

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -138- WINTER 2013

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

Ebbisham House

For the first time The Civic Society became involved in Heritage Week-end when the public were invited to enter buildings not normally open to visitors. Ishbel, our membership secretary, arranged for some of our members to be available at various premises in Church St. A number of us spent a morning at Ebbisham House which is opposite St.Martins Church and now occupied by the National Counties B.S.. Others spent time at St.Martins Church, the Fire Station, the United Reform Church and also at the Durdans Stables in Chalk Lane.

Epsom and Ewell Borough information records show that there was a piece of land near the St Martins Church 'lying in the little Pickles'. This land had belonged to the vicars of Epsom since 1702 along with a larger piece of land nearby. In 1722 the smaller parcel passed to Samuel Woodford, Clerk and it then contained a house and brewhouse, both 'newly erected on the piece of land called the Little Pightle'. Samuel inherited from his brother William and it is not clear whether Ebbisham House was complete but the building is consistent with its construction in the early 18thC and it remains imposing. (little Pickles is a corruption of Pightle-a small field or enclosure). The two large wings to left and to right were added in the early 1990's to match the original house which was an early example of the use of stock bricks. The chief exterior decoration to the centre is the fine contemporary doorcase and the original wrought iron gate. Inside can be seen a fine panelled hall and an archway which leads to a contemporary staircase. Much of the panelling is original as are the marble fireplaces.



Jeremy Harte - Curator of the Bourne Hall Museum - has done some research about this area in the 17th C. Epsom was a sensitive place in Government circles particularly at the time when the Catholic leanings of Charles II were suspect and his brother James had converted. A plot to shoot the brothers on their way to the races at Newmarket failed because the racing was called off. The authorities gathered in their suspects and among them was Ursula Morehouse who was the vicar's wife from Epsom. Her husband, John, had moved from London in 1670 and they lived in the vicarage just opposite St Martin's and presumably where Ebbisham House now stands. John drew a double salary as he was also the vicar of Ewell. Ursula had made some apparently innocuous remarks in the garden about the king and these were overheard by one Edward Matthews, decorator.

The 1st Earl of Holland had had a plan to assemble cavalry on Epsom Downs to bring down the government. During the Commonwealth a register of potential Royalists moving from or to Epsom had been set up and in 1688 an M.P. had stated that 'most Papists resort to Epsom' so a conversation overheard by a decorator, probably frequenting the Old Kings Head next door, had to be investigated. After a due investigation Mr Secretary decided that the file on Epsom could be closed and the decorator, Edward Matthews, was sent to the County Jail.

Many thanks to Jeremy Harte and to Epsom and Ewell Local and Family History Centre for their help.

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

Harry Corben

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Here is my usual extract of current cases, starting this time with two quite substantial appeal decisions.

Land off Mill Road: This is the strip of undeveloped land, formerly allotments, between the railway cutting and the north side of Mill Road, valued locally as open land and known to be a habitat for badgers. The proposal to build 10 houses on the central part of the site met with much opposition and we wrote to object. A third of the land, next to Bridge Road, would be left open and a capital sum would be given for maintenance by a nominated wildlife group. The application was refused on grounds of loss of wildlife habitat and overdevelopment harming the local open character. An appeal has now been successful. The inspector considered that there would be no material conflict with Policies dealing with protected species nor any material harm to the character or appearance of the area. We don't agree but we can't win them all.

Organ and Dragon, 65 London Road, Ewell (formerly the Organ Inn): This is the other appeal. The application was from KFC who wanted a change of use from restaurant and bar to restaurant and hot food takeaway, with work to parking and access. Again there was much heated opposition but the main objection was the effect on highway safety at this busy intersection. Our own objection included an analysis of the highway situation. SCC Highways had no objection on highway safety grounds which caused some difficulty but the application was nevertheless refused in face of a recommendation to permit. An appeal was the subject of a Public Inquiry but was dismissed on highway grounds, the Inspector taking eight A4 pages to say how bad the traffic aspects would be. This is a key case in having the strength to persist against the highway authority's comment.

Haddad House, 91 East Street: There have now been three outline applications for the redevelopment of this small building. The first was for 8 flats in two buildings and was refused mainly for being overbearing and overshadowing adjoining properties. An appeal was recently dismissed. The second was a revision, and was also refused for similar reasons and also just been appealed. The third reduces the number of flats to 6 but has the same problems and we have objected to this as we did to the earlier ones. We think a well-designed single building set back in line with adjoining development is the only acceptable solution. In the meantime we believe the latest effort will be considered at the November Planning Committee.

Crossways House, 39 East Street: We had no major objection to the conversion of this empty office building to students' accommodation when the application was made earlier in the year, as it was demonstrated that there was no demand for offices. There were, however, policy difficulties of releasing employment space near to the Town Centre. A compromise has now been found and permission given for the retention of offices on the ground floor and the conversion of the upper floors to halls of residence with 48 student bedrooms arranged into 6 cluster flats.

2 Oak Leaf Close: Oak Leaf Close is a small cul de sac of 5 detached houses off West Hill Avenue. It has two substantial listed oak trees which are some 75 years old and an application was made to fell them because they were alleged to be the cause of damage to the garage of one of the houses. This was probably true, but the garage was an extension built on inadequate foundations whereas the house itself was carefully constructed on piles. We objected and said the trees must be preserved. At the October Planning Committee it appeared that a claim for the cost of remedial work might be made against the Council if permission were not granted. However there was advice that felling would create heave which would cause more damage than leaving the trees alone and permission was duly refused.

Land between 70A & 72-74 Temple Road: Nos 72-74 is a large house on the corner of Temple Road and Pound Lane, now occupied by students and No 70A is a more modern detached house built some years ago probably in the garden of the main house. The present proposal is to build another house in the space between, now a drive and garages. We objected that this would be serious cramming and overdevelopment, overbearing on the existing house and distorting the street scene to an unacceptable amount. The application has been refused.

Oak Glade: This is one of two groups of buildings, the other being Cuddington Glade, built as nurses homes and lying just off the first roundabout in Christchurch Road entering the new hospital site development. Cuddington Glade has been successfully refurbished into a pleasant group of dwellings, and after various uses Oak Glade is now empty and a little rundown. In accordance with frequent practice, a company who wish to develop this group came to discuss their proposals with us before submitting a planning application. They wish to retain the existing buildings and refurbish them and we supported this idea subject to examining the detailed application.

Alan Baker

CONSERVATION

I was taken to task a week or so ago by a member who felt that my comments about the Metro Bank in the last Newsletter suggested that I was opposed to the employment opportunities the bank presented. This was no doubt a valid observation, but I assured her that neither I nor the Society is anti-employment. Indeed, quite the reverse, as we are very keen to see a vibrant town with plenty of business and employment opportunities. My main objection to the Metro Bank was its fascia, which the Council have succeeded in toning down, although I am still concerned. To see why, you can see an example of their house style in Sutton High Street – it really is the epitome of what we do not want to see in Epsom. We are not Sutton, or Croydon or Kingston, and this style of fascia will do nothing to enhance the Town Centre Conservation Area, within which the Metro Bank will lie, and which therefore does not comply with Council policy. The Council was clearly in a difficult position on this issue, but if the Society does not speak out on such matters, who will?

While admiring the Sutton Metro Bank, I noticed an example of a ‘green wall’ nearby, on the opposite side of the High Street. For those who have not heard of such things, they consist of a wall entirely covered by plants, usually ferns and those types of plant which remain green throughout the year. I have mixed feelings about these which are supposed to be environmentally friendly, and no doubt in some respects they are. But to remain healthy, I imagine that they must be regularly (and expensively) maintained with new plants added and dead material removed. They also need a constant supply of water and presumably nutrients, which cannot be a good thing for the building behind or helpful in terms of water conservation.

So far this year we have looked at 76 planning applications and written 13 letters. The Architecture Panel has been a great help in connection with two recent applications. One concerned a proposal to build three terrace houses behind a pair of semi-detached Victorian villas in South Street. We felt that there were several issues which made this unacceptable, including density and access matters, but we were also concerned by the extremely small size of the houses, which we were able to compare with the parking bays provided. We have seen other examples of this problem, where ‘double’ bedrooms have space for a double bed, but precious little else. Where people are expected to put their clothes and other belongings is a matter still exercising my imagination.

The second of the most recent letters concerned Seeability House in Hook Road where the applicant hopes to open a nursery for 142 children. This is probably greatly needed and is well positioned in relation to the population it would serve. The application was supported by a transport appraisal which depended largely on data from a smaller nursery near Croydon operated by the same company. However, while the parking provision would, on this basis, appear to be adequate, the dropping off facilities are clearly likely to be deficient, and in this location, close to a very busy signalised junction, it is difficult to see how this can be overcome. It is to be hoped that the County Council, as Highway Authority, share this view; experience does not lead me to be optimistic although a recent case (see Organ & Dragon above) does give some cause for hope.

Robert Austen



Seeability House

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to our 32 new members who joined at the Exhibition on 16th November. I hope many of our current members saw the Exhibition with Malcolm Boyd's excellent pictures of parts of Epsom we either don't notice or take for granted. Epsom has many lovely features and, as a Society, we want the inevitable changes to our town to provide more interesting and attractive buildings. Our membership is now approaching 2,000 which is an exceptional number for a Society like ours. Being able to back up our planning views with this number of members adds weight to the good work being done by Alan Baker and Rob Austen and our Planning Sub-committee.

Ishbel Kenward



Ashley Centre 16th November 2013.

CHUTER EDE

After attending the Remembrance Service in the Market Place on November 11th I followed The Mayor, Councillor Colin Taylor, and many of the Councillors and others to 78, Miles Road. There I represented the Civic Society when a plaque was unveiled to indicate that Chuter Ede had lived there in the 1920's. I was born in 1927, the year he moved from Miles Road, and I do remember his successful career as an M.P. in the 1940's but I am sure many patients who occupy a bed in Chuter Ede Ward in Epsom General Hospital have no idea who he was.

Born in Epsom in 1882 to James Ede and Agnes Mary Chuter and named James Chuter Ede but known as Chuter Ede. Served in WWI in East Surrey Regt. and rose to Acting RSM. Member of Epsom Urban District Council and S.C.C. and was Charter Mayor to the Borough of Epsom and Ewell in 1937. Educated at Epsom National School and eventually Christs College Cambridge. He worked as a teacher from 1905-1914 and always maintained his interest in education. He entered Parliament for a short period as member for Mitcham and then 1929-31 and 1935-1964 for South Shields where a school is named after him.

In the first post war government of Clement Attlee he served as Home Secretary from 1945-1951 and then became Leader of the House of Commons. During the coalition government of 1940-45 he used

his knowledge and love of education to help draft the Butler Education Act and later, as Home Secretary, set up the Lynskey tribunal in 1948 to investigate allegations of corruption among ministers and civil servants. When he left the Commons he was created a life peer as Baron Chuter-Ede of Epsom in the County of Surrey. He died in 1965 age 83.

Harry Corben

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Our first involvement, as a Society, with the Heritage Open Days was the weekend of 14th/15th September when we organised the opening of Ebbisham House, St. Martin's Church including the Bell Tower, United Reform Church and the Fire Station. We are very grateful for the preparation done by those responsible for these buildings. It was a successful weekend with 164 people, including 22 children, visiting the four properties. Thank you to those who assisted in the organisation and the stewarding of the properties when they were open. **Ishbel Kenward**



Photo by Jane Race

THE DOWNS Conservators meeting 17th October.

The condition of the hatched hack area continues to be unsuitable for use. The blocking of Walton Road to carriage drivers is still unresolved and discussion is ongoing with Surrey Highways Dept. Demolishing and rebuilding of the Downs keepers hut is underway, much to their relief.

Permission has been given for new, permanent saddling boxes against the hedge in front of the Grandstand complex, and work is scheduled to start – or may have started by now – and the hedge will be replanted before the new boxes are installed. I pointed out the shabby appearance when on the annual Consultative Committee Downs Tour, and comment was made in our response to the planning application, so we hope the appearance from the road will be considerably improved.

Many drivers passing the Grandstand do not appreciate the need to give horses time to cross at the rider controlled traffic lights near the bus stops. This is proving a problem for trainers and lads when going to the training gallops especially in the early morning.

New code of conduct signs will be appearing shortly with the aim of reducing the number of dogs worrying horses, and also reminding cyclists exactly where they are permitted. Joggers have even been too close to the gallops when the racehorses are using them – possibly dangerous if a horse is spooked. Simon Dow, representing the trainers, felt the Conservators did not have sufficient ability to enforce the Bye-laws which were increasingly being flouted. He felt that no-one had the right to interfere with the trainers going about their lawful business training the racehorses – they paid for the use of the Downs at the times specified. A continuing problem!

Some of you may be aware of the flooding caused by heavy rain particularly at Buckle's Gap roundabout and the one by the Grandstand. Surrey County Council (the Highways Authority) has been assessing the size of soak away required and hopes to provide a new one in this financial year. Legal agreements have to be signed before work at Buckle's Gap starts.

Apparently the sale of Downs House is progressing, and more may be known by the time of the newsletter. Considerable discussion took place about non-racing events on and around the Downs. Much concern from the trainers as their work can be disrupted especially if events are scheduled on the Highway – so called Sportives – over which the Conservators have no control. Events on the Downs are limited under the 1984 Act, so Conservators consider what, if any, damage may be caused to the downs by participants or visitors and any potential extra demands on the Downs Keepers' time before giving permission. Soiling round the Gypsy site has been a problem but it was decided not to provide more mobile toilets for them in case they attract vandals, but to make it a condition of the licence that they each bring their own portable toilet.

Angela Clifford

ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER

The 96 people who came to The Buffet Supper on Friday 11th October enjoyed a rare treat. The Melody Makers, a sextet led by Kate Bown, provided a varied repertoire of music and song ranging from 'Bridge over troubled Waters' to Rachmaninov. Her sister, Daphne Moody, the violinist, came up from Wiltshire and Bryony Moody, her niece, was the cellist. Graham Currie (singer) and Hugh Proctor (pianist and M.C.) were past and current teachers at Glyn School and performed with their former pupil, Alistair, a trumpeter and Kate's younger son - what a family of the talents.



Some of the committee with other halves and helpers



The Melody Makers

The buffet from Studio Food was served by delightful staff directly to the tables and was plentiful and delicious - Carolyn and Sara did a splendid job. Our cheery barmen, Tony Smith and Norman Dempster, kept our glasses charged and Audrey Simpson did beautiful, rose flower arrangements for the tables, which were given to those with birthdays nearest to the date of Emily Davison's death at the Derby in 1913 - 8th June. We welcomed the Mayor Colin Taylor and his wife, Josie, and the Chairman of Planning, Councillor Graham Dudley, and his wife, Trudi.

Sheila Wadsworth

LIVE SCREENING AT A CINEMA NEAR YOU

In case you are not aware, it is now possible to see plays from the National Theatre, operas and ballets screened live in Cinemas. The view is excellent, cheaper and more convenient than going up to London. You can obtain the details from the Cinema or, if you have Internet access, follow this link.

<http://www.odeon.co.uk/odeon-plus/>

Ishbel Kenward

COUNCIL TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND (CPRE)

Although most of our activities centre on the town of Epsom, we are also close to beautiful countryside that must be protected. The photographs below indicates the extent of the countryside around Epsom. CPRE is conducting a campaign to protect the rural landscape and we are inviting members and friends to sign up by using the link below and filling in the form. <https://e-activist.com/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=21&ea.campaign.id=21571&ea.tracking.id=cpre-web>

Editor



Looking North



Looking South

SPRING OUTING

G.F. Watts Gallery and Chapel, Compton

The Spring visit will be to the Watts Gallery and Chapel at Compton, south of Guildford, on Tuesday 25th March. There has been a two-and-half year restoration of the Gallery comprising the buildings and conserved paintings. It displays the paintings and sculpture of George Frederic Watts, the eminent Victorian painter, and is a centre for exploring that period of art, social history, craft and design. The Chapel is an arts and crafts masterpiece designed by Mary Watts.

Tea/coffee and biscuits will be provided on arrival. We have not booked lunches but suggest that members stagger their visits to the Tea Shop or bring their own. Parking is restricted so that the coach parks elsewhere. We suggest flat, comfortable shoes as there is quite a lot of walking especially as the Chapel tour requires a ten-minute walk and a steep path to reach it.

There are two costings for our visit, one if you drive yourself £21 or secondly, on a 36-seater coach £34. Parking for the cars is at the Gallery. We shall try to fill cars and would suggest passengers pay their driver £5. From 1st February we shall accept bookings for members' friends. The booking form for this outing is below.

Coach collection points are (A) 9 a.m. Epsom Downs, behind the tea hut; (B) Methodist Church, Epsom; or (C) The Street, Ashted. Any queries please ring me on 01372- 273517. **Sheila Wadsworth**

G.F. WATTS GALLERY AND CHAPEL- Tues. 25th March 2014

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

MEMBER'S NAME/S

NON MEMBERS NAMES (after 1st February).....

ADDRESS.....

TEL. NO.

No. OF TICKETS

TOTAL COST £.....

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