

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No- 128- SUMMER 2011

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

I had intended to prepare something else but the committee feel and I agree that we should start this Newsletter with the news that we have now changed our name and explain why. Rob Austen - our Conservation Expert - proposed the motion on our behalf at the AGM and we obtained the necessary 2/3 of members present to gain acceptance. We think it is worth repeating most of his speech and here it is.

I'm sure you all read the piece in the last newsletter about our suggestion that we should change the name of the Society, and I hope you have had a chance to mull this proposal over. The EPS was founded over 50 years ago to protect Epsom against the depredations of unprincipled developers who would demolish anything in pursuit of their gains, at a time when the planning system was weak. Bad things took place and little was done to reign in the barbarians – witness the overnight demolition of Pitt Place.

Today, thank goodness, things have improved a great deal. But more needs to be done to sustain and improve the quality of the local environment. I think most would agree that despite the efforts of those involved, the quality of the town centre continues to deteriorate. There may be those who disagree, but those I would ask to have a look at the street frontage especially that of the south side of the far end of the High Street. It is very depressing – with a few exceptions, it is a collection of garish shop fronts in bad taste and of poor design. Who wants to shop in that Epsom?

Our founders did a wonderful job, and much has been done, but, after half a century, times have changed and we must respond to those changes if we wish to remain a significant force locally. We are involved in various local initiatives but to hope really to improve matters we must adopt a more active stance – start to initiate ideas and proposals. This seems to be part of the thinking behind the Localism Bill, but if local groups are to exert power as the Bill seems to imply, we need a much larger power base and to appeal to a much wider constituency.

I have found, in talking to non-members, that we are, regrettably, seen as a rather old fashioned, reactionary lot – 'preservation' rather than 'protection'. There is nothing wrong in protection – far from it, but I believe we need to do more to appeal to that wider audience to allow us to increase our membership and make us fit for the challenges ahead, and to do that I believe that we should re-name ourselves the Epsom Civic Society.

Several people have told me that they do not understand the word 'civic'. Well, its derivation is from the Latin civicus meaning citizen, and the Oxford Dictionary defines it as 'of or pertaining to citizenship' or 'of or proper to a citizen', and I cannot think of a better way to describe the basis of what we are all about. We are, as I expect you know, members of Civic Voice, which replaced the Civic Trust. By my reckoning, of the 268 groups which are members of Civic Voice, 155 or 58%, use the word 'Civic' in their title. The others are simply named after their town, some include the word 'heritage', a few 'conservation'; understandably Bath and Oxford are 'preservation' societies. Just one is a 'Protection' Society – that's us.

One final thought. Our constitution has stood the test of time, and I would like to remind you of the first duty which it lays on what it – somewhat grandly – calls the Executive Committee. It is: To promote the civic pride of the area of benefit.

I have great pleasure in moving this proposal and urge you most strongly to support it, and in so doing to continue to support those who do so much to carry out the ideals of the Society's founders.

I did say that I would give more information about The University for the Creative Arts. The Surrey Art College consisted of the Art Colleges in Epsom and Farnham and The Kent Colleges existing in Canterbury, Maidstone and Rochester. The decision was made to combine

them into the University and maintain the five campuses. The University now has some 9000 undergraduates and this figure will probably rise to 10,000 or so in the next few years. In Epsom the students read for Fashion and Graphic Design degrees and something like 74% of them are female. The Epsom Campus lies between Worple Road, Ashley Road and Heathcote Road. The Pro Vice Chancellor for Epsom and Farnham is Professor Paul Coyle. He has spoken to my Rotary Club and I hope we can persuade him to speak to the Epsom Civic Society and perhaps arrange to show us round the Campus.

We intend to continue to 'Shape the Future and Safeguard the Past' in Epsom and we hope we can count on your support as we have in the last 52 years.

Harry Corben, Chairman

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Mainly updates this time.

Wilberforce Court, Heathcote Road. A letter was sent to Chris Grayling MP about the decision of the Planning Inspector to allow an Appeal for a development which clearly infringed one of the Council's planning policies. It is clearly too late to affect the case in point but he consulted Greg Clark MP, Minister for Decentralisation, who supports the continuation of the Planning Inspectorate but says that the Localism Bill should give communities stronger rights to shape their neighbourhoods. The effect of this remains to be seen.

Pickard House, Upper High Street: The application for student accommodation described in the last Newsletter was considered by the March Planning Committee. It was recommended for refusal and this was agreed unanimously. The principal reason was that due to its height, massing and external materials it would be a prominent and harmful addition to the street scene. I couldn't agree more. We now await an acceptable and viable proposal for this empty building and this won't be easy.

Land rear of 39-41 Manor Green Road: The reason is not known but the third application for the development of this land – for a single three bedroom bungalow – has been withdrawn.

Drummond Gardens, Christ Church Mount: This other third attempt – for a single house at the north east corner of the grounds of Drummond Gardens - was refused. We had objected that whilst it might be a good design in the right place it was not appropriate here, and the refusal was on the basis that it would not enhance the natural or built environment nor would it be appropriate to the character of the surrounding area due to its scale and adverse impact on the verdant setting of Drummond Gardens. This decision has been appealed and we have written accordingly.

3-4 Pitt Road: In the last Newsletter I reported the refusal and Appeal of this proposal for a block of three five bedroom houses on the corner of Pitt Road and Rosebery Avenue. The Appeal decision has been issued and contains some interesting comments. The applicant had taken further advice on daylight levels from proposed light wells and had put forward amended plans. The Inspector said that in the interests of fairness and ensuring that decisions are made locally where possible, she would consider only what was considered by the local planning authority. The appeals process should not be a means to progress alternatives or to amend a scheme so as to overcome a reason for refusal. She therefore dealt with the scheme as submitted and dismissed the appeal. She found that the buildings would simply be too big, too close to the street boundaries and over-poweringly weighty, visually, for this corner site. The elevation would be intimidatingly and oppressively tall to viewers on the pavement in Rosebery Avenue. A very pleasing outcome.

7 Wilmerhatch Lane: This is one of a group of six similar houses at the junction of Wilmerhatch Lane and Woodcote Green Road. The proposal was to extend the house substantially with a

considerable widening of the elevation. We thought this would be out of keeping with the adjoining houses and would damage the long established street scene. In this case our views were not supported and permission has been granted.

McCarthy and Stone, Waterloo Road: The application has now been made for 32 retirement apartments on the site of 34-42, Waterloo Road, now occupied by five modern houses opposite the principal group of shops in Waterloo Road. This seems to be an eminently suitable location for this use and in design terms the proposed buildings would in our view enhance the street scene. We have therefore written to support the application, but commented on the pastiche architecture that extends to fairly prominent chimney stacks which are probably only cosmetic. We also mentioned that 12 parking spaces seemed a low number for 32 apartments. **Alan Baker**

CONSERVATION

So a new year begins, under a new name, although the task remains the same. Last year we looked at 99 planning applications affecting either listed buildings or conservation areas, and wrote 16 letters, which is pretty typical. So far this year we have looked at 11 applications and have written 3 letters. Mostly, the letters suggest that an application should be refused for inappropriate design, excessive size or perhaps impact on neighbours or a conservation area. We don't give details of any of individual private applications in the Newsletter for obvious reasons. However, members often get in touch to discuss their concerns about such schemes. Applications relating to larger developments, usually by companies, are proper matters for inclusion in the Newsletter, although these tend to occur only rarely.

It is not very often that it seems appropriate to write in support of an application, which is rather sad and perhaps a reflection on the general standard of design. We hope to pursue the matter of a design award (which we mentioned in a previous Newsletter) this year. We have put together an outline describing how the scheme might work and await comments from the Borough. EEHAS has also been invited to join in the scheme. Both have indicated informally that they support the idea, but we await a more formal response.

The group considering street furniture for the town centre has continued to meet, the next meeting being on 20 May. The preferred designs for seats, bins and cycle racks have been identified and we are now awaiting more details. In particular we would like to incorporate some sort of logo to give the town a clear identity through its association with the Derby. An obvious suggestion for this is the silhouette of a race horse. Although the Borough has tended to favour a dark green colour for street furniture, the group felt that black had much to recommend it.

Rob Austen

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK and PLAN E

Plan E – Epsom Town Centre Area Action Plan was adopted by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council on 19th April 2011 following its examination by an Independent Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. The Inspector's report sets out a number of binding recommendations which will be incorporated, and found the Epsom Town Centre Action Plan sound. Plan E forms part of the Epsom & Ewell Local Development Framework and maps out a way forward for Epsom town centre over the next 20 years, by establishing a framework to show how change will take place, how it will be managed and how it will be delivered.

Malcolm Boyd

LAUNCH OF THE SECOND EPSOM HERITAGE TRAIL

The second heritage trail which was distributed to all members with the last newsletter was officially launched at a small ceremony on Wednesday 16th March at the town Hall attended by the Mayor, Councillor Clive Smitheram and his wife and by Mark Berry, Head of Planning.



AGM TALK Rupert Trevelyan, Managing Director Epsom Racecourse – My Job.

Rupert Trevelyan gave a very positive account of his aspirations for the future of racing in Epsom. His background includes such diverse experience as working for Centrica, The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, and Young's brewery. Hot foot from Cheltenham Races, he gave an overview of how Jockey Club Racecourses (JCR) – the owner of Epsom course and 13 others together with the National Stud at Newmarket – ploughs all profits back in to the racing industry. Indeed, this money helped to build the new Duchess's stand. Contrary to some opinion, The Hill is not common land – JCR owns the freehold, but it is covered by the 1984 Epsom and Walton Downs Act. Incidentally, Epsom is the only racecourse to have its own act of Parliament. Holes 1-17 of Epsom Golf Course also belong to JCR.

Funding contributions are split – 60% from the Borough, 30% from J C R and 10% from trainers who also pay annually per horse for use of the gallops.

Rupert is working hard to re-establish the Derby as an important part of the Social and Sporting Calendar, and also to have more interaction with the local community and business life. To this end, we will see The Derby marketed as "BRITAIN'S BIGGEST DAY OUT AND GREATEST FLAT RACE". The fashion model Erin O'Connor will be the face of the Derby in 2011. The planning of the next Derby starts immediately after one finishes. The prize this year will be £1.25 million and the race will be seen by a billion viewers in over 200 countries – a truly international event. Instead of a new trophy every year there is now one designed by Charlie Langton and made by Asprey's to be held for one year. The winners' names are engraved on the base – designed so it can be added to whenever space requires.

In the past, the betting levy contributed to the prize money, but on-line betting from off-shore has reduced that income. Training brings £8 million to the community and last year, thanks to the valiant work by the Downskeepers, the allweather gallops were cleared of snow and were used daily – meaning local horses had the advantage of continuous training in spite of the snow. 'Epsom Live' and evening racing have proved a popular innovation and are well supported. In order to maintain essential income from television, the race has to be run when companies are willing to televise it – thus the change from Wednesday to Saturday – people cannot take days off and Parliament no longer rises for the Derby!

Family Fun Days and a week-end festival linked to the Trainers Open Days are also planned. All in all, it seems our racecourse is in the hands of a forward looking and innovative Managing Director and his team. Rupert was thanked and warmly applauded for his talk.

Angela Clifford

MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to those members who have paid their Subs. and especially to those who have generously given donations. A reminder for those who have not yet paid - subscriptions are due by the end of June - £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.

I'm very pleased to tell you that our membership has risen again since last year thanks to the recruiting efforts of the Road Reps and the committee. We now have 1830 members but more are always welcome.

Ishbel Kenward - (728570)

DOWNS

A few points from the Conservators meeting on 4.4.2011. The TGMB (Training Group Management Board) raised concerns about some of the gallops. The group also wishes to implement 1997 permission to extend the gallop at the foot of Walton Downs from 5.5 furlongs to 7. The traditional Trainers Open Day will merge with a three day Family Fun Weekend at the end of August. The Chairman reported that in spite of the economic downturn, actions had been implemented relating to the management of the Derby meeting and the designated, signed cycle routes across the Downs. All in all, testament to the hard work ensuring that Epsom & Walton Downs continue to be a viable, high quality centre for race horse training. Last season 152 Epsom trained horses won almost £1 million. Integration of the Downskeepers and Council Operational services is ongoing. There have been some difficult decisions about organisers of events, other than racing, applying to be allowed on the Downs – balancing the (often charitable) aims and the potential for damage to the training grounds. The Downskeepers' hut is in urgent need of attention. Ideally a rebuild but the cost estimated at £65,000 is financially not feasible. Refurbishment estimates vary between £25,000 and £36,000. This item is still under consideration. Considerable difficulties raising funds to maintain the hack track at the foot of Walton Downs as required under the 1984 Act. In order to separate those using the Gypsy site and paying customers using The Hill – and thus lessen disputes and make emergency access easier, it is proposed making a separate entrance to the caravan site further down Langley Vale Road. Surrey County Council is withdrawing financial support (£45,000 in 2009/10) of the Lower Mole Countryside Project (LMCP) because it will no longer support local as opposed to Countywide projects. LMCP is used to do habitat management work on the Downs. This would have to be done by the Downskeepers – unlikely!

Angela Clifford

TALKS

The talk on Thursday 10th March 2011 in the Myers Studio, Epsom Playhouse was given by Rupert Trevelyan. He gave a very interesting account of his job as the Managing Director of the Epsom Racecourse, outlining his role and responsibilities. A detailed account of his talk is given on Page 4.

Ian West's Walkabout on Sunday 26th June 2011 at 2.30pm

The meeting place is at the top of Beaconsfield Road, Langley Vale. As parking space may be limited there, Ian has suggested that some people may find it easier to park at the top end of Rosebery Road or Grosvenor Road and walk along the footpath which links the 3 roads. The walk will start at 2.30pm and will be in 2 parts. The first walk will include the 'Studio House' 102 Beaconsfield Road, the old Warreners House and the City Tax Post and will last about 30 minutes. The second walk will be along the boundary of the old warren and will include some fine views of the Downs, this should take about another half hour.

If anyone has difficulty with transport please contact me and I will try to arrange for a lift.

Joy Furness Tel 01372 722186

MARCH OUTING TO SINGLETON

The 38 members who went to the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum near Midhurst on 31st March enjoyed a most intriguing visit. Originally founded in 1967 to preserve homes and workplaces from destruction from Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex and Kent and re-erected on the Singleton site, it is constantly expanding. I had not seen before the Court Barn from Lee-on-Solent housing exhibitions of plumbing, masonry and glazing or the tiny school room from West Wittering, Sussex, but the latest construction is modern using oak lathes as the ribs of the building and creating a vast unsupported space where instruction courses are held on farming methods, carpentry, ancient crafts, even coracle building. It is known as the Downland Gridshell and beneath it is a rare store of implements, artefacts of farming, rural life and crafts; some hundreds of horseshoes were being catalogued and they do have a "man trap".



The Gridshell (photo Arthur Wadsworth)



Court Barn



Bay Leaf

School children had special cooking lessons on the open fire in the "Winkhurst" kitchen from Sundridge, Kent, and we all got smoked out of "Bayleaf" a Wealden farmhouse from Chiddingstone, Kent. The volunteers everywhere were very well informed and they complimented our two clear-speaking and knowledgeable guides.



West Wittering schoolroom



Descriptive talk

(Photos by courtesy of Dr Keith Lawrence)

Our coffee was in a chilly medieval house adjacent to a little cafe which served delicious, and not expensive, homemade food. Oh, and the sun came out - as we departed.

I can recommend an independent visit to the Museum for all ages. There is quite a lot of walking but everyone managed ably. It is worth going just to see the "Whittaker's Cottages" from Ashted, and the Animal Pond from Walton Heath.

Sheila Wadsworth

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

We are pleased to report that, at a recent committee meeting, Sheila Wadsworth agreed to become a member of the committee and she was duly co-opted. Sheila will have particular responsibility for outings. We welcome Sheila and look forward to many useful contributions.

Editor

ARUNDEL CASTLE

There are still places on the visit to Arundel Castle on Tuesday 14th June. Tickets cost £32. Do ask your friends and family and ring Sheila Wadsworth – 01372 273517.

EPSOM GRANDSTAND AND RACECOURSE VISIT

Following our excellent talk at the Epsom Playhouse from Rupert Trevelyan, Managing Director of Epsom Racecourse, on its future, promotion and plans, there is to be visit to the racecourse on Thursday 29th September 10.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. for members. Currently we do not know the number of visitors allowed and if there are any costs, but propose to set a small charge which can be donated to a racing charity if necessary - probably £3. We shall visit both the Duchess and Queen's stands and possibly the Princes, which is where Mrs. Beeton lived. Parking is in the forecourt of the stands.

Please fill in the slip and return to Sheila Wadsworth (address below). No money will required yet. We anticipate many members will wish to request tickets and therefore we may need to ballot for them. Please send a stamped, addressed envelope so we can inform you if you have been successful or not. Application date by Thursday 11th August.

FAMOUS AND FIRST ECS BUFFET SUPPER

Another excellent date for your diary, Friday 14th October at St. Joseph's Church Hall, St. Margaret's Drive (behind the Haywain in Dorking Road) for our annual Buffet Supper. Tickets remain at £18 as last year and we anticipate another delicious buffet from The Food Studio served at your table. Come, listen and join in with The Downsmen entertainers. Their singing was so generally enjoyed last year and their soloists so excellent, we felt a repeat would be relished and also one of their number is an ECS member. The free car park is adjacent to the hall. On arrival please collect a glass of wine (or soft drink), join your friends at the tables and settled down to have a grand evening. Timing is 7.30 till 10.15 p.m. and the application form is at the end of this newsletter.

CIVIC VOICE Talk by Tony Burton Director of Civic Voice following our AGM

Having listened with interest to the comments made by members when considering the proposed name change, Mr Burton was sure the right decision had been made. He explained that The Civic Trust had largely been Government funded, but Civic Voice will be funded by the subscriptions of member societies - 275 so far and rising. There is a need to encourage Civic Pride and involve all members of communities. There are many ways of doing this - influencing design and planning decisions, reducing street clutter, producing publications and trails, tree planting, community meetings, 'in bloom' involvement, local listing - mainly of buildings, celebrating local open spaces, Heritage Open Days, public asset transfer matters, friends groups, Blue Plaques, Conservation Areas, clean-up campaigns to mention but a few examples. One heritage society has a youth group called The Jabberwocks.

Public perceptions of Civic Societies ranged from an organisation for intelligent crumbies, to respect in the community but deficient in a common voice and punching below their weight. When asked, people wanted strong Civic Societies with a high profile, able to influence decisions where it really mattered and willing to run campaigns. They needed financial independence and a strong civic movement where societies could help and learn from each other.

Civic Voice is working hard to raise the profile of the movement by communicating with the press, local and national radio and has the ear of politicians. It gives evidence to Parliamentary Committees, is lobbying on Localism - in other words it is trying very hard to be 'The Community Voice'. Civic Societies should have a clear vision for the area - both what it supports and what it opposes.

In replying to questions Mr Burton said Civic Voice is not against the idea of shared streets (where pedestrians and cars share them) - it has pros and cons. Subscriptions alone do not cover costs it also has grants from English Heritage and is approaching some charitable trusts for support. There are only two paid staff.

Angela Clifford

APPLICATION FOR THE GRANDSTAND AND RACECOURSE VISIT

Thursday 29th SEPTEMBER - 10.00 - 11.30 a.m.

I/We wish to apply for one or two tickets for the above visit. Tick oneor two

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE NO

No payment required yet.

Please send application to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT21 1LJ. (01372-273517) by Thursday 11th August.

BUFFET SUPPER TICKETS Friday 14th OCTOBER- 7.30 -10.15 p.m.

NAME

ADDRESS.....

PHONE NO.....

I/We wish to apply for tickets. Members' friends are most welcome.

Tickets cost £18 each Total cost = £.....

Please enclose a stamped, addressed envelope and make cheques out to "EPSOM CIVIC SOCIETY" and send to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT21 1LJ (01372-273517).

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

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

Printed: Print Centre
5 West Street
Epsom KT18 7LR

Website: www.epsomprotectionsociety.co.uk E-mail: info@epsomprotectionsociety.co.uk