

THE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

Have you been to Smitham or Reedham recently? Rather to my surprise I found myself passing through these two towns some two or three years ago on my way to London. I thought I had found an easy way to reach Charing Cross without having to change trains or to venture on to the Underground. Alas no longer so. For some three years I have been catching a train from Tattenham Corner which always left in good time and appeared to travel away from London at the beginning of the journey. We travelled via Tadworth and Kingswood and then through Smitham and Reedham, Croydon East, London Bridge and Waterloo to Charing Cross. It took some ten minutes longer than the train from Epsom but the advantage of travelling from terminus to terminus seemed to outweigh the disadvantages and the alighting onto and from a train which remains at the platform for many minutes seemed helpful to someone no longer in the first flush of youth. Charing Cross too is an easy walking distance from the Civil Service Club which I sometimes visit. I do not know much about Smitham and Reedham but in The Surrey Bedside Book I read that: - The Hamlet of Smitham Bottom which stands at the top of the pass of that name can never have been beautiful. In 1788 Jackson and Fewterel fought a prize fight there and the Prince of Wales, no less, was in the audience. Gentleman Jackson won and went on to become a friend of Byron and landlord of the 'Cock' at Sutton. On a recent trip on that line I discovered that, in a new timetable, few if any trains now go the whole way and most of them terminate at London Bridge which is not the easiest place to change trains.

Our speaker at the AGM in April was David Brock from English Heritage. A very interesting talk and he answered a question for me. One difference-perhaps the main difference-between English Heritage and The National Trust is that the N.T. will keep and maintain its properties while English Heritage will buy them, refurbish them and hope to sell them to an owner who must open them to the public for a specified number of days each year.



The Historic Assembly Rooms, Waterloo House

David Brock spoke about Waterloo House, now owned and run by Wetherspoons. He showed us some pictures which reminded me that I acted as 'minder' for Roy Butler when the 'Experts' came to Bourne Hall to value items for the Mayor's Charities in 2008. He is an expert in Arms and Armour - Antiques Road Show - who told me he was born in Waterloo House in the 20's and attended the Church of England School then in Hook Road. He could remember seeing the horse drawn carriages stopping near the Clock Tower.

Enough, I must get ready for Chantilly but hope to meet many of you at our functions during our 50th Anniversary Year.

Harry Corben, Chairman

50th ANNIVERSARY KEEPSAKE

Along with this issue of the newsletter is a brief coloured brochure that we have produced as a souvenir of our 50th anniversary. We hope you will find it informative and interesting and a reminder of what the Society stands for. **Editor**

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Continuing some of the stories from the last issue and some new ones as well.

United Reformed Church, Church Street: The proposal described last time for a new chapel/community centre plus student accommodation has been withdrawn by the applicant. No doubt a revised scheme will appear in due course.

15, Eastway: The application for student rooms on this site was refused and has been appealed. The Inspector is to visit the site and we hope for a successful result.

Wilberforce Court, Heathcote Road: This is yet another application to build student accommodation. This time, however, the site is virtually part of the Art School (sorry, the University for Creative Arts). We therefore see no objection in principle to the use, its contemporary design or to the density which in isolation would clearly be excessive. We have made comments only on the effect on the street scene and have made a number of suggestions.

40-52, Upper High Street: This site is now owned by Tesco and we understand that discussions have been held between them and the Planners on possible development without as yet any positive result. In the meantime the planning permission given on appeal to Peel Investments in 2004 is about to expire and Tesco have applied for renewal. This was not the superstore scheme but an earlier slightly more modest proposal, which we also opposed. The renewal would keep a door open for Tesco but it seems unlikely that they would really want to pursue this particular scheme. Refusal is possible only on the grounds of changed circumstances but we nevertheless wrote objecting and the application was refused unanimously by the Planning Committee after a long debate.

Drummond Gardens, Christchurch Mount: The current owners of this very charming if unusual Mediterranean style development is anxious to build in the grounds. After withdrawing his original scheme for two additional blocks of flats and a pair of semi-detached houses, he got permission on appeal for the houses which are now being built, with the unfortunate effect we expected when we objected to the application. He has now applied for permission to build 3-storey flats in the north east corner of the site. We have objected on grounds of excessive bulk and height which would seriously affect the character and local distinctiveness of Drummond Gardens.

The Comrades Club, The Parade: This is the Edwardian building between Argos and the Town Hall. The Club, providing facilities for ex service people and their families, is having financial problems and is looking for what has been called an alternative financial base. This resulted in an application from Travelodge to build a hotel with 85 bedrooms and with replacement club accommodation on the ground floor. Whilst sympathetic to the Club, we see problems with the submitted proposals, especially as this end of The Parade is an important element of the Town Centre and is already getting very crowded. We have objected on the grounds that the new building would be too high and bulky, it would overpower both Argos and the Town Hall and would create an unpleasant tunnelling effect. We also think it unsatisfactory that there is no car parking for staff, customers or even Club members on the site, and it is proposed that all parking should be on the Town Hall and other public car parks. We have written accordingly and await a decision.

Sainsburys, Kiln Lane: Sainsburys propose to make various alterations to which we see no objection, apart from “freshening” the main entrance. To do this they propose removing the present gabled feature, which we quite like, and replacing it with a large, high grey coloured Display Wall. We think this is most unfortunate. We have written on these lines and hope the planners agree with us.

42, High Street: The old Boots shop is being fitted out for Maplin Electronics. We are pleased that when we objected to proposed signs on the stone fascia we were strongly supported in the Planning Department who approved amended drawings showing the signs within the shop front frame. It is clearly their intention – and ours - that all fascia signs should be kept within the shop fronts along this part of the High Street.

Alan Baker

CONSERVATION

The Society’s New Year has kicked off fairly quietly, perhaps due to the financial climate. We have looked at 14 applications since the beginning of April, most of which have involved modest extensions or alterations to domestic buildings, together with a couple of renewal applications relating to Café One and The Assembly Rooms.

Only one application has resulted in a letter being sent to the Council. This was part of an application from Wilkinsons for new shop signs. Most of the proposals related to replacement of the existing shop signs and looked entirely reasonable, and indeed, probably represent an improvement on the existing signs. This is important on such a prominent building, albeit a modern one, within the Town Centre Conservation Area. However, part of the application was for advertising material in the first floor windows, which, if copied by other occupiers of town centre buildings, could result in a considerable degrading of the townscape. Accordingly, we have written to express strong opposition to this part of the application.

On another - but related - issue, we have been in correspondence with the County Council through one of the Epsom Councillors to express the society’s concern regarding the traffic advice given by the County in connection with major applications. This was triggered by the information provided in relation to the Lavandou Stables (Durdans) application, which seemed to be woefully lacking in the level of detail required by this site, in what is a particularly difficult location in traffic terms.

A similar problem may crop up in connection with the application for a hotel on the Comrades Club site in The Parade. This is another important site, and the traffic implications of the hotel, and the displaced club traffic, have been very superficially considered. In particular, the full impacts of the proposed use of the existing Town Hall car park by hotel guests (although a sensible use of this asset if it can be managed properly) have not been reviewed adequately. There is more about this in Alan Baker’s piece on Planning Applications on Page 2.

Robert Austen

CIVIC PRIDE

The following is an extract from a letter I received recently from Richard Freeth highlighting a useful way to encourage the Councils to clean up areas in Epsom:

An enormously helpful tool I have found in getting Epsom & Ewell Borough Council & Surrey County Council to sort out local problems such as littering, fly tipping, graffiti, broken street lights, etc. is: www.fixmystreet.com Based on a map, you select the area where the problem is, fill in a form, and it sends an email to the local council. Alongside the efforts of a few local residents to pick up all the litter in the local area, it has been really successful in getting the area around College Rd, Albert Rd, Bridle Rd to a much cleaner, tidier and nicer state to live in than previously.

Editor

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The following were elected at the Annual General Meeting on 23rd April 2009 as Officers and Committee members for the year to March 2010.

Special Responsibilities,

OFFICERS

Chairman: Harry Corben,

Vice-Chairman & Planning: Alan Baker FRICS.

Hon Secretary: Malcolm Boyd.

Hon Treasurer: Tony Smith.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Minutes Secretary: Angela Clifford.

Membership Secretary: Ishbel Kenward

Planning Infrastructure: Norman Dempster

Conservation Planning: Robert Austen

Information Technology: Piers Nicholson

Events: Joy Furness

Publicity: Nick Lock

Past Chairman: Geoffrey Stone

Hon Auditor: Harry Wilkinson

Archivist: Philip Clifford

HERITAGE PROTECTION — CURRENT ISSUES

After the AGM, Geoffrey Stone introduced David Brock, who leads the English Heritage team in Guildford dealing with all aspects of the historic environment in south and southeast England. English Heritage came into being only 25 years ago and the main purpose is to preserve for future generations. EH deals with all aspects of the historic environment — the built environment, archaeology and landscape. We learnt that consideration of the Heritage Protection Bill has been shelved due to the credit crunch. The intention is to provide a fully integrated system of the many aspects of protection of the environmental heritage. However, David explained that using the new Planning Policy Statement, EH can still improve the system, widen public involvement and simplify protection processes in advance of the Bill being brought back. He explained how English Heritage judge buildings/sites when considering grants and illustrated it in relation to Northington Grange, a Georgian house in Hampshire. The Conservatory had skilfully been adapted to form an Opera House which is helping to provide funds to maintain the whole building complex; the exterior is also open to the general public.

The reasons for EH supporting Lavandou Stables recent planning application were clarified. Change is inevitable as the roof of the Riding School is at risk and the current owner sees no advantage to him in dealing with it. Historic value and communal/community value are very strong but not enough to sustain the fabric therefore EH are supporting the change to office use. David did say, however, that if an alternative use with a secure future could be identified but one which was not able fully to meet financial obligations, then EH might be able to provide a financial grant.

The answers to the many questions were also illuminating. As EH is a last resort there are no endowments that go with NT properties; the hope is that EH can restore and then pass on protected by a covenant. Funding comes from functions and from a grant from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Buildings have to be at least 30 years old before being considered for listing. Internal arrangements cannot always be retained if the buildings are to be used; places such as Singleton will demonstrate that but it is unusual for a moved building to be registered as the position is part of the history. EH can have disagreements with local Societies about listing

but EH has to look at overall national standards.

This can only be a brief account of a highly authoritative and informative talk. More detail of the ground covered is available from the website and EH's recently published Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance book.

Ishbel Kenward/Geoffrey Stone



The Society's gift to the Town of a fountain in Rosebery Park marking the 50th anniversary was officially switched on by the Mayor, Alan Winkworth, accompanied by the acting chief executive, Frances Rutter on 30th March.

Epsom and Ewell Environmental Character Study - a talk to Epsom Protection Society on 5th March 2009 by Nicola Hammill of W S Atkins' Landscape Planning Department.

The Borough Council commissioned this report and we learned of its purpose - to identify and define distinctive environmental features of the Borough - and the methods employed. It was directed by Richard Alvey. It provides a working base for application of Planning Policies eg Policy CS5 in future, identifies areas for either character retention or improvement. Apart from Conservation Areas and the Town Centre, the whole Borough was professionally surveyed using GIS tablets and maps enabling construction of a database. Open spaces e.g. parks, gardens and green belt would need a separate study, but the team was aware of their importance.

Street features such as trees and hedges, parking and its effect on the street scene and street furniture were all noted and, together with property features such as roof lines, windows, materials and the building line, enabled the team to assess how highly sensitive to change the area under consideration would be. Areas of high sensitivity should be conserved, medium could be enhanced but would stand sensitive development and any of medium/low could certainly be much improved. Fortunately there are no areas of low sensitivity within the Borough.

The planned footprint development of the hospital cluster met with approval. It is important to retain historic landscape features such as tree belts, lanes and vistas when considering planning matters. The industrial areas were considered well-defined and not infringing excessively on

residential areas. Most development of the Borough occurred between about 1840 and 1920. The 1930s saw estates in areas such as Nonsuch and these, with wide, straight roads, grassy verges and houses with large gardens are areas of high sensitivity to change. West Hill Avenue and Meadway have a special character - large houses, individually architecturally pleasing. 1940s to 50s saw much infilling and this continued through the 60s and 70s. Many 1960s estates were not well planned and opportunities missed - plenty of room to improve. From 1980s to date, tight development has been allowed.

The approach roads to the Borough were considered - most are pleasant enough but East Street in particular was ripe for change and could be a much more attractive entry to the Town Centre. Issues thrown up by the study - apart from the inevitable impact of on-street parking or front garden parking - ranged from loss of boundary definition, infill and back-land development, side extensions giving a terracing effect to a row of houses, poor building layouts (eg pedestrians routes, no spaces between buildings giving long views) to use of totally inappropriate materials - PVC windows and unsuitable cladding were mentioned.

Other issues were SCC being the authority for highways matters, economic pressures in today's climate especially shop rents and inadequate footfall in, for example Derby Square, making it unattractive to major retailers.

Robert Austen asked Nicola how much notice the Council will take - she emphasised it is a guide on principles of design and materials which are not always within a Local Authority's expertise - it is for drawing on when making decisions. Early consultation about major developments always makes the process easier as adjustments can more easily be made.

Overall the Borough was found to have many attractive areas and 5-10 areas of special character. One member pointed out that EPS had been trying for 50 years to maintain the character and indeed this was why the Society was formed in 1959. The will is there in the Residents and the Council, but implementation is difficult. Through traffic remains a problem but it was accepted that pressures of the moment can have an adverse effect - the development opposite the Station for example was a missed opportunity for a modern, attractive area as visitors came off the train. Asked whether public transport was part the study, Nicola said no, only an environmental assessment was commissioned. Questioned about lighting, she assured us they had travelled around in the evening as well as during the day. She also thought mapping of access to public services would be a useful exercise. Although the physical background has been examined, the sociological one has not - there was thought to be a big divide between some areas. This is not an easy matter to resolve. So many services are dependent on the use of a car - hospital attendance for example.

For domestic reasons Nicola had to leave and her colleague Zoe Wallace then fielded questions. Asked what they thought made Epsom and Ewell special the audience mentioned the remaining historic buildings scattered around the Borough, the trees and open spaces giving some fine views, The Wells, The Derby, Stane Street, the Roman villa on the common, the Stew Ponds and Nonsuch. Some areas of poor character were the passage to the Town Hall from the High Street, the amount of unnecessary street furniture, the poor mix of shops and the Eastern end of the High Street.

In conclusion the Borough needs to find a new identity for the 21st century. We learned that the study will be used when the rest of the Local Development Framework is drawn up. The Society now feels it has evidence based material to consider when invited to comment on local matters.

Harry Corben, the Chairman, thanked Nicola and Zoe and gave them a bottle of wine each as a token of thanks. Rob Austen, Norman Dempster and Geoffrey Stone all had a hand in arranging this very informative talk and our thanks to them too.

Angela Clifford

EVENTS OUTINGS and TALKS

Summer Outing to The Friars at Aylesford and Ightham Mote on 27th August 2009

Aylesford is the home of a community of Carmelite Friars. The Friars, 3 miles from Maidstone, a centre of pilgrimage for all Christian traditions, has conference facilities and a guest house. The Priory, or The Friars to use its traditional name, was founded in 1242 when the first Carmelites arrived from the Holy Land. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1538, it became a private dwelling but in 1949 the Carmelites regained possession of their old home. Today The Friars is a blend of medieval and modern and its chapels contain some outstanding modern works of religious art. The ceramics created by Adam Kossowoski are especially noteworthy.

The early group of Carmelites, gathered round the Well of Elijah on Mount Carmel were hermits but circumstances compelled them to leave their settlement for Europe and a small group arrived at Aylesford in 1242. In 1247 the Carmelites underwent a major transformation of lifestyle and became mendicant friars.

The coach will pick up outside the Methodist Church in Epsom at 0830 sharp and at the free car park at Tattenham Corner (next to the tea hut) at 0845 sharp.

Coffee will be served on arrival in the restored 17th century West Barn which houses the tearoom and shop. This will be followed by a conducted tour of The Friars. Those not wishing to take the tour can watch the potter and/or upholsterer at work. Lunch (main course, desert and tea or coffee) served in the Pilgrims Hall is included. After lunch the coach will drive to Ightham Mote which is a National Trust property (NT members will not have to pay entry charge) where we will spend the afternoon at leisure, visiting the house, wandering round the gardens and grounds and having tea - you will be free to choose.

The coach will leave for Epsom at 5pm. The cost of the outing will be £25 for National Trust Members and £33.85 for non NT Members. This includes coach, coffee, lunch, entry to the Friars and Ightham Mote and tips.

Please apply on the form on page 8.

Buffet Supper 9th October 2009

Full details and application form will be in the next newsletter.

Ian West's Walkabout on Sunday 21st June 2009

Please meet outside the entrance to the Epsom Playhouse at 2.30pm. Ian will take us up South Street towards Ashted describing houses en route with the possibility of a visit inside a house in the Woodcote area. Everyone welcome.

Joy Furness

TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN

This plan, part of the Local Development Framework, has now completed its first consultation exercise during which the Society made a substantial contribution and will be progressing to a further consultation stage in June or July.

Malcolm Boyd

NONSUCH GOLD AT BOURNE HALL:

SATURDAY 18 JULY & SITE TOURS SUNDAY 19 JULY 2009

(by request from David Brooks, Bourne Hall)

'Nonesuch ... which no equal hath in art or fame'

Five hundred years since Henry VIII became King, and fifty since Nonsuch Palace was uncovered, this special study day explores the wealth and power of Tudor palaces. The programme features Martin Biddle, excavator of Nonsuch, and will include a showing of recently re-discovered film footage of the 1959 dig.

Tickets: £15 for the study day only; £20 for the whole weekend including site visits. Available from the Friends of Bourne Hall Museum, Spring Street, Ewell, Surrey KT17 1UF. Contact the Museum on 020 8394 1734; email JHarte@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

APPLICATION FORM for the OUTING to The Friars on 27th August 2009

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

Please delete as appropriate:-

I am a member of the National Trust. Cost of ticket: £25

I am not a member of the National Trust . Cost of ticket: £33.85

I would like ___ tickets for this outing and enclose a cheque for £ made payable to the Epsom Protection Society and enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

Please return to Joy Furness 37 Woodcote Hurst Epsom KT18 7DS

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