

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -147 – SPRING 2016

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

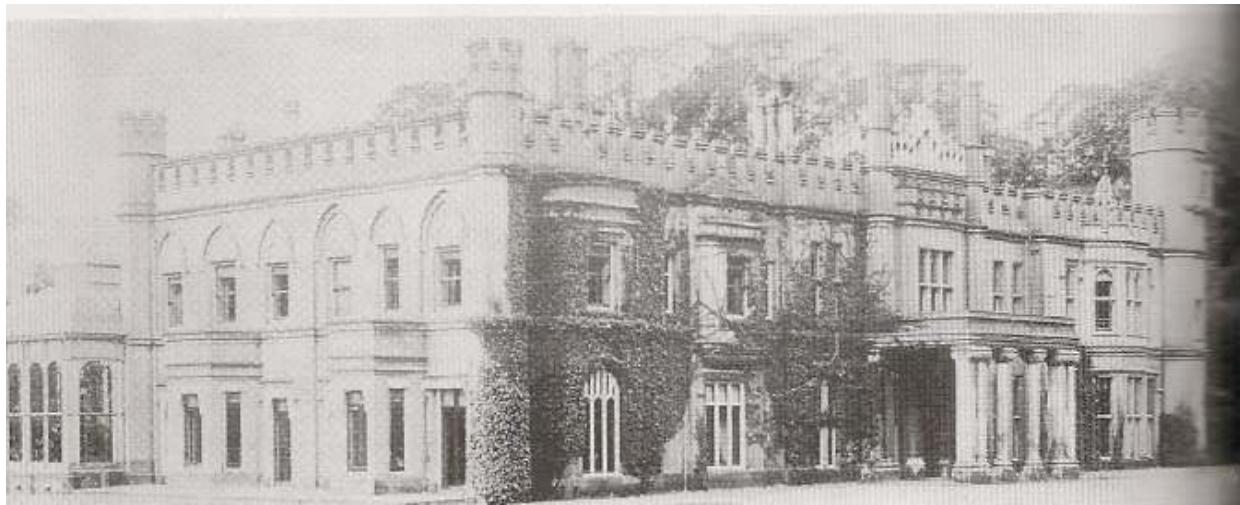
Randalls Park

I seem to visit Randalls Park quite frequently these days and twice in one day recently so I determined to find out more about the name and history. The earliest reference to Randalls Park in ‘A History of Leatherhead’ is to an estate alongside the River Mole but the name is thought to derive from the family Randolph who were said to have lawless tendencies. In 1380 William was outlawed for an armed robbery at Oxford and some thirty years later Nicholas was accused of menacing one Lawrence West. It is said that most other pre-plague families had vanished from the Leatherhead scene by 1400.

In the 16th century notable residents in Leatherhead included the Earl of Nottingham and one Thomas Sands of Randalls Park and of the Long Parliament as member for Gatton Park. During the Civil War however, when Leatherhead largely supported Parliament, Sands was excluded from Parliament by Pride’s Purge. Local people were probably less concerned with the goings on in London than the fact that the harvest had been the fourth bad one in a row.

In the 18th century the Sands along with many other well known families, had disappeared but the population had increased to 1078 at the first census in 1801. Lord Carpenter bought Randalls Park in 1753 and his son, Earl of Tyrconnel, sold it 30 years later. Sir John Coghill acquired it in 1802 and Nathaniel Bland in 1810. The old house was demolished in 1839 and a new one was built but not necessarily on the same site.

Mr and Mrs Henderson bought Randalls Park from Mr Bland in 1856 and there was apparently a small chapel in the grounds known as ‘Pachenesham Cathedral’. It was thought to have been built for the use of railway navvies and during the week for estate staff.



Randalls Park House when bought by the Hendersons (from Leatherhead – a History by Edwina Vardy)

Several farms were held in tenancies and Randalls Park had, in addition, a Home Farm. All Leatherhead farms were described in some detail by the Tithe Redemption Award dating from 1840 which had been called the ‘Victorian Domesday’. The Award was welcomed since it commuted the tithes payment which had always been a contentious issue.

There is not room here to deal with the many changes which took place in Leatherhead. Despite pleas from the Countryside Protection Society many fine buildings were demolished. The Manor House near the present Thorndike Theatre site was torn down and soon it was to be the turn of Randalls Park.

In 1932 Leatherhead Urban District Council protested at Wimbledon Borough Council’s purchase of Randalls Park grounds from John Henderson for use as a cemetery. They took their case to the House

of Lords but to no avail. In 1951 the cemetery came under the London Borough of Merton and in 1961 the crematorium was added. In 1961 the chapel was mindlessly destroyed by vandals and was rebuilt in 1987. The site is prone to be flooded as it was in 2014 but it is in a beautiful situation

Many thanks to 'Leatherhead; A History' written by Edwina Varley and published by Phillimore & Co. Ltd..

We wish all our members a good summer and we hope to see many of you at our AGM and other events.

Harry Corben.(Chairman)

HARRY CORBEN – OUR CHAIRMAN

As readers of the Annual Report will know, Harry Corben has decided to retire as Chairman after nine years in this role. It was at a Probus Club meeting early in 2007 that I asked Harry would he be interested in becoming Chairman, taking over from Geoffrey Stone. Who would have thought that not only did he accept but that he would continue for such a long time. Harry has given unstintingly and generously of himself during this time and immersed himself thoroughly in the affairs of the Society. In that time he has written 36 topical commentaries for the front of our Newsletters – a task that demands admiration, but one that I think Harry enjoyed. The committee were so pleased when Harry was awarded the Active Citizen Award in 2015. In many ways Harry was the face of the Society and during his time at the helm the Society has grown in stature and influence and we owe him a debt of gratitude

Malcolm Boyd.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Proposed Doctors' Practice, Ashley Road: A decision has now been made on the Appeal and I am pleased to tell you that the Inspector was satisfied that the provision of a medical centre on the site is achievable within a reasonable space of time, and he dismissed the appeal. The future is however on a bit of a knife edge and the future of the surgery depends on a favourable decision on funding by National Health England without further delay.

Ryebrook Studios, Woodcote Side: We had objected to the three storey element in the proposed rebuilding of the rear part of the Ryebrook Studios. It was, however, permitted by the December Planning Committee against much local opposition.

86 Grosvenor Road: We also objected to three four-bedroom terrace houses to replace this detached house in Grosvenor Road but the outline application has been permitted, under delegated authority. We can't expect to win them all but we think it is still worth while expressing our opinion.

Dairy Site, Alexandra Road: Last Autumn I mentioned a leaflet which had been circulated describing Aldi's proposal for a supermarket on the site of the Dairy on the corner of Alexandra Road and Church Road and our opposition to shopping on this site. A planning application for this was later made, provoking a flood of opposition. We wrote in January confirming our objections. This site has already been provisionally allocated to the entirely appropriate use of housing and the principle of a medium sized supermarket has been included in the planning brief for the Upper High Street development. These positive proposals should be adhered to. The five-way junction is also quite wrong for retail use and the design was poor. The debate has been hotted up by a press report that Lidl are interested in the Upper High Street site and are strongly objecting to the Aldi plan. The application is likely to go to Planning Committee in April.



Comrades Club, The Parade: Travelodge's plans for the development of a hotel on the site of the Comrades Club were refused planning permission in March 2012, and an appeal was dismissed. Premier Inn have now announced their interest in such a scheme. The Planning Inspector did not criticise the principle or design of the earlier proposal and the current one is very similar. There may therefore be limited grounds for objection. As we have done in other cases, we are meeting Premier Inn and their architect to discuss the scheme before a planning application is submitted.

33 Heathcote Road: There was an application last year for three terrace houses to replace the 4 bedroom 1960s house in Heathcote Road adjoining the vehicle entrance to the UCA. The house is in poor repair and a previous application for an inappropriate 6 apartment building had been refused in 2009. The site is just outside the Church Street Conservation Area and the design made a point of being sympathetic to the adjoining buildings. We supported this. In the event the Conservation Officer made some valid criticisms and the application has been withdrawn for further consideration.

Berridale, 15 College Road: Twice in the recent past permission has been given for the demolition and redevelopment of this substantial late Victorian/Edwardian building formerly used by Rosebery Housing Association as bed-sits. Neither has been implemented and a fresh application has been made for a three and two storey block of eight two-bed apartments of contemporary design and two semi-detached three-bedroom houses in the garden. They have considerably less impact in terms of bulk on the adjoining College Road Conservation Area than the permitted schemes. We did not think, however, that the design was appropriate for the area and could not support the application in its present form. We like to approve of good contemporary design when it suits its location but we do look at this carefully, bearing in mind that any opinion must be subjective.

Wilsons Automobiles, 101B East Street: And finally, East Street again - two of them. The first is a further revision of the proposed Wilsons new building on the corner of East Street and Kiln Lane. This time they want to add a diagonal to the building at the corner and to add a third floor to the approved two storeys. We had objected before to the approved application and have now objected that the additions, particularly the third are unacceptable.



6-8 Chuters Grove: Although this address is in Chuters Grove, it is a proposal to build two semi-detached houses in a back garden and would be an extension of the development of 168 East Street, next to the Kwik-Fit depot, which is now nearly finished. We have objected that this takes the construction too far into Chuters Grove and would have an unacceptable impact on the privacy and amenities of the neighbours.

Please remember that if you would like more details most of our letters are posted on our website (epsomcivicsociety.org.uk). Mark Bristow does an excellent job and you can see a precis, the full letter, a link to a location plan and photographs, and another direct link to the actual application on the Borough's website.

Alan Baker

CONSERVATION

Since just before Christmas, the Council no longer publishes the 'canary', the weekly list of planning applications, so called because it was printed on yellow paper. It had also been available online, but the format has recently been changed, some say not for the better, and the paper version is no longer available. The change was part of the search for cost savings - so not such a bad idea - and it may be fanciful, but there seem to have been fewer applications since the change was introduced.

We have looked at 23 applications since the last Newsletter and have written to express concern about four applications. The council seems to have shared out views and the first three were refused. The fourth concerned the lack of parking provided for the conversion of some Victorian cottages into flats, doubling the number of dwellings. While the cottages themselves had no parking, we felt that this was no reason to set aside the Council's requirement for parking once the conversion took place. Inadequate parking provision in the past has lead to excessive intensification of on-street parking to the detriment of the public realm. We await the outcome of this with interest.

You may recall that the RAC had applied for permission to undertake a lot of improvements to the Country Club. There were aspects of that with which we were uneasy, but the main villain was the application for the 'enabling development' of two houses in the Green Belt in The Ridge. I cannot resist at this point in reminding our patient readers that the appellation 'enabling development' has no formal or official standing and is simply a means of raising money to pay for something which might otherwise be unaffordable. This in our view is not an excuse for building in the Green Belt. The Council agreed and refused permission and the RAC duly appealed. We were unaware of this until very late in the day.

Fortunately the Planning Inspectorate understood the position and allowed us to submit a written representation. This is the key paragraph of our letter:

‘The Society supports the Club and its endeavours to ensure its continued success. However, we feel that this means of raising money cannot be accepted. Firstly, it will provide a precedent to others. We have been told in other instances that this is not the case, but even if a precedent is not created, an approval in this instance would give others the encouragement to try similar applications elsewhere in the Green Belt. A refusal, on the other hand, would send a clear message that the Council is firm in its protection of the Green Belt. The Society has discussed the future of the Green Belt in general terms and we are not opposed to changes being made, but these can only be made in the light of a comprehensive review so that, whatever criteria are used in such a reassessment, they are applied in a rational and consistent manner.’

This leads neatly onto the subject of the Green Belt. This was first proposed in the 1944 Greater London Plan by Abercrombie (UK population 49 million), but was not fully implemented by local authorities until 1958 (UK population 50 million). It extends for no less than 516,000 hectares, about three times the area of London itself.

It is no wonder that there is pressure to build on this land. The population of the United Kingdom has now risen to 64 million, 84% of whom live in England. The population has increased by 10 million since 1964, half of this since 2001, and is disproportionately focussed on the South East.

We are all aware of the value of the Green Belt, but we cannot expect that it will remain forever inviolate – there are pressures coming from all directions, Government, developers and business generally. Your committee is deeply concerned that, unless action is taken locally, central government may step in and we may lose control of this vital community asset. Our chairman therefore wrote to the Chairman of the Planning Committee, following the RAC case; the two important paragraphs are as follows:

‘It is quite clear that Epsom will not escape the attentions of developers and there is little doubt that further applications will come forward in the near future affecting the integrity of the Green Belt, despite the Council’s very clear policies to the contrary (eg Core Strategy Policy CS2). Rather than reacting to each application on an individual basis, it seems to the ECS committee that there is much to be recommended in the Council carrying out a review of the Green Belt boundary to identify if there are, in fact, any locations where it would be logical and reasonable to make changes which might accommodate further building. Such a review would need to include, inter alia, consideration of such matters as access, availability of utilities, drainage and the potential of flooding, the impact on nearby development, and on ecology and

the landscape, perhaps suggesting a multi-disciplinary approach and possibly including public debate and consultation.

With an up to date re-assessment in place and forming part of its published policies, the Council would be well placed to deal with future planning applications affecting the Green Belt on a rational and consistent basis, no doubt reducing the likelihood of multiple expensive planning appeals and easing the pressure on its resources.’

We shall see what emerges, but we understand that the Council is, as one would expect, fully alive to the situation.

Rob Austen

MGSO4 EPSOM & EWELL ARTS FESTIVAL

The Society is very pleased to support Epsom’s first MGSO4 Epsom and Ewell Arts Festival, which takes place 24 – 26 June 2016, across the Borough. Following on from our initial contact with Festival organisers in January, a second meeting is in prospect to discuss how the Society can best provide practical help. The MGSO4 team are putting together a programme of events across Epsom and Ewell, covering visual arts, film and photography, music, theatre, dance and literature. Inspiration for the Festival’s name comes from the chemical formula for magnesium sulphate, MgSO₄, more familiarly Epsom Salts, the foundation of Epsom’s fame as a spa town 400 years ago.

This exciting initiative to promote arts and music locally, aims to entertain and to inspire both participants and audiences. It will showcase local talent, and help to develop sustainable business

opportunities. The longer term intention is to restore the arts to their position as a driving force in the community. The Festival has the capacity to include everyone and provide cross-community appeal. Author Michael Frayn will return to Ewell for the Festival, and, inspired by professional artists and performers, the Festival team is working with local groups, including The Sunnybank Trust, Conquest Art, Phab, drop-in centres and care homes for older people, as well as all schools in Epsom & Ewell. Marketing students at University of the Creative Arts, Epsom, are among those working on new ideas for promoting the event.

More information about the Festival is available on its website: <http://mgso4festival.org/> where you can find out more about what's on, how to get involved, and also sign up to receive the latest news and updates via email. The Festival's Twitter account is @MGSO4Festival. **Margaret Hollins**

HORTON CHAPEL

An initiative is underway to safeguard a future for Horton Chapel as a community arts centre. The Society's Committee unanimously agreed to support Horton Chapel Arts and Heritage Society (HCAHS) with its plans to restore the Grade II listed chapel to beneficial use. Next steps for HCAHS include applying for status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, and applying for a Start-up grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund in order to carry out the necessary feasibility studies on the building and to develop a business plan for the centre. If plans come to fruition, then the Council's mooted sell-off of the chapel on the open market would be avoided.

Ian Reeves, Chair of the HCAHS Committee explains, "Our vision is to restore the Chapel as a multi-functional space that can be used for a variety of community arts-based activities and events for children and adults of all ages. These might include: daytime and evening arts classes (anything from painting and pottery to dance and drama); musical performances; art exhibitions and fairs. Space would also be available for local community groups to hire. It is also likely that there would be a cafe and bar area.

"The Chapel is Grade II listed and the group feels that it's important to keep the integrity of the building as well as acknowledging the history of Horton and its links to mental health." An instructive account of the chapel's history to date can be found in the Public Pack Agenda Document for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 27th January 2016 (Agenda Item 13 and accompanying Annex 1, pp 129 – 139), from which the following information / details is sourced. The document can be accessed at <http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/EEBC/Council/> - click on 'Committee Agendas and Minutes', then click on 'Strategy and Resources Committee'.



Horton Chapel was built in 1901 to serve the Epsom Hospital Cluster. It is relatively unchanged, barring the partitioning of part of the nave to create a community theatre facility known as "Harewood Hall". Previous surveys indicate that the building is basically sound, although gradually deteriorating consequent upon long-term disuse and lack of maintenance. The building and a small parcel of land was transferred to the Council in 2004. In 2014, the Council acquired a further parcel of surrounding land. There is a site map in the Agenda Documents. The 2004 transfer stipulated that the property could be used for community recreational activities and / or the provision of family medical or health purposes (any other uses requiring various additional consents). The Council holds funds that are currently allocated for spending on the chapel (around £1.69million).

The Council has attempted to progress a number of schemes over the years, none of which came to fruition (see pages 135 – 139). What to do with the building has become an increasingly pressing issue for the Council with a key priority of efficient and effective resource management. The previous Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, 17th November 2015, proposed to authorise the engagement of a property agent to market Horton Chapel for a freehold sale, at the same time authorising Council officers to work with community groups and other organisations to ensure they were given the opportunity to

submit bids to acquire the property. At the January meeting, the Strategy and Resources Committee agreed that, for the time being, the chapel will not be offered up for commercial tender. The council will review the position in June. This gives HCAHS and any other interested community groups a minimum four month window to take action, develop a full business case, and apply for grants.

With multiple community and heritage benefits in prospect, the Society continues to liaise with and support Horton Chapel Arts and Heritage Society, updates to follow. If any ECS members would like to get involved with this project, the Society is on LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/horton-chapel-arts>

A website for Hortonchapelarts.org is under construction

Margaret Hollins

SCHOOL DONATIONS

You may remember that some two years or so ago the Civic Society was left quite a large sum by one of our members when she died. We decided that we should try to involve younger members of the community and we did consider an award for special service organised through the schools. This seemed very complicated and the schools do have much to contend with these days.

We have instead given donations of £200 to five schools which are known to be active in working with and encouraging school gardens. We are using the Old Moat Garden Centre and are thereby helping a local charity as well. The schools are The Vale Primary School in Langley Vale, St Martins Junior School, Stamford Green Primary School, Kingswood House School and Danetree Junior School and we have also included the Appletree Nursery NHS plus and we are working with a Garden Coordinator in each case. The schools are given Garden Tokens and have used them variously to buy such things as compost, fruit trees and tables and seats.

Ann Ali who was one of our members got the scheme off the ground. She has moved away now but we do thank her for the great effort and time she put into the idea. A new member who has Horticultural Training, Doreen Pearce, has taken over and is looking forward to maintaining and increasing the Society's contact with the schools and Appletree

Harry Corben

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you haven't paid the 2016 Subscription [Individual £2 / Household £3] to your Rep yet please complete the slip at the bottom of the green AGM notice and take it to him/her. This would be much appreciated. The list of Reps is on the 2nd page of the AGM notice and your Rep. will have marked their name. If, for any reason, you are unsure who your Rep. is, please phone or email me using the address at the end of this Newsletter.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary (728570)

NATIONAL TRUST FREE PASSES

I have a number of NT free Passes from Civic Voice which can be obtained direct from me, for use if you are not already a member of National Trust. They can only be used by Epsom Civic Society members and are only available until end of May. Hopefully the same arrangement will be available for the rest of the year but I don't yet have the details. If you would like to make use of this offer please contact me by phone or email using the email address at the end of the Newsletter

Ishbel Kenward

CHORAL FESTIVAL OF THE TWIN TOWNS 30th June – 3rd July 2016

Epsom is hosting the Choral Festival this year with invited choirs from Chantilly and its twinned towns in Germany and Belgium. More details at <http://epsomtwinning.com/festival/>

Visiting Choirs will be arriving on the afternoon of 1st July and will be departing on Sunday morning 3rd July. The organisers are hoping to find B&B accommodation with Epsom & Ewell residents for approx 120 visitors. Those interested in helping with accommodation should contact Anne@Epsomtwinning.com for more information.

Mark Bristow

OUTING

SMALLHTTHE PLACE and GREAT DIXTER – WEDNESDAY 15th JUNE

We depart from Ashtead at 8.45 a.m. and then at Epsom Methodist Church and the car park on Epsom Downs to travel to Smallhythe Place on Wednesday 15th June. This 16th century cottage is in the Weald of Kent with an attached barn theatre. The National Trust property was lived in by the Victorian actress Ellen Terry, and contains her theatrical memorabilia. We arrive for coffee/tea before dividing into two parties to view the house and garden. The coach then drives us to the White Hart, Newhaven, for a vegetarian soup and sandwiches. After lunch the second visit is to Great Dixter, the home and garden of the famous plantsman, Christopher Lloyd. The Arts and Crafts house, built by Edwin Lutyens in 1910-12 incorporates a 15th century home and the gardens should look especially beautiful in June. We depart from there about 5 p.m. Cost for the day is National Trust member £36 and non member £42. Please bring your membership card on 15th June.

For any questions you have on this visit, please contact me on 01372 273517, **Sheila Wadsworth**. The application form at the end of this newsletter.



Smallhythe Place By David Ansley – Own Work



The new fountain in Rosebery Park

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Annual Buffet Supper - Friday 28th October. Details will be in the next Newsletter

Ian West Walk – Sunday, 3rd July. Meet at 2.00p.m. on the road at the Barn next to the Old Moat garden centre on Horton Lane.

APPLICATION FOR THE OUTING TO SMALLHYTHE PLACE AND GREAT DIXTER – WEDNESDAY 15th JUNE

NAMES.....

ADDRESS.....

TEL NO.....

No OF TICKETS..... National Trust Members £36pp.....

Non National Trust Members £42pp.....

Coach collection. Please indicate

8.45 a.m. The Street, Ashtead

9.00 a.m. The Methodist Church, Epsom

9.10 a.m. Epsom Downs car park (behind the tea hut at Tattenham Corner)

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, Ashtead, KT21 1LJ (01372 273517)