

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -140- SUMMER 2014

THE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

The Clock House and New Inn Lane (contd.)

In part 1, we left The Elms in the ownership of Samuel Sharp and referred to later changes made by Sir James Alexander, but Samuel Sharp sold the estate to Anthony Chamier who in 1765 had bought three sub-manors in Ewell - Fitznells, Roxley and Bottolphs. It is suggested that Chamier instructed Robert Adams to design some ceilings but this is not confirmed by Adam's writing and practice. Having become a member of The Literary Club in 1764 Chamier frequently entertained Samuel Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds at his home and Reynolds painted three portraits of him. Chamier died at 9 Saville Row on 12th October 1780 and left his estate in trust for his wife and then to a nephew. By 1784 on the liquidation of the estate, the Epsom house passed to Thomas Pattle who owned it until 1792 when it came into the possession of Sir John Brewer Davis until 1799.

The next owner was probably John Cunningham who was a Shopkeeper, Dealer and Merchant, but he was gazetted as bankrupt on 2nd October 1804 and, when his effects were auctioned, the Elms was not included in the sale. It was apparently leased out to the aforementioned Sir James Alexander who, knighted when Sheriff of London in 1803, purchased the property in 1819. A letter to the 'Sportsman magazine' in 1822 asked what had happened to Chamier's house and believed that a new one had been erected in its place. So having made many changes to the house Sir James Alexander died in 1830 and Mr Solomon Davies, who subsequently tenanted the property, died in June of the same year. The house was advertised in The Times in 1831 and was occupied by Thomas Whitmore, Secretary of H.M. Customs, until his death in 1841. His widow, Mrs Grace Gribble Whitmore, retained the premises with 1 acre, 2 roods and 32 perches and a meadow of about three and a half acres.

The remodelled house, mentioned in 1858 as 'built on the site of a more ancient mansion' was known as 'The Elms' for another hundred years or so. In 'Epsom its History and Surroundings' by Gordon Home, published in 1901, it was identified as 'The very substantial stuccoed house (opposite the Workhouse), the residence of Mr M.E. Muir and often known as 'The Clock House' is really named 'The Elms'. Nairn and Pevsner's 'Surrey' notes a big early C19th façade with a four column Tuscan porch.

The former stable block retains a square open bell turret with weather vane above it and a more recent clock below. Grade II listed, The Elms stands behind a high wall on the Dorking Road, Epsom with a lodge and the main house, somewhat altered, at present occupied by the Clock House Medical Practice'. (See photos in Spring 2014 Newsletter)

'Opposite the Workhouse' seems a very interesting comment and I wonder if the occupants of this mansion, at least from the end of the 18th Century, had the remotest idea of conditions for the people living the other side of the high wall and New Inn Lane /Dorking Road. That will make another story.

I am once again indebted to Brian Bouchard and the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer.org.uk for much of the information given here.

Harry Corben, Chairman

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Nescot: I told you last time that two applications had been made for the development of the animal husbandry land between the railway and Ewell By-pass. The first of these, for a dementia care home, nursing home and assisted living extra care units for a total of 150 residents, came before the April Planning Committee. We had thought that it was an imaginative and successful design; if the principle of developing the land was accepted and if it could be shown that there is an established need, we saw no objection, although we had sympathy with the major objections it had provoked among village residents.

At Planning Committee there was a long debate ending in a proposal to refuse, reflecting the village residents' views. An important feature was a policy in the District Wide Local Plan which stated that permission would be granted for educational development of the land (for an extension of Nescot). This was used by officers to justify in principle the development of this open area, but also by objectors to claim it was reserved for Nescot. Both the Head of Planning and the Head of Legal Services advised that this could not be used as a reason for refusal, since it was only permissive and as Nescot no longer had a use for it. In the end the application was refused on a vote of 7:3 for the reasons of overbearing and obtrusive overdevelopment, inadequate parking, no affordable housing and inadequate archaeological evaluation. We believe these reasons to be rather weak but they reflect local wishes, evidenced by the delight of a crowded public gallery.

The housing application was not ready for that Committee but amended drawings have since been submitted and we are looking at them to see what improvements may have been made.

Heron Court, Alexandra Road: This is the large Victorian/Edwardian locally listed house opposite the junction with College Road. It is owned by Epsom College and used for staff accommodation. A proposal to replace it with modern apartments and houses was dismissed at appeal some years ago and the College has now applied to keep the building but build a block of two houses and 8 flats in the grounds, which stretch back between the back gardens of Longdown Road and Kilcorral Close. The proposed building is of modern design unsuitable to the setting, which would destroy the attractive garden setting and would seriously affect the amenities of the adjoining houses. We have objected on these grounds.

Cedar Lodge, Headley Road: The first of two Green Belt applications, this relates to unoccupied modern stables for which demand is claimed to be non-existent. Last year an application to use the outbuildings for storage and small business units was refused as inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It is now proposed to use them for small commercial premises. We cannot see any difference from the previous proposal and have said it should be refused for the same reasons.

Priam Lodge, Burgh Heath Road: The second application in the Green Belt is about these historic racing stables which once housed the Prince of Wales' horses. The Lodge itself is converted to apartments and the stables are now mainly in commercial use by a demolition contractor. They are claimed to be unlettable for their original use although part was a livery stable until recently. The proposal is to replace them with four detached houses and we have objected in principle to this use in the Green Belt although it has to be said that the land is not accessible by the general public.

86 Pine Hill: This is an unfortunate case where a house owner applied to build a substantial two storey extension which would have an unacceptable effect on the neighbour by restricting light and being generally overbearing. It would also destroy the street scene pattern of regular gaps between the houses created by single storey garages set back from the front elevations. Amendments were made which the officers thought were sufficient but we did not. We and a number of neighbours objected and the ward councillor took the application to the full Planning Committee in May where she spoke in support of objectors. The Committee nevertheless granted permission and Mark Berry referred to the recent extension of permitted development rights which hampered local authorities' decision making, often against their better judgement

BP Service Station, 1-3 Dorking Road: Last time I reported that an application by BP to build a larger shop on the site had been withdrawn after serious objections. They have now looked at the permission they had in 2004 to rebuild the whole station including a new larger shop. They completed the pumps but presumably decided not to go ahead with the shop at that time. Using a part of planning law relating to the continuation of partially implemented permissions without time limit, they have decided to build the new shop previously permitted and have applied for a very small addition which it would be difficult to refuse on its own. We have written to say how unreasonable this is, and asking for the legal situation to be carefully checked. In the meantime we are ourselves looking into it and considering whether to make representations about this defect in the law.

Garden r/o 39 Manor Green Road: Also last time I mentioned the appeal against the refusal of the fifth attempt to build a house in this garden. I am pleased to say that this has been dismissed.

Organ and Dragon Inn: You will probably have seen with interest that Lidl, the discount supermarket, have bought this old pub and propose to demolish it. No development application has been seen although they may have been speaking to the planners. This could well be thought a suitable location, opposite the existing shops, but in traffic terms the effect would have to be worse than KFC which was dismissed on appeal, so we are watching the future with interest.

Alan Baker

CONSERVATION – SOME RELATED ISSUES

In the last Newsletter I included the text of a letter sent to the Government voicing our concerns about the size of houses being built today. It was also copied to several other organisations and individuals - in all about eleven copies were sent out. Can you guess how many responses I have had? Well of course you can't, but no doubt you will share my disappointment that we have heard from just three of the recipients: an acknowledgement from the principal addressee, a short letter from the RIBA and an email from Chris Grayling, perhaps the most useful of the three, asking me to let him know how I get on. I did read somewhere that the Government is looking at the matter and considering introducing measures, but these apparently would not be applicable in cases where such rules would affect viability. Hmm - it would not take much of a genius to concoct such a case every time. Perhaps I am naive, but I assumed that the point about rules is that they are uniformly applied and introduced to prevent undesirable things from happening, and that they should not include escape clauses when things get difficult.

Apart from cramped living conditions, the trouble with small houses is that they are so often associated with tiny gardens with very little communal open space despite the essential need to provide some relief from cramped living conditions.

I think I must have got out of bed the wrong way the day this was written because I am going to continue the litany of disappointments with a further complaint, this time about the proposed housing development at Nescot. There is the inevitable menu of house types, but it is the layout which seems to be so unimaginative. A main spine road from Reigate Road leads straight across the site to the far side where it turns a right angle to link with the Ewell bypass. A number of culs-de-sac open off the spine road with houses on each side. Although the roads have a limited degree of curvature, the general layout is rectilinear and I fear that, when built, the impression will be that of serried ranks of barracks. It need not – indeed it should not - be that way. While understanding the need to make the use of the land as efficient as possible and to achieve high densities, it would be good to see much greater variation as well as some communal space. Terraced housing can be very attractive (think of Bath, on a smaller scale). Why not include some apartments, perhaps built round a small garden square similar to those that lend such distinction to some London squares. I live in a rather undistinguished 1980's bungalow but it is one of a trio, each with a different shaped rear garden, grouped round a common front garden with a shared drive at the top of a cul-de-sac. The result is a remarkable degree of privacy coupled with security, and a

strong sense of community. These entirely (in my view at least) offset the rather plain architecture of the house.

My final complaint – and I promise to be more upbeat next time – concerns Seeability House in Hook Road. An application to change the use of this former office block to a day nursery for 142 children was refused by the council on the grounds that “it has not been demonstrated that there would be sufficient car parking space within the car park for the safe operation of the nursery without vehicles queuing back onto Hook Road B284 causing detriment to the free flow of traffic and the safety and convenience of other road users. This is contrary to Policy MV8 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan (May 2000).” The Society also wrote on pretty much the same grounds, while acknowledging that the location was good in relation to the potential market and that there was probably the demand for such a nursery. The County Council, as Highway Authority, supported the Council’s opinion, stating that there should be 50 parking spaces; 12 are proposed.

The application was allowed on appeal and permission granted on 9 May. From her qualifications, the Inspector is not a traffic engineer and, in rejecting the County’s evidence, relied instead on evidence provided by the Appellant relating to their nursery in Addiscombe. This has 8 parking spaces; the nursery has 7 nursery rooms in what appears to be a pair of semi-detached houses – I would guess it might accommodate 40, perhaps 50, children. The comparison doesn’t seem to stack up. I would have thought that, in these circumstances, the inspector would have had an obligation to have sought further technical support from a suitably qualified source in view of the wide divergence of opinion.

The real difficulty here is that the issue is not a question of design, location or use, but of operation, and this is a specialised area. If the Inspector is wrong in overturning the Council’s refusal of permission, there is no going back and the Council and the Highway Authority will have an insoluble problem on their hands, with no means of redress. While having a great deal of time for our planning system, the outcome of a planning inquiry cannot be challenged except on matters of process. It will be very interesting to see what happens.

Robert Austen.

THE DOWNS

The Downskeepers are pleased with the new hut which is now usable. They also have, and have been trained in the use of, a defibrillator. Should you need to contact them for any reason the mobile telephone number for them is 07714 855073.

At a meeting in Langley Vale with local trainers and the Jockey Club representatives, several issues were raised. Trainers find that too many motorists do not appreciate that they should slow down and pass wide when horses, whether racehorses or hacks, are on the road. Residents were worried about lads texting and smoking when riding – are they still in control of the horse? – and what to do if a horse is spooked and causes damage. The problem of identifying which stable a particular horse comes from in order to report back is being addressed. In winter the identifying rugs are not used. The protective headgear may have a particular colour pattern – the stables have different ones. Any untoward incidents or concerns regarding racehorses should be reported to Nigel Whybrow – 07831 426544. Any other Downs related concerns should be reported to the Downskeepers, telephone number as above.

Uncontrolled dogs continue to be a worry. A rider on Chobham Common unhorsed by a dog chasing her mount, was reportedly suing the dog walker for £300,000 in damages, so obviously the problem is not limited to the Borough.

The sale of Downs House fell through and was put back on the market with Bidwells property and estate agents.

Angela Clifford.

MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to those members who have paid their Subs. and especially to those who have generously given donations. A reminder for those who have not yet paid - subscriptions are due - £2 per individual, £3 per household. If you have not yet paid and you were out when he/she

called, your Road Rep. should have put a note on this Newsletter giving a reminder of his/her address. Please save them an extra trip by taking your Subscription to them. If unsure whether you have paid or not please contact your Road Rep or me.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary. Tel. 728570

NATIONAL TRUST AND ENGLISH HERITAGE

As members of Epsom Civic Society you are also members of Civic Voice and are entitled to National Trust and English Heritage Free Day Passes. National Trust passes are hard copy only, one per member (two for joint members) and can be obtained by members of Epsom Civic Society forwarding a stamped address envelope to Gill Roxborough, Civic Voice, 60 Duke Street, Liverpool, L1 5AA, quoting Epsom Civic Society. English Heritage passes are downloadable by clicking on the following link and following the instructions: www.tinyurl.com/civicenglishoffer14. The EH pass can be used between 1 April and 30 June and 1 September and 31 January 2015. It is valid for one visit per member (couples should register twice - once for each individual) and is intended as a personal benefit, therefore not valid for use as part of a group visit. This pass is not transferable.

If you do not have access to the Internet to obtain the English Heritage pass, and would like one, please contact me. Do let me know if you make use of either of these opportunities.

Ishbel. Kenward Tel. 728570

EVENTS AND OUTINGS

WATTS GALLERY, CHAPEL AND LIMNERSLEASE

The twentyfour members and friends had a fascinating visit to Compton, site of the Watts Gallery on Tuesday 25th March. The two guides were Sue Lippitt for the Gallery and Neil Bamford for the Chapel and Limnerslease, originally the Watts family holiday home. Luckily we were able to take cars to the various parts of the area which helped some walkers. The buildings have had huge, impressive, renovations and the next plan is for their house to be redone - £2.5 million has already been received towards this work. (Please see photographs on page 6)

We started with coffee and biscuits and lunch was taken individually at their extended restaurant - good, home-cooked fare. We did get damp but ECS members are a stoic lot.

Sheila Wadsworth



Lychgate to Watts chapel



Guide talk in Limnerslease

IAN WEST'S WALK

Members wondered where the Elders is on Epsom Road as we meet outside there for the walk on Sunday, 6th July at 2.30 p.m. It is the old people's home near the traffic lights as you go into Ewell. There should be parking available in Epsom Road by turning left off the by-pass.

BLenheim PALACE

There are still spaces for the Monday 15th September visit to Blenheim Palace. We have to promote these outings so far in advance; members do not necessarily know whether they will be home at the end of the summer. The cost is £29 to include coach travel and tip, coffee/tea on arrival and entry to the Palace and exceptional grounds. We can take non members now. Also if your name is on the waiting list invariably others who have booked have to cancel last minute, so usually everyone is able to come. Further details are in our Spring Newsletter.

Sheila Wadsworth 01372 273517

ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER PARTY

Don't miss our Annual Buffet Supper on Friday 17th October - 7.30 to 10.15 p.m. at St. Joseph's Church Hall, St. Margaret's Drive, off Dorking Road, Epsom. The cost is £20 each. It is always a grand opportunity to make new friends and meet neighbours. You arrive to a welcoming drink, wine or soft, and then enjoy a buffet served at your table. Recently I heard St. Joseph's Choir perform superbly for charity in the church and they will provide the entertainment for us at the supper.

Do bring along non members, they will be most welcome and we hope they may like to join us.

Please complete the application form. However if you have any queries do contact me on 01372-273517 -

Sheila Wadsworth wadsworthfamily@btintemet.com

APPLICATION FOR THE BUFFET SUPPER-Friday 17th October

MEMBER/S NAME/S
 And FRIENDS.....
 ADDRESS
 Tel. No
 No.of tickets
 TOTAL COST (£20 each) £

Please return this application slip with your cheque made out to "Epsom Civic Society" and a stamped, addressed envelope to Sheila Wadsworth,
 The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashtead, KT21 ILJ (01372-273517)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At our AGM on 10th April, the same team as last year was elected to serve for the next year. The following were elected: Chairman, Harry Corben; Vice Chairman, Alan Baker; Hon Treasurer, Nick Lock; Hon Secretary, Malcolm Boyd and Robert Austen, Mark Bristow, Angela Clifford, Pauline Devereux, Peter Follett, Ishbel Kenward, Margaret Hollins, Nick Lock, Sheila Wadsworth.

The main item on the agenda was to adopt a new, revised Constitution and this was passed unanimously after a clear presentation by Mark Bristow. The main item of interest in the Accounts for the year to 31st December 2014 was the generous legacy of almost £35,000.

After the business of the evening was complete, Adam Worley, Business Development Manager, told us, among other things, his plans to set up a Business Improvement District. After a lively question and answer session, Adam was thanked by the Chairman, Harry Corben. Some weeks after the AGM, we learnt that Adam Worley had tendered his resignation and that the Borough was re-advertising the position. Adam, in his short time in post had always been very supportive of the aims of our Society. **Malcolm Boyd**

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 13th/14th September

Last year the Society was involved for the first time and we organised and helped to steward the opening of 4 buildings in Church Street; Ebbisham House, the Fire Station, St. Martin's Church and United Reform Church. Hopefully more will be open this year. Nearer the time details should be in the local press, will be on our website and also on the Heritage Open Days website. <http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/>

Volunteers will be required to steward, just a couple of hours would be helpful – if you think that you would like to do this, please contact **Ishbel Kenward** [728570]

NEW WEBSITE

I would urge those members who have internet to look at our new website that has been diligently developed over many months by Mark Bristow. There is a wealth of information on the website including key planning applications, copies of our significant letters, our newsletters and aerial photographs. **Malcolm Boyd**

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

I would remind members that these photographs are such high quality that even relatively small areas can be enlarged. If there is a portion of a photograph that a member would like, I can crop the main photo and send it by e-mail for printing. **Malcolm Boyd**

LANGLEY VALE CENTENARY WOOD

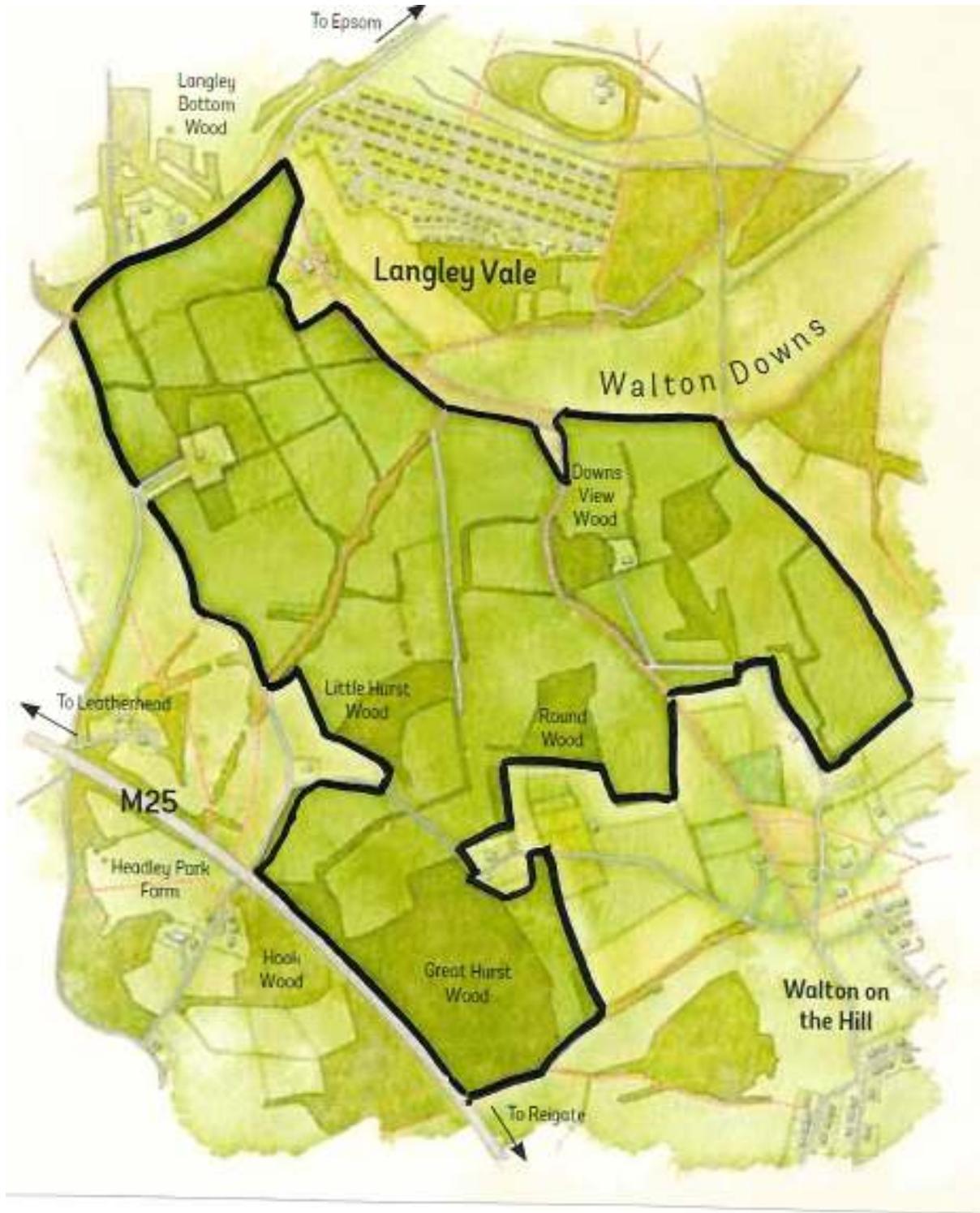
Our Society has always encouraged the planting of trees in our Borough and, in times past has actually planted many. We enthusiastically greeted the announcement of the proposed Centenary Wood near Langley Vale to commemorate the fallen and those who participated in the Great War. The land purchased by The Woodland Trust is partly in Epsom & Ewell, Banstead and Mole Valley and lies between, the M25, Langley Vale and Walton on the Hill.

The Regional Development Officer for The Woodland Trust, Mr John Brown, has asked me to ask whether any of our members have memories of the First World War as The Woodland Trust is researching people local to Epsom that were involved in the conflict.

Money is obviously important and the Society has agreed to donate at least £1,000 to this exciting project. Individuals are also encouraged to donate and can do so by the website or by telephone. <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/langley-vale> 0845 293 5858

John Brown can be contacted on 0845 293 5732

At the AGM there was a request to put a full-page map of the Langley Centenary Wood in the newsletter, so I have put this on page 8. **Malcolm Boyd**



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

Website: www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

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

E-mail: info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

Printed: Print Centre
5 West Street
Epsom KT18 7LR