

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

A friend of mine named John Pink has written a book entitled 'Country Girls Preferred' and has referred to the situation concerning servants in and around Surbiton during the Nineteenth Century. He has shown how the employment of servants has actually shaped the architecture of some houses during that time. The title of the book stems from a firmly held belief that the countryside was an inexhaustible reservoir of female domestic labour for townspeople to employ. Girls from the country were generally thought to be stronger, to work for less wages, more used to hard work, to know their place and to be more compliant than girls from the towns. The employers, and the Servants' Registries, when advertising for staff, frequently used the phrase 'country girls preferred'.

An over-riding feature of the relationship was the concept, ingrained in the British class system, 'that servants should know their place and accept it as their lot in life to serve their betters'. The concept has faded but was incredibly strong in Victorian times.

The availability of servants influenced the design of middle class homes. The typical villa was tall and designed in such a way that the family could live between the servants working area in the basement and their sleeping quarters in the attic. I am not sure if any parts of Epsom show the same architectural characteristics as Surbiton, but I hope in my next letter to say something about the older parts of Epsom such as Worple Road, which is a strange mixture of old and new, St Martin's Avenue and Ashley Road.

We have recently held two displays to publicise the Society and also to build our membership. The thrust of the displays was to demonstrate changes that had taken place in key areas of the town over the last 50 years and were illustrated by pairs of photographs taken either from the air or from ground level. The first display in Horton Park resulted in 29 new members and the second in The Ashley Centre recruited 70 members. Our total membership now stands at 1792. It is intended to put the photographs on the Society's website so that they can reach a wider audience.



Horton Park



The Ashley Centre

We have met with developers and have objected to plans to build a large supermarket in Upper High Street. See our report later in the newsletter. We have also met developers who are

about to apply to redevelop Epsom Railway Station. We think the site needs to be improved and are impressed with certain aspects of the scheme. We will be responding in due course and in good time.

It seems unlikely that the newly created 'Infrastructure Planning Commission' will have an impact locally, principally because it is an independent body which makes decisions on applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects. We will watch its progress with interest

You probably know that we have had endless trouble with the fountain in Rosebery Park. What seemed a good idea at the time has given our treasurer, Tony Smith, a catalogue of problems and we do want to thank him for his efforts. He is going to try a floating fountain before you read this newsletter and we do wish him every success.

Meanwhile I want to refer to Joy Furness who has organised many excursions and suppers over the years. She has decided that although she will continue to organise the October Buffet Supper, any excursions in 2010 will be the last for which she will take responsibility and we are looking for a volunteer to take over this important task. We owe Joy a great debt of gratitude and I should like to thank her, on behalf of the society, for the wonderful work which she has done for us. If you feel that you could offer your help in this way please get in touch with a member of the committee. Joy has said that she will be willing to help and advise.

Finally I take the opportunity to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year

Harry Corben Chairman

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

This time I can report on a number of updates and two highly controversial developments of major importance.

Drummond Gardens, Christchurch Mount: I told you last time that an application for 3 storey flats on the site now occupied by garages in the north east corner of the estate had been appealed for non-determination. The Planning Committee later decided that they would have refused if they had been in time. The Inspector's decision is awaited. In the meantime a new application has been made for a pair of semi detached 4 bedroom houses on the same site, almost identical to those approved on appeal elsewhere on the estate and now being built. The November Planning Committee heard a fairly aggressive presentation by the applicant and refused this application as well, on grounds of overdevelopment and damage to the amenities of the estate.

Rear of 39-41 Manor Green Road: The refusal of the application for a pair of four bedroom houses has been appealed and we have written to the Inspectorate confirming our opposition and our support for the Planning Committee's refusal.

Magistrates and County Courts: A decision has now been made dismissing the appeal against the refusal of permission for the development of these sites in Ashley Road and The Parade. The Inspector thought the proposal would not harm the living conditions of nearby residents and car parking provision would be adequate, but these factors are outweighed by the harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. This is a step in the right direction.

Epsom Balti House, 26 South Street: We drew attention last year to an advertisement on the prominent flank wall of this restaurant which we thought entirely inappropriate in the Conservation Area. Enforcement action was taken and the advertisement removed. The premises have now been refurbished and an application made for a new advertisement. Although smaller than before, we still think this is inappropriate and have written to object.

Tesco, Upper High Street: The planning application has now been made and is likely to go the December Planning Committee. It is for a ground floor superstore with 479 car park spaces on upper floors. The retail store is set back a little from the Upper High Street, the frontage being taken up with a number of small shops - mostly Tesco's own - and 18 flats, in a pastiche of the Victorian Upper High Street buildings. The points for consideration are the principle of a large retail unit, its appearance, its effect on the surrounding area and the additional traffic. We have written to object strongly on all these aspects. We think it is intended as a destination store which will take trade away from existing traders rather than supporting them; it would be an ugly retail warehouse fronted by an uninspiring cosmetic pastiche; it would be damaging to the adjoining Pikes Hill Conservation Area and it would cause traffic chaos in the Town. It would also prejudice the comprehensive development of an important area, contrary to the results of a public consultation held in 2007 and to the emerging Town Centre Action Plan. We are in no doubt that planning permission should be refused.

Epsom Railway Station: This is the other controversial scheme. It has been in discussion with the planners for over a year and a public exhibition was recently held, resulting in bitter comments in the press. Once again the developers have presented their scheme to our Committee and we will be commenting in detail when an application is made, probably later this month. It is adapted from the design given planning permission in 2005. It will be another high building of 5 – 7 storeys, similar to that opposite and there is talk of a creating a “Boulevard” of Station Approach. Uses will include the new station, a 64 bed hotel, a small supermarket, shops, and 124 flats of which 54 would be affordable. Equally controversially, taxis and cars would be setting down in the inside lane of the existing highway not on station land. The existence of the present planning permission must of course be relevant, but the application has the makings of another big row. Our own comments will be developed when the application is published. One thing is certain, it is high time that the station is rebuilt; I have copies of schemes as long ago as 1987, and they are probably not the first.

Please see the photographs on Page 8 for the sites of these two planning applications.

Any of our members wishing to express their views on either of above two applications should write to Mr Mark Berry, Head of Planning, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom.

Alan Baker

CONSERVATION

The year has continued quietly as far as applications affecting conservation areas or listed buildings are concerned. Other, major, applications are dealt with elsewhere in the newsletter. We have now looked at some 68 applications this year, but since the last report only two letters have been sent. One concerned illuminated signs on a rather important and historic building, which we felt were unnecessarily large, an opinion which was shared by the Council, and the application was refused. The second related to a house to be built in a relatively large back garden within a conservation area. This had been the subject of earlier applications which been refused for a variety of reasons relating to siting and design. In our view the latest design was still unacceptable, making no reference to the character of the surrounding houses and the proposed materials and finishes were, we thought, inappropriate, but to no avail. The latest application appears to have met all the Council's objections and the application was approved.

In the last newsletter we mentioned our concern regarding the quality of shop fronts in the town centre. We have now written to the Council setting out our views. We mentioned the potential impact that shop fronts can have on the street scene and suggested the introduction of a strict design code. We feel that there is no reason to allow a chain of shops to impose its house style on the town, if it is not well designed – and there are plenty of examples of poor and garish designs in the town centre. A particular house style is not an adequate reason to impose poor design and taste on the town centre and a special colour, style, or symbol is unnecessary – most of us can

read! Happily, this issue is recognised within the Borough and is covered by several policies as well as the ‘Character Appraisal and Management Proposals’ for the town centre, so we hope for a successful outcome, although we have yet to hear from the Council.

We are currently considering ways in which the Society might take a more positive stance towards development proposals within the Borough. All too often our activities are negative and in the main consist of writing to raise objections to applications. This is no doubt a natural consequence of the Society’s objectives. However, it would be constructive to help raise the quality of design by recognising good cases, no matters how modest. These would act as exemplars for others and help to raise awareness of the value, both civic and financial, of good design.

Robert Austen

Talk by Mark Berry, Head of Planning E&EBC, Tuesday 17th November, Myers Studio

Geoffrey Stone explained to the audience that this was the last event of our anniversary year and he had felt it appropriate to ask our speaker to look forward. Mark decided to try and envisage what challenges face us in the future and 15-20 years was the time scale he chose. He called his illustrated talk ‘**Epsom Futures**’.

Before starting he made very flattering comments about how our committee approaches questions dealing with both planning applications and the wider work involved with Plan E and the Local Development Framework (LDF). Plan E is going through the due process and Mark hopes it will soon be finalised and formally adopted. (Members wishing to see the Society’s response to Plan E should view the home page of our website www.epsomprotectionsociety.co.uk Editor)

Twelve issues facing Epsom were identified;

1 *Economy.* Local economies must be vibrant as so many jobs depend on it. Towns progress or decline depending on the viability of the local economy. We need a mixture of multiples and small retailers and ought not to try and compete directly with Kingston, Sutton, Croydon or Guildford. We must re-enforce our strengths, and Plan E is designed to do just this.

2 *Public realm.* Places such as the alley from the High Street to the Town Hall Car Park needed upgrading – it was much improved when ‘ASK’ restaurant did some work opening up the windows and making the area much more inviting. Hudson House developers funded improvements to Station Way from the Station to the Market Place. On the whole, vandalism & graffiti are less of a problem now that a few years ago. Utilities should be required to return any surface they dig up to its former quality.

3 *Servicing.* In spite of access to the rear, Woolworth delivery lorries continued to park in the High Street. Changes to the Town Hall car park may improve access for deliveries with little loss of parking space. Small changes can have a large impact if, for example, traders can be encouraged to use rear servicing where it is provided.

4 *Opportunities.* These are somewhat limited by lack of resources. The Upper High Street and Station sites are ones which perhaps needed planning briefs and these will have priority once Plan E is adopted.

5 *Marketplace.* This could be developed and supported under good management. We saw St Albans where there are approximately 170 stalls on Wednesdays and Saturdays, 6 continental markets each year and regular farmers’ markets. The latter of course support the local economy and goods are not transported long distances.

6 *Flora & fauna.* Mark covered biodiversity, BAPs (Biodiversity Action Plans), and told of his attendance recently at the Grey to Green Forum. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act requires Council’s to retain greenery. Encouraging green roofs, if appropriate, helps meet this requirement.

7 *Universal access.* We should always be prepared to challenge received wisdom! For example enable easy pedestrian movement by removing street barriers. This has worked well in Kensington High Street.

8 *Traffic.* Always a problem and Mark felt an Epsom bypass a non-starter - especially with Government pressure to discourage use of the car, let alone cost and sustainability implications.

9 *Urban design.* Often contentious. Bulk can be oppressive and enforcement action is taken to ensure applicants conform to the permission granted. This is also partly a matter of personal taste. Height restrictions are hard to enforce as neighbouring buildings influence the effect – costly for Council to lose an appeal.

10 *Residential development.* A mix of residential and commercial properties is essential if a town centre is to have a vibrant night life and to avoid becoming entirely a commuter town. This may entail occasional use of roof space. The matter of height has already been mentioned above.

11 *Evening economy.* This must be safe. Mark would like to introduce a ‘Purple Flag’ mark, similar to flags indicating safe beaches. This would be a policy envelope ensuring a welcoming, safe, vibrant and stimulating evening environment.

12 *Sustainable community.* It is now realised that growth of the ‘carbon economy’ is unsustainable in the long term, so efforts must be made to use other energy sources e.g. renewable. Mark felt professionally inhibited from saying anything about the possible Tesco and Station developments which are before the planning department, but took questions on other subjects.

How to restrict height and avoid a ‘leapfrogging’ effect? Have the correct policy in place.

Legally the marketplace is still classed as highway – can it be developed? E&EBC would like to stop it as highway but SCC reluctant to act.

How do we reverse the loss of small specialised shops? Good town centre management encourages investment. Mark hopes Plan E will go partway to addressing the problem and we must be cautious about replacing commercial with residential – both are essential. Time ran out! Harry Corben our Chairman thanked Mark wholeheartedly for his presentation and to audience applause and presented him with a gift of wine.

Angela Clifford

THE DOWNS.

The Consultative Committee met on 3rd November. Following the retirement of Mr David Smith, Mrs Frances Rutter has now formally been appointed Clerk to the Conservators.

The Conservators and the Borough are working hard to produce leaflets for Downs users in order to clarify which activities are allowed and where. It is hoped to design new information boards but funding is limited at present.

Excellent progress has been made developing a ‘Friends of Epsom and Walton Downs’ group under the auspices of Downskeeper Peter Murray. The first meeting was on Saturday 7th November. Peter hopes to produce a newsletter and an article for the next edition of Borough Insight. I hope this will evolve into a thriving group.

Ebbisham Lane road surface continues to be of concern. SCC would like it redesignated a bridleway and has a strategy of minimal maintenance (presumably to discourage cars!). The hack riders’ representative felt the surface is now unsuitable for riders, cyclists and even pedestrians in parts. The car park is the responsibility of the Conservators but the Lane itself is in the Borough of Reigate and Banstead. Negotiations will continue.

The obtrusive light on the Duchess’s stand has been modified – thanks to Rupert Trevelyan for his prompt action. He is also going to approach the Rubbing House owners/managers about removing the unsightly banner sign about breakfasts hanging on the underpass side of their fence. It was understandable for a short period when the hotel first opened, but I asked if it could now be removed or at least repositioned in the hotel grounds.

There is an application for low level lighting along a path between the hotel and the grandstand. Alan Baker will look closely at it on your behalf.

Some cutting back of vegetation has been agreed for parts of the golf course - trees may be lopped or even removed but various wildlife habitats will be retained.

Angela Clifford

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

The series of 91 high quality photographs of Epsom and its surrounding taken from the air in July 2008 are available for all to view by entering the Society's website and clicking on the link in the top left corner of the Home Page. For those who do not have access to the internet there are terminals in the library that could be used.

LAVANDOU STABLES

Since marketing the listed buildings on the site including the indoor riding school, the Cicero yard and the extensive paddocks, an offer is in a late stage of negotiation with Halifax Estates. It is understood that this proposal will secure the future of both the listed buildings and the equestrian use of the site. It appears that the combined efforts of this Society, together with other bodies, the Borough Councillors and an effective community campaign may finally have achieved the hoped for outcome for this important and historic feature of Epsom. A relatively small corner of the site, not involving listed buildings, will be the subject of a separate planning application for residential use.

Malcolm Boyd

CIVIC TRUST

Many members will be aware the Civic Trust, of which your Society was a member, no longer exists. There is an ongoing discussion among representatives from Civic Societies across the country about the formation of a replacement organisation. See www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk

EVENTS OUTINGS and TALKS

SUMMER OUTING to The Friars at Aylesford and Ightham Mote on 27th August 2009

53 people came on this outing which was the maximum number that could be seated on the coach. The weather was excellent and everyone enjoyed the trip. In the morning coffee was served on arrival at The Friars then there was a conducted tour of the buildings, some dating back to the 13th century when The Friars was founded. We were very fortunate to have lunch in the Pilgrims Hall which is in the older part of the building not open to the general public. In the afternoon the coach took us to Ightham Mote where people were free to explore on their own and have tea before leaving for the return journey at 5pm

***50th ANNIVERSARY BUFFET SUPPER PARTY* Friday 9th October 2009**

Over 100 people attended the party held in St Joseph's Church Epsom. Our guests for the evening were the Deputy Mayor of Epsom, Councillor Alan Winkworth and his wife Vanessa. After a glass of wine an excellent buffet meal was provided by the Food Studio caterers who also looked after us last year. Afterwards there was a musical entertainment by Louisa Cordell and her husband Jamie. This was excellent with Louisa playing her harp and Jamie singing some songs with her. Their music was varied and included items from popular shows. Everyone enjoyed themselves and several commented that the food was even better than last year.

DATES FOR YOUR 2010 DIARY

Thursday 15th April 2010, Annual General Meeting
Sunday 27th June 2010, Ian West's Walk-about
Thursday 8th July 2010, outing to Danson House and Hall Place.
Friday 8th October 2010, Buffet Supper
Talks to be announced

OUTING TO DANSON HOUSE AND HALL PLACE on 8th July 2010

Both these properties are administered by Bexley Heritage Trust and have been extensively restored.

Danson House is a Palladian House completed in 1766. It was bought by Bexley Council in 1923 and over the years fell into disrepair until English Heritage deeming it to be 'the most significant building at risk' in London purchased the site in order to oversee (and crucially fund) the house repair and secure its long term future. In 2004 with the major part of the restoration complete they assigned the lease to Bexley Heritage Trust whose first task was to furnish the house before opening to the public in 2008.

Hall Place, a grade 1 listed Tudor Mansion built in 1537 by the Lord Mayor of London with a red brick Stuart addition a century later, is located on the banks of the river Cray in historic Bexley, Kent. It is surrounded by a large estate with award-winning gardens featuring larger than life topiary figures planted for the Queen's Coronation in 1953. The house was closed in 2007 for extensive restoration and reopened in 2008.

Coffee will be served on arrival at Danson House and there are several catering facilities at Hall Place for lunch. More details and an application form will appear in the next newsletter.

This will be the last outing that I am organizing because I feel that it is rather tiring at my age (85) and I hope that someone younger will take over the job. If anyone is interested in taking on this task I am only too willing to give any help or advice which might be needed. I shall miss doing the outings because you have always been such a nice appreciative group, very cooperative and punctual which makes everything run smoothly.

JOY FURNESS (01372 722186)

EPSOM & EWELL LOCAL FAMILY HISTORY CENTRE

If you happen to be interested in the story of local buildings and people past and present, I suggest a good place to start would be this centre in Ewell Library at Bourne Hall. I confess a bias as I am one of many volunteers involved in collecting, collating and cataloguing material offered to us or researched by us. We work in partnership with Jeremy Harte and staff at the Borough Museum and Surrey History Service, based in Woking. The library staff usually refer enquirers to us or leave an enquiry form if no-one is there.

The local census returns are available and volunteers have transcribed all seven (1841 – 1901) Ewell censuses, and are working on the Epsom ones, to a programme which allows us to show all the family relationships of any individual. This can only be done at the Centre. Photographs of local schools, streets and events are all available. Council Minute Books from early 20th Century can be consulted if you wish to trace the development of your area or when your house was built. School children may have projects such as The Hogsmill River or The Ashley Centre and we hold much information to help them. Kelly's Directories can help establish when or where a particular business existed. Many micro filmed copies of local papers can be viewed in the library. Surrey County Council has an agreement with Ancestry and other interesting sites e.g. newspapers, biographical dictionaries for free access using library computers, so help is available to search worldwide.

Anyone doing research can come to us for help to get started if needed. For those of you who use the internet, the website at www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk has a wealth of information on it. If you have friends or relatives elsewhere who would be interested to learn more, do suggest the website to them. It was in fact highly commended by The National Archives at Kew and now has even more material on it – do look at it if you can. Details are held of the workhouse inhabitants, information about Epsom cemetery and St Mary's Church Ewell. The hospital cluster and development of the railways are explained and much, much more – too much to list!

The Library is closed on Mondays but the Centre Volunteers are there as follows:

Tuesday 10am – 12md and 5.30pm – 7pm (when the library closes)

Thursday 2pm – 4pm

Friday 2pm – 4pm

Saturday by appointment only.

I hope this may have whetted your appetite to pay us a visit!

Angela Clifford



Site of the proposed supermarket in Upper High Street. The part owned by Tesco is now boarded off, but the proposal includes the whole of the Upper High Street car park.



Site of the proposed new station development

Epsom Protection Society
Tel Nos: (membership 01372 728570)
(other 01372 723325)
Website:

Editor: Malcolm Boyd
10 Woodcote Green Road
Epsom KT18 7DH

Printed: Print Centre
5 West Street
Epsom KT18 7LR