

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -133- AUTUMN 2012

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

Abele Grove>Convent of the Sacred Hearts>The Haywain

In his book 'A History of Racehorse Training in Epsom' Bill Eacott refers to Abele Villas/South Street Stables. Abele Cottages still stand where South Street meets Dorking Road and he suggests that the builder's yard on the corner was stables for Abele House.

I think for Abele House we should read Abele Grove for that was the original name of what we now know as the Haywain and that name can only have been used because that is one of John Constable's famous paintings and he stayed in Hylands House which is nearly opposite.

A learned former headmaster friend of mine tells me that Abele is the name of the white poplar and indeed there are numerous poplar trees on the road behind. In the 1866 O.S. Map the area on the opposite side of Dorking Road is known as The Poplars.



I am indebted to Brian Bouchard for much of the detail which I am using via the [epsomandewellhistoryexplorer](http://epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.com). We can go back to April 1670 when Humphrey Beane purchased several areas of real estate in the district. It appears that Beane had a new residence built on New Inn Lane to the east of what became Sir Richard Rooth's house. Beane married Katherine Vincent in 1649 and their daughter became the first wife of John Parsons a London Merchant and Alderman. In his will dated 1679 Beane left the house to his relict Katherine Beane. She died in 1695 and the property descended to Sir John Parsons who became Lord Mayor

of London and on his death he was succeeded by his third son Humphrey Parsons.

His son, another brewer, was declared bankrupt in 1746 and the reversionary estate was purchased by his mother Dame Sarah and she survived until 1759. The house may have been let and by 1780 it was owned and occupied by Mrs MacDowell whose burial is registered in St Martins Church for 10th January 1795, and was then in the possession of a Miss Price until 1821. Her tenant was Rev Joseph Thomas late chaplain of the Vanguard 'Man of War', a patron of William Blake and friend of the Flaxmans. I would like to believe that William Blake did come to Epsom and a friend is researching this possibility. The earliest references to the house by name date from this occupation. A Mr Ritchie bought the freehold in 1822 but died within a year and there is a tablet in St Martin's church to the memory of Benjamin Pugh of Abele Grove in this parish who died 25th July 1823.

Some doubt has been cast on the early history of the house and I think I will leave the completion of this story to our next newsletter.

My wife Maureen and I were married on the 26th July 1952 and in 2011 we thought we were quite safe to arrange a party at a hotel near Leatherhead for the nearest Saturday 28th July 2012. Big mistake! In March 2012 we realised that there would be hundreds of bicycles in that area on that day and many roads would be closed. We had quickly to rearrange things and have our party on the 21st. Lord Coe was not able to change his date but he did write a very nice letter and hoped he had not inconvenienced us too much. So it has been a very busy period with watching the Olympics and trying to sort out-with the committee-a reply to the Upper High Street and Church Street plans.

Looking forward to seeing many of you on the trip to the Mill at Sonning and many more at our Buffet Supper in October.

Harry Corben

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

It has been quite a busy period since the last Newsletter, including two interesting items at the July Planning Committee.

Ashley Road Bunkers: I described last time this application to convert the old air raid shelters in the underground tunnels adjoining Ashley Road for the storage of precious metals. They are in the Green Belt land but we had felt that the proposal would be of no harm to the openness of the location subject to safeguards. The application was indeed recommended by officers for approval but caused a long debate before it was finally approved by a narrow majority. Objections included urbanisation of the Green Belt, insufficient parking, nuisance from noise and lighting and interference with bats. Suitable conditions will be attached to the permission.

Sainsbury's car park, Kiln Lane: The second Planning Committee item was the proposal to build a car parking deck over much of the existing car park and it was recommended for refusal on several interesting grounds. The most important ones were that it would be an overprovision of car parking according to Surrey County Council's maximum parking standards; that it would encourage more people to shop at Sainsbury's and therefore adversely affect the vitality and viability of Epsom Town Centre, of other local centres and of opportunity development sites identified in the Town Centre Action Plan (Plan E); that it would not respect the appearance of the existing buildings and that it would result in the loss of trees. The last point had been the subject of severe criticism by our member and old friend Mike Ford of TAB (the Tree Advisory Board). The recommendation to refuse was approved after another long debate and illustrates a trend favouring the Town Centre against out of centre stores, which we applaud.

Hill House, Tattenham Corner Road: The proposal for a cattery at Tattenham Corner Road was on Green Belt land but we had not opposed as it was hidden from view and used at present for storage. It has now been refused because it was not shown that any potential harm would be outweighed by other considerations. This follows the refusal of a cattery in Copse Edge Avenue following neighbour objections, so Epsom cats are going to have find a more suitable location for their holidays.

34-42 Waterloo Road: Following a second application for signage at the McCarthy and Stone site we were concerned about the length of time such signs remained and the adverse effect on the appearance of the area. Permission has now been granted on condition that they are removed on or before 25 July 2017 or when the last unit is leased or sold, whichever is the earliest.

49, Alexandra Road: An extension was proposed to this bungalow which is noticeable for its pleasant elongated appearance just south of Longdown Road. The extension would have been on two storeys and we objected to the overpowering and adverse effect on the street scene and on the adjoining property. It has been refused for its detriment to visual character of the area.

111, Longdown Lane South: The houses of the east side of this road are in the Green Belt and this application was for a change of use from a residential care home to a nursery. We did not think that this change would have a significant effect on the Green Belt, but we supported local opposition on grounds of increased parking, traffic problems and potential nuisance.

Pickard House, Upper High Street: Current planning practice favours pre-application consultation, not only with planning officers but with community organisations and we naturally support this idea. We have often had such discussions with developers and given our views and recently we were asked about a possible amended scheme for Pickard House, where a proposal for student housing had been refused mainly on the grounds that the design, height, massing and external materials would lead to prominent and harmful addition to the street scene. We said that a proposed lower height would be good but the design was still not in our view acceptable. We have offered to discuss any further ideas, as it is very desirable something suitable is put forward for this gateway property.

Epsom Station: Lastly, a plan attached to an application about detailed matters at the station was seen to show only a small “loading bay” at the station entrance, and we have again emphasized how important it is to have adequate setting down and picking up facilities when the development is complete. It would be unacceptable for the present lack of space for vehicles to continue. **Alan Baker**

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

One of our road reps recently noticed unacceptably blatant advertising installed outside a recently permitted car wash establishment. He wrote to the Planning Department and also to us. We have followed this up and the Planning Enforcement Officer, Grahame Dorrington, is now investigating. This was an obvious case but it emphasises how important it is to keep an eye open for such things, where something is happening without the necessary planning permission or contrary to a permission which may have been granted. The planning staff do not have the time for continuous inspections and any contribution we can make is important. If you suspect something is wrong write to the planners and/or let a road rep or Committee member know. We shall wait for the flood. **Alan Baker**

CONSERVATION

Things tend to be a little quieter in the summer months. I have looked into 27 applications since the last Newsletter, resulting in three letters being sent to the Council. Of these, one was to commend the much improved proposal for a very small office on the tiny parcel of land next door to The Pines in The Parade. The second letter related to a very large extension in a conservation area which was felt to be completely out of keeping with both the character of the conservation area and the existing house. The Council agreed. The third related to The Card Warehouse, which is to become a Metro Bank. I reported in the last letter that the previous application had been withdrawn; regrettably the new incarnation is no better and I have written accordingly. I hope that the Council will take a robust approach – fortunately they have their new guidelines for shop fronts (see the last newsletter) to support a refusal, but a decision letter has not yet been issued. Fingers crossed! **Robert Austen**

UPPER HIGH STREET & DEPOT ROAD DRAFT DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

This is the second consultation that the committee’s planning sub-committee has been responding to. The area in question includes the Upper High Street car park, the Depot Road car park and across Church Street including the former police station, the ambulance station and the Health Centre. It has been described as potentially the largest and most important development in the town centre since the building of the Ashley Centre. Much of the site is in private ownership, with a substantial part owned by a subsidiary company of Tesco, but the car parking areas are owned by the council. Aware of the importance of the area the Society has been pressing the Council over several years to produce a development brief for the site, so that undesirable piecemeal development can be dealt with in the context of a comprehensive plan.

The development brief is rigidly predicated on three options based on the location of a large 2,000 square metre foodstore and, in the first instance, we recommended a foodstore in the centre of the site. Subsequently we revised our recommendation and questioned whether a supermarket of the size suggested was necessary. We feel that such a store would be a destination store and as such would do little to rejuvenate the Upper High Street. We are also concerned that the 12 metre height of the former police station would act as a precedent for further development in the highly sensitive Church Street area. The former police station is currently offered for sale by Surrey County council for commercial or residential accommodation.



This public consultation resulted in an important and vociferous reaction from several groups in the town primarily as a response to the widespread dislike of the height and bulk of the new station building, Hudson House and Capitol Square and the strongly held view that buildings of this size should not be replicated within the area of the development brief. A further group deplored the loss of important retail outlets in the town centre and the continuing decline in the retail offer in Epsom. Needless to say we strongly support this view and hope that the intended appointment of a Business Development Manager and the grant of £100,000 to the Borough following the Mary Portas review of town centres may help to alleviate the situation. While we support the sentiments expressed from these groups, we chose not to join but rather to remain independent and retain our own voice. Instead we pressed for a meeting where all groups are invited to discuss the issues raised with the planning officers and relevant Councillors. This meeting will now take place at the end of August and there will also be a public meeting in the town hall at 7.30pm on Tuesday 4th September. Members are encouraged to attend this meeting, but are advised to come early. You may receive your newsletter too late for this meeting, but those who are on e-mail will have received notification.

Malcolm Boyd

PLANNING CONSULTATION

A further consultation paper entitled Development Management Policies Development Plan Document has been receiving many hours examination by the planning members of your committee. The thrust of this important paper is to formulate entirely new policies or substantial revisions of existing development control policies that were contained in the 2000 Local Plan. A few of the policies in the old Local Plan will be retained. Our views on these new and retained policies are being sought and we have responded by answering an extensive list of questions. This Development Plan Document (DPD) will form an important part of the new Local Plan (LDF), and will be in conformity with the recently published National Planning Policy framework (NPPF).

Malcolm Boyd

EPSOM TOWN CENTRE

The following is an excerpt from the minutes of the June meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Borough Council and may be of interest to members.

EPSOM TOWN CENTRE AND THE HIGH STREET INNOVATION FUND. The Committee received a report which considered how the Council might make best use of the recent award of £100,000 of High Street Innovation Fund money.

The Committee agreed to (1) the principle of appointing an Epsom Business Development Manager subject to achieving matched funding and therefore authorised the Chief Executive, in consultation with the

Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee, to pursue this option and (2) to the establishment of a Civic Investment Fund as set out in the report and matched funding of £50,000 from the New Homes Bonus. In so doing, the following points were noted: The optimum mix of retail in Epsom needed to be addressed and this was one of the aspirations behind the possible appointment of a Business Development Manager for the Borough; there was pressure on small retailers but it was agreed to work with major retailers first.

Malcolm Boyd

BLUE SKY DAY

Things are moving ahead albeit rather more slowly than we would have liked. Three groups have been set up involving members of the committee and the Society and meetings are being arranged. The Sub-Committee charged with The Future of the Society has met for the first time and initial discussions included topics such as the geographical area covered by the Society; relationships with other interest groups and increased use of e-mail to improve communication with members. We also gave some consideration to the widening of our demographic range by approaching younger people and possibly corporate groups.

A great deal of ground to cover in our future meetings!

Robert Austen/Peter Follett

E-MAIL ADDRESSES

An e-mail was sent out on 8th August giving details of the public meeting on Tuesday 4th September at the Town Hall regarding the Upper High Street, Depot Road and Church Street Development Brief. If you use e-mail and would appreciate such information please e-mail the address at the end of the Newsletter to let us know with 'E-mail addresses' as the heading.

A few bounced back which means either the e-mail addresses have been changed or I have entered it incorrectly.... which is always a possibility! If you thought we had your e-mail address and you didn't receive that e-mail, do let me know.

Members' e-mail addresses are not used for any purpose other than ECS communications. All such communications are sent out as 'Blind Copies' so no-one else would have access to your e-mail address.

We try to act on your behalf and we would like to have your views. E-mail is a useful means of communication for those who have that access.

Ishbel Kenward Membership Secretary

SWAIL HOUSE

It has been brought to our notice that the owners of Swail House in Ashley Road, a very important site near the town centre where visually impaired people live, have indicated that they would be prepared to dispose of the site. Adequate alternative accommodation for the residents would have to be provided before any sale could be contemplated, but we need to be vigilant and be aware of any developments.



Swail House

Malcolm Boyd

ECS EXHIBITION Saturday 27th October in the Ashley Centre

Do come along to see what we are trying to achieve for Epsom. Committee members will be manning the Exhibition and will be happy to see members as well as hopefully recruit new members.

THE DOWNS

I have observed several Conservators' meetings and attended the Consultative Committee meeting on 9th July. I wish to report that the Racecourse Management, Conservators and Council Staff worked hard to ensure the lighting of the Jubilee Beacon by the Scouts was a success. Unfortunately I could not be there myself but understand all went smoothly.

The Downs are NOT, as is often supposed, common land but are privately owned and the general public is permitted access for air and exercise. Sadly, although most visitors are considerate towards other users, there is a small but increasing number who are not. As I have reported in the past, both riders and pedestrians have been bothered by cyclists not giving way, or at least slowing down. Horses are particularly unsettled by dogs barking at them or chasing them, joggers getting too close and in one or two instances children in pushchairs being pushed across the training gallops while they are available for race horse training. Several tons of galloping, unsettled race horse is not something easily avoided! The lad may have difficulty controlling it too. Horses being ridden for pleasure have been affected in similar ways. To try and address these problems, the Conservators propose drawing attention to these dangers by erecting notice boards at two access points. These will draw attention to the behaviour expected from all users.

I was astounded that your Society was not asked for an opinion about the proposal to try and emphasise the special place of the Downs, but there it is.

Concern had been expressed about the future of Downs House but as there are ongoing legal proceedings, apart from stating that the Council is mindful of the history of the site and would consult the Conservators should any proposal be submitted in the future, Mrs Rutter (Chief Executive of EEBC) was not free to comment further. The Council owns the site; it is not part of the Downs.

Angela Clifford

RENAISSANCE

It is becoming well known that many public houses are being forced to close as a result of the dire economic situation and the smoking ban. However it is pleasing to know that at least some of them are having a new life in an entirely new sphere of endeavour. The former Ladas in Woodcote Road (on the left) is being converted into four apartments and the former Queen's Head in South Street has been beautifully converted into a furniture showroom.

Malcolm Boyd



IAN WEST'S WALKABOUT Sunday 24 July 2012

The weather forecast was correct about the rain! A good crowd of people assembled by the railway bridge in Wells Road. Then at 1.55pm it poured with rain and everyone sheltered under their umbrellas, but at 2pm, by general agreement, we decided to start the walk despite the weather which thankfully improved later on after the initial downpour. As the footpath from Spa Drive to Castle Road had been reduced to mud we walked across the common to Castle Road to start the walk at 'The Castle' (ie nos 54-62 Castle Road). The oldest part appears to be the rear of 58/60 with a later range built in front probably converting the property into two cottages. Two further cottages were added in the early 19th century with a castellated three storey building to the north providing an extra property. Ian pointed out the detailing of the windows which is interesting, particularly the unusual top lights and 'Gothic' cast iron window frames at the rear.

The group made their way back to Woodlands Road to look at a pair of 19th century weatherboarded cottages with slate roofs - the slate probably brought to Epsom by the newly constructed railway. Numbers 12-14 are a pair of brick dwellings constructed of locally fired bricks and being a little earlier than the previous pair. Passing a very much altered bungalow (no 33) we looked at two interesting terraces which after some discussion we decided had probably been built for laundry workers. After a short debate about the site of an old iron chapel, the group moved on to the site of The Well, noting the 1930-50 housing built on the land of Old Well Farm. At the Well Ian gave an informative talk about the enclosure of the land around the farm, the discovery of the properties of the water (Epsom Salts) and a little about 'Spa Life'. Leaving the well site via the footpath to Spa Drive we viewed the late 19th century Farm House now renamed Old Wells House prior to returning to the original meeting point by the railway bridge. It was quite a long walk, and a few people dropped out part way round, but everybody found it very enjoyable despite the miserable weather.

A big 'thank you' to Ian for giving up his Sunday afternoon and conducting the walk and providing so much interesting information.

Ian has offered to do another 'Walkabout' next year, the date will be the last Sunday in June 2013 and it will be in the West Hill area.

Ian West/Joy Furness

EVENTS AND OUTINGS

All the tickets for the lunch and theatre visit to The Mill at Sonning on Saturday, 8th December have been sold and there is a waiting list, however if you wish to join the list we often get last-minute cancellations for a variety of valid reasons and you might get on the trip.

We hope to hear of the rearranged visit to the University of the Creative Arts soon and those who have already booked will be informed probably in October.

Finally, now diaries are clearer and it is not so far ahead, please book for our annual Buffet Supper on Friday, 12th October at St. Joseph's Church Hall. This gives members and their friends a great opportunity to meet in convivial surroundings with a welcoming drink on arrival and delicious and varied food from the Food Studio, plus an entertainment put together by Audrey Ardern-Jones to include poetry, monologue and music. There is plenty of parking there. Cost is £18 and the occasion starts at 7.30 p.m. until 10.15 p.m.

Sheila Wadsworth

APPLICATION FOR THE BUFFET SUPPER-FRIDAY 12TH OCTOBER

NAME/S

ADDRESS

TEL. NO.

NO. OF TICKETS

TOTAL £

Please return this application slip with your cheque made out to "Epsom Civic Society" and an s.a.e. to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT2I ILJ (01372- 273517).

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