing the opportunity for a bit of hyperbole, I have written to protest about the very unfortunate impact this is likely to have on this prominent site in the town centre.



Finally, I am very pleased to report that the Council now puts the details of all applications on their website. I sympathise with those who do not have a computer, but for those who regularly research applications it is a godsend. If you can, have a look at the application I have mentioned above. Its reference is 11/01225/FUL and, if you agree, please write to the Council with your views. The Society is particularly keen to do what it can to improve the appearance of the High Street which is blighted by more than its fair share of poor shop fronts.

**Rob Austen**





## STATION DEVELOPMENT



Those of our members who have not been to the town centre recently may not have seen the extent to which the new station building/hotel has grown in recent weeks. Once the ground works were completed the building above ground has proceeded rapidly. Love it or hate it, we will be stuck with it!

**Malcolm Boyd**

## BLUE SKY DAY

We had to cancel the Blue Sky Day because of the poor response. We have moved it from the weekend to a weekday evening in the hope that more will attend. It is your chance to let us know your views about the Society, but more particularly to influence the future direction and activities of the Society. This is becoming particularly significant with the impending introduction of greater local involvement in planning matters. So keep the evening of Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> March free and join us if you can at Christchurch Hall, but please let us know so that we can make the necessary arrangements (see application form).

**Rob Austen**

## TOM DETHRIDGE (13.4.1920 – 12.11.2011)

It was reported in the last newsletter that Tom had died and what follows is a short appreciation of a man who was an important figure in the story of the Society. Tom was born in the Rhondda Valley, but soon moved with the family to Portsmouth. His career was associated in many different ways with the Admiralty. He served in WWII in Logistics with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary as a Lt Commander and saw duty in the Mediterranean, South Africa and other areas. After the war he remained with the Admiralty until he retired having held various responsible director appointments including responsibility for naval fuel. Although a desk job, he was able to travel widely to countries such as America, Australia, Russia, France, Holland and Italy. Tom was a prolific writer and researcher and made great use of his excellent memory that served him well right to the end. All through his life he researched, without the aid of a computer, wrote and had published many authoritative papers, charting the history of things which fascinated him. As an officer of the Society, both as Secretary and Chairman, Tom contributed significantly to its history. A more lasting legacy consists of the two heritage walking trails and a much more substantial 'Heritage of Epsom' all of which appear on the Society's website.

**Malcolm Boyd**

## **VISIT TO THE BLUEBELL RAILWAY AND SHEFFIELD PARK GARDENS**

Our spring visit is on Thursday 3rd May to the Bluebell Railway Line in Sussex and then to Sheffield Park nearby. We are booked on the observation railway coach so that, unless the bluebells are unusually early, we should enjoy magnificent views of the flowers and the countryside on the 12 noon special. We expect to arrive at the station by 11 a.m, where coffee/tea and a biscuit will be served and members can explore the station, particularly the newly-extended museum, opened last July. Our train returns at 1.15 - 1.30 p.m and our Hardings coach will drive us to the National Trust Sheffield Park Gardens just up the road. There is a spacious restaurant with both indoor and outdoor tables where a choice of meals can be taken comprising main courses, salads, sandwiches, cakes etc. or there are many tables in the parkland for picnics. NT members go in free but there is an additional charge for non members. There is also a display of original costumes and unique memorabilia of the World of Gilbert and Sullivan at a cost of £3 per person.

We have three departure points 9.00 a.m. from the Downs Car Park, 9.15 a.m. at the Methodist Church, Epsom, and 9.25 a.m. in The Street, Ashted.

Costs are £26 per person for National Trust members and £33 for non-members. Please complete the application form at the end of the Newsletter and enclose your cheque made out to "Epsom Civic Society". Although this outing is for ECS members, if you have friends who might like to come along please contact me in April to see if there are any tickets still available. I hope this will be a very memorable outing for everyone.

**Sheila Wadsworth (01372-273517)**

## **MORNING VISIT TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CREATIVE ARTS**

On Tuesday 12th June there is a visit to the University of Creative Arts for ECS members. This follows the excellent lecture to the Society in November from Professor Paul Coyle, Pro Vice Chancellor. Timing is 10.30 a.m. - 12 noon and please meet at the Epsom campus in Ashley Road (opposite Rosebery Park) at approx. 10.25 a.m. There is no parking available there. We shall see the architecture of the site and examples of the students' work. Please complete the relevant application form just so I can compile a list of attendees in case the numbers have to be restricted nearer the visit's date. There is no cost.



**Sheila Wadsworth**

## **DIARY DATES**

Ian West Walk. Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June. Venue to be decided

Buffet Supper, Friday 12th October. The entertainment will be a Poetry and Music Ensemble arranged by a member, Audrey Ardern-Jones

**EPSOM HERITAGE** (This is part of the Introduction to the paper mentioned above by Tom Dethridge)

Epsom was founded in or about the 6th century (one historian suggests the fifth) as a Saxon settlement close to the Roman road of Stane Street, along which the new arrivals probably travelled. The road ran between Londinium (London) and Noviomagus (Chichester) and the new hamlet was named from the leader called Ebb (or Ebba or Ebbi) - hence Ebb's hame. Over the centuries there have been a dozen or more renderings until Epsom became the more or less accepted version by the 16th century. The name Ebbisham is of course still to be found locally. The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book as Evesham with the Abbot of Chertsey as its landlord, a state of affairs that remained the case up to the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII. There were at one time quite separate communities of Woodcote and in the Stamford Green area, but these are now part of Epsom.

That Stane Street continued in existence as a major way for some centuries is borne out by the fact that William the Conqueror after the battle of Hastings rode along part of the Surrey section on his advance towards London. There does not appear to be much in the way of definitive archaeological evidence as to the precise routing of Stane Street, at any rate at its northern end, perhaps evidence exists still waiting to be uncovered. It ran south-eastwards out of Londinium probably along the line of the A3 via Tooting and on to Stonecot Hill, along the line of the A24 via North Cheam to reach Ewell, which with its natural wells served as a watering and refreshment staging post and was the site of an older settlement. From Ewell it is thought by some to have passed by Langton Avenue and Windmill Lane, possibly along or close to Mill Road although some would locate it a little further east by Bridle Road. It then followed Church Road immediately east of the subsequent Saxon settlement and St Martin's Church, crossing Ashley Road, the Durdans and Woodcote Park/RAC golf course to Headley Road near Chalk Pit Lane. It then ran east of both Ashtead (where a road branched off to a large Roman clay tile factory on Ashtead Common) and Leatherhead to north of Burford Bridge and Dorking and on to the Coast following very much the line of the A29.

The original Epsom was centred on the site of St Martin of Tours parish church, on which there is supposed to have been a Christian church since perhaps the 7th century. The Domesday mentions two churches here; one is undoubtedly St Martins but the precise location of the other is uncertain. Epsom was formerly described as the Hundred of Copthorne in the County of Surrey; a Hundred was a mediaeval administrative division (for which there are a number of alternative explanations) and Copthorne survives as the name of a village just to the east of Crawley but seems to have no direct link with Epsom.

Previously predominantly an agricultural community, though with some brick making on the Common, Epsom underwent expansion in the 17th century following the discovery on the Common of the well producing water with medicinal properties and the consequent development as a spa and entertainment and leisure centre within reasonable access from London. The most convenient area for enlargement lay in the meadowland to the west; the district now covered by the western half of the High Street, and this came to be linked to the old village by a road known, as it still is, as The Parade, along which the celebrities of the day were wont to parade on Sundays in their finery. It was of course to this western area that the centre of activity of the town was to migrate.

*The full article (36 pages) will appear on the Society Website, but I can send it on request by e-mail to anyone who would like it. It will also be available at the Local & Family History Centre, Bourne Hall.* Editor.

*Please make a copy of your application form on Page 8 if you would rather not cut into page 7.* Editor

**APPLICATION FOR BLUE SKY DAY** on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> March,  
7.30 to 10pm at Christ Church Hall.

Name/s.....

Address.....

Phone Number.....

Please return to Malcolm Boyd, address below or send particulars to [info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk)

**APPLICATION FORM for BLUEBELL RAILWAY LINE and SHEFFIELD PARK GARDENS  
- Thursday 3rd MAY 2012.**

Cost covers train journey, coffee/tea & biscuit, entry to Sheffield Park for NT members (please bring your membership card), coach and gratuity.

Name/s .....

Address.....

Phone Number.....

No. of tickets NT members @ £26 per person ..... Name/s.....

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Non-NT members @ £33 p.p..... Name/s.....

TOTAL COST = £ .

Your departure time (A) 9.00 a.m. Downs Car Park, near tea hut at Tattenham Corner  
(please underline) (B) 9.15 a.m. Methodist Church, Epsom  
(C) 9.25 a.m. Bus stop in The Street, Ashted .

Please return this application slip with your cheque made out to "Epsom Civic Society" and a stamped addressed envelope to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT21 1LJ (01372-273517).

**APPLICATION FORM FOR VISIT TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CREATIVE ARTS  
Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June**

Name .....

Address.....

Phone Number.....

Please send this application slip to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted,

KT21 1LJ (01372-273517). No acknowledgement will be issued.

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