

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -144- SUMMER 2015

THE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

EPSOM AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR Part Two

Inevitably, perhaps, there was a shortage of uniforms for the men who were joining the army for training before being sent to France. The local paper reported that 'nearly 5000 soldiers in sports coats and Varsity flannel trousers, college mufflers, gabardines and macintoshes, are billeted between Ewell and Leatherhead, with Epsom as headquarters....the qualification for membership of these crack corps is the fact of having gone to one or other of Britain's public schools'.

So the soldiers of the Royal Fusiliers, University and Public Schools Brigade (known as UPS) assembled at Woodcote Park, near Epsom in 1914. One of their first priorities was to build/assemble accommodation and meanwhile each landlady received twenty-four shillings a week for each man billeted in her home. In April the War Office announced that one hundred and seventy six thousand pounds had been spent on billeting the men, and money being the sinews of war there was a brief time of prosperity in parts of the town not known previously for prosperity. Bowdens the tailor and outfitter prospered as did many of the other shops in the town, advertisements appeared in the newspapers and Lord John Sanger's circus visited twice instead of once as intended.

A screen performance of 'Tommy Atkins', adapted from the famous play at the Lyceum Theatre, occupied the local cinema screen for a whole week. Dave Abbott a Scotch (sic) comedian appeared at the Electric Theatre picture house each evening and P.C. Weeding was almost a resident witness at the new Court House in Ashley Road. There he reported on various offences including that of Jack Henry Woolf Banato who was fined 20s (£1) plus 8s 6d costs for contravening lighting regulations under the Defence of the Realm Act. He was a member of the extremely wealthy Joel family who had created a huge mining concern in South Africa and of the Public Schools Brigade.

In March 1915 the four billeted Battalions making up the UPS. began to move into the camp which they had helped to build. In April it was announced that the entire three thousand were now quartered at Woodcote and in May it was announced that the UPS. Brigade were being moved to Clipstone in Nottinghamshire. The men had enjoyed their time in Epsom and a parade of some two or three hundred visited the town, with musical accompaniment, to say thank you particularly to the landladies. At intervals of half an hour the men marched to The Downs Station and eight trains at hourly intervals carried them to London and away. Within two weeks of their departure some two hundred returned to Woodcote as a reserve and recruiting company in part of the camp known as 'the farm'. In November they were ordered away to Brighton and they were given a well rehearsed departure with a band playing Old Lang Syne. Local people had raised £100 for musical instruments.

Greatly altered, the UPS Brigade went into action in France in the La Basse Canal area. The great demand for officers having reduced their strength, many having gone to cadet schools, the 18th 19th and 21st Battalions were disbanded in 1916. A reunion and memorial service was held at St Giles Parish Church in 1931. The Woodcote Camp subsequently became The Woodcote Convalescent Camp for wounded soldiers.

Meanwhile Ewell Castle built in the early part of the 19th Century and currently Ewell Castle School was owned by Captain Clarence Wiener of Austrian origin but a USA citizen. In 1917 the London Evening News published an article concerning 'Suspensions in a Surrey Garden'. Captain Wiener was apparently attempting to sell the 'Castle' with a tower commanding a view of the countryside 'suitable for astronomical observations' and a powerful telescope.' The gardens have foundations of deep layers of concrete, which could be used in case of invasion as emplacements for five enemy guns directed against London'. Captain Wiener sued Associated Newspapers Ltd in respect of articles published in their papers. They would not publish an apology and pleaded 'in mitigation of damages' a number of

allegations against the moral character of the plaintiff and his relations with women. Surrey newspapers also covered the story. The Jury, after more than one hour, returned verdicts for the plaintiff and Capt Wiener was given damages of £50 against the 'Evening News' and £25 against the 'People'.

We hope you all have a good summer and that we shall see many of you at our events. Thank you to Sheila, our Events Organiser, for the excellent and most enjoyable trip to Penshurst.

Harry Corben, (Chairman)

OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The following Officers and Committee members were elected at our AGM on the 28th April 2015
To contact any committee member, see telephone numbers at the end of this Newsletter or e-mail info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

Chairman; Harry Corben,
Vice-Chairman & Planning; Alan Baker FRICS
Hon Secretary; Malcolm Boyd.
Hon Treasurer; Nick Lock
Planning & Conservation; Robert Austen,
Information Technology; Mark Bristow
Downs; Angela Clifford.
Minutes Secretary; Pauline Devereux
Planning Support; Peter Follett.
Legal and Planning Advice; Margaret Hollins
Membership Secretary; Ishbel Kenward.
Events; Sheila Wadsworth

Following the business of the evening, we welcomed Mr John Brown, the Regional Development Officer of The Woodland Trust, who then gave a very interesting talk entitled Echoes of War – A Wood to Remember. He reminded us that the Centenary Wood at Langley Vale was to commemorate the start of the First World War. Tree planting is already underway with welcome help from The Vale Primary School and members of the public, including some of our committee. At the end of the evening, Harry Corben presented a cheque for £2,000 to Mr Brown for the Centenary Wood Fund. The presentation was well covered by the local Guardian newspaper. There are many opportunities for volunteering for this project and details can be found on the right hand side of the home page of our website epsomcivicsociety.org.uk. The next open days for volunteering are the 3rd and 4th July.



Alan Baker, Harry Corben and John Brown



Ishbel Kenward, Sheila Wadsworth and Malcolm Boyd

We were pleased to receive the following letter from the Chief Executive of The Woodland Trust

Dear Mr Corben,

Thank you so much for the wonderful donation of £2,000 on behalf of the Epsom Civic Society towards our work at the First World War Centenary Wood at Langley Vale. I am so pleased that you enjoyed the talk with John Brown and Paddy Byrne - we are very grateful for your support.

As you will have heard at the talk, we are planting 200,000 native trees, including beech, rowan, hawthorn and oak and creating carpets of striking wildflowers. The land will be transformed into a peaceful place with natural habitats for the little owl, dormice, and many other plants, insects and mammals. Ten thousand trees have already been planted at this site by local school children and nearby residents.

Surrey is home to more ancient woodland than any other county and there are over 140 acres of existing woodland, mainly ancient, on this site. Our new woodland creation will link and buffer these vital habitats, creating a safe environment for wildlife to thrive whilst saying thank you to those who lived and died during the First World War.

Please pass on our thanks and appreciation to everyone involved and thank you again for standing with us and helping to create our England flagship Centenary Woodland in Surrey. John will be in touch with you as the project develops.

Yours sincerely,
Beccy Speight
Chief Executive
The Woodland Trust

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Still some East Street to start with.

20-24 East Street: This is a new one and is the Ford car showroom. Ford propose to move to an out of town location and this application proposes enlargement of the ground floor by internal rearrangement to provide a retail use. The prospective occupant is Pets at Home, a multiple company with some 350 branches throughout the country. The loss of the car showroom and forecourt will be a welcome improvement to the street scene and the proposed substantial use is not inappropriate, although retail should not normally spread too far from the centre.



Rosebery House, 55 East Street: There has been an appeal against the latest refusal and we have drawn attention to our objections to an additional floor, to the adverse effect on Lintons Lane Conservation Area, and to the inadequate parking.

Haddad House, 91 East Street: A sixth (!) attempt has been made to deal with the adverse effect of this office development on Middle Close. The proposed rear building has now been reduced in height from three to two storeys and this may prove to be a satisfactory solution.

Acer House, 97-101 East Street: Permission was granted last November for 12 flats with 10 parking places on this site. This has not been implemented and a new application is for an increase to 14 flats with 11 parking spaces, achieved by building two extra flats over part of the car park. We are still concerned about the amount of parking but the appearance of the East Street frontage is improved and better proportioned.

Priam Lodge Stables, Burgh Heath Road: I described this in some detail in the last Newsletter, ending with the Appeal being dismissed solely for lack of an affordable housing contribution. A new application reverts to the original four houses and argues for a contribution to be excused by a recent addition to government planning guidelines about Vacant Building credit. We have again emphasised our

views on Green Belt protection, but this exceptional case now rests on the legal interpretation of the guidelines, which we must leave to others.

72-74 Temple Road: This is the interesting Arts and Crafts style building on the corner of Temple Road and Pound Lane, now used as student accommodation. An earlier proposal to extend was dismissed on appeal. A new greatly improved proposal creates a pleasing appearance which we find satisfactory subject to careful landscaping.



Land off Mill Road: This is another revised application, which almost seems normal procedure at present. This time permission was granted on appeal in 2013 for 10 dwellings on the strip of land between Mill Road and the railway, former allotment land now reverted to natural scrub with considerable wildlife interest. This also has not been implemented and an application now seeks permission for a very similar scheme but to be used for student accommodation, now in great demand. We still feel development of this land is unfortunate, but in view of the appeal decision we can seriously object only to the effect of such a use in a quiet residential area.

Combined Courts Site, Ashley Road: We are delighted to learn recently that NHS funds are to be released for the medical centre to be established on the ground floor in Ashley Road, after many years of hard negotiation.



Nescot Agricultural Land Housing Development: Lastly, a welcome revision of the estate layout of this housing development, already approved in outline. This is now in the hands of Circle Hill, a combination of a housing developer and a housing association. We all thought the first layout was an unimaginative standard housing estate, and the present scheme is a lot better with development arranged around courtyards, reduction of hardstanding and vehicle domination, and the creation of tree lined “boulevard” with a vista terminated by a landscaped open space. Our only reservation is whether the parking allowance is sufficient to discourage parking in adjoining local roads. **Alan Baker**

CONSERVATION

In the year just ended (from AGM to AGM) I have looked at a total of 137 applications but written only 12 letters; last year the comparable figures were 116 applications and 22 letters. Each year is quite different, although my area is limited to Conservation Areas and listed buildings. The last two letters, one written in March and one in April, both concerned new vehicle accesses. The first involved knocking a gap in a listed wall to make a second access to a property, the two presumably to be operated as a separate entrance and exit. I felt the loss of the wall could not be justified in view of both the very limited number of vehicles using the accesses and the absence of any real safety issues. The second case was perhaps more serious and involved a new access onto Downside, which at the point in question is very narrow and has a footway on only one side. The application included the comment that the new entrance would ‘contribute positively to an active street scene, which is to be encouraged’. Yes, we agreed, it is, but not by additional vehicles in an already dangerous situation. An active street scene is gained from additional people, not cars, especially in this case when there is a perfectly adequate access from Church Street, which had previously provided for greater demand than under the changed circumstances which would exist in future.

Talking of matters affecting roads leads me on to the proposals for South Street. This seems to be a matter which causes a lot of anguish, so I arranged to talk to the Surrey County Council people involved, who very kindly agreed to meet me, with Mark Berry, a few weeks ago. I should add that, before I retired, I spent a great deal of my professional life as a consulting engineer involved in highways, traffic and related issues associated with major infrastructure and development schemes. The meeting was very cordial and frank and I was shown a great deal of the background work which has been carried out. It is very thorough indeed. The data collected about traffic movement was secured through the use of automatic number plate recognition cameras on all the routes into the town. This allows the entry and exit points of traffic passing through the town to be established. The data was supplemented by cameras at car parks and elsewhere so that the traffic destined for the town could be established. A massive amount of up to date data has been collected, which revealed in great detail what is going on. An interesting feature was the surprisingly large number of cars coming into the town and leaving by the same route a relatively short time later; this was almost certainly people being dropped off in the town, probably mainly at the railway station.

The analysis and the techniques used were independently assessed by a third party, as is now recommended practice, and was found to be sound. When I read this sort of statement, I'm afraid my natural cynicism usually comes to the fore. However, I have experienced such audits and they work; the third party has no interest in being associated with inadequate or biased work – it is in no one's interest and any such deficiencies will inevitably emerge at some stage.

The benefits to the town are potentially substantial but they will depend on the additional measures proposed, such as moving the taxi rank from outside the NatWest Bank to the other side of the Clock Tower, reducing the present four pedestrian crossings to three, and moving the bus bay to a more central location. The detailed proposals will come forward in due course and it is in these that we should be most interested. The reason for the changes is mainly to help the movement of traffic through the town and avoid the queues which tend to build up particularly on the approach to the Ashley Road junction past the Clock Tower.

The County has a great deal of data on pedestrian movements and volumes which has been taken into account. I know many will be unhappy that the crossing outside the entrance to the Ashley Centre would be closed, but please keep an open mind about this at this stage until the detailed proposals come forward.

South Street is of particular concern to us all, especially the matter of deliveries to the shops. The County has spoken at length to the retailers. Deliveries are, of course, the main issue; these would be limited to off-peak periods and the County's analyses suggest the road capacity will continue to be satisfactory at these times. I had particular concern about this, and continue to have reservations. However, I am aware of other places where such arrangements work, such as Putney High Street, which experiences far higher traffic volumes. Inquiries are being made into the possibility of deliveries at the rear, using the Ashley Centre service area. While this might be possible, other difficulties have then emerged; most of the South Street shops are converted houses and deliveries at the rear are, in some cases, simply impracticable.

Other means of improving the town centre are often suggested. The idea of using the Station Approach as part of a one-way system is immensely attractive but is unfortunately a non-starter. The route is too tortuous and congested to accommodate large vehicles, especially the turn from South Street to West Hill, then the immediate right turn into Station Approach. Station Approach would be overwhelmed with traffic especially with cars dropping people off at the station. The bulk of the traffic would then have to take a right turn into Waterloo Road and then a left turn back into the High Street. Attractive as it is, this route simply would not be able to deal with the volume of traffic passing through the town centre.

This, of course, leads on the beguiling thought of a by-pass. The A24 was once an important route to the South Coast and consequently carried quite a lot of long distance traffic. Much of this traffic has moved to other routes since the A3 was improved to near motorway standard and the M23 was completed, so the traffic on the A24 is now much more local in nature. It is therefore questionable as to how effective a by-pass might be. It is also necessary to consider the effect of a new route and the impacts it might have. To attract traffic it would need to be at least as short as the existing route, at least

in terms of journey time. This implies it would probably be close to, or pass through, built up areas with consequential effects of severance, noise and air pollution. (The alternative would be a route through the Green Belt which I should think would never command any support from our members.) Consider noise; if a by-pass took half the traffic out of the town centre, noise in High Street would be reduced by only 3 decibels, a change which the human ear can just about detect. But the area through which the by-pass was routed would be subject to just as much noise as the High Street, so the negative effects of traffic noise are now spread even more widely. A greater impact on people's everyday lives is that of severance, which can have a devastating effect on communities. Finally, of course, there is the matter of finance – it is very certain that no Government would fund such a scheme. There are probably literally hundreds of towns experiencing the sort of difficulties Epsom faces.

It seems to me that we must make the best of what is being proposed. However, I would float an additional idea. The imposition of a 20 mph limit on the High Street, Upper High Street and on short lengths of the roads connecting to them would have a very significant effect on the quality of the town centre. It might allow the removal of the central reservation along the eastern half of the High Street with consequential widening of the footways being possible. Traffic speed reduction could be encouraged by other features, such as raised pedestrian crossings as speed control devices, which might help to address the concerns of the police, who tend to oppose such schemes which are difficult to enforce. The County doesn't favour this idea, but if you do, let us know and we might then be able to show enough support for the idea to be taken seriously.

Rob Austen

CONGRATULATIONS

It is with great pleasure that we report that our Chairman, Harry Corben has been awarded the annual Epsom & Ewell Active Citizen's Award.

In presenting the award, the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell Councillor Robert Foote mentioned that he had first met Harry when Harry was a Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator. The Mayor commented "we all benefit from the Civic Society's work: protecting the heritage of Epsom, encouraging high standards of new planning, building and promoting civic pride. Our borough is very fortunate to benefit from Harry's tremendous commitment and calibre, and willingness to work so hard across a wide range of areas".

(From Borough Insight March 2015)



BOUNCING EMAILS

Postmen can generally deliver a letter despite misprints. However if I've misread or mis-typed just one character in an email address then the email doesn't get through. Sometimes I can track it down but not always so if you think that we have your email address but didn't receive an email from me on the subject of the South Street proposed two way system consultation in March please can you let us know at info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk with the subject 'updated email address'.

If you haven't previously given us your email address and would like to receive the occasional email with items we think would be of interest between Newsletters or you have changed email address then let us know with the subject 'email address'.

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.

Mrs. Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary. Tel. 728570

OUR WEBSITE

Our website can be found at epsomcivicsociety.org.uk (modern browsers don't require you to start with www. any more!).

Over the last year, the content has expanded with many of the letters written by the Committee about planning applications having been added, as well as the regular quarterly newsletters (with colour photos) and news about the Langley Vale WW1 Centenary Wood, where activities will be continuing in 2015 and 2016 with more volunteering opportunities (see the latest website posting for details)

The home page includes a rolling list of recent postings, as well as a weather forecast for Epsom updated daily. Other pages include details of our events and outings, and the Heritage materials collected or produced by the Society over the last 50 years.

Each post for a planning application uses the address as the title, shows a link to Google maps so you can see where in Epsom the site is, a link to the borough's own planning website, direct to the section for the relevant application, a short summary of the proposal and the Society's views, and a link to download the letter we have written.

Not all the letters we write are included, only those involving redevelopment of one or more properties. We may comment on applications from individual residents seeking to modify or extend their existing dwelling, but don't feel it is appropriate to publicise these. All our letters are, of course, included amongst all other responses to the council, on the Borough's planning website.

But on the more contentious proposals, where a lot of objections are raised, it may be more difficult to find what the Society wrote – much easier to visit epsomcivicsociety.org.uk and look at Planning Applications!

Mark Bristow

EPSOM CIVIC SOCIETY AWARDS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS (By Ann Ali, the project leader)

After the Blue Sky workshop in 2013 it was decided to approach the LEA primary schools and one private primary school in the Epsom area, a total of 7, to see if any of them would be interested in a financial award scheme to help with civic awareness projects that the school was doing as part of the curriculum. We did not want to put more work on the schools but to be helpful.

In 2014 I wrote to all the schools and St Martins replied and were very helpful in suggesting ways we could help. As a result we awarded them £200 towards the cost of developing a school vegetable garden and they will get another £200 for 2015 for compost. They have a range of really good ideas of how the garden will develop including vegetables and salad for their lunches.

I wrote again to the same schools this year and with a clearer idea based on St Martins. 3 schools The Vale, Stamford Green and Kingswood house replied. They also were all at different stages of developing a garden. The Stamford Green class had suggested they had a WW1 memorial Garden and each child had drawn a plan. Kingswood House are in the process of developing their ideas. The Vale school is the furthest along as they had started their garden over a year ago and last summer raised money for it selling the vegetables to the parents. The school has also been closely involved in the tree planting for the Woodland Trust's WW1 Memorial wood.

The children of Class 5 and their teacher, Mrs Tinker showed me round what they have done already and they have worked hard as it is not an easy site. It was lovely to see the pride they all had in what they had achieved. Although it was this class who has done the work so far the other classes are getting involved and Mrs Tinker has told me about the fun the infants have had as Sycamore seedling hunters. Much more fun than computer games one child told her. The parents are also involved and the school caretaker has built the children a shed for the tools so all the school is involved.

The children prepared a letter from all the class plus individual statements and drawings about what learning how to garden means to them--see next page. All ECS committee were very impressed with their enthusiasm and have agreed to fund 5 long weather proofed tables for their outdoor class room.

I would like to thank Sarah Leyland, Co-Head, Andrea Tinker, teacher, and all the children of class 5 for their hard work at THE VALE and look forward to working with the other schools as their projects progress. I will give a report on them in the next newsletter. I would like to thank the OLD MOAT Garden Centre for being will to cooperate with us for the future in supplying garden vouchers.

EVENTS

PENSHURST PLACE AND GARDENS - Tuesday 14th April

We could not but enjoy our outing to Penshurst Place and Gardens. The two guides, Eileen McAllistair and Patricia Evens, were so enthusiastic, clear and knowledgeable and the thirty-five of us basked in the superb weather. We had a view of the private garden of the De L'Isle-Sidney family and were awestruck at the 14th century Baron's Hall, even better preserved than Hampton Court I felt, and more ancient.

There are gardens for all seasons and we were there for the magnolias in a dell surrounding a Naiad statue, erected in memory of Jacqueline, Viscountess De L'Isle, mother of the current Viscount who died whilst her husband was Governor General of Australia. One area also has a Union Flag layout. The Sidney family crest is a porcupine and there is an impressive example by the Heraldic Garden.

If you are near Tonbridge, it is an unmissable place to visit.



Penshurst Place and gardens



A descriptive talk for members

ROYAL HOLLOWAY COLLEGE AND RUNNYMEDE-Thursday 30th July

There are still a few places for the Royal Holloway College and Runnymede visit on Thursday 30th July and non members will be most welcome. Cost £28. Details are in the Spring Newsletter but my details are given at the end of this section.

ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER PARTY - Friday 16th October

We hope to see you all at the 2015 Annual Buffet Supper party. It starts at 7.30 and finishes at 10 15 p.m, the cost is £21 with guaranteed entertainment, This year we shall have John White, an actor and historian, address us on "Henry VIII's Life and Palaces" with reference to Nonsuch and Hampton Court, Our caterers, Studio Food, will deliver their delicious offerings to each table and they always add new items to their menu and as you arrive there will be a welcome wine or soft drink..

The venue is St. Joseph's Church Hall, St. Margaret's Drive, off Dorking Road and there is adequate free parking there.

It is a fine opportunity for members to introduce their non-member friends to our Society . Transport problems can be raised with the organiser. The booking form is on page 12.

DINNER THEATRE AT THE MILL, SONNING--:Saturday 5th December.

We have had several requests to revisit The Mill again; the last time was in 2012. Thus a matinee performance of "Stepping Out" by Richard Harris has been organised. The format is that there is a Christmas lunch followed by the performance which is in their intimate theatre. Apparently the story is set in a North London church hall where a tap dancing class, seven women and one man, are preparing for a charity concert, sounds a recipe for disastrous fun.

Tickets are £51 each which cover our coach and tip, the two course meal with coffee or tea, and the play. Non members may book after September.

The coach will pick up at (A) 10.20 a.m. Epsom Downs, the car park behind the tea hut by Tattenham Corner, (B) 10.30 a.m. the Methodist Church, Epsom and (C) 10.40 am. The Street, Ashted. We anticipate departing from The Mill about 5.15 p.m.

We hope that this will set you off for a jolly Christmas season. The booking form is on Page 12.

Sheila Wadsworth 01372-273517

IAN WEST WALKABOUT

This will take place on Sunday 21st June at 2.00pm. Members should meet outside the Assembly Rooms and the walk will be in the west end of the High Street and West Street.

ASHLEY CENTRE DISPLAY

Our annual display in the Ashley Centre will take place on Saturday 24th October. It is always good to welcome members to support us.

ABELEA GREEN

I have been asked to say that the green sward on the left as you drive up St Margaret's Avenue is private.

APPLICATION FOR THE ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER - Friday 16th October

Name/s.....

Address.....

Tel. No.

No. of tickets @ £21 pp **Total cost £**.....

Any dietary or allergy requirements? Yes/No Please list

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, Ashted KT21 1LJ (01372-27357)

APPLICATION FOR THE DINNER THEATRE – THE MILL AT SONNING

Saturday 5th December. The cost covers 2-course meal, coffee/tea, play, one programme for every two people, the coach travel and driver’s tip.

Members Name/s.....

.....

Address.....

.....

Tel. No......

No of tickets @ £57pp..... **Total cost**.....

Any dietary or allergy requirements? Yes/No please list.....

.....

Coach collection. Please indicate.

(A) 10.20a.m. Epsom Downs, the car park behind the tea hut by Tattenham Corner

(B) 10.30a.m. the Methodist Church, Epsom

(C) 10.40 a.m. The Street, Ashted

Please return this application form with your cheque made out to “Epsom Civic Society” and a stamped addressed envelope to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted KT21 1LJ (01372 273357)