

**CHAIRMAN’S COMMENTARY**

**Woodcote House and the Northey Family**

Just two hundred yards behind Epsom General Hospital lies Woodcote House which was owned for nearly three hundred years by a family which, arguably, had more influence on Epsom than any other. I refer of course to the Northey family. The house faces the rear of Epsom General Hospital but is well hidden by trees and I am sure most Epsom people do not know it is there. Although the house is now divided into flats which are privately owned, the plaque above the door referring to ‘a Building of Public Interest’ suggests a building with significant heritage.

C.J.Swete wrote a ‘Handbook of Epsom’ in 1860 and he refers to The Family Vault of The Northey family at St Martins Church. ‘Here are the remains’, he wrote, ‘of Sir Edward Northey, Attorney General of England in the reigns of William the Third, Queen Anne and George First, also of his son Edward, who died A.D.1738 and resided at Woodcote Green; which has at times been honoured by the visits of various members of the Royal Family’.

Swete also refers to Woodcote Park, now of course the RAC Club and says that ‘adjoining it and fronting the village green is the handsome residence of Edward Richard Northey. For the extent of its grounds, which are not large, this demesne strikes the eye in passing as well laid out. Its greatest interest rests in the fact that it was built by Sir Edward Northey, Attorney General at several times in the reign of three monarchs’. In addition to being Attorney General between 1701 – 1707 and 1710 – 1718, Sir Edward was elected as Member of Parliament for Tiverton in 1710. He was taken ill in 1722, resigned his seat and returned to Woodcote House where he died on 14th August 1723.



The refurbished Woodcote House

Photos Malcolm Boyd

The fortunes of the Northey family of Woodcote House and the descendants of Sir Edward continued to thrive and to expand beyond the confines of Epsom. In 1755 the baronies of East and West Cheam, Cuddington and Ewell were bought by Edward Northey, son of Sir Edward, from Lord John Russell later the Duke of Bedford who had been left the properties by Revd. Robert Lumley Lloyd DD who had been the Duke’s chaplain. The influence of the family was obviously sufficient to bring about the naming of Northey Avenue on the border of Ewell and Cheam.

I have received much help from the Epsom and Ewell History Society especially Peter Reed in Bourne Hall and I will continue the story of the Northey Family in the next Newsletter.

Now that the redevelopment of Epsom Station has started in earnest I have discovered a local newspaper cutting from 1998. It reads 'Epsom Station is set to be demolished next year and replaced with a new complex in time for the millennium'. It was to cost £210,000 and a state-of-the-art station was to be completed by April 1999. This time it is £6 million and we shall have to wait and see how it works out after twelve years.

This is our last Newsletter in 2010. We wish you all a Happy Christmas and a successful New Year.

**Harry Corben, Chairman**

## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

***Epsom Railway Station:*** Clearance work has started and the taxi rank has been moved to the other side of Station Approach. I understand that work on the temporary station will also be started in November. A number of conditions in the planning permission have been discharged by way of fresh applications. These include artwork (part discharged), methods of construction and sound insulation but revisions to the condition for night time working have got stuck. The condition allowed this only for "track possession work", which could be done only when the rail tracks were closed. There was a misunderstanding about work to the existing, temporary and new stations. This also could only be carried when the station was closed to the public, and an application asked for permission to do this at night. We objected that the proposed wording was too wide, and there was considerable opposition from local residents. The application went to the September Planning Committee who deferred a decision for the wording to be reconsidered. This seems to have taken some time and will be reported for decision by the November Committee.

***Magistrates and County Courts:*** As expected, the refusal of permission for the redevelopment of the courts site has been appealed and you will have seen that the sites have been boarded up ready for demolition. We wrote supporting the reason for refusal, namely the lack of adequate parking spaces. In recommending the grant of permission, officers had emphasised the Government's aim to reduce reliance on the private car, but we stated our long held view that tight control over parking spaces in new development would not stop people owning cars and that they will instead be parked in local roads to the great detriment of local amenities and road safety. We also referred to the coalition government's emphasis on the importance on local decision making and said that the views of the Planning Committee members should be taken seriously into account.

***16 Whitmores Close:*** This is a back garden development at the rear of Whitmores Close but with a frontage to Dorking Road, next to Oakmead Green. Permission was granted in 2008 for a pair of three bedroom semi-detached houses and this work is now taking place. Application has been made for the permitted design to be extended and we objected that this would be excessive and bring the houses unacceptably close to the adjoining houses in Whitmores Close. Permission has, however, been granted.

***Enforcement:*** Our attention was drawn to a permission granted for a house extension subject to a number of conditions. The work did not comply with the conditions in several substantial respects but when the enforcement officer's attention was drawn to this by a neighbour he did not think it warranted action particularly in view of his heavy workload. We wrote to mention our strongly held opinion that the whole planning process is put in jeopardy if decisions are not strictly enforced. In the light of staffing problems and the likely pressures resulting from financial restrictions, we said we would wish to support any arguments to ensure that these vital services are maintained, but we have not yet received any response.

**Alan Baker**

## CONSERVATION

The saga related in the last two newsletters regarding the listed wall in Woodcote End proceeded to an unhappy conclusion - the Council gave permission for the developer to knock another hole in the wall. Your committee discussed the matter at some length and it was decided that a letter should be written. The letter, sent on 14 September, was quite short and the following extract encapsulates the sentiments of the committee:

*At its meeting on 8 August, the Society's Committee recorded its great concern, dismay and surprise that approval had been granted to this application given the availability of a viable alternative which would have avoided the need to demolish any of the listed wall. The possible inconvenience which a few might perceive to be occasioned through the use of a shared drive is a very small price to pay to avoid the need to destroy the integrity of a listed structure. This brings into question the very purpose of listing, if the protection it is supposed to afford can so easily be set aside in the face of obvious means of avoiding any impact.*

At the time of writing, we have not received a reply.

On the other hand, the other application we mentioned, for a bungalow in a back garden in Burgh Heath Road, was turned down. However, the grounds given were:

1. The proposed development would involve works within the root protection zones of the adjacent Deodar Cedar and Yew tree and which may harm the health and future growth of these trees. The proposal would therefore have a significantly detrimental effect on the visual amenity and landscape character of the area.....
2. There is insufficient spatial separation between the proposed dwelling and the protected Deodar Cedar tree.....would create unsatisfactory living conditions for future occupants in terms of overshadowing, perceived and actual safety, and falling needle and cone debris.....

While we endorse the decision, the reasons given do not seem as substantial as those which might have been applied to save the wall.

We also mentioned the Durdans Stables in the last edition. We must apologise for possibly misleading our readers into thinking this perhaps included the house itself, an impression which may have been reinforced by the associated photograph. However, the application relates only to the stables, also known in recent years as Lavandou stables. In explanation, there were, in fact, three applications, each headed 'The Durdans, Woodcote End, and we followed this description in the article. Our apologies for any misunderstanding that might have arisen.

A revised application has been received for the Grade II listed water tower at St Ebbas hospital. Only the bottom half of the tower is now to be used, for access, with the surrounding buildings (it is thought that these are un-listed) converted into flats. This avoids the need for the adjoining access tower which the earlier scheme required for the flats which extended for the full height of the tower. This still provides the means to save the listed building, which is to be applauded.

**Robert Austen**

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The next stage of this process that will eventually replace the existing Town Plan is upon us and your committee has been formulating their response. The Core Strategy was approved and published in 2007 and the present draft document on which we have been invited to comment involves broad decisions on where to build the required number of homes in the borough in the period up to 2026. We were given three strategies to discuss and to choose one with our reasons.

The three strategies were:

- (i) Build all of our future homes in the existing urban area.

- (ii) Build the majority of future homes in the existing urban area but provide some of these homes on public open space and/or Green Belt land. This would mean 70-90% of new homes being built within the existing urban area and the rest on land released from the Green Belt and/or open space use.
- (iii) Build large number of the new homes we need on a planned urban extension. This would mean approximately 40-60% of new homes will still be built in the urban area but that the remainder will be built on land released from the Green Belt.

We have in the past said that very limited incursion into the Green Belt would be permissible with certain safeguards. Our reply to the Planning Policy Unit in the Council favoured Strategy (ii) and we provided the following reasons for our decision. If Strategies (ii) or (iii) are endorsed by the Council parts of the Core Strategy would have to be changed and would require a further round of consultation.

**Malcolm Boyd**

*The town of Epsom has a special character and it is important to consider those aspects that make it worth preserving this character and to prevent them being compromised by threat of development. Public open spaces, playing fields, green field sites, trees and conservation areas are high on this list and would be threatened under Strategy (i) if all other identified sites had been used up or even if they had not been used up. Additionally, Strategy (i) would lead to higher density, pressure for increased height of buildings, increased traffic congestion and pressure for car parking. Provision for affordable homes is a vital component of this whole issue and we agree with the document that it would be difficult to achieve the target for affordable homes within Strategy (i).*

*The urban area of Epsom is closely confined by the Green Belt, the majority of which is well separated from other areas of housing development. The Green Belt is essential to maintaining this separation and the character of Epsom. However, we feel that the allocation of sites within the Green Belt close to already developed sites in the urban area, up to but not exceeding 20 per cent of the total housing requirement as offered by Option (ii) could be allowed without significant loss of amenity. This would allow the opportunity for developments with greater imagination and higher quality than might be possible in the smaller sites within the present urban area. Option (ii) would also assist in reaching the target for affordable homes since larger developments could be accommodated. However, adequate safeguards must be put in place to prevent premature release of sites in the Green Belt, such that 80 per cent of the target homes should be identified within the urban area before release of Green Belt sites. Inappropriate development of chosen sites in the Green Belt must be prevented and as far as possible those sites identified should not encourage 'urban sprawl'.*

*With regard to Strategy (iii) we find it difficult to identify satisfactory urban extensions. Whilst we know that allocations are not being considered at this stage, the strategy depends on feasibility and we do not favour this proposal. The Green Belt remains a vitally important amenity to separate the urban area of Epsom from other urban conurbations.*

#### **THE DOWNS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE. 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010.**

Several matters relating to hack rides, cycle routes and control of cycling over the Downs were discussed. The condition of the 'hatched area' at the foot of Walton Downs on the map continues to be a challenge which is still being addressed, though funding is a problem. Non-racing events sometimes cause problems for the Conservators - either by the large numbers involved or inadequate clearing up afterwards.

*Approval has been given to:*

Downs Young Athletes Cross Country League – 20/02/2011 and 06/03/2011.

Epsom College Cross Country Championships – 25 and 29/11/2010.

*Approved in Principle:* Race for Life 26/6/2011; Royal British Legion Poppy Walk 2/10/2011.

It seems unlikely that Surrey County Council will do any work on Ebbisham Lane surface but Frances Rutter is looking into the options.

*Derby arrangements:* the work on Epsom Station may cause difficulties for pick up and put down by buses and different access arrangements for the Gypsy site and also certain entrances to the Racecourse at the Derby will be altered.

Two disabled parking spaces will be provided at the point where Walton Road crosses the racecourse to the East of Downs House, for use only by EDMAC members (model aircraft) when participating in Club activities.

Full minutes of the meeting will be on the Council's website. If you have any matters which you wish raised, please let me know via the Secretary and I will do my best. The next meeting will be on 4th July 2011 at 6pm.

**Angela Clifford**

## **EVENTS, OUTINGS and TALKS**

### **Buffet Supper**

The supper took place on Friday 8th October in St Josephs Church Hall. Nearly 100 people attended including the Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Councillor Clive Smitherham and the Mayoress. Several people said how much they had enjoyed the evening, some saying it was the best one. There was general praise for the catering and the food was also said to be the best we had had to date. The entertainment by the Downsmen Group of singers, which includes one of our members, was excellent and everyone joined in with the singing. The general opinion was that we should invite them to give a return performance in the near future.

**Joy Furness**

### **Talks**

On Thursday 28th October one of our members, Bill Eacott, gave an excellent talk entitled 'A History of Race Horse Training in Epsom'. He imparted his wealth of knowledge about the subject to us and showed some very interesting slides of the old trainers and their stables a few of which still exist. A detailed report of his talk is given below.

More talks are planned for 2011.

**Joy Furness**

### **Bill Eacott's talk**

An almost full house was entertained by member Bill Eacott who gave a fascinating account of the History of Racehorse Training in Epsom. From foot racing to pony racing, jump and flat racing, over the centuries Epsom has seen them all. It was rather sobering to learn how much land which was once training stables has been built on. Upper High Street car park is one example, the present Sandown Lodge in Avenue Road another. There have, of course, been 'characters' associated with racing – Colonel Denis O'Kelly was one such – an opportunist of doubtful background, he had a training stable on Epsom Downs and was asked to provide a galloping companion for a horse trained by William Wildman of Mickleham. That horse was Eclipse who eventually retired unbeaten to O'Kelly's stud on Clay Hill having won 2,149 guineas – a sizeable sum in the late eighteenth century. It is possible that one of the cottages still there was a groom's cottage. Eclipse's skeleton is in the Racing Museum at Newmarket.

Two families particularly associated with Epsom for several generations are the Sherwoods and Nightingalls. Indeed the present Downs House was previously known as Sherwood's Cottage. The arrival of the Woottons from Australia changed the face of racing by demanding a very high standard from the apprentice jockeys – so much so that to have been at Wootton's stables guaranteed a job at any other stable. It was Stanley Wootton who gave the Six Mile Hill gallops on Walton Downs to the Horse Race Betting Levy Board on a 999 year lease at a rent of 'a peppercorn if required'. We have much to thank him for.

Bill's book – A History of Racehorse Training in Epsom - ISBN number 978-0-9548278-1-6 is full of details of the places and personalities who have been involved locally with the industry.

After the talk Bill answered questions from the audience and was thanked by Harry Corben who presented him with two bottles of wine from the Society.

**Angela Clifford**

### **Visit to the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum**

On Thursday 31st March there will be a visit to the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum at Singleton, between Midhurst and Chichester. It is a magical place set in the South Downs, now National Park, and you can explore six centuries of traditional rural buildings saved from destruction and rebuilt in the countryside setting. Among the exhibits are a 13<sup>th</sup> century flint cottage, barns, grander houses with period cottage gardens alongside traditional crafts, 17<sup>th</sup> century flour mill, Tudor kitchen as well as Shire horses, and farmyard animals and crops. There will be quite a lot of walking, and, as visitors can go into the buildings, there are several twisty staircases.

After coffee and biscuits our guides will take you around the site till lunchtime and thereafter you can explore further yourself. There is a conservation workshop and two of Ashted's clapboard cottages are there - one is fully built and the other demonstrates how it was constructed.

The cost is £24 per person. Further details are at the end of this Newsletter, but if you wish additional information, please ring Sheila Wadsworth (01372- 273517).

Also please put in your diary Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June as we shall be going to Arundel Castle. Details will be provided in the next Newsletter.

### **ASHLEY CENTRE DISPLAY**

We held a successful display on 25<sup>th</sup> September in the Ashley Centre, and there was much interest in our aerial photographs. We were pleased to recruit 32 new members which brought our total membership above 1800. It was good to welcome several of our members who were passing by.

**Malcolm Boyd**

### **NEWSLETTERS by E-MAIL**

About twenty members have opted to have their newsletters sent by e-mail. If there are others who would like this service, please send me a message using the e-mail address on the back page.

**Editor**

### **HERITAGE TRAIL No 2.**

This second heritage trail is in the final stages of preparation and many of the illustrations that will appear are shown below. As before these have been painted by Denise Pattison. **Malcolm Boyd.**



Symonds Well



Sicily Restaurant





London House/ Paisley House



Clock House



Hylands Mews



Hylands House



Westgate House



Chalk Lane Cottages



The Amato



Maidstone House



Chalk Lane Hotel



Durdans

**VISIT TO THE WEALD AND DOWNLAND OPEN AIR MUSEUM**

THURSDAY 31st MARCH, 2011

This Open Air Museum is at Singleton, south of Midhurst.

The cost is £24 which covers entry, guide, coffee on arrival and coach (with toilet) and gratuity. Departure is from (A) Downs Car Park, near tea hut at Tattenham Corner, at 8.30 a.m., (B) the Methodist Church, Epsom at 8.45 a.m. and (C) the bus stop in The Street, Ashted at 8.55 a.m. This should allow us to reach Singleton by 10.30 a.m. for coffee and biscuits and join guides (three I hope) about 11.15 a.m. Lunches are available in the cafe but times will have to be staggered as it is not large; however, picnics can be taken if wished. Departure from the museum will be about 4.15 p.m.

Please return the application slip below and send it to me enclosing your cheque and a stamped, addressed envelope.

Please return the application form to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT21 1LJ (01372-273517). Cheque to be made payable to "Epsom Protection Society".

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

Tel. No.....

No. of ticket/s @ £24 per person.....

TOTAL COST = £

Please circle where you wish to be collected: A B C

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