

**NEWSLETTER-No-118-WINTER 2008**

**CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY**

You may have gathered by now that I enjoy visiting Bourne Hall and the Ebbisham Centre libraries and I am always looking for books which have interesting stories about our Borough. I was born in the Twenties but in Hampshire and made a first flight, at the age of six, in a Westland Wessex with my parents and brothers in 1933 to the I.o.W. and back. I remember some of it and have later memories of the Thirties. I therefore enjoyed reading Thirties Epsom by R.I.Essen, Printed and Published by Pullingers Publishing and I trust that I may quote from the book.

The book is written largely to show the effect of the railways on Epsom but I am more interested in the building of the Woodcote Green Estate by E.G.Harwood between 1933 and 1939. The estate was built on land bought from Lord Northey in three parts in 1933, 1937 and 1939 and was centred on Cedar Hill. Each front garden was planted with two trees to prevent additional building and to preserve the avenue effect. The prices were from £1095 to £2500 and it was one of the last and most expensive of the estates to be built in Epsom before the war.

In Ewell meanwhile, in 1933, the Queen of the Carnival was crowned and the Epsom Cottage Hospital Carnival processed to Woodcote House Park where, by kind permission of E.G.Harwood Esq., Lord Northey opened the Grand Fete and Fancy Fair on the land which is now Woodcote Hurst. Needless to say the Estate has flourished and prices have escalated considerably.

The 'credit crunch' which is now having such a dramatic effect on many lives will no doubt encourage some householders to extend their properties because they cannot move. We have not yet had much experience of the new Planning Laws as they apply to domestic properties but no doubt time will show if we are to become more involved.

We have arranged to update and expand our website - currently receiving some 1800 hits each month - and will hope to make it useful and user friendly.

The committee join me in wishing all our members a happy Christmas.

**Harry Corben, Chairman**

**PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

**Magistrates and County Courts:** This application by Gladedale for 54 flats, ground floor offices and basement parking was refused by the September Planning Committee. The main grounds of refusal were very similar to our own objections: by reason of their design, height, bulk and proximity to the street the proposed blocks would be out of keeping with the character of existing development and would adversely affect the street scene; Block A would result in undue overlooking of adjoining houses in The Cressinghams; and the development would provide insufficient parking. No information has been received about an appeal and Gladedale are no doubt considering an amended

scheme. We were asked very informally by the planners whether we felt the County Court in The Parade should be kept but the Executive Committee decided that this would not be justified, although we strongly believe that any development must be more sympathetically designed than the previous application.

**The Paddock, Langley Vale Road:** The Holiday Express Hotel is now open and is probably as discreet as could be hoped. The Signs are almost unnoticeable. There have been adverse comments about the car park lighting but opinions vary and we are advised that planning permission is not required.

**Hudson House, opposite the Railway Station.** The alterations required by the Planning Department are now well under way and do provide some improvement, although nothing can reduce the grossly excessive bulk. The line of Station Way through to the High Street can now be seen and will hopefully be open soon, together with the crossing at the station, and suitable signage.

**Woodcote House Court, Woodcote Green Road:** This application proposed the redevelopment of 1-5 Woodcote House Court and a pair of houses on the site of the garages in the private roadway from Pine Hill. We objected on the grounds of overdevelopment and lack of relationship with the remaining terrace. The application was later withdrawn and we wait to see what happens next.

**Lavandou Stables, Chalk Lane:** The same can be said here. The application has still not materialised at the Planning Committee and we will await the Agenda for 11th December with great interest.

**Alan Baker**

## **CONSERVATION**

57 applications have been looked at so far this year. We have written to the Planning Department concerning 10 of these with comments varying from the complimentary to some fairly strong criticisms.

Many applications are entirely reasonable and well designed, but occasionally the proposed design seems to be entirely unsuited to its location. This is of particular concern in conservation areas, where a new building must take account of its surroundings and respect the qualities of the area which the Council is rightly seeking to protect through conservation designation.

There have been three recent examples of this. In one case, there have been several proposals from the same applicant related to a site which requires the subdivision of a large garden. Generally, the Society is against such proposals, but in this case the area would seem to be well suited to the idea, which has not aroused the opposition of the neighbours. However, the proposed building, the latest of several designs, seems to pay no regard at all to its surroundings in both its basic design and the choice of materials.

Two other cases seem to exemplify two other problems. One is, dare we say, the result of developer's desire to put too many properties on a given site. This is usually justified by saying that the resulting density is within government guidelines. While in strict terms this may be so, it often results in the undermining of the qualities of the area and would impact adversely on the neighbouring properties.

The second difficulty arises from guidelines for parking provision which limit the number of parking spaces in an attempt to reduce car usage. This fails to recognise the difference between car ownership and car usage, and becomes singularly inappropriate when applied

to a family house. It is little wonder that on-street parking is becoming such a problem in the face of such ill-considered policies.

It is unfortunate that so often we have to be rather negative about applications. As we mentioned at the beginning of this piece, many are well designed and deserve our support and in some cases result in the rescue and refurbishment of historic buildings which have become run down over the years. One such is Tamarisk Cottage in White Horse Drive, which is being extensively renovated and returned to its original form, with the assistance of members of the Planning Department.

**Rob Austen**

## **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

In the Summer Newsletter I reported that we had participated in the first part of a consultation on a Character Appraisal and Management Plan for Epsom Town Centre. The council has now collated the responses and produced a very comprehensive list of issues and a series of 44 questions to which we were again invited to respond.

Apart from the important points we raised previously (see summer Newsletter) which we reiterated, here are some additional replies that we made:

- Ensure better architectural quality in new buildings
- We would like to see a reduction of traffic in the town, but there should be a balance between pedestrian use and traffic.
- A radical improvement of the walkway between the Town Hall car park and the High Street by compulsory purchase
- Provision of bus parking bays in the High Street to facilitate traffic flow.
- Consider traffic calming measures to prevent traffic racing to beat the next traffic lights
- We need a greater range of quality independent retail outlets. The planners should find ways to make the town more attractive to such retailers.
- We suggested that a bowling alley and a skate park would be useful facilities to be focal attractions for families and young people respectively.
- We emphatically resist any change to the policy of restricting the height of buildings in the town centre to four storeys
- We opposed the idea that Swail House and Dulshott Green be considered as development sites.

These answers and the rest of our responses can be found on the council website [www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk](http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk) and we await with interest the next stage in the management plan for the Town Centre that will be operative during the next twenty years.

**Malcolm Boyd**

## **EPSOM & EWELL CHARACTER STUDY**

EEBC has recently completed a 'Character Study' of the borough. To quote the Council's words, 'it has become increasingly apparent that local distinctiveness and environmental character are central considerations when developing planning policies and making planning decisions. In response to this, the Council has commissioned Atkins Consultants to carry out an Environmental Character Study of the Borough.'

EPS was among a small number of local organisations which were invited to be involved in the production of the study through membership of a working group. The study covered the entire Borough, but excluded Conservation Areas, which have their own detailed management plans.

The Study Group's involvement started with a day-long tour, which provided a fascinating glimpse of the variety of environments and architectural styles which exist within the Borough. There is much to be protected but there are also some areas which deserve to be improved. We had a chance to comment on the draft documentation produced by Atkins and to discuss the issues which emerged at a number of follow-up meetings. Apart from outside organisations, which included CPRE and the local archaeological society, the discussions were attended by the consultants, members of the Planning Department and several councillors. The discussions were quite lively, but all those present were clearly motivated to help to protect and enhance the Borough's (generally) high quality environment.

The work included the preparation of detailed descriptions of some 50 areas, although some were sub-divided resulting in a total of nearly 100. Details were collected by staff on foot using computer notebooks, and following a rigorous methodology to ensure consistency. The results, which are voluminous, have been prepared in electronic format as well as being printed conventionally, a copy being made available to the Society. This will form an invaluable reference document for the EPS

We are very pleased that the leader of the Atkins group who carried out the work will be giving a talk to the Society in March, with the blessing of the Borough. We do hope you will come and learn a great deal more about this fascinating piece of work than is possible here.

**Rob Austen**

## **2009 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS**

### **Progress Report**

The organisation of our Special Events is now in hand.

**Chantilly, 20<sup>th</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> May 2009.** The hotel and coach are now booked and other arrangements will be completed by January for the visit to Chantilly in May. There are now only three places available on a first come/first served basis. Contact Brian Gee on 01372-720473

**Anniversary Dinner.** The Cedar Room at the RAC is reserved for our anniversary dinner on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> July.

**Rosebery Fountain.** Our offer of a fountain for the Rosebery pond has been accepted by the Borough Council and we hope to have it installed for an official opening in the spring.

**Souvenir Programme.** We are planning to issue a souvenir programme to all members in March.

Each event will be publicised in the appropriate newsletter.

**Norman Dempster**

## ASHLEY CENTRE DISPLAY

On Saturday 18th October we held our latest exhibition consisting of ten enlarged aerial photographs of Epsom and its surroundings and also the Chalk Lane Conservation Area which includes the Lavandou stables – the subject of the current controversial planning proposal. The photographs were taken in August as a special commission and, as an illustration of continuous change, the large building seen in Upper High Street now owned by Tesco, has since been demolished.

Many passers by, including some society members and the Mayor and Mayoress, found the display of interest and the committee members on hand were kept busy answering questions and pointing out places of interest. We recruited 41 new members which brings our current membership to over 1700.

**Malcolm Boyd**



The Ashley Centre Display with Harry Corben (Chairman), Rob and Liz Austen

## THE DOWNS

A special meeting of the Downs Conservators concerning the proposed 2-day concert in 2009 was convened on 3<sup>rd</sup> September at the Town Hall. The Chairman allowed councillors to question the organisers, and they did so for 45 minutes. When no more questions were raised, the meeting proper opened and further questions banned. David Smith (Chief Executive) had obtained Counsel's opinion about the legality of the Conservators' ability in law to give consent for such an application. Counsel said it was lawful.

Matters of concern ranged from noise, lighting, safety, allowing access as required under the Downs Act, preventing damage to the Downs by heavy vehicles, safety of horses – hack and racing, stewarding, policing, egress from the events and charges for car parking. The satisfactory restitution of the site after the event would be examined before hand back to the Racecourse was accepted. Nick Blofeld (Racecourse Managing Director) and possibly Nick Owen (of Lower Mole Countryside Management), but certainly two people, would be involved.

The Conservators approved the application and it was subsequently considered at a meeting of the full Council which gave consent but attached a number of conditions (Full minutes of the meetings are available on the Council's website). David Smith said that arrangements are now in the hands of the Racecourse and the Concert Organisers. Special licensing conditions to control alcohol outside the site itself will be discussed further.

We have since learnt that David Smith is recovering in hospital following a stroke and we wish him a swift return to full health.

**Angela Clifford**

### **TELL ALL YOUR FAR-FLUNG FRIENDS ABOUT EPSOM!**

These colourful postcards with 6 views of Epsom help to publicise the Epsom Protection Society. You can buy them at our meetings, or in bulk at £12.50 for 50 or £22.50 for 100 from Piers Nicholson on 01 372 725 742. Use them as greeting cards, moving cards, etc. etc.



**Piers Nicholson**

### **EVENTS, OUTINGS and TALKS**

Next year is our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and as you already know from the last newsletter there is a special programme of events to mark this occasion but the committee have asked me to arrange the usual events as well, so there will be a summer outing and the buffet supper in 2009

#### **Buffet Supper Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

As usual the party was held in St Joseph's church hall and was well attended. Everyone enjoyed themselves and several people thought it the best evening so far. We were entertained by Headley Kay with his special mixture of guitar playing, songs and anecdotes. Sara and Caroline from the Food Studio did the catering, and provided a wide variety of delicacies in ample quantities.

We were pleased to welcome the Mayor and Mayoress of Epsom & Ewell as guests of honour for the evening. Councillor Alan Winkworth took great interest in our display of aerial photographs of Epsom and was quick to point out the site adjacent to the Derby stables where he devotes his skill as an expert archer. In addition to his civic duties, Alan is currently Chairman of Surrey Bowmen, the oldest archery club in the country.

I should like to thank those who attended for supporting the event and especially the committee and all the people whose help contributed to make this occasion a great success.

## **OUTINGS**

### **Christmas Outing to Chichester on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

There was a good response to this outing which was oversubscribed and unfortunately for some there had to be a ballot to allocate the 50 tickets available and I am very sorry for those who were unlucky and did not get a ticket. The lucky ones have already received their tickets and there is a short waiting list.

### **Summer Outing 2009**

An outing is being arranged for a Thursday in August 2009. It will be to The Friars at Aylesford in the morning including a light lunch followed by a visit to Ightham Mote in the afternoon. Full details and a booking form will be in the next newsletter.

## **TALKS**

### **Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2008 at 8pm in Myers Studio**

Unfortunately this talk had to be cancelled because although months ago CABE had promised to supply a speaker they let us down at the last moment and said they had no-one available. All cheques have been returned. Sorry for any disappointment caused.

### **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009 at 8pm in Myers Studio, Epsom Playhouse**

The talk will be given by Nicola Hamill of W S Atkins. Epsom and Ewell Planning Department commissioned Atkins to carry out an Environmental Character Study earlier this year. Nicola Hamill who took a leading part in this study is coming to give an illustrated talk about this important piece of work, how they went about it and the results (see Rob Austen's article on page 3). The talk will be very popular and early application is advised. The cost is £3 per ticket.

Please apply on the form at the end of the newsletter and return together with your cheque made payable to Epsom Protection Society and a stamped addressed envelope to Joy Furness 37 Woodcote Hurst Epsom KT18 7DS

**Ian West's Walk About** will be in Epsom in June 2009 - date to be given in next newsletter.

**Joy Furness**

## **WOODCOTE GREEN HOUSE**

One of our members, John Parsloe, who has owned and lived in Woodcote Green House since 1977, has now written a book about the history of the house and some of the historic houses in its vicinity. The title of the book is 'Woodcote Green House, and Other Woodcote Houses in Epsom'. The house probably dates from the last quarter of the seventeenth century and has experienced many different tenants and owners, among whom was the Northey family. The first part of the book concerns the history of the house itself while the second part is concerned with research into other houses in the Woodcote area, notably The Durdans, Woodcote House, Westgate House, Maidstone House and The Amato.

John Parsloe has kindly donated a copy of the book to the Society for its archive. The book is available from Waterstones for £25 or can be obtained directly from John at

No1 Woodcote Green House, Woodcote Green Road.



Woodcote Green House

**HERITAGE WEEKEND**

The Committee set up to organise this weekend reports that the event was very successful, and was made possible by the kind sponsorship of Atkins and also due no doubt to the excellent weather.

Speaking personally, I and a member of Atkins staff were stewarding at the Woodcote Grove Mansion, owned by Atkins. Expecting a dozen or so people, we were very happily inundated with well over three hundred visitors who thoroughly enjoyed themselves exploring the unusual architecture of this 300-year old building and its interesting history, through guided tours. This happened to be the first time the Mansion, overlooking splendid gardens, had been opened up to the public. As well as learning about all its previous owners, visitors also gained a little insight into the very beginnings of Atkins' vast consultancy, set up by Sir William Atkins. Fortunately, having known Sir William, I was able to add a few notes of my own.

It transpired that Woodcote Grove and the Lavandou stables (formerly part of The Durdans estate), in close proximity to Woodcote Grove, received the most visitors throughout Epsom and Ewell. We look forward to next year's event and hopefully a repeated success.

**Margaret A. Pettit**

(On behalf of the Epsom and Ewell Heritage Weekend Committee)

**APPLICATION FORM FOR TALK on THURSDAY 5<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2009**

To be held at 8pm in the Myers Studio Epsom Playhouse

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

PHONE NUMBER.....

I would like ..... tickets for the talk (£3 each) and enclose a cheque made payable to Epsom Protection Society for £ ..... and a stamped addressed envelope. Please return to Joy Furness 37 Woodcote Hurst Epsom KT18 7DS (Tel 01372 722186)

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