

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -142- WINTER 2014

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

The Workhouse (Part 2)

The Epsom Poor Union was formed on 31st May 1836 by 15 parishes. It covered a population of 15,700 spread over an area of 40,400 acres and each parish elected one or more Guardians to administer the workhouse. The first meeting of the Guardians was held on the 2nd June 1836 when a chairman and vice chairman were elected and Mr W Everest was appointed the first clerk at a salary of £150 p.a.. Carshalton and Epsom had 3 Guardians each, Cobham, Ewell, Leatherhead and Sutton 2 each and Ashted, Banstead, Cheam, Chessington, Cuddington, Fetcham, Gt Bookham, Little Bookham, Stoke D'Abernon 1 each making a total of 23 representing populations varying from 138 in Cuddington to 3,231 in Epsom. Initial rates levied for 3 months varied from £14 in Fetcham to £1,796 in Epsom. It was at their second meeting that they decided to close the existing old parish poor and workhouses and build the new one which was ready for occupation in 1838. Proceeds from the sale of old premises raised £4,265.

Provision was made for those who remained at home to receive Out-relief which was given by Relieving Officers who were instructed to give one half of the relief in kind (eg food and clothing) when the amount exceeded 1s 6d. Initially the Union was divided into two areas for Out-relief and this was later changed to three areas.

The first master of the new workhouse was Mr John Trower at £40 pa and his daughter was expected to assist as unpaid matron. They were soon dismissed as incompetent and a new master and matron took over at £70 and £30 pa. Three medical officers, two superior health officers, a labour master and porter with his wife were appointed and after one year the Board appointed a chaplain at £100 pa.



EGH the original site of the Union Workhouse

Tenders were invited and accepted for the food. Uniforms were arranged for the inmates: men in striped calico trousers, worsted stockings, fustian suits, smock-frocks and shoes with hats or caps. Elderly and infirm women were dressed in blue print or striped gowns with Lindsey walsey petticoats and caps or bonnets for outings, but able bodied women wore less warm clothing. No space here to detail the diet but cooked meat and potatoes were offered on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, soup on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. Five or six ozs. of bread was offered each day with cheese on four days and broth on the other days.

Tasks were allocated to the inmates. The men ground broken glass into powder and corn and barley for workhouse use. Some inmates mended shoes while women and girls worked in the laundry and kitchen and did the cleaning and some were employed in the Ewell Bleach Works. So the Union Workhouse began its life and no doubt many appreciated the improvement in their circumstances.

In 'A History of Britain' Simon Schama says "In times of extreme economic distress, like the 1840's, even the most brutitarian regime was preferable to starvation. The ebb and flow of the numbers in the workhouses, their critics rightly pointed out, was no index of social misery, only of those moving in and out of the institutional walls". Things, however, were to improve gradually. In 1879 a chapel was consecrated by the Bishop of Guildford and had a stained glass window given by Lord Rosebery. Discipline was firm and by the standards of today, the rules seem incredibly harsh but by the standards of the time there is no known record of exceptionally harsh treatment in the Epsom Workhouse. The writings of Charles Dickens and Cobbett drew attention to some of the cruelty nationally.

In 1871 the role of the Poor Law Board was taken over by a separate department in the Local Government Board. At some stage the Workhouse was known as 'Middle House' to reduce the feeling of discrimination and the 'W' was omitted from birth certificates. The workhouse system was formally abolished in 1930, being replaced by other social legislation, but inmates were not turned out on that date and many workhouses continued to be run into the 1950's under County Council control.

My thanks as usual to the Epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.

We wish you all a Happy Christmas and a good New Year.

Harry Corben

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

First this time the continuing saga of East Street, where the lack of demand for out of date office buildings is being recognised and other uses, principally housing, permitted.

Crossways House and Bradford House, 39/39A East Street: Close to the Town Centre and next door to Staples, Crossways House had permission last year for conversion to 48 student bedrooms. Having bought the adjoining Bradford House, the applicant now wishes to add a large rear extension and provide 91 student bedrooms on the joint site, with the ground floor of Crossways House staying as offices, and the upper floors of Bradford House becoming flats. We had previously expressed a preference for any development to be combined with the public service sites at the rear, and were pleased to learn that the planning department had held a meeting with the various landowners. Joint development had proved impracticable but a new vehicle entrance from East Street to the rear land is to be reserved adjoining Bradford House. The new proposals seemed acceptable in height and bulk and we have raised no serious objection.

Rosebery House, 55 East Street: This is on the corner of Victoria Place and the proposal was to convert to 32 residential units with an added fourth floor, rear extension and a retail frontage but minimal parking. The application has been refused on grounds of visual clutter, loss of trees, overdevelopment, adverse effect on visual amenity and on adjoining conservation area, inadequate parking and manoeuvring space, and intensification in use of the site. These include our own objections, reported last time.

Haddad House, 81 East Street: Last time I reported that the only reason for the dismissal of the appeal against the previous refusal was the effect of the houses in Middle Close. A revised application therefore set back the rear building to reduce this effect, although we were still not satisfied that this was a good

development. Contrary to our expectations it was refused unanimously by the October Planning Committee because of the continued impact on Middle Close.

Acer House, 97-101 East Street: Originally three gable fronted houses, then combined into a care home and now vacant, Acer House is next to the Wilsons showroom on the corner of Kiln lane. It was removed from local listing in 1996. Demolition was proposed and the erection of a three storey building containing 12 flats. We would here also like to see a comprehensive corner development to include the Wilsons site, but this was not on offer and the application must be dealt with as it stands. We see no objection to housing use but wrote objecting to the size of the building which extends to the full depth of the site, inadequate parking, effect on houses in Middle Lane and an uninspiring design with the address in large letters on the roof. It was reported to the November Planning Committee, when two less flats and two more parking places were shown. It was recommended for approval but the result is not yet published.

168 East Street: We had again objected to this third go at redeveloping the site next to Kwik-Fit but it was approved at the October Planning Committee, who felt that there were insufficient reasons to refuse.

3 Alexandra Road: This is a large detached house, opposite the former milk depot, now divided into two flats. Last year an application was made to demolish the house and build a striking three storey contemporary block of seven flats. We said it was a good design but too large and out of place here. The Planning Committee took the same view and refused the application. On appeal the Inspector did not think the contemporary design to be inappropriate in this context, but thought the bulk would dominate its neighbours giving an undesirable impression of overdevelopment and he dismissed the appeal. A fresh application has now been made reducing the number of flats to four, with less bulk and height. This is clearly an improvement but we still think the suitability of the design is an issue, although the potential redevelopment of the milk depot will change the context. We have written accordingly.

Nescot Care Home: The earlier refusal of the application for development of part of the agricultural site as a care home had been appealed and the November Planning Committee considered a revised scheme where massing, rooflines and elevations had been reworked and the landscape buffers had been increased. We thought something had been done to deal with earlier objections but it was still a compromise. After an hours debate the amended scheme was approved on a vote and the appeal will presumably be dropped.

Oak Glade: The resubmission of this proposal to refurbish former NHS cottages has been approved after a compromise was reached on affordable housing.

Ethel Bailey Close: This is another large group of NHS cottages, now available for redevelopment and the subject of an application for demolition and the building of 48 new houses, 19 (the correct 40%) of which would be affordable. We have supported the application subject to a number of comments.

Alan Baker

CONSERVATION

The tally of applications affecting listed buildings or conservation areas is up to 88, a few more than at this time last year, perhaps a reflection on the improving economic climate. This is 39 more since the last Newsletter but only two provoked letters although I referred four to the Architecture Panel.

Our crusade against rabbit hutches – sorry, inadequately sized dwellings – seems to be part of a much wider concern. The Government has consulted on this with a view to adopting a national policy

and has developed criteria which seem to echo standards which have been introduced elsewhere, so there is some hope. We also hope that our own Council will include appropriate requirements in the design document which is in course of preparation.

There was an article in the Daily Mail of 23 September under the headline ‘Rabbit Hutch Britain’. It is worth quoting some of it: Britons live in the smallest homes in Western Europe because of draconian planning laws restricting house building, a report found yesterday. Residential floor space in Britain is on average just 66 square metres (710 square feet) per household compared to a spacious 118 square metres (1,270 sq ft) in Ireland, 115 square metres (1,238 sq ft) in Denmark or 110 square metres (1,184 sq ft) in Italy according to data compiled by the Institute of Economic Affairs.

The article continues, quoting the IEA: ‘All the evidence suggests that years of tight planning controls restricting house building has led to us having the smallest space per household in Western Europe.’ I have to say that I am not entirely convinced that the IEA is entirely correct in placing all the blame on planning controls. While this no doubt contributes to the paucity of building land, it does not control the size of houses. Please forgive me for wondering if developers might not just take the chance of using this as an opportunity to maximise profit. In the current febrile market it seems people will be tempted to buy anything, so why not reduce your costs by building smaller houses – the sale price is no doubt the same, after all, a three bedroom house is a three bedroom house. One final point, for our ‘typical’ house to become the same size as the Irish equivalent (ie nearly 80% larger), it would have to be only six feet wider and six feet deeper.

Apropos this issue, an application was submitted to convert a basement to a studio apartment. In this case my complaint was that the apartment would have virtually no daylight and would certainly have no direct light or sunlight and would be unfit for human habitation. The council wisely refused permission on the basis that ‘The proposed studio, by virtue of the unacceptable outlook and insufficient glazing would create an unsatisfactory internal living environment and reliance on artificial lighting contrary to policies.....’



Letters were also written in connection with an advertisement at the Clockhouse Medical Practice in Dorking Road, an advertisement on an office at the end of the High Street and a proposal for two new external stair wells on a building at Epsom College, facing College Road.

Local policy states that ‘Consent will not be granted for the display of advertisements on hoardings within conservation areas.’ The advertisement proposed at the Clockhouse Medical Practice is 4.57 metres (about 15 feet) long by 0.55 metres wide. Perhaps this shape does not rank as a hoarding; in any event permission was granted despite its size and location in the Woodcote Conservation Area. The second advertisement was objected to on the basis of its impact on the visual amenity of the High Street (it would be placed 6.78 metres – about 22 feet - above ground level) and was, in my view, in very questionable taste. The outcome is awaited.

The final letter concerning the stair wells at Epsom College was also basically a matter of taste. The Planning Statement accompanying the application stated that the two stair wells are to be finished in

light grey zinc cladding and that they ‘have been designed to be contemporary in nature and not a pastiche of the existing building’. Our letter stated that the Society is not opposed to contemporary design but that ‘rather than enhancing the facades of the group of buildings facing College Road, the stairwells will simply stand out in stark contrast to the style and materials of those buildings. In these circumstances, zinc cladding, which conveys a sense of a low quality, temporary building, would seem to be a strange, even bizarre, choice of materials.’ Again, the outcome is awaited. I must add that the building is neither listed nor in a conservation area but is part of a significant group of buildings in the Green Belt, some of which are listed.

I learned this week that the main applications relating to the RAC have been withdrawn, although the more (in my view) contentious one relating to the residential development in the Green Belt has not been withdrawn. This one clearly has some way to run.

Atkins has submitted an application following their consultation earlier in the year. You may remember that we wrote to express concern about the height of the proposed new office building and the potential visual impact on the neighbouring Conservation Area. It seems we were not alone and the company responded to this concern and the scheme submitted for planning approval has been reduced in height. The application is very fully documented and the Design and Access Statement includes some helpful photo-montages which indicate that the impact will indeed be quite modest. Nonetheless, I have asked the panel to have a look at this one.

Talking of the Panel leads me to confess to some disappointment in that I did not get a single response to my appeal in the last Newsletter. Fortunately, four new members of the Society, recruited at our display in the Ashley Centre in October, agreed to join the Panel – many thanks to them. The offer is still open to anyone who feels they can help.

Rob Austen

THE ASHLEY CENTRE DISPLAY 11th October



This annual display was very successful and 37 new members were recruited. Welcome to our 122 new members recruited this year.



The Downs

The new Downskeeper’s hut has been a great improvement on their previous accommodation which they have welcomed. Flooding at Buckle’s Gap seems to have been addressed by the work undertaken by Surrey County Council. Approval has been given for several events on the Downs next year. Approval for these events is only given after consideration of any possible interference with racehorse training or damage to the Downs. Not only the number of participants, but expected visitor numbers is relevant too. The Head Downskeeper is asked for his opinion as his team has to do the clearing up/repair of damage.

The maintenance of some of the hack rides continues to be problematic. Differences of opinion about responsibility are still being addressed and the Council Legal Team is involved.

Unfortunately uncontrolled dogs continue to be a problem - chasing horses and cyclists. Legislation to deal with this problem has changed recently but is being consulted. Enforcement of rules and regulations on this is difficult for the Downskeepers. Sadly, they are subjected to abuse far too often.

The gardeners amongst you may have had the challenge of Chafer Grubs destroying your lawns – they feed on the roots, loosening the sward. Well, it is also happening on the racecourse and training gallops. The birds feeding on the grubs also disturb the grass. The racecourse is sprayed but the cost of treating the whole of the Downs is prohibitive.

For a one year trial, the Conservators voted to allow the use of raised barbecues on the Downs during Ladies Day, Derby Day and the August meeting. [Under the 1984 Act which controls the Downs, lighting of fires is banned unless specifically permitted]. The Racecourse promised to have a team dedicated to supervising their use. Both the Chairman (Councillor Jean Smith) and Councillor Jan Mason were vehemently opposed but were out-voted. There was considerable discussion of the wisdom of permitting, but the point was made that people light barbecues anyway. We must wait and see whether the public will be sensible in the use of barbecues.

As a member of the public, I was surprised no mention was made of consulting the Fire Brigade for advice.

Angela Clifford

VISIT TO BLENHEIM PALACE

Blenheim Palace, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was built in early 18th C by the 1st Duke of Marlborough as a reward for his military triumphs against the French. The Palace not only has the expected spectacular rooms, pictures etc., it also has Exhibitions including the ‘Untold History of Blenheim’ which was fascinating and very well done. The estate is run very much as a family business and some of us saw members of the family discussing future plans for some of the exhibits.



In addition there are formal gardens, the park, the Victory Column, the Pleasure gardens and probably more. There’s so much that I certainly didn’t see it all and I’m hoping to make use of the fact that we were able to convert the day ticket to an Annual Pass at no extra cost. Thanks to Sheila Wadsworth’s excellent pre-planning of the day and the co-operation of everyone on the trip we had a really good day. The fact that we were lucky with the traffic and the weather was an added bonus. P.S. did anyone make use of the English Heritage or National Trust Passes that we are entitled to thanks to Epsom Civic Society’s membership of Civic Voice? If you did I’d appreciate hearing from you. [01372 728570 or email me at info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk]

Ishbel Kenward

ASHTED AND EPSOM SPORTS CLUB GREAT LOSS. We offer our deepest sympathy to Sheila Wadsworth on the sudden death of her husband, Arthur. He was a popular member and officer of Epsom Sports Club and will be greatly missed by the club and by his many friends. The Society was well represented at the committal and afterwards at the Sports Club.

Malcolm Boyd

HAVE YOU VISITED OUR NEW WEBSITE YET?

The website has been running since the beginning of the year, and now contains details of our social events, our heritage documents and our set of aerial photographs of Epsom – as well as today's weather in Epsom!

The main content, however, concerns some of the many planning applications that your Committee has considered and responded to on behalf of the Society. As a matter of policy, the website entries are mainly restricted to applications from professional developers and/or for commercial properties. While the Society does consider and respond to applications seeking to enhance or modify a property as a single personal residence, our letters about these applications are not normally added to the website (but our letters can be seen on the relevant entry on the EEBC planning website together with all other responses from interested parties). Our web address is www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

Mark Bristow

ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER PARTY

"A delightful evening" was the general consensus on the 2014 supper party held on Friday 17th October in St. Joseph's Church Hall. Eighty-one members, friends and family were joined by the Mayor, Councillor Robert Foote, and his wife, Rosemary - both ECS members. The colourful, floral decorations on the tables were arranged by Audrey Simpson and Studio Food's buffet, provided by Carolyn and Sara, was discreetly served and abundant with drinks served by Tony Smith and Norman Dempster. However the highlight of the event was the St. Joseph's Family Choir, conducted by Helen Wade and accompanied on the piano by Alex Watson. The thirteen in the choir had a varied repertoire from Bob Dylan to Bizet finishing up with Paddy on the Railway. Their soloists, Sandra Dunn, Amanda Mathers, Paul Tooke and Phil Wells were joined by guest artists Amelya Goldy (soprano) and a name for the future, Amelya's pupil Elspeth Marrow (mezzo-soprano) - what amazing musical talent lurks around Epsom!

Sheila Wadsworth

Some photos of the buffet party taken by Beryl McLoughlin



Mayor Robert Goode



Elsbeth Marrow



St Joseph's Family Choir

OUTING to PENSHURST PLACE, Tuesday 14th April 2015

The spring outing will be to Penshurst Place and Gardens near Tonbridge, Kent. The medieval manor house and gardens date from 1341 and in 1552 the De L'Isle family were granted the estate by Edward VI after it had been used by Henry VIII as a hunting lodge. The Baron's Hall is an amazing example of medieval domestic architecture and records exist of the gardens from 1346. The walled garden was first laid out in 1580. The staterooms have a fine collection of portraits, furniture, porcelain, tapestries and arms. There is also a Toy Museum and close by is Penshurst village, home of the original Leicester Square, an ancient Guildhouse and St. Joseph's Baptist church where the Sidney memorials and tombs are found.

On arrival we shall have coffee/tea and a cookie and then have guided tours of the house in the morning and of the gardens in the afternoon. For lunch there is the Garden Restaurant and the Porcupine Pantry plus a kiosk for ice creams, drinks and snacks, plus delegated picnic areas. It would be advisable to stagger times for lunch.

The coach will leave The Street, Ashted at 8.45 a.m. (A), the Methodist Church, Epsom at 9.00 a.m.(B), and Epsom Downs, the car park behind the Tattenham Corner tea hut at 9.10 a.m. (C). We plan to leave Penshurst at 4.15 p.m.

Cost is £35 per member. Non members will be welcome to book after 1st February. For any enquiries my phone number is 01372-273517. Sheila Wadsworth

APPLICATION FOR PENSHURST PLACE - Tuesday 14th APRIL 2015

MEMBERS' NAMES.....

And FRIENDS after 1st February.....

ADDRESS

TEL. NOMob. No (for use on the day).....

COACH COLLECTION (please circle) (A) (B) (C)

NUMBER OF TICKETS..... TOTAL COST

Please return this form to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT21 ILJ. Cheques to be made payable to "Epsom Civic Society" and enclose a **stamped addressed envelope**. Thank you.

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