

# Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -134- WINTER 2012

## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

### Abele Grove>Convent of the Sacred Hearts>The Haywain (Part 2)

We left Abele Grove occupied by Mrs Sarah Pugh, widow of Benjamin who died in 1823, and she advertised in The Times in 1829:- 'This much admired villa in the most complete state of repair ...with a spacious entrance hall, neat morning room, well proportioned dining room, 4 best and 3 secondary chambers, ample cellaring, three-staff stable, coach house, cow house, piggery, tool house etc. A neat lawn neatly encircles the residence, 15 acres of rich meadow land encircles the lawn about 5 acres of which form a pleasing eminence adorned with stately Abele.' The house was taken by Webb Maurice Bennett and he was followed as tenants by Rev John Wellings and Capt Paul Hunter.

In 1839 Mrs Pugh sponsored the Rev Benjamin Bradley Bockett's induction to the Vicarage of Epsom and also contributed funds for a chapel of ease on Stamford Green. The vicar had married her niece and when she died in 1867 the main beneficiaries under her will were the Bockett's children.

Until 1895 the Holland family used it as their residence but when Augustus Holland died in 1895 Abele Grove was offered for sale with vacant possession as:-'An old fashioned residence containing accommodation for



Abele Grove 1928-1978

a moderate family. The extent of the property is about 18 acres and a frontage of 1550 feet to the main road to Dorking is available for building operations'.

Purchased by Edward E.Tatham, a stock jobber, it was offered for sale again in 1907 as 'nearly 200 ft above sea level in all about six acres with a valuable main road frontage'. In 1908 it apparently became a rest home for 'aged or infirm Ladies or Gentlemen carefully looked after'. For a period it was licensed to operate as a private mental institution and the property was then occupied by Henry James Delaforce of the family of port wine merchants until 1928.

We now move into the second part of the story of The Abele. Papal authority was given in 1817 for the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and from France the new Foundation spread abroad. Arriving in England the faith started in Trowbridge (1895) then Weymouth and in 1928 purchased the property from Delaforce. The land acquired with the building 'extended from the builders yard, across the field (on the left of the present driveway) and up over the brow of the hill as far as the railway line'. The convent school opened on 20<sup>th</sup> September so within less than three months a private house had been converted into a school.

In 1930 the Sisters running the school negotiated the purchase of the Clock House comprising two buildings; the stables which has a clock on the front exterior (hence the name) and the main house which was to become St Joseph's School from 1936-1977.

I am indebted to Brian Bouchard and The History of The Catholic Church in Epsom for much of the information in this article.

Our Newsletter has been read in Dublin by Sister Regina K Corrigan who taught at The Convent for nearly 40 years and she has offered to let me have some of her news and views about life at Abele Grove so I will leave my article here and await her reply.

We wish all of our members a Happy Christmas and a good New Year.

**Harry Corben**

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

*Epsom Station:* Now that the building is nearing completion, you will have noticed that the artwork over the station entrance is taking shape and has already been the subject of much comment. It might be of interest if I describe briefly the way this has evolved.

The officers' report to the Planning Committee meeting that approved the scheme said that a series of decorative art panels would be provided above the entrance and over the ventilation openings to the first floor car park. The developer organized a design competition with students of the University for the Creative Arts and the brief required the design to add interest to the elevation of the building and to be relevant and unique to Epsom. Some 30 designs were submitted and were judged by a panel consisting of the developer, the architect, 2 university staff, the Council's conservation and design officer and a ward Councillor. The winner was Nick Jameson, who has since qualified as a graphic designer and is working in London. Final details were agreed by a group including the design officer and three ward Councillors.

The design derives from photographs of Epsom residents taken publicly in the Town, when these people also wrote why they thought Epsom was a good place to live. Selected photos, rendered anonymous, were produced on glass panels, and the statements will also be recorded along with an explanation.

There was no indication earlier of what form the design would take, and we have not been given a chance to comment. When the work is finished we shall be discussing it and deciding whether and what to say to the Council.

*Land off Mill Road:* This is a long and narrow strip of land between Mill Road and the railway, stretching from the Windmill Lane Bridge to beyond the Bridge Road turn off. It was once allotments but has reverted to natural scrubland. According to your point of view it is either a valuable green area supporting badgers and other wildlife, or an untidy mess encouraging undesirable weeds and foxes. The former is undoubtedly the majority view and the Millbridge Wildlife Trust has been formed by local people keen to preserve the land for this purpose. The houses opposite are mainly substantial and attractive and well set back from the road. We have recently been consulted on a Housing Site Allocations paper as part of the Local Development Framework, where this was one of the sites suggested for future housing development and we saw difficulties from the nature and shape of the site.

An application has now been made for building 10 dwellings on the site, which we have opposed because they would be very congested and close to the pavement, with little garden space and inadequate parking. It would also permanently compromise the outlook from the houses opposite and reduce the attractiveness of the street scene. The applicant offered some land near the bridge to the Trust but we think a better solution would be for fewer houses on the widest part of the site and the remainder to be maintained by the Trust.

*111, Longdown Lane South:* The application I mentioned last time, to change the use of this house from a residential care home, for which it was no longer suited, to a nursery was withdrawn, no doubt following the considerable opposition. A new application has been made to change the use to a single dwelling and this seems perfectly satisfactory.

*Comrades Club, The Parade:* The latest design for a Travelodge Hotel on this site was refused by the Planning Committee earlier in the year and an appeal has now been lodged. We have written to the Inspectorate supporting the refusal on the grounds of the bulk, height and mass of the building being out of keeping with the character of the surrounding area and adversely affecting the street scene.

*35A Worple Road:* We have objected to a proposal to demolish a small bungalow on this site and erect a pair of large semi detached 5 bedroom houses on three floors. We think this would be gross overdevelopment which would seriously detract from the street scene and would badly affect neighbouring properties.

*Organ and Dragon Inn, London Road, Ewell:* Although we don't always comment on Ewell cases, we have written to object to a proposal for the change of use of the Organ from the existing Thai restaurant and bar to a KFC restaurant and takeaway, the last word being the relevant one. We think the traffic implications are important, and the effect on the character of the surrounding area would be unfortunate.

*St Martin's Schools, Worple Road:* We have seen a display of proposals to increase these schools from 2 to 3 form entry, involving the building of 7 additional classrooms and making other alterations to the present buildings. It sounds difficult because the whole site is in the Green Belt, but the design on

two floors has less effect than might be expected. We shall be keeping an eye open when the expected planning application appears.

**Alan Baker**

## **CONSERVATION**

I have looked at a further 35 applications since the last Newsletter, almost all in connection with minor matters such as extensions or replacement windows affecting private dwellings. I have written letters about seven of these, usually about design issues but one concerning over-development.

Design is clearly very much a matter of personal taste, although there are various aspects which, over time, have become fairly well recognised. One maxim worth remembering (from Yves St Laurent) is that ‘fashions fade, but style is eternal’. The Council’s Core Strategy policy CS5 says: ‘*The Council will seek to enhance the Borough’s heritage assets including historic buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains, ancient monuments, parks and gardens of historic interest and other areas of special character. The settings of these assets will be protected and enhanced.*’ Some policies from the previous District-wide Local Plan of 2000 were retained. They make interesting reading: BE1 for example: ‘*New development will be required to be of a design which makes a positive contribution to the quality of the built environment.*’ and BE3: ‘*Within a conservation area, proposals for new buildings and extensions or alterations to existing buildings will be required to be designed in a manner sympathetic to the scale, siting, form and materials of adjacent buildings and to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area in general.*’ (I am intrigued by the use of ‘or’ here – surely ‘and’ is what is needed.)

The point about all this is that there seems to be a great variability in the extent to which approved applications meet these objectives. We are hoping to initiate regular meetings with the Planning Department at which we may be able to discuss these matters and perhaps gain a better understanding of how some of these decisions were made.

It is proposed to carry out some improvements to 13-15 High Street, including a change of use of the upper floors from offices to residential and the addition of a fourth floor within a mansard roof. The architect for the scheme has approached us for our views prior to making a formal application. While not objecting to the change of use, we were unhappy about the appearance of the mansard roof and the scale of the upper windows. Our view was that, if an additional floor was acceptable (ie within the Council’s policy), then we would very much prefer to see dormer windows within a pitched roof. That part of the High Street, including the impressive row of shops along the north side, is almost exclusively three stories with pitched roofs. We also objected to the painted render finish, which was proposed to ‘liven up this high street location’. You only have to consider the appearance of this type of finish if left for a few years without regular maintenance – there’s a good example of this almost next door to this site. It will be interesting to see if our thoughts, which were well received by the architect, have any effect.

**Rob Austen**

## **NOTES on the DOWNS**

At the Conservators meeting we were informed that Rupert Trevelyan has been appointed Regional Director for Epsom, Kempton and Sandown Parks Racecourses. Work at Buckle’s Gap to alleviate flooding will be undertaken by Surrey CC. The Roundabout by the Grandstand also floods and will need attention. Andrew Cooper apologised for the fact the Training Ground Management Board (TGMB) did not get approval for the tarmac on Walton Road – a misunderstanding – and requested retrograde approval, which was granted. The Japanese knotweed has had one injection of herbicide into the roots. This will need following up next year probably with a spray. Connor Morrow of Lower Mole Countryside Management is organising this. Ragwort is pulled up and disposed of according to DEFRA regulations ie to landfill. Of the events applying to use the Downs next year, the Race for Life causes most concern. Numbers of competitors is limited to 5000 but spectator numbers are unknown. Charging for events will come in next year but did not apply to events applying before 18/10/2012.

Downs House - Strategy & Resources Committee will employ external advisors at a maximum cost of £10,000 to investigate the most suitable basis for a viable re-occupation of the property. Continued training use will be the preferred option. Much repair and restoration will be needed prior to occupation and it may be that reconstruction to modern standards of training yards may be best use of funds. A 125 year term lease or sale of the freehold are possibilities though the latter is less likely on policy grounds. So far the cost of rubbish clearance, asbestos removal and securing the property is £10,000 in round figures.

Juniper seed will be collected by the Millennium seedbank at Wakehurst Place. Erosion of Hyperion Car Park (Grandstand Rd) has necessitated some remedial work. It was agreed that a small [up to 6m x 6m] area of hardstanding be introduced at the entrance. The Constitution of the Consultative Committee will be considered at its next meeting (8/11/2012). Three code of conduct signs will be erected. The design was agreed but not the final content.

I and several others are somewhat unhappy with the attitude of the Conservators to the Consultative Committee – we are simply not consulted!  
**Angela Clifford**

### **DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

Much time was spent discussing revision of this Committee's 1991 Constitution and it was decided to set up a sub-committee to meet and suggest amendments. The sub-committee is being chaired by Simon Mortimore of Epsom Equestrian Conservation Group; I shall attend along with Hugh Craddock (British Horse Society (BHS) and Alex Stewart (Epsom Downs Riders Protection Society) and Richard Balsdon of College Ward Resident's Society. Our suggestions will then be passed to other user groups for approval and finally to the Conservators for ratification. This will not happen until early next year. I shall suggest that our two meetings should be scheduled just prior to meetings of the Conservators in order to facilitate communications between us.

The British Horse Society is much concerned that Walton Road (the one which goes across the downs and six mile hill) has been blocked and is unusable by horse driven carriages should they so wish. This matter is of long-standing concern to the BHS and neither the Conservators nor Surrey County Council (SCC) seem willing (or able) to act. I am not qualified to comment on your behalf except to say that if carriage driving is legally allowed it should not be prevented.

Concern was also raised about the legality of the proposal to charge for events. Frances Rutter said it was not forbidden by the Act. Permission for two new paths was given to the Golf Club providing they do not impinge on the bridleway used by hack riders.

I suggested to the Downs Manager that perhaps local vets and dog parlours could be asked to display a notice about the necessity to keep dogs away from horses and that dog walking companies (of which there are many) be emailed on the matter. She agreed to consider the suggestion. **Angela Clifford**

### **UNIVERSITY FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS**

A visit was organised by Sheila Wadsworth, on behalf of the Civic Society, and some 30 of us were shown round the Campus by Richard Jones, Operations Manager.

Richard covers the Epsom and Farnham parts of the University and also visits the other campuses from time to time. He explained that Epsom and Farnham had combined with three Kent Colleges and their total strength of more than 6,000 qualified them to be a university. They now total more than 7000 with Epsom-the most buoyant part-numbering some 1800-1900. They study Fashion and/or graphic design and four courses are organised. The Maidstone site has now been sold but Canterbury and Rochester continue as parts of the University.



Student accommodation

We were amazed at the diversity of buildings on what seems a small site and felt that Epsom can only benefit from the presence of this prestigious seat of learning.

Women predominate among the undergraduates and when the university year ends in June students from Europe and Asia move in until September.

The newest three storey building cost £5.6m and has features which include the collection of rainwater for the toilets and solar heating. An auditorium seats over 200 and gradually facilities will enable lectures to be presented from distant places and the travel expenses of 'visiting' lecturers will be saved.

Past students from the university have gained 4 Oscars and 11 BAFTAS and many well known personalities have graduated from U.C.A. These include Tracey Emin, TV Presenter Tony Hart, Oscar winner Susie Templeton and fashion designers Owen Gaster, Karen Millen and Zandra Rhodes.

Some of the undergraduates live on site and there are two accommodation blocks in Epsom but rail and bus facilities enable many to travel daily. Richard Jones said that the University is anxious to work with the local community and they are already exchanging facilities with the Playhouse Theatre. He did say that, at the moment, there are no permanent 'Bar facilities' on the campus and he would like to be able to offer them. Some local residents are not sure that that would be a welcome development. The Executive Dean is Dr Roni Brown.

A very interesting afternoon, and we hope to be able to offer the visit to other members of E.C.S. probably in March of next year.

**Harry Corben, Chairman**

### **THE FOUNTAIN IN ROSEBERY PARK**

Some of you will remember that to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the setting up of the Epsom Protection Society - now of course The Epsom Civic Society - we paid for the erection/installation of a fountain in Rosebery Park. I know that not all of our members will use Rosebery Park but those who do will be aware that we have had trouble with the fountain because the water does get rather dirty and the filters become blocked and the flow of water is reduced. We have called out an engineer every three months or so to clean the filters and resume the flow. This has been costing the Society some £600 each year and it becomes questionable whether we should keep it going. I think those who do use the Park appreciate the fountain and since the Park achieves its centenary in 2013

I do hope we can continue to maintain it at least for another year. If you have any ideas or if you know any business etc. who might be willing to sponsor the fountain please let me know. The Friends of Rosebery Park are interested but at the moment they have no membership as such and thus no funds.

**Harry Corben, Chairman**

### **EVENTS AND OUTINGS**

The Annual Buffet Supper was enjoyed by some 90 members on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October. Harry Corben welcomed our Guest of Honour the Deputy Mayor Michael Arthur and his wife Ann and the members as they arrived. The Food Studio provided a varied and generous supper served at the tables, following a welcome drink organised by Tony Smith and Norman Dempster. Members spent a happy hour listening to poetry and prose, some written by Audrey Ardern-Jones, and accompanied by Lynda Chang (piano) and Rachel Aukett (flute).



Michael Arthur thanked the Society for inviting him and his wife and he warmly applauded the Society for the work we are doing which is greatly valued.

A watercolour of the King's Head pub generously donated from the estate of Tom Dethridge was raffled and the £85 plus our payment given to Audrey went to The Royal Marsden Hospital Cancer Genetics Research.

The date for the 2013 buffet supper will be in the next newsletter.



## **BLETCHLEY PARK - Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2013**

The next visit will be on Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> April to Bletchley Park, Home of the Codebreakers. Many members may already have visited there, but there have been extensive additions to the exhibits in recent years so you may wish to go there again. The cost will be £39 which will include coach and tip, entry, a guided tour, coffee and a hot lunch. As the journey may be two hours, may we suggest you bring water or a juice with you, also comfy shoes as the Park is quite an extensive site. Wheelchairs are available and if needed please indicate this on the application form. Departure is from the (A) Downs car park, near Tattenham Corner at 9.0 a.m., (B) the Methodist Church, Epsom at 9.10 a.m. or (C) the bus stop in The Street, Ashted at 9.20 a.m.

If you have any questions about this visit, please telephone me on 01372-273517. If you happen to have an in-date, annual pass, there will be a reduction in cost. Members' friends will be welcome if tickets are still available in March.

**Sheila Wadsworth**

## **ASHLEY CENTRE DISPLAY**

Our annual display took place on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October and was visited by many of the public including some of our members. The display featured a map of the Upper High Street/ Depot Road Development Area and highlighted the undesirability of having high buildings similar to those in Station Approach in this area. In contrast, the display illustrated a selection of apartment or office buildings in Epsom of more pleasing architecture and design. Some 124 members were recruited on the day and a further four later. Together with another eleven members recruited at the Fun Day to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Borough, this brings our total membership to well over 1,900. Our grateful thanks go to those who organised the display, to those who manned the display and we welcome those new members who joined the Society.

**Malcolm Boyd.**



## **THE DURDANS STABLES**

Those of you who may have taken a walk up Chalk Lane recently will have seen that the Grade II listed indoor riding school has a new roof, paid for by the lease holders who are members of the Society, with a contribution from English Heritage. It is also pleasing to note that the famous gates and railings that had been removed for refurbishment are now reinstated in pristine condition.



## **GEOFFREY STONE – AN APPRECIATION**

Geoffrey – an outstanding and effective Chairman of the Society for many years passed away on 7<sup>th</sup> September. He worked tirelessly to fulfil the objectives of the Society and, even when retired from the chairmanship, he continued to be a committed and valuable committee member and the Society benefitted from his wise and considered advice. He was instrumental in producing many of the annual displays and would often leave the house early so that the sun would be in the best position for the best photograph of his chosen building. Many of the Society’s documents benefitted from Geoffrey’s careful and thoughtful use of words.

In his successful career as an electrical engineer, Geoffrey joined the Central Electricity Generating Board, eventually becoming a corporate director and was responsible for the decommissioning of several power stations. He was an inveterate supporter of nuclear power and was always ready to defend his stance against champions of wind and wave. Geoffrey lost his beloved wife, Connie, shortly after their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and he remained close to their two daughters and their families to whom we send our sincere condolences. The crowded chapel at his funeral service is testament to the esteem in which Geoffrey was held by his many friends and colleagues. **Malcolm Boyd**

## **OLD ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPS**

The Society has been gifted a map of Epsom dated 1912 by our member Geoffrey Bull. Among features of interest, the hospital is described as Union Workhouse; Swail House as Worple Lodge; and shows the original Pitt Place, the old Police station opposite what is now the Methodist Church and Avenue Road stopping at Madans walk. There is also a comprehensive history of the town on the reverse along with a list of private residents and their addresses. These maps may be purchased at very reasonable cost, along with many neighbouring ones, from Alan Godfrey Maps, Prospect Business Park, Leadgate, Consett, DH6 7PW [www.alangodfreymaps.co.uk](http://www.alangodfreymaps.co.uk) **Malcolm Boyd.**

## **CALLING PHOTOGRAPHERS**

Among our membership there may be some amateur photographers who take photos of buildings in the borough. These could be a valuable resource for the future. If such photographs could be sent to me together with the name, date and location of the building and a stamped addressed envelope they will be scanned and returned and form part of our archive photograph collection. Digital photos should be sent to [info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk) **Malcolm Boyd**

## **CONSULTATION**

We have recently been consulted on a draft Development Plan Document (DPD) by the Development Management Policies Committee of the Council. This is a vital DPD and will set out the Council’s policies on key areas such as green belt, building heights, design of new developments and open space. The minutes of our meeting with council officers can be viewed on our website under the heading of ‘Consultation Minutes’. **Malcolm Boyd**

## **BLETCHLEY PARK - THURSDAY 11<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2013**

Please return this form to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT21 1LJ. Cheque to be made payable to "Epsom Civic Society" and enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope.

NAME/S.....

ADDRESS.....

Tel. No.....

No. of tickets @ £39 per person.....

TOTAL COST £.....

Please circle where you wish to be collected: A B C

I need a wheelchair Yes/No.

Kindly indicate if you have any particular dietary requirements.

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