

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -135- SPRING 2013

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

Abele Grove>Convent School>Haywain (Part 3)

Sister Regina K. Corrigan has e-mailed me from Dublin giving more of the story of the first five Sisters who moved from the Weymouth Convent to Epsom on 2nd July 1928. They moved at the request of Canon Christall, parish priest of St Josephs. When they arrived the gardener opened the door of Abele Grove and welcomed them to their new home which had been bought by the congregation from the Delaforce family of Portuguese wine merchants.

The land purchased with the house extended over the hill as far as the railway and included stables which were quickly converted into classrooms. Father Christall and the local solicitor, Mr McMahon, who had negotiated the purchase were frequent visitors in the early days. In just eleven weeks Abele House was converted from a private house to a school and the first pupils arrived on 20th September. The sisters did most of the work and until the 1970's they did most of the cleaning, decorating and maintenance. Starting with fewer than 20 pupils, by the end of the first year the school was thriving with 60.

In 1932 the Superior of the Sisters, with Mr McMahon, negotiated the purchase of The Clock House comprising the property next door and the larger adjacent building which played a big part in the life of the Convent for many years. By 1934 the ground and second floors of The Clock House were the elementary school and this continued until 1968 when it was inadequate for the numbers and a new school was built in Rosebank.

Before the war the land adjacent to the railway belonging to the Convent was bought by S.C.C. as a site for Rosebery School. Within a year of the start of war Epsom Convent became a refuge to victims of the war and many were sleeping there when bombs fell in the grounds without causing damage. After the bombs the men and boys were allowed to sleep in the wine cellar together with the ladies, something not previously considered 'proper'.

The convent had its own cows, ducks, hens, pigs and even rabbits and with their own milk and butter became almost self sufficient and were able to offer refuge to Sisters and others from Guernsey, Belgium, France and London. The pupils adopted the cruiser H.M.S. Calcutta and, when it was tragically sunk, H.M.S. Wallace and H.M.S. Ganges.

In the 1970's The Clock House and other property in Tadworth were sold and the proceeds were used to build a new Convent on the hill for the Sisters who until then had slept in crowded accommodation. Gradually however the number of Sisters became insufficient to maintain the school; lay teachers were more expensive and the decision, not taken lightly, was made to close and sell the site. The four remaining Sisters were found accommodation in Woodcote. Some buildings were demolished, Abele House was converted into the Haywain and the hotel was built behind. A large part of the site remains open to the public and a new St Josephs church was built on the hill.

Harry Corben

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Land off Mill Road: Amendments have been made to the application to build ten houses on this land, described in the last newsletter. They are of a very minor nature and would still result in the loss of a valuable green area, damage an important wildlife site, cause harm to the street scene and the amenities of neighbours, create unsatisfactory conditions for future residents and

cause serious traffic problems. We have not changed our view that the application should be refused.

Organ and Dragon Inn, London Road, Ewell: The application to change the use to a KFC restaurant and takeaway was refused by December Planning Committee on highway grounds. An appeal has been lodged and a new application made. We have criticised the lengthy traffic report accompanying the application on a number of grounds and maintained our objection.

St Martin's School, Worple Road: The application to extend this school was referred by the County, who are the planning authority in this case, to the Borough which has raised no objection.

Lintons Lane Centre: Earlier proposals for students' accommodation in this former school fell through. As part of a pre-application consultation we were invited by developers to see their proposals for a housing estate on the site, which had already been under negotiation with the planning department for some time. The site adjoins a number of Victorian terraces, with narrow roads. We expressed concern over several aspects of the plans. We thought the high density amounted to overcrowding and that a layout with fewer units would work better; the increase in traffic would cause problems; parking was difficult; the proposed grid system of roads – encouraged by the planners – would be monotonous notwithstanding its similarity to the adjoining roads; and the placing of a playspace adjoining the footpath next to the railway would not be a safe location for children. A planning application is now awaited.

Three applications in East Street:



(1) *Crossways House No 39:* This is an empty office building close to Staples. Lack of demand for office space has been clearly demonstrated, even though it is within the Town Centre Business Area. The University for the Creative Arts confirmed the urgent need for student accommodation and we raised no objection in principle to the proposal to adapt the building, with a modest extension, for this purpose. We stated a preference for brick filling between the windows rather than larch and said that although parking was limited to loading and unloading, space should be provided for a manager to ensure proper supervision.

(2) *No 87:* Former offices, now demolished, backing onto Middle Lane. The proposal by Sanctuary Supported Living is to build young peoples' supported accommodation consisting of 45 bedsit apartments for the temporary housing of young people between the ages of 16-45, together with communal facilities. It has caused much comment for and against. We see the benefit but not at the expense of creating problems for local people, but we are informed that in other places supervision is adequate. Massing and height of the building seems reasonable but the contemporary façade, especially brightly coloured panels, seems out of place here and parking is inadequate. We therefore did not support the granting of planning permission for the scheme in its present form.

(3) *Haddad House, No 91:* This is another empty building suffering, although small in size, from the lack of demand for offices in East Street. Only an outline application was made and we reserved our judgement until more detail is available although we saw no objection in principle to residential use.

Pickard House, Upper High Street: Following the refusal in 2011 of the earlier scheme for refurbishment and extension, the property seems to have changed hands and an entirely new scheme has been submitted for extension and conversion to provide 12 flats instead of student accommodation. We see no objection to this use or massing of the building, which is much better than the earlier scheme. We have serious doubts about the viability of a ground floor commercial unit and would prefer another flat. As this is a prominent gateway building at the entrance to the town centre we are disappointed that the front elevation consists of white render and cedar panelling which might deteriorate quite quickly. Amendments to deal with these points are desirable and we have written accordingly.

Alan Baker

CONSERVATION

Since the last Newsletter, I have looked at another 37 applications, now altogether 100 since the last AGM. I wrote about six of them including 2 shop-fronts, both were, I thought completely unacceptable. One has been approved and the other was refused.

The council has adopted a code of practice for shop-fronts, to which I have referred on a previous occasion. It has some very good principles and should prove a great help in resisting the more unsightly proposals. One such particularly egregious example was that by Metro Bank who hope to take over the present Halifax location together with the adjoining unit. Their original



proposal was frankly awful and I wrote on your behalf at the time; fortunately the Council agreed. It appears that the Council and the Bank are now in discussion to try to reach something which is acceptable. I understand, however, that the Bank is compromising very little, and seems to be hanging onto the idea that their 'house' style should be adhered to. It doesn't help, of course, that the Bank's architect is based in America, and

consequently has no idea about things like heritage and conservation areas, or at least, seems to behave as this is the case.

I hope that the Council sticks to its guns on this one, as their excellent code of practice might otherwise not be worth the paper it's printed on. We should do what we can to help in this; the best way is to write expressing your views – but do look at the application first. This can be done on line and the two applications are 11/01223/ADV and 12/00298/ADV. Strictly speaking they are out of time for comments, but a letter expressing support for the Shop-Front Code of Practice, quoting this as a case in point when the Code is particularly helpful cannot go amiss.

Another interesting case is that of Chesham House on the corner of Ashley Avenue and South Street/Dorking Road. This is a Grade II listed building currently used as an office – or it would be if it had any tenants. In common with many office blocks in Epsom it is empty and the owners propose to convert it into three two-bedroomed flats and four one-bedroomed flats. There will be very few external changes, and there is existing parking for six cars. The Society tends to support this sort of change – it is better to have a building occupied and in constructive use, especially as, in this case, it is helping with the housing shortage. One caveat, of course – it is to be hoped that the owners carry out regular external maintenance so that this important building continues to grace this particularly prominent street corner.



Rob Austen

THE NEED FOR PLANNING PERMISSION: SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We thought it would be helpful to provide members with an overview of when the need for planning permission arises and how to go about getting it. This is not a definitive guide but intended to set out some general principles, provide an outline of procedure and signpost additional sources of information.

When do I need it?

Planning permission is needed for 'development' and in most cases the circumstances will be clear whether or not the rule applies, e.g. if you have a plot of land and want to build a house on it, this is development requiring planning permission. In terms of structures, the size, height, and degree of permanence will all be relevant considerations, so the building of a substantial tree house in your garden might also need planning permission. Other situations may also give rise to the need for planning permission, e.g. where there is a material change of use, say from residential to business use, or vice versa, even where no building works are involved. It is a question of fact and degree as to whether a change of use will be material (ie significant in that it changes the character of the use of the land and premises) and if in doubt you should seek the advice of your local planning authority, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC).

House extensions also require planning permission but you will need to check with your local planning authority about how to go about getting permission in this case (see the next section). EEBC has been operating Planning drop-in sessions to deal with planning queries from 10.00 – 11.00hrs at the Town Hall. Their website also provides key planning information, see 'Useful Links' below.

How do I get it?

There are various ways to get planning permission, the most common being by making an application to EEBC's Planning Department. There is a standard form for making applications, reference 1APP, accessible electronically via the **Planning Portal**, the UK Government's online planning and building regulations resource for England and Wales: <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/applications/>

You may not need to make an application for planning permission if what you propose is classified as 'permitted development'. This means that your development proposal falls into a category of development that is automatically approved under planning regulations. House extensions fall into this category if they do not exceed the tolerance levels (i.e. the limits) specified by the regulations. If you live in a Conservation Area, permitted development rights under the regulations may have been removed (by 'Article 4' directions), and if you live in a listed building, you will need to get listed building consent for any works, and probably planning permission as well. If in doubt about the position, get advice from EEBC's Planning Department before proceeding with any works or development.

Useful links and sources of information

The Planning Portal is delivered by the **Department for Communities and Local Government** (CLG), the central government department with responsibility for planning, housing and building regulations. The CLG's website is accessible at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government> The CLG has also produced a useful online guide to Planning Permission: <https://www.gov.uk/planning-permission-england-wales> Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's website also provides links to and information about: the Planning Portal, when you need to get planning permission, conservation areas, Article 4 Directions, and listed buildings: <http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/EEBC/Planning/default.htm>

Margaret Hollins

THE FOUNTAIN in ROSEBERY PARK

In the last Newsletter I asked if anyone would be prepared to sponsor our fountain and one of our members - who has chosen to remain anonymous – has sent a donation of £300 and we are very

grateful to him. He remembers walking in the Park in the 1940's and it obviously means much to him. To my surprise the last refurbishment of the fountain - it was lying at about 30 degrees - was carried out without our knowledge. We are pleased that this was done and would like to thank the mystery friend. The Friends of Rosebery Park are busy devising a strategy for improving the Park and we wish them well especially in this Centenary Year.

Harry Corben

NOTES FROM DOWNS CONSERVATORS MEETING 24th January 2013.

Simon Durrant has been appointed General Manager of Epsom Racecourse and was confirmed as a member of the Conservators.

Agents are being selected to market Downs House

Hack ride at foot of Downs still unsafe to use.

Still difficulties with flooding at Buckles Gap and the roundabout by the Grandstand.

A sub-committee still considering amendments to the Constitution of the Consultative Committee.

Hugh Craddock of the British Horse Society gave a presentation about the reasons the BHS considers the blocking of Walton Road to carriage driving illegal. Nick Healey of Surrey CC Highways dept was in attendance. He stated that Walton Road is officially classed as a 'D' road, a highway which has a defined width, but documentation about when barriers were erected is not available. Under the Epsom and Walton Downs Act, Walton Road cannot be widened, so Simon Dow asked if carriages are allowed, how they could pass without encroaching on the Downs. There was a long discussion relating to the enforceability of the present prohibition – no correct notice currently displayed; who needs consulting, 'right of access' usually means there is a destination involved but is open to wide interpretation; past legislation/bye laws need examination; SCC as the Highway Authority could extend the prohibition to include horse-drawn vehicles. The matter is still under consideration. (full minutes on the Council website).

After discussion it was decided to refer the matter of the Downskeepers hut (restoration or replacement) back to procurement to see if a better option is possible. Estimated cost of £15,000 for demolition of current building was felt excessive

In spite of reservations expressed by the trainers' representative, the Conservators accepted in principle to host some part of Stage 7 of the Tour of Britain cycle race upon the Downs should the Borough be invited so to do.



The racecourse submitted an outline proposal to develop and conserve the Prince's Stand as a high end restaurant. The Chairman deferred discussion to the next meeting as insufficient detail regarding work involved, car parking, lighting and planning issues.

Angela Clifford

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVIST WANTED

We are looking for a volunteer with computer experience from among our membership to sort and archive our extensive collection of photographs of Epsom and its surroundings. If anyone is interested in putting their name forward please contact me. **Malcolm Boyd (01372 723325)**

NATIONAL COUNCIL for VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS (NCVO)

The Society has community membership of this organisation which offers a range of discounted products and services. Any member is free to take advantage of these offers. Log on to www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/user/register and complete the form including our membership number MEMBERVC/12394.

Malcolm Boyd

ENGLISH HERITAGE

As the Society is a member of Civic Voice each member is eligible for one free day access pass to any English Heritage property. This can be used between 1 April and 30 June 2013 and between 1 September 2013 and 31 January 2014. Log in to www.civicvoice.org.uk and write English Heritage in the search box. This will take you to the English Heritage website where you will see 'Civic Voice pass' and fill in the form.

Malcolm Boyd.

IAN WEST WALKABOUT

The walk will take place on Sunday 30th June 2013 in an area around West Hill Avenue. We will meet by the arch at the top of West Hill Avenue at 2.30. The walk will not be too long with the speciality being an 'arts and crafts' house.

Any enquiries to Peter Follett on 0208 3937789

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you haven't paid the 2013 Subscription to your Rep yet please complete the slip at the bottom of the green AGM notice and take it to him/her. The list of Reps is on the 2nd page of the AGM notice and your Rep. will have marked their name. This would be appreciated by the Reps.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary (728570)

USE OF E-MAIL

I realise that some members do not have e-mail but for those who do, we can now send Newsletters by e-mail which some people find more convenient. We save cost for postal members and hassle where members live in 'secure' accommodation when letterboxes cannot be easily accessed. If you think that you would like to try having your Newsletters by e-mail let us know via the e-mail address on the last page of this Newsletter with 'Newsletters by e-mail' as the heading. You can always change your mind.

E-mails are also an excellent method of notifying members between Newsletters of any important matters like the Hospital meeting last month. If you have e-mail and didn't receive one from us about that meeting, again, use the e-mail address in this Newsletter to give us your e-mail address.

Ishbel Kenward

THE SOCIETY WEBSITE

For many years our website has been overseen by Piers Nicholson as the Webmaster and this has proved to be a very useful depository for our newsletters, letters to the planning authority, responses to consultations, aerial photographs etc. Piers has now decided not to seek re-election to the committee at the Annual General Meeting and we would like to express our grateful thanks for the valuable and dedicated contribution he has given to the Society and to wish him well in the future.

As a consequence of Piers standing down, the Committee has co-opted Mark Bristow to be our new webmaster and our website will be undergoing changes over the next few months. Through the good offices of Piers, we have been introduced to Fingo, a company in Epsom that specializes in modeling websites, and Mark will be working with them to give our website a facelift.

Malcolm Boyd

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We are delighted to say that Pauline Devereux has agreed to be our new Minutes Secretary and she has been co-opted onto the Committee. Pauline takes over from Angela Clifford who retains responsibility for reporting on Downs activities. We also take the opportunity to welcome Peter Follett, who in an earlier life, was a Chartered Surveyor and will be looking after communications.

Hon Secretary

NATIONAL TRUST

I understand that the National Trust is holding a free open weekend on 18th/19th April.

Ishbel Kenward

THE NEW GLEE WALK

GLEE stands for the Green Lanes of Epsom and Ewell. It is a self-guided walk of 13 miles linking our green lanes round the Borough, developed by me and can also be done in sections.

Please see www.epsom.townpage.co.uk/glee.htm for description, photos and maps. It will be officially opened by the Mayor on 12th May.

Piers Nicholson

WATCH THIS SPACE

We understand that the Milk Depot on Alexandra Road has been sold and a development application is expected.



Also, No 3 Alexandra Road, opposite the Milk Depot, is the subject of a development proposal to rebuild as a block of eight apartments with pleasing modern architecture and an undercroft car park. A decision is awaited.

EPSOM GENERAL HOSPITAL

If the number of your committee who attended the recent public meeting on the future of our hospital is a reflection of the concern felt, then feelings are running high. The thought of potentially losing the more serious cases from A&E and consultant led maternity caused a large number of concerned local residents to turn out. It appears now that, thanks to intervention by our MP, Chris Grayling and the vociferous expressions of local residents and doctors, that there is a much needed re-evaluation of options and a delay in announcing proposals. Local Surrey GPs will now have a greater say in the hospital's future. We await with interest, coupled with concern, publication of the future public consultation.

Malcolm Boyd

EVENTS AND OUTINGS

On Tuesday 12th March the second visit to the University of the Creative Arts took place. Details of the site were described in the last Newsletter, but nevertheless we were grateful to Richard Jones, Campus Operations Manager, for repeating such an interesting and informative tour. The Executive Dean, Dr. Roni Browne, regretted she was unavailable that afternoon.

The outing to Bletchley Park takes place on Thursday 11th April with a full coach and a waiting list.

The annual Buffet Supper Party is arranged for Friday 11th October at St. Joseph's Church Hall, St. Margaret's Drive (off Dorking Road). The event starts at 7.30 p.m. till 10.15 p.m. with a free wine or soft drink, followed by a varied buffet served by Studio Food at your table. The entertainment is being finalised currently. The cost will be £19 per head and non members are very welcome. There is adequate free parking. If you have any queries, please contact me on 01372-273517.

Sheila Wadsworth

APPLICATION FOR THE BUFFET SUPPER-FRIDAY 11TH OCTOBER

MEMBER'S NAME/S

And FRIENDS

ADDRESS

TEL. NO.

NO. OF TICKETS

TOTAL COST £

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, Ashtead, KT21 1LJ (01372-273517)

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