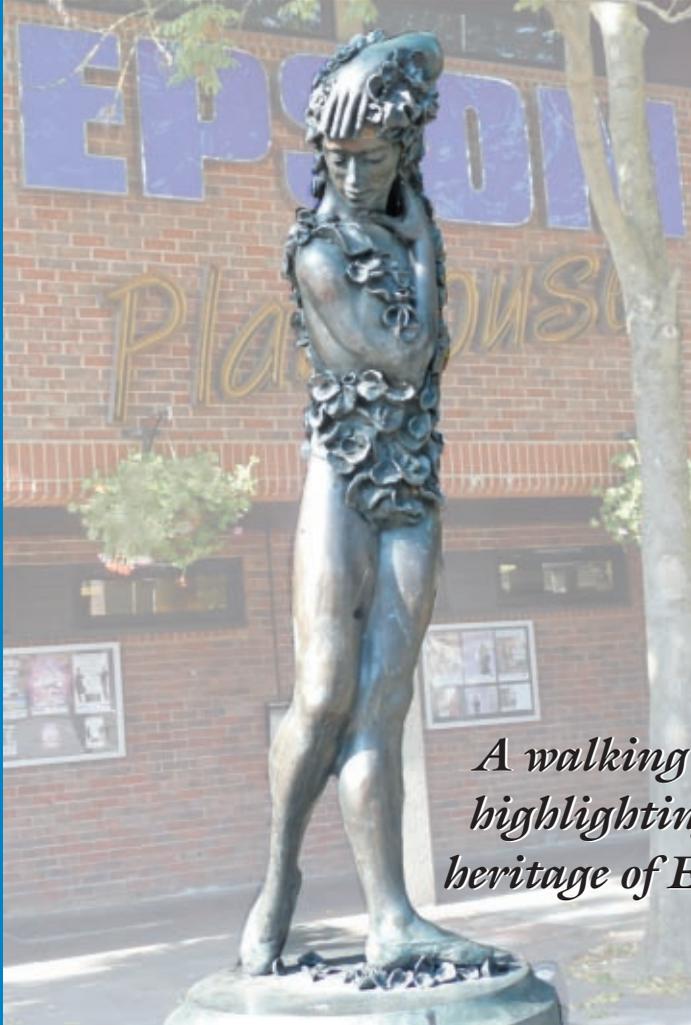


Epsom Heritage Trail

GUIDE II



*A walking trail
highlighting the
heritage of Epsom*



eps
epsom protection society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

Epsom Protection Society is for all who care about their surroundings and wish to change them for the better whilst protecting the heritage

EPSOM HERITAGE TRAIL

GUIDE II

A *previously published heritage trail guide focusing on Epsom Town Centre covered the area around Church Street and the High Street. This guide leads out of the High Street at its western end, turning left into South Street and on to Dorking Road and to Woodcote. It also includes a possible detour to the Old Well for anyone who might wish to go the extra mile to visit the source of the town's fame.*

Unexpectedly, South Street does not begin on the corner just west of the Assembly Rooms. The first block, surmounted on its front by a brick pinnacle, has the address of Nos 149–153 High Street, and South Street commences with the next block along (Nos 1–5). On the west side, the first block adjacent to the Albion used to be called Halfway House, because it stood between the High Street and South Street. Here as elsewhere it is necessary to stand back (on the other side of the road) and look up to identify interesting and unusual details in buildings which, at ground level, might seem unremarkable.

Up to 1990 South Street was bi-directional, as was the western half of the High Street; the present one-way system was inaugurated after the construction of the Ashley Centre and Ashley Avenue. Odd numbers are to the east (the left side looking south) and evens to the west.

South Street could lay claim to being Epsom's most interesting road. Formerly called New Inn Lane, it led to a pub of that name at what is now No 77 Dorking Road. The pub was established in the late 17th century; before that the road was just 'the lane to Woodcott'. Sadly many of its fine houses have been bulldozed, at least four of them since World War II, including the Shrubbery (No 53) where Ashley Avenue joins the road. Happily a number of old, attractive or interesting buildings have survived, often somewhat disguised, among a mix of structures from the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries and even 21st century additions.

Over the years, South Street has attracted niche businesses of various sorts. As well as restaurants and pubs, still to be found there, it has been home in its time to a brewery, a soft drinks factory (first at No 18 and later behind No 55) and a bicycle maker; while in World War II a small munitions factory temporarily displaced lemonade production. From 1935 to 1971 Epsom Coaches had their garage at No 37, where lengthy vehicles could be seen reversing off the narrow road through 90° into a concealed interior. In the 18th century John Livingstone's New Well and his adjacent pleasure grounds were established on the west side, while in 1984 the Playhouse complex came into being on the east. There is a public garden on one side and a park on the other. And further along Dorking Road stood the workhouse, a plant nursery and a school – and we still have a petrol station, a chapel and the hospital. Variety indeed!

South Street proper begins with a line of shops, Nos 1 -9, dating from Regency to Victorian (1). The row was once known as Controversy Cottages from their landlord, Mr Hersey, a man of strong opinions, of whom more anon. For some the building at No 29, of the late 18th century (2), might be the gem of South Street; now a restaurant, it is often known still as Stebbings after the family that ran it as a shop until the 1960s. In those days it was the archetypal small newsagent-cum-general store – a lost species – which sold something of everything from a chaotic jumble of stock (yet you could always get what you were after!).

Opposite is a range of shops of varying height and design, of which Nos 6–8 were old buildings with Victorian shop-fronts mainly rebuilt in the 1970s. Already in 1901 No 26, which retains a late 17th century elevation with blind windows, was being described as ‘old world’ (3). Behind this row of shops was located the field where Dr Livingstone opened his New Well in 1701, when the well on the Common was falling into disfavour. The buildings opened up onto a bowling green and pleasure ground on the Upper Green; later they were known as the Folly.



Symonds Well

At No 30 is Symonds Well pub (4), an 18th century pub with later additions – for a long time it was the Magpie, mentioned as such in 1754, and renamed in 1995 after a yet another source of mineral waters. Standing alone at No 34, now The Sicily (5) is a half-weatherboarded 19th century building which formerly had a rough-cast front. It has long been and still is an eating place, and was a rendezvous in times past for cycle and tandem riders from London seeking fresh air and refreshment. Then comes Mounthill Gardens,

a public open space with many fine trees on upward sloping ground, although the Victorian house from which it takes its name has been replaced by flats. Epsom enjoyed happy links with the cycling fraternity, offering hospitality to visitors while it provided facilities for repair and support – and even actual manufacture. It was along here in South Street, where a line of 20th century shops now stands, that Tom Hersey (the man of controversy mentioned above) set up his cycle works and garage before moving to Nos 149–153 on the opposite side.



The Sicily

Returning to the east side of South Street, Nos 47–49 were originally a single late 17th century building (6) and have been incorporated into the fabric of the Playhouse while 43 intriguingly proclaims Stage Door. Outside the entrance to The Playhouse a little way along Ashley Avenue is the attractive statue of John Gilpin as ‘Spectre de La Rose’ by Tom Merrifield (7) depicted on the front page. Across Ashley Avenue, No 55 is a handsome late 17th century house (8), now offices, and is followed by two attractive modern blocks, which brings us to Rosebery Park (9). This park, Epsom’s largest open space, was donated to the Borough by Lord Rosebery in 1913, when it was known as Reading’s Mead. Although a large summerhouse and bandstand have gone, the pond remains from the original design, but with the addition of a fountain presented by Epsom Protection Society in their fiftieth anniversary year.

The Council gardeners’ changing displays, here and elsewhere,

continue to enhance our townscape. Along the southern end of the park, the attractively-named Sweet Briar Lane leads out of South Street.

Passing a group of Victorian houses, note the tall chimneys on No 63, which brings us to another picturesque survival, the pair of cottages at London House



London House

Paisley House

(10) (No 73 – the name was in use in 1680) and the 18th century Paisley House (10) (No 75) with the adjoining building remaining, a shop until the 1990s, but now part of the accommodation. Beyond these is the Queen’s Head (11); a pub of this name has been on the site since 1746, but the present building is later. Until quite recently its inn-sign depicted Queen Adelaide, full-faced on the Epsom side but with her back to the other.

We now come to Woodcote Hall (12) on the corner of South Street and Woodcote Road. Originally called the Poplars, this grand building was rebuilt in the mid 18th century with its front door now asymmetrically repositioned, and was converted to flats in about 1930. The left and right front pavilions add to its attraction. This brings us to the end of South Street but before leaving, look back to the west to see Abele Cottages (13), a group of three colour-washed (Nos 58–62) likely to date from 1690 rather than the 1896 on the plaque which records their refurbishment.

Depending on the available time, energy and inclination, one can now choose to see what Dorking Road offers to the heritage seeker and even visit the Well. Alternatively – or additionally – you can sample the treasures of Woodcote which in mediaeval times was a hamlet separate from Epsom. The guide proffers both options.

For those choosing to walk straight on and investigate Dorking Road, the first stop is a petrol station on the site of a 19th century wheelwright, later a cycle and motor works, and subsequently taken over by Wilsons who a century ago were pioneers in the art of motor car driving instruction in this area. Opposite is the **Haywain (14)** hotel and accompanying restaurant, recently converted from a girls' school. From 1928 to 1992 this was the Convent of the Sacred Heart, home of an order founded by exiles from the French Revolution. Built in the early 19th century, it was originally called Abele Grove. The convent had also acquired some 19th century buildings further along the road – **Clock House (15)**, **Bell House (16)** (formerly the stables) and the **Lodge (17)** all impressive buildings with pedimented roofs. The Clock House has recently been taken over for a new role in the form of medical treatment. It replaced an earlier property, the Elms, built by Richard Rooth in c.1720. An ice-house survives, one of the earliest examples in the country, and accessible from St. Margaret's Drive. A climb up the hill from the Haywain leads to the new Catholic Church of St. Joseph, designed in the modern idiom and opened in 2001 next to St. Joseph's School.



Clock House



Hylands Mews

Back across the road is Epsom General Hospital. It was opened in 1890 on the site of what had been the Poor Law Institution and Workhouse, where up to the 1930s the homeless and destitute could find temporary accommodation with food and care in return for work. The present-day buildings are 20th century, many erected after World War II. Immediately beyond at **No 63** is the White Horse pub (**18**), earlier known as the New Inn; this, however, is not the original New Inn, which was at No 77. The pair of weatherboard cottages next to

it (**19**), **Hylands Mews (Nos 67–69)** form a picturesque group. Next come two fine residences, the **Hylands (20)** at **No 71**, partly dating from 1743–8, and **Hylands House (21)** at **No 73**, built in 1716–23. Hylands House belonged at one stage to the uncle of John Constable, and the artist stayed there two or three times between 1806 and 1811, painting both the house and other local scenes.



Hylands House

White Horse Drive branches off on the west side of Dorking Road; this was the original way to Epsom Wells, which today leads to the famous Rosebery School opened for girls in 1921. Just inside the road to the left is **Tamarisk Cottage (22)**, a plain but interesting survivor from the early 18th century, probably built as the dairy of the Elms estate. Nearby, the cul-de-sac Orchard Gardens was built in the kitchen garden of the same estate, for which the brick boundary walls are visible at the rear of the houses. Hereabouts, on the west side of the main road, one of Epsom's many ponds remained until the early 20th century, evidence of the town's origin on the spring-line between chalk and clay strata. Another small building of note, culturally rather than architecturally perhaps, is Grace Chapel, formerly Salem. It is a meeting place for adherents to the Strict Baptist or Calvinist tradition; the church moved here from the Bugby Chapel off East Street, founded in 1779 and mentioned in our first guide.

For anyone who having come thus far wants to visit the Well and is ready to walk an extra mile and back, it can be reached by continuing along Dorking Road, turning into Wells Road (sign-posted), and then taking a left turn into the Wells Estate. A footpath at the end of Spa Drive will take you to the well, which lies at the heart of this 1930s estate, while the residential roads curve around it in a series of circles. They were built to occupy the circular plot of Wells Farm, which in turn consisted of the land cleared for a furlong all around the Old Wells. This well, which produced the bitter, purgative water which led to Epsom's fame as a spa, was discovered by a cowherd called Henry Wicker and his cattle in the drought year of 1618. After years of neglect, it was reopened, rebuilt and surmounted by a decorative well-head in 1989. Apart from that, there is little to see today and certainly nothing to drink, but it is a tremendously important item in the town's story – though the world-famous Epsom Salts have long since been produced commercially from seawater. Of particular note are the weatherboarded cottages in Woodlands Road, mostly 19th century although No 33 is 18th century.

Having returned from Dorking Road, and perhaps from the Well, we are back at its junction with South Street and Woodcote Road. Let us now direct our path along the latter, leaving Woodcote Hall behind us to our left. The plain building on the right (**Nos 2–4**), has a place in Epsom's history as the oratory (**23**) where Roman Catholics celebrated Mass before opening their church in Heathcote Road in 1866. Beyond is the Schnadhorst Sports Ground, secured in perpetuity for the Epsom Cricket Club in 1934 by the family of that name, who were keen members. The Club, which was founded in 1800, has played at Woodcote since 1860 and in its day took on and defeated county sides including Surrey and Middlesex. Moves a few years back to sell off this green oasis were fortunately thrown out.

The trees along Woodcote Road include a number funded by the Epsom Protection Society to mark its silver jubilee in 1984, when it planted fifty at various locations around the borough. On the north side of the road are two imposing residences, **Queen Anne House and Woodcote End House (24)**. In the late 18th century these were a single property, recently rebuilt, although Queen Anne House is partly early 18th century. The

house was occupied in retirement by the Rev. Martin Madan, preacher and philosopher with unconventional views on polygamy. Our familiar arrangement of ‘Hark the Herald Angels Sing’ is his version of the original by Charles Wesley.

He gave his name to the nearby Madans Walk but was very unpopular locally – and burnt in effigy – for his severity as a magistrate on illegal gaming. After this come a couple of 19th century cottages, possibly associated with the next building – the **Ladas pub (25)**. Previously called the Fox, this was renamed after Lord Rosebery’s first Derby winner. Ladas, the horse, is said to have taken his name from the initials of a Society lady although an allusion to the ancient Greek runner seems more probable. To one side of the Ladas, Madans Walk cuts through to Rosebery Park and leads back to the town.

Before turning into Chalk Lane, we can look over the wall to see **Woodcote Green House (26)**, dating from the late 17th century. Inside there is a Chinese Chippendale staircase and a rococo ceiling. Opposite the Ladas stands an attractive weatherboarded cottage at **No 10 Woodcote Road (27)**, still looking like the neighbourhood corner shop which it was until the 1980s. Last owned by an American lady, this very convenient facility was lost due to cheaper price competition from the larger stores in the town. Next, at No 2 Woodcote Green Road, is **Woodcote Villa (28)**, dating from the 17th century but with a mid/late 19th century brick facade and an unusual front door, probably of Spanish origin. Next door are three attractive tile-hung cottages linked together, probably estate workers’ dwellings in an earlier life. **No 10 Woodcote Green Road (29)** is a mock-Tudor house with interesting timber carving, probably the best of its type in Epsom, and unique in having the date of construction, 1932, carved in wood on its facade.

For those who wish to view it, Woodcote Pond lies a little way along Woodcote Green Road on the left. Its surrounds were greatly enhanced, mostly by volunteer labour, to mark the millennium in 2000, since when it has been known as the Woodcote Millennium Pond. Opposite will be seen the south side of Epsom Hospital. All Saints’ Chapel, a Victorian building originally serving the Workhouse, stood in the grounds here until about 1960. The late 17th century York House on Woodcote Green Road was used as nurses’ accommodation until it was demolished and replaced by a modern building, less interesting externally but doubtless more suited to its purpose within. Across the road is Woodcote House, the home of the Northey family for nearly three decades, late 17th century with 19th century alterations to the façade. It can be approached by a footpath leading diagonally from Woodcote Green Road and the corner of Pine Hill. It has recently been refurbished and restored as apartments.



Westgate House

Returning to Chalk Lane and continuing past the Ladas we come to the 17th century **Westgate House (30)**, formerly Woodcote Place. For some years this was used as an hotel, followed by a derelict period and a fire, after which fortunately the interior was completely rebuilt with alterations to the mansard roof; it now serves as a handsome apartment block. Facing it is a group of small cottages (**Nos 2–14**) of four different designs (**31**); No 4 incorporates a 16th



Chalk Lane Cottages

century timber framed barn while Nos 8 and 10 were a single house when first recorded in 1680. This group of cottages form a picturesque scene and they are much painted and photographed.

Opposite the cottages is a small yard, originally the stabling to Woodcote Place. In the 20th century it became a riding school and stables and, when this was found not to be viable, it was successfully converted into residential accommodation around the central courtyard (32).

The entrance is in Worple Road ('worple' meaning 'field path' was an old path from Epsom village to the Downs). In times past, the course of Worple Road ran further to the south, exiting further along Chalk Lane closer to Woodcote Grove. Beyond the cottages is **The Amato** (33), a pub with a small garden. Originally the Hare and Hounds, it was renamed after the 1838 Derby winner, owned by Gilbert Heathcote of the Durdans. A well-head by its entrance has achieved fame, even outside England, through the mysterious way each year in which the name of the impending Derby winner appears chalked on its woodwork before the race – not invariably correct but with an enviable success rate!



The Amato



Maidstone House

Next comes **Maidstone House** (34), built about 1700 and carefully restored. It faces **Woodcote Grove** (35), a house built in the late 17th century by Josiah Diston, Deputy Governor, Bank of England. At first it was known as Mount Diston; later it came into the Garland family, and was given additional wings in the late 19th century. Half-hidden behind its wall, it was acquired by Sir William Atkins for the headquarters of his Atkins engineering group in 1957.

Forming the third side of a triangle with these two houses is an early 18th century building, which, since before World War II, has been the **Chalk Lane Hotel** (36).

At this point Woodcote End leads off to the right and, passing a number of modern dwellings, reaches the current entrance to the **Durdans** (37). The west side gateway, with the date 1878 inscribed above it, leads into the coach-house courtyard. A little way



Woodcote Grove

We now approach the **Durdans** (37) and its outbuildings from the east side. Originally a Tudor mansion, **Durdans** was rebuilt by the 1st Lord Berkeley in the 1680s. Frederick, Prince of Wales, lived in the property between 1731 and 1747. This house was demolished and partly reconstructed, but during the rebuilding it was destroyed by fire. The house was finally rebuilt in 1764. **Durdans** was acquired in 1872 by Lord Rosebery, Prime Minister in 1894–95, and owner of Derby winners – Ladas (1894), Sir Visto (1895) and Cicero (1905). These three racehorses, along with Amato (1838), are buried in the grounds. The house was enlarged by Lord Rosebery but reduced back to more manageable size in 1956. It is now in separate ownership from the rest of the estate. As well as the four equine graves and a grotto, the estate contains a unique indoor riding school of 1881,



Durdans

further along the lane, on the right, is another of the springline ponds, while to the left stretches a fine 18th century listed boundary wall, on which several old dates have been carved. There is no longer a way out at the end of this lane, which leads to a handful of houses known as World's End. So one must walk back to the Chalk Lane Hotel, this time passing it by on the right. Snowdrops grow in profusion hereabouts in the spring, perhaps another Rosebery legacy.



Chalk Lane Hotel

equipped with a dais at one end from which his Lordship could inspect and judge the horses. Nearby are the stables, some of which may be 18th century, while the Cicero yard dates from c.1900 and forms three sides of a square overlooked by a green dovecote tower. All these are privately owned and not usually open for viewing.

Continuing up Chalk Lane, the visitor's attention will be caught by

the fine ornate **gate of wrought iron (38)**, taken from the house of the Duke of Chandos at Canons in Edgware and still bearing his monogram. This was installed when the main entrance to the house was altered on the east side, so that it could give a view to an avenue which was approached by a driveway from Ashley Road. It is by this gate that the best view of the house can be secured. A second ornate entrance, the Ladas gates, can be seen together with its listed gatehouse on Ashley Road. The visitor can now walk on along Chalk Lane up to the Racecourse and view the Prince's Stand, the Queen's Stand and the recently built Duchess's Stand if so wished; alternatively turn back to the Town Centre by way of Worple Road along the side of the impressive brick wall, or head along Madans Walk. This is also bounded by a brick wall and features, on the left, another imposing 18th century wrought-iron gate which has been quoted as 'the grandest back-garden gate' in the town. Originally it gave access to the garden of Woodcote End House.

This is the second of two guides which we have produced, but they by no means exhaust Epsom's heritage of the old and the unusual. Anyone who has followed the trails set out will, we hope, have found the exercise rewarding in interest and knowledge, as we see something of what our local predecessors (sometimes our own ancestors) achieved and what they left behind for us to wonder at and enjoy.

Epsom Protection Society would like to express thanks to Denise Pattison, a local artist, who provided the illustrations.

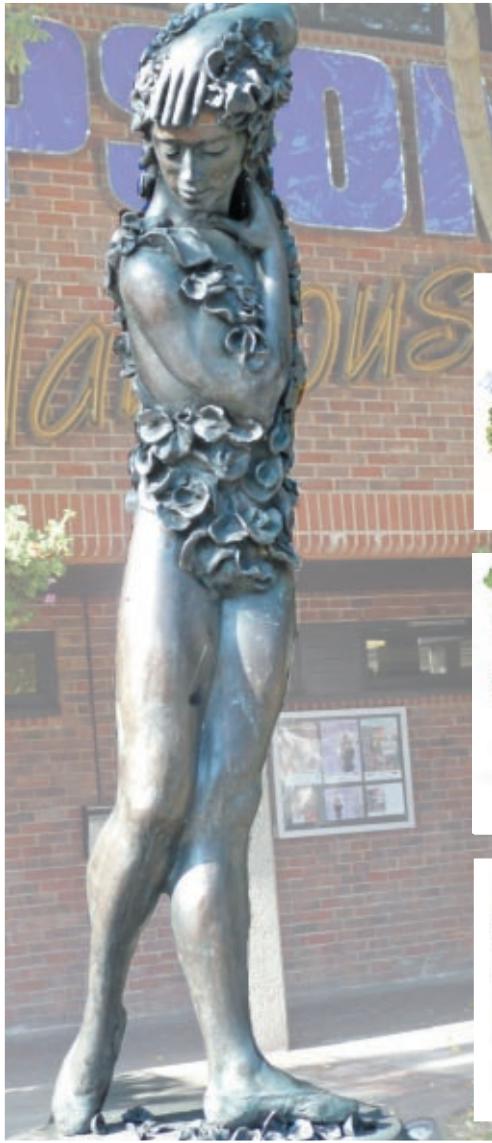
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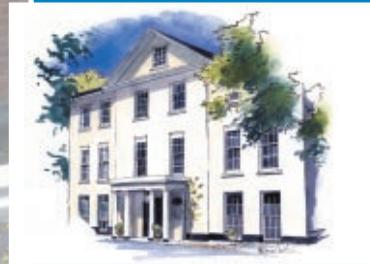


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