

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

Worple Road

In the last Newsletter I said I would write an article about the Worple Road area. I would imagine that it must be the only road in the country which has two short stretches of two way traffic and two longer stretches of single lane traffic. The road runs from Church Street to Chalk Lane and has a great mix of buildings starting from The Cedars which is actually in Church St. but has a longer section in Worple Road. The Cedars was recently sold by the council and appears to have been sympathetically converted into flats. Near this point the traffic from Heathcote Road runs into Worple Road and makes it two way for a short stretch towards Church St.

At this junction with Heathcote Road and Downside we enter the first rather narrow one way stretch of Worple Road. Incidentally Worple means bridle way and it was one of the earlier roads to be developed for building. Writing in 1928 Reginald White said that the Victorian developers 'speculative builders of narrow outlook', did not attempt to widen the road and this section could not easily cope with modern traffic running in both directions. The buildings do differ greatly both in their distance from the road and in appearance.

Worple Road and surrounding area was designated a Conservation Area in 1987 and there are Listed Buildings at Nos 5,7,9 and 11 built as two pairs in 1868 and the Flint House at No.58 is also noted as worthy of interest. There is no pavement on a large part of the left hand side. On the left hand side hidden from the road and occupying what was Glebe land is The Epsom Bowls Club which recently celebrated its 100th birthday and almost opposite is the delivery entrance for the newly formed University of the Creative Arts. Next to the Bowls Club is one of the numerous footpaths with which Epsom is richly endowed and this one leads into St Martins Avenue.

Through the volunteers at the Local and Family History Centre at Bourne Hall I have been given the answer to a question I raised in the last Newsletter. Have any Epsom homes been designed by an architect specifically to accommodate a servant? One of them has produced for me the Hampton and Sons details for the auction on 30th June 1903 of Woodcote Cottage, Worple Road. The cottage had five acres of land, stabling for six horse, knife room and wine cellars in the basement, four bedrooms on the first floor plus the servants' bedroom with its own staircase.

I think I must leave the rest of Worple Road to the next newsletter and start to prepare for the A.G.M. details of which will accompany this edition. I should like to thank Sheila Wadsworth for volunteering to organise future events, thank Norman Dempster for his years of service to the committee and the Society and hope he does not have too much trouble with the Caledonian Society for whom he will be giving his time in future. Have a good 2010 and we hope to see many of you at the AGM and other events.

Harry Corben, Chairman

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The two substantial and vitally important applications for the Upper High Street and for the Station hold the headlines this time. They may well go to the Planning Committee in February and may therefore have been decided by the time you read this Newsletter.

Tesco, Upper High Street: Last time I described our strong objection to this proposal for a 48000 sq ft superstore with over 500 parking spaces, all in a 5-storey building and creating, in our view, serious traffic problems. I thought it might have been decided at the December Planning Committee but for various reasons it was delayed and will now go to a special meeting on 11 February when I am sure it will attract a long and contentious debate. It is of interest that the latest, and probably final, draft of Plan E (the Town Centre Action Plan) has now been published for consultation and its proposal for the Upper High Street/Depot Road site includes a total of 2,000 sq m (21,500 sq ft) of retail space stated to allow for a mix of small retail units and a small-medium sized foodstore. We await with interest to see how this is dealt with in the officers' report. There is also a new 37 page Govt Policy Statement and a 105 page Practice Guidance on Planning for Town Centres to take into account.

Epsom Railway Station: Following our meeting with the developer's team, their application has been submitted and may go to the Planning Committee on 18 February, subject to the usual possible delays. We have made a strong objection on grounds that include the concept of high buildings on both sides of Station Approach, the lack of a proper transport exchange, the use of the inner lane of the road for taxis and dropping off and the resulting traffic problems. We think the architecture is better than the previous scheme, but it cannot disguise a large 5-6 storey slab. We do not think that an otherwise unacceptable proposal can be justified by the need to provide capital for station improvements, however necessary they are; they should be paid for out of railway capital not at the expense of an important development which should provide a landmark in the town centre of which we can be proud in years to come. In this context, Plan E requires an improved station, a public transport interchange facing the station with access onto Station Approach and mixed uses; there is no mention of height or design of the buildings so all seems to be to play for here.

The Bungalow, Pitt Road: Last year we raised objections to the replacement of this bungalow, on the corner of Pitt Road and College Road, with a block of three three-storey four bedroom houses on the grounds that it would be dominant and overbearing and inappropriate to this prominent location. The proposal was refused planning permission and was appealed. A revised scheme, said to deal with the reasons for refusal, was recently submitted but we felt that the same objections applied. We therefore wrote to the Inspectorate supporting the refusal and to the planning department objecting to the revised version. The Planning Committee took a similar view and have refused it unanimously in spite of an officers' recommendation to approve.

Drummond Gardens, Christchurch Mount: Continuing this saga, the amended application for two three bedroom houses on the garage site, which was refused last year, had also been appealed and we have written accordingly supporting the refusal.

Alan Baker

PRESS RELEASE issued 23 January 2010 and sent to the local Guardian Newspaper

NO BOULEVARD, PLEASE! THE WRONG APPROACH FOR EPSOM STATION, COUNCIL TOLD

Epsom Protection Society this week criticised a new design for the town's landmark but dreary looking railway station. The latest long awaited proposal, in a planning application by Solum Regeneration, is an improvement on what was approved by the Council in 2005, but has many unacceptable aspects, says the Society's Vice-Chairman, Alan Baker. His letter to the Town Hall says that major improvement to the station is necessary and long awaited, but questions whether that should be the rationale for allowing construction of a 5/6 storey block housing 124 residential apartments, a 64 bed hotel and 3 shops or restaurants, together with 67 car parking spaces. In the end, the only enhancement of the station itself would be a new ticket hall and some improvements to the subway, stairs and toilets. "But that will have been achieved with the loss of the current slip road area, including public parking and the taxi rank."

The Society objects particularly to the height of the proposed building, which the developers consider will produce a "boulevard" effect for Station Approach when combined with the blocks of apartments already built on the town side of the road. The Society – which has 1,750 members - thinks that Station Approach would become "just a busy road lined with high buildings, which has already been described as a Grand Canyon or a wind tunnel". And it has severe doubts about the conclusions of the Traffic Assessment "which does not take proper account of the loss of the existing station forecourt, and risks worsening congestion by moving the taxi rank and pick-up area on Station Approach itself, close to its junction with Waterloo Road".

The letter concludes that "the use of the public highway as a transport interchange, a key part of the operation of the station, is unacceptable and appears to have been done simply to provide maximum development potential". Overall, the Society urges the Council to explore with the developers "a more modest concept with lower buildings, possibly to include a curved service road running beneath the upper floors of the new building to allow better vehicle access," and warns against "missing an opportunity to provide a development which would become a landmark the town could be proud of in years to come".

(Editor's note: This press release has been included so that members are informed of the Society's actions. It is also available on the Society's website)

CONSERVATION

The year has continued quietly, as might be expected over Christmas and the New Year, with one exception. A number of letters have been sent to the Borough mostly concerning relatively minor design matters, again with one exception, which concerns the listed wall in Woodcote End. Approval has been granted for two houses, but the developer has recently submitted a revised application, again for two houses which, in themselves, are probably an improvement on the original designs. However, the application now includes the formation of an additional opening in the wall. We feel this is unnecessary as a single entrance can perfectly well serve both properties and an additional opening would seriously undermine the appearance and integrity of the wall.

The other exception mentioned above relates to Dame Annis Barn. The house has been sold to a developer who specialises in small, high quality developments. An application has been made for just three houses on the site and members of your committee had the opportunity of meeting the developer and the architect to discuss the application. You may recall that the garden of this house is very large and consists mostly of a disused quarry and is surrounded by a high fence with hedges and trees. Views into the garden are very restricted and surveys indicate that it is of very little ecological interest. While we are generally opposed to developments of this nature, given Government policy and the pressures to provide more housing, this site was bound to be a target. The current proposal probably represents the best that can be expected.

We mentioned in the last newsletter that we are looking into the possibility of an award scheme. Progress has been unexpectedly slow due mostly to difficulties in setting up a meeting with EHAS, whom we felt should be involved as a matter of courtesy and because our spheres of interest overlap. However, we should be meeting shortly, so it is hoped that things will move forward a little faster over the next few months.

Finally, last time we described our concerns regarding the poor quality of shopfronts and the consequent effects on the appearance of the High Street, and that we have written to the Borough about this issue. Following this a meeting has been set up with the Borough - at their request - to discuss this issue, so hopefully things will move forward in this important area.

Rob Austen

THE DOWNS

Conservators meeting 21.01.10.

Superintendent Bristow of Surrey police responded to complaints about over-use of sirens, police in riot gear and lack of policing of exit roads after the Derby meeting. From the police perspective it had not been as an unusual meeting. Re-location of the fair may well have changed the crowd dynamics. There had been sporadic disorder on the fair site in the afternoon necessitating the use of specially trained officers in 'code 2 dress' - padded jackets, flat caps and gloves - different but not riot gear. For an event with such a large attendance percentage wise there had been fewer arrests than an average Saturday night. Councillors requests included: that motorcycle police patrol all exit roads till 9 or 10pm, that Tattenham Ward Councillors be invited to planning briefing as used to happen and one commented that the position of the fair on The Hill interfered with the view of visitors, some of whom may not return.

As your representative, I was given draft copies of the proposed user leaflets and have made several suggestions.

There is now a full complement of Downskeepers.

Angela Clifford

EVENTS OUTINGS and TALKS

SUMMER OUTING to Danson House and Hall Place on Thursday 8th July 2010

This outing includes a visit to Danson House in the morning and Hall Place in the afternoon. These properties in Kent are very close to each other and are both administered by Bexley Heritage Trust and have been extensively restored.

DANSON HOUSE was rebuilt in 1766 by Sir John Boyd as a house for entertaining to celebrate marriage to his young wife. The themes of love and entertainment can be seen in the gilded dining room with its unique wall paintings, the opulent salon and the library with its magnificent George England organ. Bexley Council bought the house and grounds in 1923 and it gradually deteriorated due to poor and incorrect maintenance until in 1995 English Heritage purchased the site in order to fund and oversee the repair of the house and its long term future. Extensive historical and physical investigations resulted in the house and its interior being restored to its former Georgian splendour. In 2004 the lease was assigned to Bexley Heritage Trust who furnished the house which opened to the public in 2006.

HALL PLACE is a Grade 1 listed Tudor Mansion built in 1537 for the Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Champneys with a red brick Stuart addition a century later. The river Cray runs close to the house through the extensive award winning gardens, which include a topiary

lawn planted for the Queen's Coronation in 1953. There is also a horticultural centre and plant shop.

Coffee will be served on arrival at Danson House. There are various options for lunch at Hall Place, a Mitchell and Butler restaurant in the historic Jacobean Barn, lighter meals in the riverside tearoom or bring a picnic. The cost of the outing is £25 each which includes coach, entry to both properties, coffee and tips.

The coach will pick up outside the Methodist Church at 9am and from the carpark at Tattenham Corner (next to the tea hut) at 9.15am. The coach will leave Hall Place at 5pm reaching Epsom about 6pm.

Please apply on the application form at the end of this newsletter.

NOTE: I am delighted that one of our members, Sheila Wadsworth has offered to take over the job of arranging future outings. She has had considerable experience of organising outings for the Ashted branch of NADFAS and we are lucky to have such a qualified volunteer.

IAN WEST'S WALK ABOUT

On Sunday 27th June 2010 Ian will take us on a guided walk in the College Road area. Please meet at the junction of College Road and Randolph Road at 2.30pm .

BUFFET SUPPER Friday 8th October 2010

The party will be held in St Joseph's Church hall and will be similar to previous years. Further details and application form will be in the next newsletter. Please keep this date free.

TALKS

More talks are planned for the autumn but it is difficult to find suitable speakers. Suggestions from members would be welcome, either for the names of possible speakers or topics they would like explored.

Please contact Geoffrey Stone Tel 01372 812752.

Joy Furness 01372 722186

**THE RAILWAY COMES TO EPSOM – A historical record compiled from various sources
by T.H.J.Dethridge, a former Chairman of EPS.**

Next to arrive on the scene was the London & South Western Railway from Waterloo with a branch originally planned by another independent, the Wimbledon & Dorking Railway. This branch left the London & South West main line at Raynes Park, formed an end-on junction with the Epsom & Leatherhead at Epsom and a through service between Waterloo, Epsom and Leatherhead was opened on 4th April 1859. The London Brighton & South Coast also bought into the Epsom & Leatherhead, extending its line from its Upper High Street terminus, with a new bridge over East Street (which was formerly known as Volunteer Bridge) and on 8 August 1859 its trains also ran through to Leatherhead, but did not stop at the Epsom station. The line was doubled by 1867. This company opened extensions to Dorking and Horsham between 1862-1864, while the London South West line extended to Effingham on 2nd February 1885 to provide a link to Guildford.

In 1870 the London Brighton & South Coast Railway which was running from London Bridge and Victoria built a new station in Upper High Street, to be known as Epsom Town, with staggered platforms connected by a subway. Its main building with its distinctive four chimneys survives to this day, concealed behind the shops at Nos 47-51. It also constructed a goods shed and yard, an engine shed and a lofty signal box close by, but these were demolished in the 1960s for subsequent residential development at the site from 1974 on both sides of the line.

On 22nd May 1865 the London Brighton & South Coast opened a further branch from Sutton to a new terminus called Epsom Downs, immediately adjacent to Longdown Lane South (it was originally mooted to be located just 200 yards from the Grandstand but this was vetoed). It was a large affair with no less than nine platforms; most of which were used only on race days, but proximity to the course earned a major share of the traffic. The number of platforms was reduced to two in February 1972 and the station closed on 10th February 1989 to be replaced by a single-line structure 300 yards up the line closer to Banstead. The goods yard had already closed on 7th September 1964. The site of the former station with its Station-master's house and the very substantial lands thus released, were sold for housing development.

The Racecourse's traffic potential also attracted the attention of the South Eastern & Chatham Railway, which operated out of Charing Cross, Blackfriars etc and (since 1898) from Victoria, mostly into Kent. The South Eastern & Chatham constructed a branch line from Purley via Tadworth to Tattenham Corner. The line was opened throughout on 4th June 1901 and remains in use to this day. For many years it has been used for the royal special train conveying the Monarch on Derby Day. The station buildings were partially demolished on 1st December 1993 by an early morning empty train which ran through the buffers; they were quickly reinstated.

Epsom had one other standard-gauge railway, the Horton Light Railway, which ran from Ewell West Station into the hospital complex to the west of the borough. Opened on 20th April 1905 by a contractor to bring in building materials for the Long Grove Hospital, it originally crossed Hook Road on the level near to the Ewell West end but following a fatal accident in 1906 the line was altered to run under a bridge. The London County Council, original owners of the five hospitals, bought the railway in 1907 and constructed internal extensions in 1911. It had its own stud of tank engines and was used to bring in the copious supplies needed for the maintenance and support of its very large population. It is not clear that it ever carried passengers though there have been reports to his effect. Increasing reliance on motor transport led to declining use and it was abandoned in 1949. The track was lifted but traces of its former existence may still be found.

Returning to the main line, in 1923 by Act of Parliament the railways of Great Britain were with a few minor exceptions grouped into four large companies; one of which, the Southern Railway covered the south of England by absorbing the London Brighton & South Coast, London South West, South East & Chatham railways (already mentioned) and a few smaller concerns. The new company inherited a number of suburban electrified services and committed itself to an ambitious programme of electrification, initially over the outer suburban area and, from the 1930s down to the coast, using the third-rail 660 volt d.c. system. Thus the lines to Epsom and beyond were converted as follows: from Waterloo on 12th July 1925, from Victoria/London Bridge on 3rd March 1929, and the Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner branches in June 1928 (the former replacing a short-lived overhead electric system). Goods trains and some longer-distance and special passenger trains continued with steam haulage for some time but steam was finally phased out in July 1967 excluding an occasional enthusiast special.

Concentration of ownership enabled the new Southern Railway to solve the problem of having two separate stations in Epsom. Although London Brighton & South Coast trains ran through the

centre of Epsom Station, they did not serve its platforms and the lines joined (and parted) south of the station by Wheelers Lane. A completely new station in the art-deco style much favoured by the Southern was built on the site of its old London & South West predecessor in 1928/29, to handle both the Waterloo and Victoria/London Bridge line trains and was opened on 3rd March 1929. The original 1859 edifice had been replaced twice and had still comprised only two platforms (for London & South West trains only).

With the commissioning of the new station, the old Epsom Town station in Upper High Street was closed and partially dismantled, but the main station building was left in situ, as already noted. It was damaged by fire in the spring of 1978, but fortunately repairs were carried out and it is now locally listed. Attempts to find an ongoing use for it have not so far proved successful. Other changes consequential on the building of the new station included a new bridge to carry the railway over Waterloo Road, previously leading only as far as the station, to be extended westwards, facilitating considerable residential development to the west of the line, which had hitherto been largely open country. Prior to the new section of road, the only way through had been an 1896 footway through a low tunnel.

Redevelopment of the 1929 station has been mooted off and on over the past 20 years or so but, although there have been some minor changes, it remains much as it looked 80 years ago. The small London & South West goods yard was closed on 3rd January 1928 and activity transferred to the former London & Brighton yard at Epsom Town station leaving two sidings adjacent to Station Approach used for horse-boxes; these were taken out in 1986 and the land reinstated in the 1990s. The famous signal-box on a gantry straddling the lines at the south end, wrongly supposed to have been listed, was taken out of use on 29th July 1990 and despite efforts to preserve it was demolished in 1993.

The four railway companies set up in 1923 and known as the Big Four were nationalised from 1st January 1948 by Act of Parliament, to become known as British Railways and later British-Rail. The Southern Railway now became Southern Region of British Rail but apart from some changes in train livery, not particularly obvious on electric trains, things generally carried on in much the same ways. Of course with the passage of time change came about but that could have been expected anyway. A process of contraction began particularly in the area of leisure travel, but the main task of the railway in Epsom, the conveyance of commuters to and from London (incidentally, the term commuter was unused in Britain 50 years ago) still persists and today's Epsom commuter has much in common with his predecessor of earlier periods.



The new fountain in Rosebery Park on a winter's day (see AGM Review)

Malcolm Boyd

**APPLICATION FORM for OUTING to DANSON HOUSE AND HALL PLACE
On Thursday 8th July 2010**

NAME.....
 ADDRESS
 PHONE NO

I would like.....tickets (£25each) and enclose a cheque for £ made payable to the Epsom Protection Society and a stamped addressed envelope
 Please delete as appropriate

I will join the coach at the Methodist Church at 9am

I will join the coach at Tattenham Corner at 9.15am

Please return to Joy Furness 37 Woodcote Hurst Epsom KT187DS

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