

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

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NEWSLETTER No -146 - WINTER 2015

THE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

SOUTH HATCH

Built in 1901, but not seen at its best from Burgh Heath Road, the famous and popular South Hatch has been sold and will presumably become a private family home. First occupied by the famous 'Racing Family' the Nightingalls and, for most of its life associated with Epsom's Racing history, the views of and from South Hatch are at their magnificent best when seen from the back and facing across the Downs. Walter Nightingall trained his horses in the adjoining stables which have a history well before that of the house.

Walter Nightingall, the successful jockey and trainer, was followed into South Hatch by Arthur 'Scobie' Breasley, the successful Australian jockey and trainer who took his nickname from another Australian. He retired from his life as a jockey in 1968 and purchased South Hatch to train horses. One of his famous owners was Mr Rivi Tikoo, who objected to the imposition of VAT on bloodstock sales and moved to Chantilly, now of course twinned with Epsom. Scobie followed him with many of his 'lads' but after another fallout, this time with the French, Rivi moved and Scobie followed him to the USA. Scobie later returned to Britain, but by this time South Hatch had been bought by Arthur and Heather Pitt as a residential home and horse training establishment.

They opened what quickly became a most popular and welcoming restaurant and rendezvous, with the racing fraternity very much to the fore. The Rotary Club of Epsom met here for lunch weekly for many years and other local organisations used it regularly. It was a popular place for 'wakes' after funerals. When Heather died Wendy, their daughter, continued to run the establishment until retirement beckoned. Racing memorabilia was very much in evidence with a picture of Sir Winston Churchill with his horse, Colonist, which he kept at South Hatch Stables from



1949 to 1964. We wish the new owners happiness in their new home. Horse training will continue at South House Stables with Jim Doyle who has some 50 plus horses and is himself a qualified Vet.

My thanks to Epsom Guardian, The Spectator and Bill Eacott's 'A History of Racehorse Training at Epsom'.

We wish our members a happy Christmas and a good New Year.

Harry Corben (Chairman)

PLANNING APPLICATIONS



Haddad House, 91 East Street: East Street has formed a tradition of wearing down applications until they produce an acceptable version of the original; not always acceptable to us or the Planning Committee, sometimes only to the Planning Inspector! Haddad House is no exception. Application No 6 omitted one floor of the rear building, as reported to you. It was approved by the Committee in June, subject to a condition, added at the Committee meeting, that the rear building should be rendered in white. No 7 asked for this condition to be removed. The November Committee

agreed when told that local people accepted the proposed light coloured boarding now proposed. I have now been told that the refused No 5, with the higher rear building, has been appealed. Never mind, this appeal will hopefully be withdrawn when the latest permission is issued and that will be the end of this particular saga.

Rosebery House, 55 East Street: This one, on the corner of Victoria Place, has also ended. Following the informal appeal hearing in August, the latest application, which changed the ground floor use from retail to offices, restored the under-croft parking and removed proposed rear parking stacks, was allowed. The earlier proposal was dismissed.

Court Lodge, Court Lane: Court Lane runs from West Hill to the public car park to the west of the Court Recreation Ground. Three adjoining large houses in Court Lane are allocated for housing development totalling 16 residential units. Court Lodge is one of these and an application proposes demolition of the house and erection of three-storey flats with 10 units in an interesting contemporary design. The October Planning Committee had divided opinions. Criticisms included out of place design, access across a public car park, height and bulk and too many units on this part of the total allocated area. Officers supported the committee's recommendation to approve, but it was eventually refused on a vote of 7:5. It is an accepted general problem with the highly desirable positive planning that, if a group of properties in separate ownership is allocated for development, they are unlikely to become available for development at the same time unless the local authority is in a position to acquire them compulsorily. Otherwise it can only be seen as encouragement and guidance in development management. The Upper High Street site suffers from the same difficulty.

Ryebrook Studios, Woodcote Side: Ryebrook Studios consist of a pleasant two and a half storey building fronting the road and a large industrial style building behind. They were used as offices and the front building is now being converted into 9 flats. The application is to redevelop the rear with 14 flats in a contemporary building. In this case we think the design is acceptable but the rear 3 storey is too high and prominent and contains too much space to be adequately serviced by the available car parking area. I have therefore written to say that this should be reduced to two storeys.

Proposed Doctors' practice, Ashley Road: I have previously mentioned the problem caused by delays in the NHS funding for the proposed medical centre in the combined courts development. The latest refusal of permission to change the use to residential has been appealed and I have written to the Inspectorate emphasising that the reasons for the dismissal of the previous appeal are still relevant. It must, however, be recognised that the NHS delay is also causing problems for the developers, as well as the medical practice. They have had an empty part of this building on their hands for many years.

Land off Mill Road: This application for 77 units of student accommodation in 9 buildings came before the November Planning Committee. You may remember that permission had been given on

appeal for a similar development for residential use but had not been implemented. The issue of the planning permission would be subject to a prior Legal Agreement to convey the freehold of the wildlife sanctuary to the Millbridge Wildlife Trust and endow the Trust with a £25,000 bequest; also to a condition requiring approval to a Management Strategy addressing on-site supervision. This covered two points we had made. An earlier decision had been deferred to obtain confirmation of a sustainable drainage system being approved. The drainage had since been approved and the solicitor thought it unreasonable to refuse on new grounds after the deferral. Many points were nevertheless debated again and there was a clear indication that many Members favoured refusal. However, a proposal to refuse was lost 4:7 and permission was approved 7:3.

86 Grosvenor Road: This a double fronted detached house among similar houses towards the eastern end of Grosvenor Road. It is rather tired and the application is to demolish it and erect three four-bedroom terrace houses on two floors plus the master bedrooms in the roof. They would be well in front of adjoining houses, occupy most the width of the site and have end to end parking for two cars and a narrow path in the front garden. Even in the varied designs of Langley Vale this is unacceptably cramped over-development and we have written to object.

12-14, Grosvenor Road: In this case, a small house was proposed in the back garden. We thought this would increase density, affect the amenities of adjoining houses, have unsatisfactory access and unacceptable parking arrangements. Liz Frost, the ward councillor, took it to Committee but emphasis was placed on the many other back developments nearby and permission was granted after little discussion.

Alan Baker

CONSERVATION

First of all, an apology: in my piece in the last newsletter, in the last line of the last paragraph, I mentioned the western end of the High Street in connection with the removal of the central reserve. It should of course have been the eastern end.

Since the last newsletter, we have looked at 35 applications affecting conservation areas or listed buildings. Two letters have been written and a couple more are on the stocks. One letter concerned an application for advertising which included covering one window with a plethora of advertising which I felt would have a detrimental effect on the building and the High Street. It was approved.

The second letter concerned an application to build a rather odd looking house squeezed onto a very small plot. It was refused; one of the reasons given was that the proposed scheme would not provide adequate internal space in compliance with the Nationally Described Space Standard, contrary to Development Management Policy DM 12- Housing Standards. This is noteworthy because, I think, it is the first time that we have seen a refusal based on this type of problem which we have been banging on about for some time. This ground for refusal has become possible because the Borough now has an official policy to control such matters, for which we should all be grateful.

Nationally, all sorts of interesting things are going on. Most of you will know that English Heritage has morphed into two separate organisations, which probably makes a lot of sense. A new independent charity, still called English Heritage, will look after the National Heritage Collection, while Historic England will continue the statutory role of giving expert constructive advice to owners, local authorities and the public, and championing the wider historic environment.

The following is an extract concerning the South Downs National Park which I picked up from the web, and while it does not affect us directly, I think it is good news: 'New policies that set the course for development across one of the largest planning authority areas in England are out for consultation now

the South Downs National Park Authority has published its so-called preferred options strategy. ‘The proposed local plan for the park, which covers large parts of Hampshire, East and West Sussex, seeks to put landscapes first while still serving the needs of communities and the local economy. ‘When the plan is adopted (expected to be in 2017) it will be the first time that a single set of planning policies have been applied across the 1,600 square kilometres area of the UK’s newest national park.’

I also picked up a bunch of statistics; a couple of which I felt give cause for cautious optimism: ‘Land use change statistics for 2013/14 indicate that some 60 per cent of new homes over that period were built on previously developed land. ‘Three per cent of new homes were in green belt.....of new homes built in green belt, 62 per cent were on previously developed land.’

Perhaps less happily: ‘Energy company Europa Oil & Gas has won a long-running battle to carry out exploratory oil drilling in the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A planning inspector has allowed the company’s appeal over refusal of planning permission by Surrey County Council for the drilling at Holmwood near Leith Hill.’



Another development, very much relevant to us, is that ‘A new taskforce and consultation have been announced to obliterate pointless road signs. A taskforce overseen by Sir Alan Duncan MP will tackle the overuse of traffic signs while a consultation proposes a range of new measures including: ensuring road signs that are used far longer than needed have a ‘remove by’ date, making sure traffic signs are visible on unlit roads, stopping temporary message signs from being cluttered with adverts and distracting logos.’ ‘Research carried out by the

Department for Transport showed that the number of traffic signs has doubled in the last 20 years. Sir Alan Duncan’s taskforce will make practical suggestions for removing clutter and ask whether some signs can be removed altogether.’

‘Britain is renowned for having one of the best traffic signing systems in the world but the 2002 legislation that underpins it is now widely viewed as out of date, meaning some signs are either confusing, redundant, or both.’

‘The taskforce will begin work soon and present its recommendations to government by December 2015. The consultation will close on 6 October 2015 and DfT will respond in due course.’ (Hmmm – I wonder).

Possibly of greater importance is that a new 20mph speed zone has been permanently imposed on the A77 through Maybole, an Ayrshire town. This is the first such limit on a trunk road in Scotland, but must be a precedent we can use in persuading the powers that be that such a scheme should be considered for Epsom town centre. Maybole has a very busy, narrow main street, and the measure is intended to reduce the number of accidents and specifically those which involve the elderly and cyclists. This is the first of the five pilot sites which are expected to improve road safety generally while bringing specific benefits for vulnerable road users, such as older people and cyclists.

Interestingly, an article in ‘The Economist’ entitled ‘Streetwise’ gave the following statistics: ‘More than 80% of pedestrians hit by cars moving at 65kph (40mph) die - at half that speed only 5% die.’ It added that a 25mph (40kph) speed limit went into effect in New York last year and that London

recently cut the speed limit to 20 mph on more than 280km of its road and is getting rid of pedestrian unfriendly giant roundabouts.

And finally: The Walkie Talkie, a 37-storey building, officially named 20 Fenchurch Street, has been crowned Britain's ugliest building after scooping the 2015 'Carbuncle Cup' (an annual award by Business Design, a magazine). The magazine said the judging panel's decision to award the Carbuncle Cup to the building was unanimous. Judge Ike Ijeh said the building was a "gratuitous glass gargoyle graffitied onto the skyline of London", while architectural designer Eleanor Joliffe said the Walkie Talkie was like a "Bond villain tower, as it could melt your car with a solar beam from space." That curious curved facade reflects sunlight that has actually melted a car's bumper and burnt the paint on buildings opposite.



But how on earth did the architect ever manage to persuade the owner - and the planning authority - that this design was acceptable? Luckily, Epsom has nothing to match it. **Rob Austen**

SCHOOLS GARDEN PROJECT

This project arose out of a 'Blue Sky Day' that the Society held several years ago and Ann Ali volunteered to lead it. She has written to several schools in the Borough offering our support in a number of ways and we are most grateful to her for the excellent work which she has done. So far five schools have expressed interest and are grateful for her help. Ann has told us that she and her husband are moving out of the area so her involvement is coming to an end. We wonder if, among our members, there may be someone who is willing to continue to visit the schools occasionally to assess their gardening or other needs and let us know how we can help. Please let us know if you feel able to assist.

Ann writes: four primary schools have ongoing projects plus one new one; these are The Vale, St Martins, Stamford Green, Kingswood House and Danetree. As we are giving help in the form of garden vouchers from The Old Moat garden centre run by the Richmond Fellowship, we are also supporting a very important local charity that has grown out of the work once done by the NHS at the former Manor Hospital.

I have enjoyed working with the teachers to develop this project and it is not time consuming but in January we are moving to a new home out of Epsom so I am looking for someone who would like to continue this project. If you are interested please ring me on 01372 721611. I would like to thank the committee for supporting this project.

UPDATE ON LANGLEY VALE WOOD

We have learnt that the plans for the Centenary wood at Langley Vale will include car parking for 160 cars, a visitor centre with toilets, hard surface paths and multi-user paths for cyclists and horse riders. The Woodland Trust is developing an Environmental Impact Assessment and is seeking views from the public. There will be an exhibition at Bourne Hall on Saturday morning on the 28th November. **Editor**

THE DOWNS

Unfortunately no-one was able to attend the recent meeting of the Consultative Committee but I listened for most of the latest Conservators meeting on Wednesday 8th October. Councillor Liz Frost is now Chairman and Andrew Cooper remains her deputy.

Downs House has now been sold and the new owner is planning a racehorse training establishment. Good news all round! It will help our local racing industry, provide jobs and continue the heritage of the house. We wish the new owner success.

Hack sand track. There are still unresolved issues with management and maintenance of this area at the bottom of Six Mile Hill.

Dog Control. Simon Dow told of an incident the day before when a puppy leapt up and played with a horse's tail and another of a dog chasing a racehorse. Not good news! Council Officers Samantha Whitehead and Samantha Beak have worked hard to resolve the continuing problem of poor dog control. A report commissioned from a specialist had some positive suggestions for addressing this widely experienced problem. Good signage is vital and so new and descriptive notices will be displayed – education/information is a more cost-effective way of encouraging understanding and compliance with requests. Enforcement has not been an efficient method in other parts of the country with similar problems.

Derby meeting. This was generally a successful event but marred by some members of the Gypsy site using the woods as toilets.[Gypsy culture is not to have toilets in the caravans, but some do bring their own outside portable ones]. Discussions took place with the Gypsy site manager to try and improve things next year. More metal fencing was considered, but unsightly, costly and may just be viewed as a challenge or may move the problem further afield. Cutting back undergrowth and raising the tree canopy considered but rejected for the same reason. Glass removal after the meeting was again a problem. No glass is available on the racecourse, so this seems to be largely improper disposal by the public. The Racecourse management is having a general discussion with the contractors who were felt, among other things, not to have emptied the skips often enough.

Tattenham Corner Road traffic lights. Access for pedestrians from Tattenham Corner Station, especially with push or wheel chairs, has been fraught with difficulty. After viewing the site and various discussions and suggestions, the racecourse fencing has been turned round so there are 'refuge points' should traffic be too near or too fast. General tidying of the grass verge will also help. This crossing is part the fastest 7 furlong race in the country and mats are cut to size for use during racing. Surrey County Council has been asked for comments, but in the past has not considered it their responsibility to act.

Music evenings next year. Due to planned work on the roof of the Duchess's stand none will be arranged.

Winter tee mats. A request for approval in principle of new ones on 7 tees was made by Epsom Golf Club. Considerable care has been taken to have suitable material and consent was granted subject to Planning Permission being applied for and granted. There is an ongoing discussion to resolve a matter of unauthorised development elsewhere.

Downskeepers. A planned winter work programme was submitted and approved with minor adjustments.

Budget. Due to increased pension contributions required, suggested precept will need to rise by 4%.

On behalf of the society I had drawn the new Chairman's attention to a matter we have raised in the past about the powers given to the Conservators regarding extending periods of preparation as defined in the 1984 Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984.(Of which I have a copy, along with the bye-laws). This was discussed at the Consultative Committee meeting and the advice from the Council's Head of Legal was that they do have such powers. The British Horse Society's Representative asked for his disagreement with this opinion to be minuted. Having expressed our concern, your committee is not minded to pursue this any further. **Angela Clifford**

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to all our new members, over 90 this year, including 39 who joined at our display in the Ashley Centre last month. In addition to welcoming our new members, the committee enjoyed meeting and chatting to members who were passing by. Our membership is now approaching 1950 which is an excellent number but we need to attract new members all the time as, for various reasons, we lose approximately 100 each year. If you think that you know someone who might wish to join please contact me [Tel. 01372 728570 , email



info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk] for our leaflet with information and application form and/or encourage them to visit our website www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk Your neighbours, family or friends who live in, work in or visit Epsom may / should be interested in Epsom's future and its past.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary.

NATIONAL TRUST FREE PASSES

If you are not already a National Trust member, Epsom Civic Society's membership of Civic Voice entitles you to one free pass which can be used between now and 31st May 2016. Send a stamped addressed envelope to 60 Duke Street, L1 5AA asking for the free National Trust Pass and referring to your membership of Epsom Civic Society. Did anyone use it last year? I'd be pleased to hear about it.

Ishbel Kenward

EVENTS

ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER PARTY



This annual event took place on Friday 16th October in St. Joseph's Church Hall. It was well attended with one hundred and six members and friends and the Mayor and Mayoress of Epsom, Councillors Chris and Liz Frost and local historian, Ian West and Iain McKillop.

The Studio Food buffet was delicious and plentiful. Bourne Hall kindly loaned displays of Nonsuch Palace and Hampton Court arranged by Angela Clifford and Diane Tidd, which provided added interest to the entertainment from John White,



historian and actor. He was a towering presence as Henry VIII; he used the year of his death, 1547, to describe his wives, life and palaces and was dressed in appropriate garments fourteen layers including a weighty cloak which I had to help him haul on.

Many thanks must go to the Civic Society committee who work very hard in preparing the hall for this event. Tony Smith and Norman Dempster are a difficult act to follow with organising and running the bar, but Mark Bristow (Information Technology member) and his wife, Linda, and Pauline Devereux (Minutes Secretary) did excellently.

Now we look forward to the visit to The Mill at Sonning on Saturday 5th December. We have a long waiting list for this Christmas lunch and "Stepping Out" performance.

Sheila Wadsworth (01372-273517)

A SELECTION OF PHOTOS FROM THE BUFFET SUPPER



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