EPSOM HERITAGE

A Detailed Survey of Epsom with historical context by Thomas H.J. Dethridge

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Epsom was founded in or about the 6th century (one historian suggests the fifth) as a Saxon settlement close to the Roman road of Stane Street, along which the new arrivals probably travelled. The road ran between Londinium (London) and Noviomagus (Chichester) and the new hamlet was named from the leader called Ebb (or Ebba or Ebbi) - hence Ebb's hame. Over the centuries there have been a dozen or more renderings until Epsom became the more or less accepted version by the 16th century. The name Ebbisham is of course still to be found locally. The village is mentioned in the Doomsday Book as Evesham with the Abbot of Chertsey as its landlord, a state of affairs that remained the case up to the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII. There were at one time quite separate communities of Woodcote and in the Stamford Green area, but these are now part of Epsom.

That Stane Street continued in existence as a major way for some centuries is borne out by the fact that William the Conqueror after the battle of Hastings rode along part of the Surrey section on his advance towards London. There does not appear to be much in the way of definitive archaeological evidence as to the precise routing of Stane Street, at any rate at its northern end, perhaps evidence exists still waiting to be uncovered. It ran south-eastwards out of Londinium probably along the line of the A3 via Tooting and on to Stonecot Hill, along the line of the A24 via North Cheam to reach Ewell, which with its natural wells served as a watering and refreshment staging post and was the site of an older settlement.

From Ewell it is thought by some to have passed by Langton Avenue and Windmill Lane, possibly along or close to Mill Road although some would locate it a little further east by Bridle Road. It then followed Church Road immediately east of the subsequent Saxon settlement and St Martin's Church, crossing Ashley Road, the Durdans and Woodcote Park/RAC golf course to Headley Road near Chalk Pit Lane. It then ran east of both Ashtead (where a road branched off to a large Roman clay tile factory on Ashtead Common) and Leatherhead to north of Burford Bridge and Dorking and on to the Coast following very much the line of the A29.

The original Epsom was centred on the site of St Martin of Tours parish church, on which there is supposed to have been a Christian church since perhaps the 7th century. The Doomsday mentions two churches here; one is undoubtedly St Martins but the precise location of the other is uncertain. Epsom was formerly described as the Hundred of Copthorne in the County of Surrey; a Hundred was a mediaeval administrative division (for which there are a number of alternative explanations) and Copthorne survives as the name of a village just to the east of Crawley but seems to have no direct link with Epsom.

Previously predominantly an agricultural community, though with some brickmaking on the Common, Epsom underwent expansion in the 17th century following the discovery on the Common of the well producing water with medicinal properties and the consequent development as a spa and entertainment and leisure centre within reasonable access from London. The most convenient area for enlargement lay in the meadowland to the west; the district now covered by the western half of the High Street, and this came to be linked to the old village by a road known, as it still is, as The Parade, along which the celebrities of the day were wont to parade on Sundays in their finery. It was of course to this western area that the centre of activity of the town was to migrate.

Its most distinctive surviving landmark has to be the Clock Tower, built in 1848 to mark the institution of local government in a more modern and responsible form no longer based on the Parish Vestry, the previous focus of local authority. The new innovation stemmed from an Act of Parliament, in the guise of local Boards of Health in an era when the state of public health and hygiene (such as then existed) was a matter for serious concern particularly in the growing urban areas. The Epsom Board instituted in 1850 was one of the first to be set up in the whole country. It was in fact the Vestry which had been in existence since at least 1770 and. in its early days met at the Spread Eagle, that earlier, in the 1840s had approved the building of the new tower. (We will come back to this later)

Just as the Board of Health superseded the Vestry, so it was in turn replaced in 1894 by a newly constituted Urban District Council (UDC); in that same year an Epsom Rural District Council (RDC) was established whose writ ran in Ewell, Cuddington and other outlying areas. In 1933 the UDC was enlarged to take in the responsibilities of the RDC and in the following year renamed itself the Epsom & Ewell UDC. Conscious of its much increased size and importance, the Council now resolved to petition the Crown for the grant of Borough status, which was granted in 1937, the formal incorporation taking place on 27 September.

In 1963 the then Government tabled a Bill before Parliament to set up the Greater London Council (GLC) which would replace the existing London County Council (LCC) also taking in Middlesex and certain parts of the surrounding home counties. This would have included Epsom Borough's three northern wards and as the debate in the House progressed came the threat of the whole Borough being absorbed, like Sutton and Kingston. This aroused intense local opposition, in which the Epsom Protection Society (then still in its first three years or so of existence) played a major role, and by dint of some astute behind-the-scenes parliamentary manoeuvring at the eleventh hour the threat was warded off.

Epsom is very largely enclosed by existing built-up areas to its north and by the Downs and the Metropolitan Green Belt on the others end this has rendered it unlikely to be subject to significant outward enlargement and change. Proposals for development within the Green Belt have mostly been fought off (though one or two small ones have slipped through). This has been an ongoing battle in which the Epsom Protection Society has stood in the forefront. nevertheless the threat will still remain, particularly if Government ever concludes that its perceived requirement for considerable additional housing development in the South East - or for any other reason - should take precedence. There will be an ongoing need for vigilance if the space within the M25 ring, and indeed beyond, is not to become a relentlessly extending subtopia.

In the following survey, certain buildings are referred to as 'listed'. This refers to listing at Grade II level or the less usual Grade II*. Grade I covers structures of national importance

and none is to be found within Epsom. Listing, which has to be approved by English Heritage on behalf of Government, means that because of their architectural and/or historical importance, such buildings may not be demolished or altered without specific permission. The designation 'Conservation Area' by the Council likewise imposes restrictions on changes.

In this survey, a number of businesses and shop are mentioned by name, some local and some national; these have been mentioned where they are thought to be of ongoing interest. It has been quite impossible to quote more than a few out of the many hundreds, indeed thousands, who have served Epsom over the years, even where their names, locations, types of activity, and (in some cases) dates are known. They all made their contribution to the life of the town and their fellow-citizens.

The terms High Street, East and West, are used purely for convenience; they are not used officially.

HIGH STREET (WEST)

It has already been remarked that the Clock Tower of 1848 must be Epsom's most distinctive and well-known landmark. It was erected on the site of an older, smaller structure, which not only boasted a clock, regularly wound by a volunteer member of the public, but also accommodated the lock-up and its keeper, the Constable, while outside just to its east were the stocks, still reportedly in occasional use not so long before that time.

Like any new municipal undertaking, the tower gave rise to controversy and criticism, particularly its apex, though it elicited praise from Charles Dickens when he came for the Derby in 1851. In its later years and until quite recently, its base housed public conveniences - they were described by one writer as one of the most impressive public toilets in the country! They were replaced for a time in recent years by an information office.

As built and for its first seventy years, the square-section tower rose from a substantial ground-level structure, also square in shape, with lofty doors in its east and west sides. At one time in the 19th century this enclosed space housed the town's horse-drawn fire engine, doubtless among other purposes. The horses were not stabled there; they were taken off other tasks and sent to the tower as required, e.g. from the municipal dust-cart, on the sounding of the fire-alarm. It is also reputed that the hoses were stored elsewhere, which could not have made the firemen's task any easier! Towards the end of the 19th century, possibly when no longer used for the fire engine, and in the early 20th century, the tower was enclosed within a surround of iron railings. About 1910 the tower was put to a further use, that of holding up two large street lamps suspended from brackets, one each on the north and south sides. While of some practical value, they hardly enhanced its appearance but continued in place until about 1990 when they were removed.

In the- mid-1920s the ground-level building was enlarged on its east and west sides by extensions, each of two sections of divided roofline but of completely compatible design to the existing one. It was undoubtedly in these extensions that the public lavatories were installed. No doubt their introduction were accorded due publicity at the time but, oddly, the writer has yet to come across any specific reference to the extensions in subsequent literature. One of the first decisions of the new Health Board was to drain the large, egg-shaped, semi-stagnant and frequently noisome pond just to the west of the tower, yet when it was filled in 1854, many Epsomians regretted its loss. Be that as it may, we today are indebted to the pond for the spacious width of the western end of our High Street. Another water feature

close by, between the pond and the Albion, was one of Epsom's three parish pumps for the use of those without their own well; the others were at the very eastern end of the High Street and in Church Street, the last-named being reputedly the purest water.

In its later years at least, the pond was enclosed within a surround of wooden rails with a gap for horses to enter but that did not of course prevent accidents, either in its water or when it was frozen over - from contemporary accounts it was clearly an enticing venue for children. An annual fair of very long standing was held between the pond and the Albion, which continued long after the demise of the former, providing fun and games for the young, and perhaps the not-so-young, including a greasy pole poking out over the pond which could yield a prize leg-of-mutton - or a ducking. Another annual contest held in this same area was the Shrove Tuesday football match, but what its rules were and how the teams were made up does not appear to be on record. It seems to have degenerated over the years into a rumbustious free-for-all with windows having to be shuttered, until finally a public petition led to its termination late in the 19th century, doubtless to mingled relief and regret. The fair survived into the post WWII era but with increasing traffic through the High Street (still two-way) it was eventually moved to Fair Green, West Hill, where after a few years it fizzled out altogether.

Up to the middle of the 19th century, the land stretched away behind the properties that lined the north side of the High Street West, apart from the odd adjacent shed or outbuilding at rear, was open country. The railway borne in on its embankment from Ewell had not yet arrived in Epsom - until 1859. When in 1847, the Methodists acquired their first premises for worship, it was by conversion of a barn in the field behind the Furniss corn shop (presumably No 100 or thereabouts); it was called by some "the pretty rustic chapel". As is mentioned later, even by 1929 there was very little in the way of building between the High Street premises and the railway or beyond the far side of the station. Incidentally the Methodists moved from their barn in 1863 to their first purpose-built chapel in Waterloo Road- later in the 20th century it was to become the Foresters' Hall.

Over on the south side, there were up to the 19th century a number of buildings fringing the road out to the Wells and Leatherhead - formerly New Inn Lane and subsequently South Street, but eastwards and south of The Parade and Ashley House and west of Church Street, there was little or nothing until the Woodcote/Chalk Lane area. Because of the wide space available here, it was the obvious venue for major events. For Example in 1878, when Lord Rosebery who had bought the Durdans four years earlier, brought his American heiress bride to Epsom, they were welcomed by the townspeople, the street including the Clock Tower being lavishly decorated for the occasion. Then in 1902, on the Coronation of King Edward VII - no stranger to the town - an ox was roasted whole just west of the Tower and distributed to the assembled crowd in marquees. In September 1937 the ceremony of handing over of the Lloyd Charter of Incorporation of the Borough by the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey to the Charter Mayor, Councillor Chuter Ede, was enacted here. At one time local Hunts assembled prior to moving off to hunt foxes (apparently up to 1912) or stags, the course for the latter being between Stamford Green northwards towards Ewell.

The southern part of High Street West is now of course pedestrianized over most of its length with traffic, eastbound only, confined to the north side. This resulted from a decision taken in or about 1991, following a public consultation exercise, to create a quadrilateral one-way system along the then new Ashley Avenue, High Street West and the linking sections between them of South Street and Ashley Road. The three older roads had up to that time been bi-

directional and with a roundabout at the junction of South, West and High Streets, which had been constructed in the 1930s, prior to which there was just a small triangular island.

A further project mooted about the same time and known as the Southern Link Road Extension (SLRE) would have seen the construction of an extension of Ashley Avenue between Ashley Road and Church Street to a point in the latter on the site of the Baptist Church (which would have been demolished and replaced elsewhere), across the Silver Birches site (so named from a very old house which formerly stood there, and where the car park is now located), cutting across the Parade and the grounds of the Methodist Church. The scheme also envisaged a rear service road to the premises on the south side of High Street East and was initially supported by the Epsom Protection Society, principally for taking the A24 with its through traffic out of the High Street which would then become more congenial for shoppers and possibly pedestrianized. In the early 1990s the scheme was forecast to come on stream in 1997, but delays for funding reasons and gathering protests led to its eventual abandonment, the Society also having lost its earlier interest. Had it been implemented, Ashley Avenue would probably have become bi-directional with possible widening at its western end.

Few who pass along the High Street may realize how many old buildings dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries still survive, particularly if they fail to look above the ground floors with their more recent shop-fronts, or, for that matter alterations stemming from the desire of owners to modernise their properties to accord with changes in fashion or for other reasons. Yet time was when the road was mainly lined by well-to-do houses of two or three storeys, shielded by yews, limes and elms, as well as a number of more modest dwellings. Through the 19th and 20th centuries, there was increasing commercial, mainly retail, development so that today only a little obvious evidence of antiquity remains. Fortunately much of the development was by conversion rather than outright demolition and replacement and in such cases it is when one looks at the upper storeys and roof-lines, or has the opportunity to view the sides or rears, that the signs of bygone design and construction are to be seen.

High Street West with its adjacent buildings now forms the Town Centre Conservation Area, together with the Spread Eagle complex, West Street, South Street as far as Ashley Avenue, Ashley Road as far as Ashley House and Waterloo Road with the first block on the west side and, perhaps unexpectedly, Lloyds Bank opposite. The Area contains a high proportion of listed buildings, as will be evident in the course of the walk we are about to embark upon.

The Clock Tower will serve as a suitable departure point for our tour as we first head westwards. High Street is numbered from east to west with odd numbers on the south side, evens to the north (though many premises still seem shy of displaying their identity). Even numbers go up to 124 and up on the wall of this building can be seen the High Street nameplate. Its immediate neighbour carries No2 and postally is in West Street along with the adjacent ‘Marquis of Granby pub at No 4. Then High Street evens resume across the road on the buildings of the Albion terrace facing eastwards along the High Street, as Nos 126-134, the last being the Albion itself.

So, let us walk along the north (even) side but looking across as we progress at the other side, which will be dealt with in more detail a little later. Tucked away off the road between Leightons Opticians at No 88 (for decades until quite recently the Gas Company’s offices and showrooms) and Nos 94-98 is No 92 (listed) an 18th century house with stable extension, subsequently subdivided and now in use as offices. In front the three houses Nos 94-98

(listed.) give the nearest hint of their old late 17th century appearance especially the latter two, with their fenced forecourt, now Cafe Rouge, previously Yew Tree Cottage and many may remember it as Wrights; the association with culinary pleasures goes back a long way. They have been identified in a survey of 1680. Not so many years ago all these lay behind a fence and gardens in front and No 94 was graced with an ornate glazed porch. No 96 was for a time in the 19th century Epsom's post office before it moved to Waterloo Road (where the public library was located until quite recently. Strictly speaking only No 98 should be referred to as Yew Tree Cottage.

No 100 is early 18th century and retains the 19th century metal standard with finial and filigree ironwork identifying the occupant; for a long time it bore the name Furniss and was the place of business of a well-known local family, which had moved from 26 West Street and described itself as corn, hay, straw, coal, oil and garden supplies. It ceased to trade in 1983 and subsequently the standard has carried the words Optician and then Insurance to denote its revised activities. John Furniss was incidentally an Epsom Protection Society committee member for a time after his retirement. Nest to No 100 comes a modern development dating from the early 1980s, Nos 102-120, initially occupied by Sainsbury's supermarket. Yet plumb in the middle an astonishing late 17th century survival at No112 (now a personnel office) has outlasted other 17th, 18th, 19th and even 20th century neighbours. Prior to Sainsbury's return to Epsom, after quitting their much smaller premises in Upper High Street a decade or two earlier, much of the site had been taken up with the Odeon cinema built in 1937, the George pub and one or two smaller shops.

The cinema, which had some 1,400 seats, was built in conformity with the general design adopted for Odeons up and down the country in that era, with a tower; it was said that a condition was stipulated that this should not be higher than the Clock Tower. The George pub, built at the same time, replaced a much older one of the same name and was of an impressive appearance topped with a pediment - it would seem that Epsom was loth to forego the characteristics of classic architecture altogether! Almost adjacent to these there survived another well-loved Epsom establishment, Marshalls, famous for fish, both wet and fried, and for many it was a habit to come out of the cinema and into Marshalls for their fish and chips. Marshalls also had other shops - at the east end of the High Street and/or in Upper High Street and in East Street (not necessarily at the same time). The 1960s/70s saw a considerable downturn in cinema attendance across the country in face of the attraction of television and numerous cinemas were closed or diverted to other uses. The Odeon screened its last film on 20.6.1971. It was not long before the bulldozers moved in and in a short while the 102-120 site was empty (apart from No 112)

Following the demolition of these premises at the west end of the High Street in the early 1970s, the area remained derelict for a considerable period, affording an extensive open view from the High Street through to Station Approach and the railway beyond. It came to be known a little cynically, if indeed not without a degree of anger, as 'the bomb site' - bomb sites were a feature of post-war urban landscapes with which many in those post-war years were all too familiar, not least those who commuted to London day by day, although Epsom itself had emerged from the war relatively, though not completely, unscathed. This 'bomb site', it might have been said, was self-inflicted and it even attracted a brief visitation from a band of travellers. But eventually the site-owners found it worthwhile to move forward by the beginning of the 1980s and Sainsburys made their return to Epsom with a new superstore, which incidentally preserved the independent No112 in its midst. The new store became a popular and well-patronized venue for local shoppers and it was with much dismay when

word was announced in 1994 that this prestigious company was intending to quit the town centre in favour of a new and larger store in a fresh location to be developed on what had been a largely empty area between East Street and the Waterloo rail line, called the Peel Centre or Kiln Lane. It was not out-of-town, as favoured by some supermarket groups, but it was deemed off-centre to many (times change!). The firm was persuaded to keep the store going for a year or so as a concession until new occupiers might be found and this was in fact done but by early 2000 they had moved and it was all change again as new owners T.K.Maxx took possession of the building.

Next along past the 102-120 site stands No 122 (Cafe Uno and Ladbrokes) late 18th century, 3-storey and then No 124 (Lisa's Haberdashery, a rare, local non-multiple trader) also 18th century with 2 storeys and attics (listed) shared with another personnel office. As already mentioned, this marks the end of the High Street on this side and up on the wall above the shop is the old High Street nameplate. The shop immediately adjacent is No 2 West Street.

Crossing over the road now by the light-controlled crossing, we reach the Albion terrace, Nos 126-134 (all listed}. It has a significant place in Epsom's spa history; built in 1706 by Dr Livingstone (or Levingstone] an entrepreneurial apothecary, who saw that the inaccessibility of the Old Well on the Common had become a disadvantage at a time when Tunbridge and Bath had begun to supplant Epsom in the favours of the fashionable set. He established his New Well just along in South Street by what is now the Symond's Well pub (renamed, with greater significance, from the Magpie in 1996 and commemorating the owner of the land where the well was sited) together with a bowling green and other leisure activities and built his Coffee House for dancing and refreshment. The adjacent shops at Nos 126-132 were built about the same time to provide additional inducement to patrons to spend their money. As built, the Coffee House presented an austere appearance but this was transformed by the still surviving exterior decoration applied late in the 19th century, in the course of which the Albion name had been bestowed. Nicknamed The House of Lords by the locals for its sedate atmosphere, it was for many years the meeting place of Epsom's magistrates until a special building was brought into use in Ashley Road in 1934.

Before entering West Street, and for those who do not wish to go beyond the High Street, let us look again and in more detail at the south side of the main road. Starting by the Clock Tower at Nos 119-121, formerly and for much of the 20th century the Nell Gwynne Cafe but more recently Hyams Jeweller and an employment bureau, a 2-storey 18th century building with a balustrade (listed), it has for more than a century preserved the memory of Sweet Nell with its name of Nell Gwynne House, although it was in fact not yet built when she stayed in the town.

Outside on the very edge of the pedestrianised zone is a 19th century horse trough which had at one time stood in the middle of the road at the junction of High Street and Church Street. It has two water holders, a shallow one just above ground level for dogs etc., and a deeper one two or three feet higher for horses and larger animals, plus at one end a revolving tap by which people might obtain a drink - but this is no longer fitted. Such troughs were fairly commonplace up to the early 20th century when traffic was mostly horse-drawn and also cattle and sheep droving on the hoof from the countryside to London and other large towns was a regular feature of life. The troughs were mainly provided by charitable animal welfare organizations and on this Epsom one the inscription "Presented by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association" can just be made out along its side. One might regard them as the bygone equivalent of the petrol pump.

Next beyond Nell Gwynne House is a modern building, Nos 123-125 which in addition to its shops contains an entrance to King's Shade Walk leading through to what was formerly King's Shade Square, both being open to the sky when new in the 1960s, there was even quite a tall tree growing robustly in the Square. Both were absorbed into the Ashley Centre and received roofs to close them in but apart from that they have not changed much, except that in the south west corner of the Square there was another walkway leading through to the municipal car park behind Waterloo House.

King's Shade Wa1k is on the site of the King's Head Hotel, an attractive building formerly fronting the High Street and demolished to widespread regret as recently as 1957. It had been rebuilt, modernized and much improved in 1838 from its 17th century origin which had played host to Charles II. The rebuild had incorporated a handsome projecting entrance with an assembly room on the first floor above.

Nos 127-129, Lloyds Chemists (previously Harsant & Lee) and the Clock Tower Cafe is a tall 3-storey 18th century building (listed) notable for preserving the original twin bow windows and doorcase. Then comes Nos133-135, Marks and Spencer, seemingly a single modern structure -but look up at the roof with attic over the east section. Nos 137-139 form Bramshott House, Cafe Nero now, a late 17th Century dwelling (listed) where Samuel Pepys tells us that Nell Gwynne and her patron Lord Buckhurst in the 166Os "did keep a merry house". Tales of a hidden tunnel from the King's Head have never been proven (Charles never attempted to keep his liaison with Nell a secret). Nos 143-145 (listed) date early 18th century and the former is interesting also for the 19th century ironwork canopy outside. No 141 is a separate in-fill of slightly later date. Incidentally (and this applies to one or two others) one can form a better impression of the antiquity of some of these buildings by observing the rear of No 145 from the adjacent entrance into the Ashley Centre. In the 1920s, and possibly earlier and later, space to the rear of these shops was laid out with tables and chairs to form the Roseary (sic) Tea Gardens where no doubt many of our predecessors whiled away a pleasant and refreshing half-hour. The area now lies within the confines of the Ashley Centre.

Finally on the south side we come to what is agreed to be Epsom's premier historic building, at No.147 (actually Nos 147-153) now graced again with its early name of the Assembly Rooms. Built in 1692, it had initially been called the New Tavern and apart from eating and drinking, gaming and dancing, it was with its adjacent leisure space and bowling green a venue for activities such as bear baiting and cock-fighting. In the 18th century, plays were staged and other performances but by now, Epsom's star as a leisure centre was on the wane and by the 19th the building was divided into shops, even including a shoeing forge. It housed the business of John Bailey, known as the Epsom Banker, who built it up into the finest shop not only in the town but for miles around, attracting a clientele including "the carriage trade" from far and wide. It would often take over an hour to be served. Baileys later became Oldridges and at some point in the 19th century had acquired the name of Waterloo House - apparently from a fashionable London emporium - and this name still persists with many people up to the present day.

In the 20th century including post WWII the store was in the hands of a firm called Wheelers who in turn sold out to Ely's of Wimbledon. Many in Epsom will still recall shopping at Ely's and possibly a few at Wheelers. When Ely pulled out post-WWII, late 1950s or early 1960s, the long-time department store lay empty for a few years, until in 1966 a different sort of occupant moved in. This was the National Counties Building Society, a company founded

in 1896 as the Post Office Building Society with offices in London and its primary aim of providing postal workers with loan and financial services - later extended to civil servants generally - and ultimately post-WWII altering its constitution so as to become a company dealing with the public at large. On acquiring Waterloo House, National Counties Building Society was obliged by the Council to install not-well-advised anachronistic windows along its front, now fortunately removed. In the 1980s the Epsom Protection Society was given permission to stage a number of successful exhibitions there. With continuing expansion of its business, NCBS transferred its headquarters activities to Ebbisham House, another listed building in Church Street, but still retained a presence at Waterloo House for personal callers. In 1995 having built a small extension to the southeast corner for this limited work, the Building Society sought to divest itself of the main building.

There followed an anxious period while it lay empty with its future seemingly in the balance; a number of proposals were put forward, with the Protection Society and other local people maintaining a close watch to ensure an outcome appropriate to its history and importance (which it has to be said, did not always appear to be likely). Then after one or two abortive projects, the building was eventually bought by the Wetherspoon pub chain, which fortunately had some experience in the successful conversion and adaptation of old buildings to suit its present-day catering business. The Protection Society played an important role in these developments and the Society was actively consulted for its views and suggestions. After a careful and sympathetic restoration, external and internal, the premises were reopened for business in 2002 as the Assembly Rooms.

At both ends of the building can be seen the outline of the arches through which in its earlier days the carriages of patrons were driven to set down or embark in the interior courtyard. Not surprisingly, given the many changes it has undergone in the last three centuries, little of the original internal fittings remain but it preserves a close likeness to its 1ate 17th century external appearance. Up to the pedestrianization of the area, there had long been three or four steps from the roadway to the pavement, but these no longer exist.

Back at the Clock Tower, the south side of the road retains a good element of 18th century survival. No 115, Nat West Bank, which replaced the much lamented timbered Riddington's tea-rooms and bakery, now exhibits a plaque proclaiming a 1993 county design award after a felicitous face-lift of the previous exterior, regarded by many to have been Epsom's ugliest frontage - Riddington's having been one of the most attractive (and incidentally displaying a sign announcing its founding in 1802; it is also said that Mrs Beeton as a girl learned cookery in these premises!) Nos 105-113 were also 18th century (what remains is listed), as also were Nos 93-95 but the construction of the Ashley Centre, opened in 1982, with a notable feature marking its main entrance, led inevitably to considerable change. No 113, Waterstones, previously Lester Bowdens, still remains as do Nos 93-95 where Browns Estate Agency is the last, round the corner, looks eastwards over a small square. On the south side of this square formerly stood the well-knovn White Hart Hotel, later Lawleys Chinaware and now a card shop, alongside the Halifax Building Society and a small Italian Trattoria brings us to Ashley Road.

Over on the north side between the Clock Tower and Waterloo Road, the buildings are all late Victorian or 20th century. Right by the Tower and between Nos 86-88 is an alleyway, still known to many as Station Way, which for decades had led directly to the station, although its alignment at the inner end was changed in 1929 when the station was completely rebuilt.

Both before and after WW II, its entry immediately opposite the Clock Tower was surmounted by a large overhead board advertizing the rail routes served from the station. In fact it is still there in the Southern Railway's customary green enamel with white lettering, but now covered over with a canvas screen. The two or three shops fronting this path remain but beyond them the ground had been left wild. The path was closed off immediately past the shops when redevelopment of the sector was commenced in 1992 and despite intensive efforts by the Epsom Protection Society for the facility to be retained or reinstated. Their efforts included the posting of a public notice at the town end of the passage proclaiming it as a public right of way, approaches to the Borough and County Councils and publicity in the local press, as well as representing its views at an inquiry in Kingston. Unfortunately it proved impossible legally to uphold the contention that a public right of way had existed or been created by usage; on the contrary it was demonstrated that it had been the property of the London & South Western Railway which had exacted a toll from local businesses (albeit unwillingly) for its use by the public. These rights had passed in turn to the Southern Railway in 1923 and to British Railways in 1948, even though the toll had long since been dispensed with. Although not completely successful, the Society secured an undertaking that an alternative passage would be provided. Quite recently a footway has been sign-posted between the High Street, by the side of No 100, and Station Way.

The change in the alignment of the path mentioned above was from the original straight way culminating in steps up to the station level, at that time the inward end of Waterloo Road curving round to the front of the station, the entrance to which was a little further along opposite the steps. The alignment change eliminated the steps and instead made a right-handed turn up a gentle slope towards Station Approach, emerging just opposite the new station's entrance, some yards to the east of the previous one. There were three or four small self-contained shops erected at this point, also facing the station, of which one was used by an estate agent and the others by coal company offices – at time the great majority of householders were still dependent on solid fuel for heating. Then on the other side of the Way was a parking ground for Brewers Garage for car servicing and beyond that there was virtually nothing between Station Approach and the backs of the High Street shops. In the road itself was the "lay-over" point for London Transport buses terminating in Epsom (the 93 to Putney, 164 to Sutton, etc): these turned right out of High Street East into Waterloo Road, and on departure turned left out of Station Approach into West and High Streets - neither of these manoeuvres is now possible.

In the 1980s the right-hand turn out of High Street East was banned, so the buses then continued along the High Street to turn right into Station Approach to lie over on the rail side of that road; on departure they proceeded via Waterloo Road to regain the High Street for their return journeys. The corner of Waterloo Road and Station Approach also saw the erecting of an additional single-storey building as an overflow car showroom for Page Motors in post WWII days. It later passed to other traders, e.g. furniture, but like the other small buildings on the way round to the station, it was to be swept away in the 1990s developments.

Prior to the 1929 rebuilding, there had only been a footway cut through the rail embankment at the east end of the station, since at least 1896, but no roadway and this only came about

with the new development, which resulted in three new bridges to carry the revised junction layout across the top. Up to that time there had indeed been little or no housing west of the railway between Temple Road and West Hill to be accessed; the Horsley Close/Hazon Way housing would be built later in the 1930s and at this stage the area remained open fields. Such vehicular traffic as needed to cross the railway went via West Hill or Hook Road.

No 86 for many years from the 1930s up to 1999 housed the offices and showrooms of the Gas Company - prior to the nationalization of the late 1940s known as the Wandsworth, Wimbledon & Epsom District Gas Co and subsequently as the SEGAS division of British Gas. As with the Electricity Office shut down at about the same time, the closure caused much dismay among local consumers. The building is currently being used by Opticians. Across the Station Way inlet, No 84 has had a variety of occupiers ranging from undertakers and financial services to restaurant. Then comes Barclays Bank at No 82, which not long before the war had carried out an enlargement and rebuilding, taking in an old-established butcher's shop. Close by the bank was another well-patronized feature of the High Street in post WWII days, the largely al-fresco site of Poulsons, a local greengrocer, facing on to the pavement.

No 80, another 1930s style building was latterly the place of business of Norlands builders merchants and when they moved away in the late 1980s, became one of a number of shops held temporarily on very short-term leases at various times by Dave, whose niche was the sale of cut-price goods allied with lurid publicity display; he also traded from Nos 78 and 86 among others at different periods.

This brings us to another well-known local firm, Page Motors, at No 78, where previously there had been a veterinary practice. In 1919 Pages transferred from the middle of the Victorian block in Waterloo Road, where the business had originated as the Waterloo Cycle Works in 1907. The front part of the new premises comprised the car showrooms and behind were the workshops and servicing areas- accessible from the High Street. Although normally reached from Waterloo Road via a rear entrance. It may seem remarkable today that one could draw up in the High Street and fill up with petrol from a pump outside the premises, the filler pipe being swung across the pavement on an overhead arm - no yellow lines then!

Also in Waterloo Road in its later years, Pages put up a single-storey building, curved to match the corner with Station Approach, as an additional car showroom, doubtless to catch the eye of the numerous passers-by on their way to and from the station. Pages transferred their business in stages to new and more commodious premises - Kiln Lane in the 1960s for servicing and repair, and later, and progressively, sales and other activities to East Street, coincidentally on a site previously occupied in part by Snow, another cycle dealer. However they maintained a presence in the High Street until about 1976, though by this time the pavement petrol pump and its associated tank below the road surface had been dispensed with. The overflow car showroom on the corner of Station Approach was also relinquished to sell a different range of products and for a time was in use by a furniture company. It was later demolished in the early 1990s as previously mentioned.

On vacation by Pages, No 78 was converted to a completely new use, unique in Epsom's shopping history, to become the Indoor Market, a shopping centre which, while quite lacking the spaciousness and modernity of the Ashley Centre opposite (then yet to be built) had a very wide range of goods of all descriptions on offer from a large number of individual stalls, including at least one dispensing eats and drinks. The access from Waterloo Road was

retained and indeed some of the stalls were set up there including the area where the Foresters' Hall had stood for a hundred years until its demolition in 1979. The Market attracted considerable support from local shoppers. It also had a very distinctive smell of its own. It continued in business until 1995. Incidentally the site had once contained not one, but two, wells, further evidence of the abundance of water in, or rather under, Epsom.

Nos 78 and 80 were demolished in the late 1990s and in their place, Wilkinsons built Emerald House, which they opened in 1999, of pleasing appearance and sympathetic to its surroundings. It is good to see a building which proclaims its birth-date. The main post office building at Nos 74-76 which is listed, dates from Victoria's jubilee year of 1897 and for long was solely dedicated to the business of the GPO but is now shared with other occupants. Originally it had no fewer than 18 tills, lined parallel with the road, to enable it to cope with the rush of business expected on race days. The sorting office for mails was originally located in the rear part until its transfer in the 1930s to a purpose-designed building erected on the more commodious site in East Street where earlier had stood Doctor Barnardo's Home for Boys in Mittendorf House (the charity of the good doctor being nationally famous and the building itself named from its benefactress). On the west side of the main post office, there was an arched passage-way for the postmen (and postwomen during the Great War) to go to and from the sorting office for mail collections and deliveries. Immediately adjacent to the Post Office on its west side in the early 1920s was a small 3-storey building, its purpose denoted by the title on its fascia - United Kingdom War Pensions Committee. Its site was subsequently absorbed into the Post Office, which was extended in a style closely matching the Victorian design, but with changes to the doorways and with a new two-storey window. In or about 1988, No 76 (including this extension) was surrendered for commercial occupation and postal business concentrated in the other half.

No 72 is also a listed building. Currently an amusement centre, it was until very recently the Wellington pub and was built in 1906 in replacement of an older and smaller pub of the same name, a 2-storey building which had proclaimed itself as the Cyclists' Hotel and acted as the meeting place for the Epsom Cycling Club and two or three other local societies. Incidentally, Epsom seems to have been something of a cyclists' Mecca in terms of the facilities available in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A small point of interest here was that, as would be expected, the inn-sign displayed the head of the Iron Duke, but in 1996 this was replaced by the head of a well-known local trader, albeit in suitable uniform. (Presumably an in-joke?).

The two large 3-storey mock-Tudor buildings at Nos 68-70 have had a great variety of businesses over the years but the current occupiers, Orange and Vodaphone deal in products not conceived of back in the Edwardian era when these buildings were new. The junction between the Wellington and Waterloo Roads in the late 19th century were low-rise premises owned by the local firm of Dorsets, which to advertise its trade in agricultural equipment, maintained an old plough on the roof. They sold half the site to the London & Counties Bank, which in 1901 built the still-existing 4-storey building (listed) and replaced the other half with a new 3- storey double-fronted premises for themselves, where they remained into the 1930s. From there they moved round the corner into the two end shops of the decorated Victorian block, No 7, where they flourished until comparatively recent times as general ironmongers, heating engineers and plumbers, but have now gone out of business.

This group of buildings (Nos 66-72) when first erected earned some praise from local observers although one commentator would have welcomed No 66 being one storey lower.

Nevertheless it must have seemed quite an impressive development at the time, but if the Council's ideas about road widening by continuing the alignment of the new north side of High Street East across Waterloo Road into the west side, had been realized, this century-old group would perhaps not have reached its golden jubilee.

To pick up on one or two points before we leave High Street (West), it is well known that up to WWII and indeed for the decade or so following, car ownership, even in a reasonably affluent area such as Epsom, was on nothing like the scale that it has since become. Parking especially short-term was consequently not a serious problem and particularly where, as here, the main shopping streets were quite wide. On-street parking was generally permissible almost anywhere away from street corners, bus stops or certain other restricted sections.

Even as late as 1984, there were no yellow lines and driving across the road to park on the "wrong" side was still not unknown – if the circumstances were right! In High Street (West) the centre space, was also used for the purpose. Saturdays were probably the most difficult time with the market in full swing and with weekend shoppers and increased through traffic. There had been a park in the open space between High Street (East) and the railway embankment, which had come to be known as Boots Car Park - not because Boots owned it but because that was where the entrance was (accessible both to and from left and right). It also contained a small building with public toilets; these have now been replaced within the Ebbisham Centre which has recently been built to take up the whole site. As the pressure for off-street parking increased, other parks were opened up off the Upper High Street (later extended and improved), the vacated Gas Company land just inside Hook Road (later replaced by a multi-storey) while another was on the unpaved land behind the south side of High Street (West). The site of the last-named had become available when University Motors moved in 1935 to Church Street from its previous premises in-South Street (as T.Hersey Ltd). This left a large L-shaped area of land, entered by the west side of Waterloo House (in effect Hersey's neighbour). The site stretched eastwards behind Waterloo House and there was latterly a pedestrian access into the southwest corner of Kings Shade Square and thence into the High Street. This parking area was located where the 18th century bowling green and entertainment spaces linked to the Assembly Rooms had once been. In the Ashley Mall development of the early 1980s, this area was absorbed and built over.

In the early post-WWII period parking charges, once they began to be imposed at all, were quite low (which is not to say welcomed) and often collected by hand. If you were a local rate-payer you could obtain a season ticket available for the whole year and valid at any council park for seventeen shillings and sixpence (seven-eighths of a pound, though it must be added that the value of money was vastly different a half a century ago). The site of the last-named (obviously located where the 17th/18th century bowling green and other entertainment spaces had once been) was absorbed into that of the new Ashley Centre complex which opened in two or three stages from 1982. This also absorbed the original Ashley Avenue, a short but attractive residential road a little north of the present-day one-way thoroughfare which carries the A24 trunk road; and in addition it took in the former Ebbisham Hall and its adjunct the Myers Hall which had been built in 1929 by The Brotherhood, a nationwide religious society for men; they were also intended to be available for hiring-out. Ebbisham Hall was distinguished by a quite impressive entrance in Ashley Road and its facade was incorporated into the shell of the new Ashley Centre at the store of W.H.Smith (formerly John Menzies) while the old Myers Hall had a rather inconspicuous entry round the side by Ashley House. In the new complex they have been replaced to some extent by the Playhouse and new Myers Ha11, opened in 1983. (The Epsom Protection Society has used both the old and

new Myers Halls for most of its meetings). Despite its considerable size and importance to the Town Centre, the Ashley Centre presents only a single (but distinctive) feature to the High Street - that over its eastern entrance.

WEST STREET AND WEST HILL

When we crossed the road to the Albion at the western end of the High Street, we noticed that next to No 124, the adjacent premises were No 2 of West Street and its neighbour at No 4 the Marquis of Granby pub. The small shop at No 2 was for long a quality butchers and had an unusual internal glazed separate cashier's desk. There are perhaps today still many people who will recall buying their weekly joint to their own choice, having it cut and paying at the desk in Matthews as recently as the mid 1980s. This firm had taken over the business from Elphick Ardern prior to WW II and a photograph exists of the shop in the 1920s with the meat carcasses hanging up outside, normal practice in that era - the amount of passing traffic was of course but a fraction of that of more recent times! The shop is listed, as is the pub next door. The latter is of 18th century construction with a 19th century porch. The retention of its familiar (though not original) name represented another small triumph for the Epsom Protection Society and other concerned citizens, many of whom had been dismayed in 1997 to learn that new owners were intending to re-title it as the Flutter and Firkin in conformity with their company naming policy. Vigorous protests secured that the traditional name should remain in place alongside the new soubriquet. After the passage of a few years, it is the latter which has been dropped.

No 6, a former small workshop and Nos 8-10, now a pair of houses with steps up to the doors but originally a single residence are all 18th century and all have been used as offices. No 6 was still in use by Waglan builder as his base until late in the post WW II era. Past No 10 there were 3 or 4 shops including a stationer cum toy shop reaching to the Station Approach corner but they were gone by 1984, replaced by a new 4-storey office block with its own internal ground floor car-park - this was later modified.

On reaching Station Approach, look up at the decorated gable end over the block of small shops, Nos 26-30, lying east of the railway bridge. These were built of reinforced concrete in the 1870s, Epsom's first, by the Furniss family on the small triangle of land between the railway and the road to the station, as combined dwelling, works and shop. Among present occupants is a baker with his own oven and a barber. Across the road Nos 1-5 (Viceroy Cars, Cairds and the Print Centre) are conversions of early 18th century houses, with Nos 7-11 late 17th, No 7 having not long since been well known locally as Ye Olde Guild Cottage bread and cake shop. The bow window to No 9 is a fairly recent addition. Nos 13-15 is a small timber-framed weather board cottage. Continuing up the hill as it bears round to the left are three large 18th century houses, the Old Manor House (never actually a real manor house), the White House -both early 18th - and the British Legion Club, a shade less old. All these buildings from No 1 are listed.

For those who wish to go on further, under the bridge and into West Hill, there are more items of interest. Emerging from the bridge earlier the station-master of the LSWR station had been immediately adjacent to the line, presumably numbered 2, and next came Nos 4-6 a pair of timber framed listed late 17th/18th century houses, originally built as a single dwelling. Over to the south lies Fair Green (yes, fairs have been held on it) bounded on its far side by an old brick wall (listed.) formerly marking the edge of the Hookfield House estate, whose distinctive mid-Victorian Lodge remains, as further along does the old coach house (both

listed), though the house itself has gone. West Hill was once known as Clay Hill and Pair Green was called Clay Hill Green along with the existing area still referred to by the latter name. Hookfield House had been built in 1857 in replacement of an earlier mansion closer to the road. The Stamford Green Conservation Area takes in the district bordering West Hill and Christ Church Road as far as the church itself and then that part of the common from Stamford Green southwards to Bramble Walk west of the Hookfield Estate.

On the north side of West Hill, now in use as offices is the former 19th century pub, the Eclipse at No26, named after the invincible horse of the 1770s, whose progeny include numerous Derby and other classic winners right down to modern times; with no owners willing to pit their horses against him he was retired to stud a little further on from here. Two doors away stands the former church hall of Christchurch; it dates from 1899 and was closed as such in 1986, being then converted for use as a private school. The church itself, originally intended as a Chapel of Ease for St Martin's to serve parishioners on the Common and indeed known as the Common Church was built in 1843 but replaced 33 years later by the present, larger building (listed) which lies further along West Hill just past Stamford Green.

Going back to the north side and continuing on from the Church Hall leads to Clay Hall Green (already mentioned two paragraphs earlier). At its eastern side is West Hill House, which dated from about 1700 but was altered in the 18th and 19th centuries and then, after a long period of neglect, was rebuilt in the late 20th in a copy of its previous appearance and is now in use as offices. The Meadway in the centre of the Green leads though a distinctive arch into the 1930s Chase Estate. On the western side of the Green stands a line of attractive and varied Victorian dwellings including West Hill Cottage, No 38 (listed), and, close to the main road, Kingswood House prep school which was built on the site of the residence and presumably stables of Colonel Kelly, owner of Eclipse which retired to stud here.

On the south side is a pair of early 18th century cottages, Nos 43-45, (listed) and then we reach Stamford Green with its pond, its attractive Georgian pub, the Cricketers, of weatherboard construction (listed, like the Jolly Coopers further round), a variety of smaller houses and other buildings of note many of 19th century date, including the prominent ornately gabled Victorian Working Men's Club. At the western end stands the previously mentioned Christchurch of 1876 (listed) while opposite is the early 19th century Old Lodge (listed; with its bow front on timber supports, formerly belonging to the moated Horton Manor which was sold to the London County Council in 1890 at the beginning of the vast mental hospital project; this complex - which has come to be known in recent times as the Hospital Cluster-was built, unit by unit from the 1890s up to 1925, but in the last 15 years has been largely abandoned following changes in medical - and political - thinking, though some of the buildings, mostly built to high standards, are being preserved or converted.

SOUTH STREET and WOODCOTE

We now return to the High Street and leave it at its western end, turning left into South Street and on to Dorking Road and to Woodcote. The route also includes a possible detour to the Old Well for anyone who might wish to go the extra mile to visit the source of the town's fame.

Unexpectedly, South Street does not begin on the corner just west of the Assembly Rooms. The first block, surmounted on its front by a brick pinnacle, has the address of Nos149–153 High Street, and South Street commences with the next block along (Nos l–5). On the west

side, the first block adjacent to the Albion used to be called Halfway House, because it stood between the High Street and South Street. Here as elsewhere it is necessary to stand back (on the other side of the road) and look up to identify interesting and unusual details in buildings which, at ground level, might seem unremarkable. Up to 1990 South Street was bi-directional, as was the western half of the High Street; the present one-way system was inaugurated after the construction of the Ashley Centre and Ashley Avenue. Odd numbers are to the east (the left side looking south) and evens to the west.

South Street could lay claim to being Epsom's most interesting road. Formerly called New Inn Lane, it led to a pub of that name at what is now No 77 Dorking Road. The pub was established in the late 17th century; before that the road was just 'the lane to Woodcott'. Sadly many of its fine houses have been bulldozed, at least four of them since WW II, including the Shrubbery (No 53) where Ashley Avenue joins the road. Happily a number of old, attractive or interesting buildings have survived, often somewhat disguised, among a mix of structures from the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries and even 21st century additions.

Over the years, South Street has attracted niche businesses of various sorts. As well as restaurants and pubs, still to be found there, it has been home in its time to a brewery, a soft drinks factory (first at No 18 and later behind No 55) and a bicycle maker, while in WW II a small munitions factory temporarily displaced lemonade production. From 1935 to 1971 Epsom Coaches had their garage at No 37, where lengthy vehicles could be seen reversing off the narrow road through 90º into a concealed interior. In the 18th century John Livingstone's New Well and his adjacent pleasure grounds were established on the west side, while in 1984 the Playhouse complex came into being on the east. There is a public garden on one side and a park on the other. And further along Dorking Road stood the workhouse, a plant nursery and a school – and we still have a petrol station, a chapel and the hospital. Variety indeed!

South Street proper begins with a line of shops, Nos 1 -9, dating from Regency to Victorian. The row was once known as Controversy Cottages from their landlord, Mr Hersey, a man of strong opinions, of whom more anon. For some the building at No 29, of the late 18th century, might be the gem of South Street; now a restaurant, it is often known still as Stebbings after the family that ran it as a shop until the 1960s. In those days it was the archetypal small newsagent-cum-general store – a lost species – which sold something of everything from a chaotic jumble of stock (yet you could always get what you were after!).

Opposite is a range of shops of varying height and design, of which Nos 6–8 were old buildings with Victorian shop-fronts mainly rebuilt in the 1970s. Already in 1901 No 26, which retains a late 17th century elevation with blind windows, was being described as 'old world'. Behind this row of shops was located the field where Dr Livingstone opened his New Well in 1701, when the well on the Common was falling into disfavour. The buildings opened up onto a bowling green and pleasure ground on the Upper Green; later they were known as the Folly.

At No 30 is Symonds Well pub, an 18th century pub with later additions – it was long the Magpie, mentioned as such in 1754, and renamed in 1995 after yet another source of mineral waters. Standing alone at No 34, now Sicily is a half-weather boarded 19th century building which formerly had a rough-cast front. It has long been and still is an eating place, and was a rendezvous in times past for cycle and tandem riders from London seeking fresh air and refreshment. Then comes Mounthill Gardens, a public open space with many fine trees on upward sloping ground, although the Victorian house from which it takes its name has been

redeveloped into flats. Epsom enjoyed happy links with the cycling fraternity, offering hospitality to visitors while it provided facilities for repair and support – and even actual manufacture. It was along here in South Street, where a line of 20th century shops now stands, that Tom Hersey (the man of controversy mentioned above) set up his cycle works and garage before moving to Nos 149–153 on the opposite side.

Returning to the east side of South Street, Nos 47–49 were originally a single late 17th century building and have been incorporated into the fabric of the Playhouse while 43 intriguingly proclaims Stage Door. Outside the entrance to The Playhouse a little way along Ashley Avenue is the attractive statuette of John Gilpin as 'Spectre de la Rose' by Tom Merrifield and which is depicted on the front page. Across Ashley Avenue, No 55 is a handsome late 17th century house, now offices, and is followed by two not unattractive modern blocks, which brings us to Rosebery Park. This park, Epsom's largest open space, was donated to the Borough by Lord Rosebery in 1913, when it was known as Reading's Mead.

Although a large summerhouse and bandstand have gone, the pond remains from the original design, but with the addition of a fountain presented by Epsom Protection Society in their fiftieth anniversary year. The Council gardeners' changing displays, here and elsewhere, continue to enhance our townscape. Along the southern end of the park, the attractively-named Sweet Briar Lane leads out of South Street. Passing a group of Victorian houses, note the tall chimneys on No 63, which brings us to another picturesque survival, the pair of cottages at London House (No 73 – the name was in use in 1680) and the 18th century Paisley House (No 75) with the adjoining building remaining a shop until the 1990s, but now part of the accommodation. Beyond these is the Queen's Head; a pub of this name has been on the site since 1746, but the present building is later. Until quite recently its inn-sign depicted Queen Adelaide, full-faced on the Epsom side but with her back to the other.

We now come to Woodcote Hall on the corner of South Street and Woodcote Road. Originally called the Poplars, this grand building was rebuilt in the mid 18th century with its front door now asymmetrically repositioned, and was converted to flats in about 1930. The left and right front pavilions add to is attraction. This brings us to the end of South Street but before leaving, look back to the west to see Abele Cottages, a group of three colour-washed (Nos 58–62) likely to date from 1690 rather than the 1896 on the plaque which records their refurbishment.

Continuing along Dorking Road, the first stop is a petrol station on the site of a 19th century wheelwright, later a cycle and motor works, and subsequently taken over by Wilsons who a century ago were pioneers in the art of motor car driving instruction in this area. Opposite is the Haywain hotel and accompanying restaurant, quite recently converted from a girls' school. From 1928 to 1992 this was the Convent of the Sacred Heart, home of an order founded by exiles from the French Revolution. Built in the early 19th century, it was originally called Abele Grove. The convent had also acquired some 19th century buildings further along the road – Clock House, Bell House (formerly the stables) and the Lodge all impressive buildings with pedimented roofs. The Clock House has recently been refurbished for a new role in the field of medical treatment. It replaced an earlier property, the Elms, built by Richard Rooth in c.1720. An ice-house survives in the grounds, one of the earliest examples in the country, and is accessible from St. Margaret's Drive. A climb up the hill from the Haywain leads to the new Catholic Church of St. Joseph, designed in the modern idiom and opened in 2001 next to St. Joseph's School.

Back across the road is Epsom General Hospital. It was opened in 1890 on the site of what had been the Poor Law Institution and Workhouse, where up to the 1930s the homeless and destitute could find temporary accommodation with food and care in return for work. The present-day buildings are 20th century, many erected after World War II. Immediately beyond at No 63 is the White Horse pub, earlier known as the New Inn; this, however, is not the original New Inn, which was at No 77. The pair of weatherboard cottages next to it Hylands Mews (Nos 67–69), form a picturesque group. Next come two fine residences, The Hylands at No 71, partly dating from 1743–8, and Hylands House at No 73, built in 1716–23. Hylands House belonged at one stage to the uncle of John Constable, and the artist stayed there two or three times between 1806 and 1811, painting both the house and other local scenes.

White Horse Drive branches off on the west side of Dorking Road; this was the original way to Epsom Wells, which today leads to the famous Rosebery School opened for girls in 1921. Just inside the road to the left is Tamarisk Cottage, a plain but interesting survivor from the early 18th century, probably built as the dairy of the Elms estate. Nearby, the cul-de-sac Orchard Gardens was built in the kitchen garden of the same estate, for which the boundary walls are visible at the rear of the houses. Hereabouts, on the west side of the main road, one of Epsom's many ponds remained until the early 20th century, evidence of the town's origin on the spring-line between chalk and clay strata. Another small building of note, culturally rather than architecturally perhaps, is Grace Chapel, formerly Salem. It is a meeting place for adherents to the Strict Baptist or Calvinist tradition; the church moved here from the Bugby Chapel off East Street, founded in 1779 and mentioned earlier.

For anyone who having come thus far wants to visit the Well and is ready to walk an extra mile and back, it can be reached by continuing along Dorking Road, turning into Wells Road (sign-posted), and then taking a left turn into the Wells Estate. A footpath at the end of Spa Drive will take you to the well, which lies at the heart of this 1930s estate, while the residential roads curve around it in a series of circles. They were built to occupy the circular plot of Wells Farm, which in turn consisted of the land cleared for a furlong all around the Old Wells. This well, which produced the bitter, purgative water which led to Epsom's fame as a spa, was discovered by a cowherd called Henry Wicker and his cattle in the drought year of 16l8. After years of neglect, it was reopened, rebuilt and surmounted by a decorative well-head in 1989. Apart from that, there is little to see today and certainly nothing to drink, but it is a tremendously important item in the town's story – though the world-famous Epsom Salts have long since been produced commercially from seawater. Of particular note are the weatherboarded cottages in Woodlands Road, mostly 19th century although No 33 is 18th century.

Returning to the point where South Street joins Dorking road at the petrol filling station we continue along Woodcote Road, leaving Woodcote Hall behind us to our left. The plain building on the right (Nos 2–4), has a place in Epsom's history as the oratory where Roman Catholics celebrated Mass before opening their church in Heathcote Road in 1866. Beyond is the Schnadhorst Sports Ground, secured in perpetuity for the Epsom Cricket Club in 1934 by the family of that name, who were keen members. The Club, which was founded in 1800, has played at Woodcote since 1860 and in its day took on and defeated county sides including Surrey and Middlesex. Moves a few years back to sell off this green oasis were fortunately thrown out.

The trees along Woodcote Road include a number funded by Epsom Protection Society to mark its silver jubilee in 1984, when it planted fifty at various locations around the borough. On the north side of the road are two imposing residences, Queen Anne House and Woodcote End House. In the late 18th century these were a single property, recently rebuilt, although Queen Anne House is partly early 18th century. The house was occupied in retirement by the Rev. Martin Madan, preacher and philosopher with unconventional views on polygamy. Our familiar arrangement of 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' is his version of the original by Charles Wesley. He gave his name to the nearby Madans Walk but was very unpopular locally – and burnt in effigy – for his severity as a magistrate on illegal gaming. After this come a couple of 19th century cottages, possibly associated with the next building – the Ladas pub. Previously called the Fox Revived, this was renamed after Lord Rosebery's first Derby winner, Ladas, the horse, is said to have taken his name from the initials of a Society lady although an allusion to the ancient Greek runner seems more probable. To one side of the Ladas, Madans Walk cuts through to Rosebery Park and leads back to the town.

Before turning into Chalk Lane, we can look over the wall to see Woodcote Green House, dating from the late 17th century. Inside there is a Chinese Chippendale staircase and a rococo ceiling. Opposite the Ladas stands an attractive weatherboarded cottage at No 10 Woodcote Road, still looking like the neighbourhood corner shop which it was until the 1980s. Last owned by an American lady, this very convenient facility was lost due to cheaper price competition from the larger stores in the town. Next, at No 2 Woodcote Green Road, is Woodcote Villa, dating from the 17th century but with a mid/late 19th century brick facade and an unusual front door, probably of Spanish origin. Next door are three attractive tile-hung cottages linked together, probably estate workers' dwellings in an earlier life.

A little way along Woodcote Green Road on the left lies Woodcote Pond. Its surrounds were greatly enhanced, mostly by volunteer labour, to mark the year 2000, since when it has been Woodcote Millennium Pond. Opposite will be seen the south side of Epsom Hospital. All Saints' Chapel, a Victorian building originally serving the Workhouse, stood in the grounds here until about 1960. The late 17th century York House on Woodcote Green Road was used as nurses' accommodation until it was demolished and replaced by a modern building, less interesting externally but doubtless more suited to its purpose within. Across the road is Woodcote House ,the home of the Northey family for nearly three decades, late 17th century with 19th century alterations to the façade. It can be approached by a footpath leading diagonally from Woodcote Green Road and the corner of Pine Hill. It has recently been refurbished and restored as apartments.

Returning to Chalk Lane and continuing past the Ladas we come to the 17th century Westgate House, formerly Woodcote Place. For some years this was used as an hotel, followed by a derelict period and a fire, after which fortunately the interior was completely rebuilt with alterations to the mansard roof; it now serves as a handsome apartment block. Facing it is a group of small cottages (Nos 2–14) of four different designs; No 4 incorporates a 16th century timber framed barn while Nos 8 and 10 were a single house when first recorded in 1680. This group of cottages form a picturesque scene and they are much painted and photographed.

Opposite the cottages is a small yard, originally the stabling to Woodcote Place. In the 20th century it became a riding school and stables and, when this was found not to be viable, it was successfully converted into residential accommodation around the central courtyard. The entrance is in Worple Road ('worple' meaning 'field path' was an old path from Epsom village to the Downs). In times past, the course of Worple Road ran further to the south,

exiting further along Chalk Lane closer to Woodcote Grove. Beyond the cottages is the Amato, a pub with a small garden. Originally the Hare and Hounds, it was renamed after the 1838 Derby winner, owned by Gilbert Heathcote of the Durdans. A well-head by its entrance has achieved fame, even outside England, through the mysterious way each year in which the name of the impending Derby winner appears chalked on its woodwork before the race – not invariably correct but with an enviable success rate!

Next comes Maidstone House, built about 1700 and carefully restored. It faces Woodcote Grove, a house built in the late 17th century by Josiah Diston, Deputy Governor, Bank of England. At first it was known as Mount Diston; later it came into the Garland family, and was given additional wings in the late 19th century. Half-hidden behind its wall, it was acquired by Sir William Atkins for the headquarters of his Atkins engineering group in 1957. Forming the third side of a triangle with these two houses is an early 18th century building which since before World War II has been the Chalk Lane Hotel.

At this point Woodcote End leads off to the right and, passing a number of modern dwellings, reaches the current entrance to the Durdans. The west side gateway, with the date 1878 inscribed above it, leads into the coach-house courtyard. A little way further along the lane on the right is another of the springline ponds, while to the left stretches a fine 18th century listed boundary wall on which several old dates have been carved. There is no longer a way out at the end of this lane, which leads to a handful of houses known as World's End. So one must walk back to the Chalk Lane Hotel, this time passing it by on the right. Snowdrops grow in profusion hereabouts in the spring, perhaps another Rosebery legacy.

We now approach the Durdans and its outbuildings from the east side. Originally a Tudor mansion, Durdans was rebuilt by the 1st Lord Berkeley in the 1680s. Frederick, Prince of Wales, lived in the property between 1731 and 1747. This house was demolished and partly reconstructed, but during the rebuilding it was destroyed by fire. The house was finally rebuilt in 1764. Durdans was acquired in 1872 by Lord Rosebery, Prime Minister in 1894–95, and owner of Derby winners – Ladas (1894), Sir Visto (1895) and Cicero (1905). These three, along with Amato (1838), are buried in the grounds. The house was enlarged by Lord Rosebery but reduced back to more manageable size in 1956. It is now in separate ownership from the rest of the estate. As well as the four equine graves and a grotto, the estate contains a unique riding school of 1881, equipped with a dais at one end from which his Lordship could inspect and judge the horses. Nearby are the stables, some of which may be 18th century, while the Cicero yard dates from c.1900 and forms three sides of a square overlooked by a green dovecote tower. All these are privately owned and not usually open for viewing.

Continuing up Chalk Lane, the visitor's attention will be caught by the fine ornate gate of wrought iron, taken from the house of the Duke of Chandos at Canons in Edgware and still bearing his monogram. This was installed when the main entrance to the house was altered on the east side, so that it could give a view to an avenue which was approached by a driveway from Ashley Road. It is by this gate that the best view of the house can be secured. A second ornate entrance, the Ladas gates, can be seen together with its listed gatehouse on Ashley Road. The visitor can now walk on along Chalk Lane up to the Racecourse and view the Prince's Stand, the Queen's Stand and the recently built Duchess's Stand if so wished; alternatively turn back to the Town Centre by way of Worple Road along the side of the impressive brick wall, or head along Madans Walk. This is also bounded by a brick wall and features, on the left, another imposing 18th century wrought-iron gate which has been quoted as 'the grandest back-garden gate' in the town. Originally it gave access to the garden of

Woodcote End House.

HIGH STREET (EAST)

Returning yet again to the High Street at the crossroads in the town centre and looking eastward we are with the important exception of the Spread Eagle and its immediate neighbours - in an architecturally and visually quite different world. A present-day Epsomian, taken to the crossroads and transported back 100 years, would have little difficulty when looking west in making out where he was, despite the many changes in the interval. But turn around and he would totally fail to recognize the scene east. In 1934 and under pressure from the Ministry of Transport, which was anxious to improve the A24 trunk road to the coast, the Council had agreed to the widening of High Street (East).

It was then just half its present width and with increasing traffic including double-deck buses and delivery lorries was becoming congested (nothing much changes!). The approved plan was to pull down everything on the north side and double the carriageway - double, not dual; the barrier down the middle is a recent addition.Hitherto both sides were a mixture of mainly 19th century buildings but with some 18th century survivals and a few 20th century newcomers, mostly small medium sized and with a considerable variety in design, size and height. On the southern side about a third of the way along a few tiny, tumbledown timber cottages known as Rabbit Hutch Row still existed well into the 19th century, opposite a house dubbed Frog's Hole with its floor level markedly below its neighbours!

It need hardly be remarked that the proposal to transform High Street (East) in this manner gave rise to much local dispute at the time. However, given the increase in traffic through the 20th century, the failure to go ahead with a by-pass (which had been planned in some detail by 1932 but never implemented, largely because of the war in 1939) and the later rejection of at least two different schemes for a relief road (the inner Relief Road and subsequently the Southern Link Road Extension, both in turn causes of controversy but supported by the Protection Society when mooted) it has to be concluded that the widening was inevitable.

The occupants of the premises on the north side were local businesses in the main and a number of these survived the destruction of their shops, etc., some by moving away from the High Street. One such firm to do so was a still flourishing company which is among the oldest and best-known as well perhaps most widely recognized Epsom house. Epsom Coaches indeed began its life from a base in High Street East in 1920 when the firm of Richmond & Reeves (H.R.Richmond Ltd from 1933) acquired covered accommodation in the yard between the road and the railway. It was accessed by a very narrow inlet from the High Street, where a rather wider Boots Car park approach was later located - and still is though car park no longer.

One inevitable consequence of the road widening was the contraction of the space behind, up to that time taken up with a number of stores and other structures. Realizing that their garage - then known as Brighton House Garage from the name of an unrelated shop at the front - would not provide a viable long-term base for an ambitious concern with ideas of expansion, Richmonds in 1934 sought an alternative and moved to 37 South Street where they remained until 1971 on transfer to a completely new operational base at Longmead. A partial return to High Street was made in 1992 when a travel agency was opened at No 73 on the south side, but it was subsequently sold off in 1999 though the agency still remains at that address.

A completely new north side was needed and this was brought to fruition with what at first glance might appear to be an extended homogenous terrace, but is actually made up of varying but harmonious designs of standard height affording a pleasing overall effect. Look for instance at Lloyds Bank at No 64 on the corner and compare with its neighbours at Nos 58-62 with pilasters and pediment flanked by stone urns, and those with the adjacent properties to their east.

Or again, observe Macdonalds at Nos 36-40 with its six classical pilasters - originally occupied by Burtons multiple tailors - and those on either side. As the redevelopment progressed, many of the old shops co-existed for a time in front of their modern replacements. Lloyds had even put up a new bank in 1935 on the old frontage line when there was still doubt about the rebuilding project but had to pull it down and start again on the new. Even in 1938, the not inconsiderable bulk of the 4-storey mid-19th century Railway Inn still traded on its old site at the far end, forming a neat bottle-neck. Next to it and curving round to East Street stood a row of four 19th century shops, originally houses, of plain but pleasing appearance; they included Boots the Chemist's first venture into Epsom in the Edwardian years, one of the first multiples to arrive. And next to these just before the railway bridge was the Cinema Royal, entertaining Epsom from 1911 to 1938 in a distinctive converted building with five arches on the ground floor for its windows and doors. Seating some 500 patrons, it showed the town's first talkies (films complete with sound track) in 1929 prior to which the films were silent but often accompanied by a piano or sometimes a small orchestra making up the music as the film unrolled.

All these were demolished by 1939 but with World War II looming, the spaces were to remain vacant until the building programme could resume in the early 1950s and it was in 1955 in the case of the last-mentioned when Waitrose could move into its newly-opened store. Directly behind the Railway Inn a new building erected in 1939 became the Charter Inn - Nos 28-30 -the manager of the former taking over its replacement. Although this pub closed in 1970 and was then divided into shops, it is distinguishable from its neighbours by the white semi-circular fans over its first-floor windows and it too is topped by a pediment. As already indicated, the space between the Charter and East Street railway bridge remained as waste ground through the war years. It was in 1955 that Waitrose came to Epsom and moved into its new store next to the Charter Inn after a short occupation by Courts furnishers.

Mention of Boots is a reminder of the opening between its present shop at No 44 and Quality Seconds at No 4 which until quite recently led to what was usually referred to locally as Boots car park but which is now occupied by the new Ebbisham Centre. A brief look in here in Derby Square reveals an imaginative equestrian sculpture of a pair of galloping racehorses by Judy Boyt commissioned just a few years ago. One has the name Diomed (winner of the first Derby in 1780) carved into it. The other Galileo (winner in 2001, the latest winner when the work was conceived or executed).

Arriving at the railway bridge, we have perhaps surprisingly not finished with the street's even numbers, for the last premises adjacent to the railway lines turns out to be No 12 and reminiscent of the situation at the western end where it was necessary to cross the road to find the last few numbers. Here again No 10 and below lie over the road in the small group of late 19th century buildings between the bridge and Upper High Street corner. These were built, as indeed were the properties on the north side of Upper High Street, on the site of Ormond House, a large house facing the High Street and owned in the earlier and middle

years of the 19th century by the locally famous Henry Dorling, printer and publisher who became Clerk of the Course on the Downs in 1839 and lessee of the Grand Stand in 1844. He and later his son were instrumental in considerably developing and improving the course facilities. By his second marriage in 1843 to Elizabeth Mayson, mother of four, he became step-father to Isabella who went on to gain widespread and lasting fame as Mrs Beeton.

An impressive iron-built coach-house on the north side of Ormond House was demolished in 1859 to make way for East Street bridge (which became known locally as Volunteer Bridge) when the LBSCR rail line was extended to a junction with the LSWR line. The house itself was pulled down later and the short terrace of shops already mentioned erected on the site. Ormond was another Derby Winner (the name is sometimes spelt as Ormonde) and the name Ormond House still survives on the entrance to the accommodation. No 2, which some older Epsomians will recall as Coppins drapery store; even in its final surviving years of the mid-20th century it still contrived to maintain a quaintly old-fashioned atmosphere. It was later succeeded by wal1paper and paints up to 1998 the latter in turn by Dream Beds. Nos 4/6/8 carry the name Cadogan House and this group echoes the triangular gable then so prominent round the corner in Upper High Street and also sports an architectural conceit in the form of a pair of small arches at first-floor level. No 10 immediately next the bridge is a smaller and later infill. These are all turn of the 19th/20th century.

The south side of High Street (East), Nos 1-89, by contrast, has never undergone wholesale transformation but lives on as a mixture of style, size, height and age, with a gradual process of updating to meet changing needs. Apart from the Spread Eagle, it has no building of particular historical or aesthetic importance. The Spread Eagle (listed) dates from the late 17th century - a date of 1680 has been quoted - and its exterior has remained little altered from its early days. In the 19th century it became a favourite meeting point for racing enthusiasts attending the Derby and it continued its existence as a pub until about 1990 by which time the progressive deterioration of its interior led to the decision to surrender the licence. Fortunately, after a period standing disused and empty, it was bought by the well-known local firm of Lester Bowden - then coming up to a century of trading in Epsom - and after a major renovation re-opened in its present guise in 1994.

The two large black birds (not original) but put up in the later days as a pub are a reminder that at one time the name was the Black Spread Eagle - symbol of Prussia, an ally in that period. Its immediate neighbours at Nos 85 (Cancer Research) and 87 (Michael Everett) (both listed) are of 18th century origin and by the latter there still remains a former entrance to the old stable yard; in fact there were two entrances, the second coming in from Ashley Road, now transformed into a small shopping precinct displaying the title Spread Eagle Walk. The west side of No 87 was lived in as a house up to the 1920s but by the 1930s became an off-licence of Epsom wine stores and has remained as a two storey shop under various owners up to the present day.

Having looked at this end of the High Street, albeit more briefly than its western section, we come to its east end where once stood another public water pump, later replaced by a horse trough, in fact a pair of them at one stage, apparently much used by the gypsies at Derby time. The trough was still in situ well into the post WWII era and has now been transferred to the pedestrian area at the western end. After the widening of the road and probably post WWII a roundabout was constructed at this point, displacing the horse trough, and much more recently the roundabout has been superseded by a system of traffic lights and pedestrian crossing points with islands.

UPPER HIGH STREET

At the eastern end of the High Street there is in effect another set of cross- roads. Bearing left under the railway bridge is East Street and the road to Ewell, and straight ahead (more or less) is Upper High Street and on to Drift Bridge and Banstead, while round to the right lies Church Street, our next focus of interest, but before we set out along it, a glance around may be worthwhile. East Street actually begins at the north side of the bridge; it was not historically the way to Ewell but fizzled out in an area once known as Wapping. The Ewell road lay some hundreds of yards to the east, probably along the line of Church Road and Windmill Lane.

Upper High Street was originally Station Road and just led to Epsom Town Station, built by the LBSCR as the terminus of its 1847 branch line from Croydon via Sutton, which was extended in 1859 to a junction with the LSWR line from Waterloo and Wimbledon, and thence on to Leatherhead. It is understood that at the very outset the station lay a little way to the east of its subsequent site and it is not unlikely that initially there may have been little more than a single raised platform with a booking hut, handling half a dozen trains in and out a day. It would also seem very possible that in the early stages the access to the new station, which lay along the south side of the Ormond House property and with very few, if any, buildings along its length, would have been little more than a path or trackway. However as time passed and the train service increased, with the number of passengers and the quantity of freight handled, especially after the 1859 extension, pressure for development would become inevitable.

So far as the railway itself was concerned, a brick-built engine shed was constructed in the 1850s on the north side of the line with a turntable and some sidings, while on the south side a small goods yard was built to handle coal and other freight including livestock. This yard lay across the line of the road, which ran only as far as the station, and it was not until late in the 19th century, not earlier than the mid-1880s, that it could be extended to link with Alexandra Road to form a more direct way from what had become the town centre to College Road, Drift Bridge and Banstead.

Further information on the railway infrastructure is contained in a later section of this survey, but it may be recorded that after the station changed from a branch line terminus to a through line, a new platform and building were constructed in the 1870s on the down (south) side a little nearer the town. It was not directly opposite the up (north) side platform; instead they were linked at their inner end by a subway under the tracks rather than by a footbridge. The new station building was of single-storey brick construction, distinguished by four prominent chimneys and two triangular gables facing both the street and rail side elevations. It was to remain in use for half a century with little change until 1929, when the newly formed Southern Railway, established six years earlier by Act of Parliament (along with the GWR, LMSR and LNER, the so-called Big Four, between them covering the whole of the country in place of the previous plethora of companies) and in the process absorbing the LSWR, LBSCR and other companies in the south of England, built the present station on the site of the former LSWR one and closed the station in the Upper High Street (by then named Epsom Town.

The new arrangement had the great advantage of permitting direct change of train between the Waterloo and Victoria/ London Bridge services. It was doubtless the occasion for the change

of name from the no longer appropriate Station Road to the less-than-inspired Upper High Street.

Remarkably however the old station building on the down line survives to this day, though no longer with the platform or canopy. It is hidden behind the group of single-storey shops, Nos 47-57, built where the station forecourt had once been. Representations to restore and convert the building to more positive use and perhaps bring it back "into the open" have so far been unavailing, although roof repairs were carried out in 1978 after a fire. Now only a glimpse of its top can be had from the road and that only from the opposite side.

Conversely to its action regarding passenger handling, the Southern Railway decided, also in 1929, to concentrate its goods activity at the former LBSCR yard and away from the very cramped LSWR facility at the main station. The old engine shed was sold off to Longhursts, a local firm of builders and builders' merchants with other railway land; this firm's premises, accessed off Church Road were eventually sold off for housing development (Delaporte Close) about the 1980s. The goods yard remained in active use as such up to May 1965 when the prominent raised signal box was demolished; this yard too, having been cleared in 1974, was sold off for development. It now includes the small housing estate, Stevens Close, a group of private garages and a modern office, Pickard House, initially built for the headquarters of the Little Chef roadside restaurant chain.

As we have already seen, Station Road was originally bounded on its north side - left hand going up - by the Ormond House property, or its shallow remnant left after the westward extension of the railway in 1859. Doubtless it was separated off by a wall or fencing, so there was little scope for change on this side. On the south side, a number of buildings called Railway Terrace were standing by 1869, although apparently little else; they have been described as large houses of which some remained in 1970. In 1883 two major buildings were erected, the Public Hall on the corner with Church Street and the Congregational Church a little further up. (They will both come in for mention later). When they were built there was just open space between them but by the turn of the century a block of seven 3-storey triangular-gabled buildings, with a shop at ground level and accommodation on the upper two floors - which was to become a common pattern in the town centre - were in place, and still are to this day, Nos 2-12. Minor differences in the detailing of the frontages indicate that the terrace was formed of two sections of four (lower) and three (upper) although at a glance it appears to be a single block.

It is not clear whether the Public Hall was regarded as being in Church Street or Station Road, or perhaps it was thought to be so important that it did not require a specific address. The Quadrant row of shops which eventually replaced it in 1938; merits its own separate address, but the writer's guess is that the Hall came within Church Street and it is covered in that section. Be that as it may, it lasted until 1934 when it had passed out of active use and was demolished. The Church, later known as the Lecture Hall (when another was built in Church Street in 1905) lasted much longer, till about 1990. Apart from religious activities such as Sunday school, Sunday evening service and standing in as an alternative to the main church when required, the Hall was the venue for a day school, seemingly privately run, in the 1920s/30s, as well as for other more secular events. However for its last 60 years it had sadly been almost lost from the Station Road street scene; for in about 1929 the church authorities under heavy financial pressure agreed to permit the construction on the forecourt of two lock-up shops fronting the road.

Thereafter the Hall could only be seen through a small gap between, and even here it was scarcely possible to take in the building with its lofty spire, although the rear end, less imposing, was entirely visible from the Depot Road area. Its presence was however indicated between the two shops, Nos 14 and 16, by an arched entry-way with the carved words Lecture Hall and an overhanging lamp. Oddly a view became opened up when the sites of the post-WW II office blocks in Church Street were levelled in preparation. Finally it was demolished in 1991 when the opportunity arose for the church authorities to concentrate activities at the site of their main church in Church Street, which by now had taken on the new name of the United Reformed Church.

Continuing along up Station Road, the south side became wholly taken up with retail shops as far as the station, by a process of new building, conversion or replacement of units of the old Railway Terrace. They comprised a number of shops numbered up to No 24, selling a variety of wares at different periods as the premises changed hands from time to time; they included one of Epsom's first super-markets when the new practice of self-service was introduced; initially it was an outlet for Worlds Stores, a former country-wide group, later becoming known as Gateway. It had front and rear entrances, the latter being accessible from an allocated section of the Depot Road car-park.

Nos 24 and 26 formed a pair of plain 3-storey semi-detached houses with basements, the former a dental practice with the Liberal & Social Club occupying the other. One wonders if these were the survivors of the Victorian Railway Terrace previously mentioned. Nos 28-30 made up the Capital Garage of Epsom Motors Ltd, with a large forecourt, showrooms and, the writer seems to recall, basement servicing and repair shops. No 32 was what was then known as the Labour Exchange where people without jobs sought work and drew "the dole" (unemployment benefit money); this too had a large forecourt on which a queue of applicants were wont to form. It was later moved to Clayton Road off East Street. No 34 was a store building for Post Office Telephones and will be mentioned a little later. Then came four large houses, Nos 36-42, while No 44 comprised the residence and offices of John Norrington, builder and decorator, with an adjacent yard and its front distinguished by a glazed display cabinet showing samples of DIY items for sale. No 46 was the Railway Hotel (opposite the station) and next door came another car firm, Pearces, later Allams. From that point on upwards as far as Church Road were houses, of which some disappeared to make way for the Upper High Street carpark. The hotel subsequently became the site of the Bejam frozen food store later Iceland. A very long-established footpath between Upper High Street and Church Road along the eastern edge of the car-park also forms the western boundary of the Pikes Hill Conservation Area, which however lies outside this survey.

Much of this section of the road which has been covered in the foregoing paragraphs has been entirely replaced in the 1990s, and further on still plans are currently being aired for further redevelopment up to and including the car-park, the latter to be replaced, it has been suggested, by another multi-storey facility. The scheme has already become the focus of considerable controversy and the outcome remains for the future. The 1990s changes brought one advantage for many local people; having lost all its earlier cinemas, Epsom's film-going public gained a new entertainment facility, the multiplex, at the very end of 1999 with the opening of the second Odeon with its eight screens and 2,100 seats. In addition to the cinema, three new blocks of three storeys each have replaced the variety of premises which previously stood there. Clearly, the process is not yet over.

Going back to the north side of Station Road/Upper High Street, which as we have seen, had little or nothing to mark it between what remained of the Ormond House property and the station up to the close of the 19th century, the eventual selling off of the former at last enabled new construction to be put in hand along the road as well as in that small part of the High Street just to the south of the East Street railway bridge. Interestingly what was then built has survived virtual1y intact for the past 100 years, after the shop on the corner; it comprised a block of four 3-storey triangular shops with accommodation above, Nos 1-7, similar to the block opposite, followed by the only 2-storey building on this side, a house with annex at No 9, which was for many years the seat of the Conservative Club but post WW II has become just another shop. Recently it has been acquired by the Co-Op as one of its "Welcome" brand convenience stores, marking the return of that group to Epsom, where for many years, pre- and post- WW II, the South Suburban Co-Op owned a group of four shops, with meeting hall above, just south of the Church Road turning in East Street. No 9 displays a stone panel at the top of its façade bearing the date AD 1908.

Nos 11-33 form a terrace, which is the defining feature of the street, of twelve shops, similar to the four mentioned in the previous paragraph. The whole present a harmonious vista of gabled facades stretching most of the way up. Open for business by 1900/1901 this became the fashionable shopping centre of Epsom, assuming the prestigious title of the Grand Parade. Among the original traders No 15 was distinguished by its name in large gilt block letters above its retractable canvas weather awning (a common feature of most main street shops in the earlier years of the 20th century, and some in side roads too). The name was J.Sainsbury and later the firm possessed two other shops there, No 15 for its butchery department and No 23, like No 21, for general groceries. The two latter, although neighbours were not connected, at least for shoppers. Closed in 1965, these local outlets were of the conventional counter and service type usual before the arrival on the scene of self-service and check-out.

The Upper High Street shops were too small for conversion and the company withdrew from Epsom; it was to be some years before it returned with its new super-store at the western end of the High Street. Another firm to try its hand in Station Road, though not on a permanent basis (so far) was Tesco (thought to have been at No 35) which later still moved to High Street East and then withdrew altogether. Many well-known local names were to be found in Upper High Street over the years, even in post-WW II years, offering service on an individual basis, which is becoming less common in our 21st century, but times change!

While Epsom Town Station continued in use, there remained an open space between it and the eastern end of the Grand Parade at No 33, apart from the perhaps temporary siting of a railway structure at some stage, but after the 1929 closing, a new block was erected as Nos 35-45. These continued the pattern of 3-storey shops and accommodation but were to a simpler exterior design - without gables - more characteristic of the post-Great War architectural thinking. Until quite recently, it was possible to walk in by No 45 and look along the back of the old station building but this view is now blocked off.

One interesting unit located at one time in Station Road was an early experimental automatic telephone exchange of American design, which in 1912 replaced the 1905 manual system with the first such facility in Britain. Epsom is understood to have been selected for this trial on account of its proximity to London and the heavy traffic expected from the racing.
For whatever reason the system was not perpetuated and reversion to manual was made, the latter continuing in use until well after WW II. So having had its taste of robotics, it was ironic that Epsom was destined to be one of the last places, long after Ewell in fact, to

surrender its love affair with human Hello-girls on the switchboard ready and able to "put you through". It would seem likely that the automatic unit was housed at No 34 on the south side, given that this building remained in GPO ownership for some years after.

THE RAILWAY COMES TO EPSOM

If the discovery of the Well on the Common in 1618 led to the transformation of Epsom from a small rural hamlet to a popular spa town, the coming of the railway in the mid-19th Century stimulated its growth and development into the town we live in today. It is worth reiterating in greater detail that led to the evolution of Epsom's railways.

The first railway line to access Epsom opened on 10 May 1847. It was projected by the London & Croydon Railway running since 1839 from near London Bridge to West Croydon. The L&C favoured the atmospheric principle for propulsion, in which a truck was connected to a metal tube between the rails and linked to a piston which was drawn along by a vacuum in the tube created by pumping stations at intervals and pushed forward by air (atmospheric) pressure. The system achieved some success .and even attracted the great BruneI but there were some inherent problems. The L&C proposed to extend its use to the new projected Croydon-Epsom line but the company was taken over by the London & Brighton Railway, to form the London Brighton & South Coast Railway (LBSCR), and the new owners wanted nothing to with atmospherics, instead relying on the steam locomotive.

The new branch ran to a small terminus near the top of Upper High Street (formerly Station Road - present-day names are used in this article), probably just east of Church Road. On the west side of the town a small independent company, the Epsom & Leatherhead Railway (ELR), built a single-line track from a point where today's station stands to another on the north side of Leatherhead and with an intermediate halt at Ashtead. The local station was described as spartan and comfortless. This line opened on 1st February 1859.

Next to arrive on the scene was the London & South Western Railway (LSWR) from Waterloo with a branch originally planned by another independent, the Wimbledon & Dorking Railway. Although the LBSCR and LSWR were not keen on the activities of small independent concerns in "their territory" they solved the problem by buying them out. The branch left the LSWR main line at Raynes Park and formed an end-on junction with the ELR at Epsom. A through service between Waterloo, Epsom and Leatherhead was opened on 4th April 1859. The LBSCR also bought into the ELR, extending its line from its existing terminus, with a new bridge over East Street (which was formerly known as Volunteer Bridge) to the LS WR station but the layout was such that its trains did not use the latter station. This extension was opened on 8 August 1859 enabling LBSCR trains also to run through to Leatherhead. The line was doubled by 1867. The LBSCR built an extension to Dorking on 11th March 1867 and to Horsham 6th May 1867, while the LSWR extended to Effingham on 2nd February 1885 to provide a link to Guildford.

The LBSCR which was running from London Bridge and Victoria in 1870 built a new station in the Upper High Street, to be known as Epsom Town, with staggered platforms connected by subway; its main building with its distinctive four chimneys survives to this day, concealed behind the shops at Nos 47-51. It also constructed a goods shed and yard, an engine shed and a lofty signal box close by, but these were demolished in the 1960s for subsequent residential development at the site from 1974 on both sides of the line.

On 22nd May 1865 the LBSCR opened a further branch from Sutton to a new terminus called Epsom Downs, immediately adjacent to Longdown Lane South (it was originally mooted to be located just 200 yards from the Grandstand but this was vetoed). It was a large affair with no less than nine platforms; most of which were used only on race days, but proximity to the course earned a major share of the traffic. The number of platforms was reduced to two in February 1972 and the station closed on 10th February 1989 to be replaced by a single-line structure 300 yards up the line closer to Banstead. The goods yard had already closed on 7th September 1964. The site of the former station with its Station-master's house and the very substantial lands thus released, were sold for housing development.

The Racecourse's traffic potential also attracted the attention of the South Eastern & Chatham Railway (SECR), which operated out of Charing Cross, Blackfriars etc and (since 1898) from Victoria, mostly into Kent. The SECR constructed a branch line from Purley via Tadworth to Tattenham Corner. The line was opened throughout on 4th June 1901 and remains in use to this day. In recent years it has been used for the royal special train conveying the Monarch on Derby Day. The station buildings were partially demolished on 1st December 1993 by an early morning empty train which ran through the buffers; they were quickly reinstated.

Epsom had one other standard-gauge railway, the Horton Light Railway, which ran from Ewell West Station into the hospital complex to the west of the borough. Opened on 20th April 1905 by a contractor to bring in building materials for the Long Grove Hospital, it originally crossed Hook Road on the level near to the Ewell West end but following a fatal accident in 1906 the line was altered to run under a bridge. The London County Council, original owners of the five hospitals, bought the railway in 1907 and constructed internal extensions in 1911. It had its own stud of tank engines and was used to bring in the copious supplies needed for the maintenance and support of its very large population. It is not clear that it ever carried passengers though there have been reports to his effect. Increasing reliance on motor transport led to declining use and it was abandoned in 1949. The track was lifted but traces of its former existence may still be found.

Returning to the main line, in 1923 by Act of Parliament the railways of Great Britain were with a few minor exceptions grouped into four large companies; one of which, the Southern Railway covered the south of England by absorbing the LBSCR, LSWR, SECR (already mentioned) and a few smaller concerns. The new company inherited a number of suburban electrified services and committed itself to an ambitious programme of electrification, initially over the outer suburban area and, from the 1930s down to the coast, using the third-rail 660 volt d.c. system. Thus the lines to Epsom and beyond were converted as follows: from Waterloo on 12th July 1925, from Victoria/London Bridge on 3rd March 1929, and the Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner branches in June 1928 (the former replacing a short-lived overhead electric system). Goods trains and some longer-distance and special passenger trains continued with steam haulage for some time but steam was finally phased out in July 1967 excluding an occasional enthusiast special.

Concentration of ownership enabled the new Southern Railway to solve the problem of having two separate stations in Epsom. Although LBSCR trains ran through the centre of Epsom Station, they did not serve its platforms and the lines joined (and parted) south of the station by Wheelers Lane. A completely new station in the art-deco style much favoured by the Southern was built on the site of its old LSWR predecessor in 1928/29, to handle both the Waterloo and Victoria/London Bridge line trains and was opened on 3rd March 1929. The

original 1859 edifice had been replaced twice and had still comprised only two platforms (for LSWR trains only).

With the commissioning of the new station, the old Epsom Town station was closed and partially dismantled, but the main station building was left in situ, as already noted. It was damaged by fire in the spring of 1978, but fortunately repairs were carried out. Attempts to find an ongoing use for it have not so far proved successful. (*adapted for residential use in 2013 Ed.)* Other changes consequential on the building of the new station included a new bridge to carry the railway (actually there are three separate bridges) over Waterloo Road, previously leading only as far as the station, to be extended westwards, facilitating considerable residential development to the west of the line, which had hitherto been largely open country. Prior to the new section of road, the only way through had been an 1896 footway through a low tunnel.

Redevelopment of the 1929 station has been mooted off and on over the past 20 years or so but, although there have been some minor changes, it remains much as it looked 80 years ago. The small LSWR goods yard, was closed on 3rd January 1928 and activity transferred to the former LBSCR yard at Epsom Town station leaving two sidings adjacent to Station Approach used for horse-boxes; these were taken out in 1986 and the land reinstated in the 1990s, while the famous signal-box on a gantry straddling the lines at the south end - wrongly supposed to have been listed - was taken out of use on 29th July 1990 and despite efforts to preserve it was demolished in 1993.

The four railway companies set up in 1923 and known as the Big Four were nationalised as from 1st January 1948 by Act of Parliament, to become known as British Railways and later British Rail (BR). The Southern Railway now became Southern Region of BR but apart from some changes in train livery, not particularly obvious on electric trains, things generally carried on in much the same ways. Of course with the passage of time change came about but that could have been expected anyway. A process of contraction began particularly in the area of leisure travel, but the main task of the railway in Epsom, the conveyance of commuters to and from London (incidentally, the term commuter was unused in Britain 50 years ago) still persists and today's Epsom commuter has much in common with his predecessor of earlier periods.

CHURCH STREET

Turning right out of the High Street we enter Church Street and moving on southwards we are now returning to Epsom's roots, the area in the near vicinity of the Parish Church of St.Martin of Tours, where the initial Saxon settlement was established a millennium and a half ago. Church Street has been described as Epsom's finest road and although this tribute related to the period up to the late 19th or even early 20th century, since when a number of its important houses have been demolished and in some cases replaced, some not, it can still boast a number of quality buildings some listed including Grade II* level.

When the centre of gravity of the town began to migrate westwards to its present-day location from the 17th century on, virtually all traces of the original hamlet disappeared and the areas became increasingly colonized by wealthy proprietors setting up various imposing houses for occupation, or in some cases as investments; then later in the Victorian era followed a number of villa type residences. Inevitably over the intervening years many old properties have been

demolished in turn, mostly but not all to be replaced by more modern buildings often with a commercial but some with a more beneficent motivation.

In the post-WWII era, as a growing emphasis on heritage and conservation was making itself more insistently manifest - but not before a number of fine old houses had been irrevocably lost - Church Street became a priority for designation as a Conservation Area. This comprises Church Street itself, south of but not including the United Reform Church and the Police Station, as far as Burgh Heath Road; it also covers Grove and Church Roads but not their houses except for the row immediately to the east of St Martins, Downside, Heathcote, Laburnum and part of Worple Roads and part of the Parade.

It should be borne in mind that even into the 20th century, the road was of lesser width than now, apart from the section south of Worple and Grove Roads which has been subject to much less change over the years. The existence of brick walls, some quite tall and others surmounted by iron fencing kept many of the properties shielded from the road and passers-by; it also accentuated the perception of narrowness. Later in the 20th century with growth in vehicular traffic, it became Council policy to widen the road, taking advantage of alterations and demolitions, and in the main it was achieved in the section north of the Worple-Grove line.

Entering the road from the High Street, on the east side it begins at The Quadrant, a row of three-storey shops built in 1938 to a pleasingly simple design curving to the corner of the Upper High Street by contrast with the more ornate Victorian buildings between which they are sandwiched as well as the ones they replaced. The latter was the Public Hall, a large building already mentioned in the survey of Station Road/Upper High Street. This had been erected in 1883, its façade ornamented with two pilasters, a decorated pediment and balustrade despite which it seemed with its plain oblong body running back diagonally from the corner to have presented a heavy, even foreboding appearance (a judgment the writer readily admits based on photographs and, not on actual sight, although it did come in for some contemporary criticism). The main door, surmounted by the inscription ‘Epsom Town Club led into the (men only) club premises on the ground floor, and with separate entrances for the upper hall floor (ladies admitted) which was hired out for events, functions, meetings and entertainments; in the early 20th century the latter included ‘cinematograph pictures’ and the great explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton gave such a show on his Antarctic expedition. Then from 1916 to 1930 it was fitted out, somewhat hazardously, as a cinema under the name ‘The Public Palladium’ but with the opening across the road of the new and modern Capitol cinema, use of the Hall fell into further decline; it was closed and then demolished in 1934.

Immediately past the Quadrant is a short narrow road to the left, with a second just after the Technical Institute, both labelled Depot Road and leading into the area behind church and Upper High Street. Of the pair, the latter is the older, the name may no longer be apparent but this area was formerly the site of the Council’s base for its outdoor industrial activities such as cleansing etc. In 1902 the new electricity generating station was built there – prior to nationalisation in1948 electricity supply in Britain was very often a municipal undertaking, unlike the production and distribution of town gas which in most places including Epsom was a commercial operation, before it too was nationalised in the same era. The area no longer retains any trace of such activities but is largely given over to car parking; indeed it has been a parking place for many years, though on a more restricted scale than now.

The Technical Institute is the large red brick building with terra cotta ornamentation opened in 1896 with the active involvement of Lord Rosebery in the project and the same architect as the Public Hall, J.Hatchard Smith. With different names at various times, it has always been used for educational activity up to the present day, adult education, vocational training, evening classes, etc. By 1920 it housed the County Secondary School for Girls until this moved into a new purpose-built school in that year in White Horse Drive and later taking the name of Rosebery School. With their departure, the County School for Boys moved in until the acquisition of new grounds in Hessle Grove at Ewell in 1927; it became Epsom Grammar School until the famous Education Act of 1944 and Glyn Grammar School in 1952. The Institute was also home to the well known School of Art and Design; this foundation also migrated to its own new premises in Ashley Road in 1974 which in the past few years have been remodelled and extended. Prior to the 1896 Institute some educational work had been carried out in one of the buildings on the north side of High Street East.

Next to the Institute are two survivors of a group of four small shops modified from 19th century houses (Nos 11-17) and between these and the new Kirkgate office block lies the second (and now more frequently used) Depot Road. No 17 was formerly a printing shop and at another period was Mr Morgan's Dairy selling its own locally produced milk and products. There had been another in the High Street, Mr Skittens at No 107, and the writer recalls that in the 1970s it was still possible to make out on a wall facing the station at the end of Station Way a faded painted advertisement for milk from a farm in Alexandra Road. All this serves to indicate that until well into the 20th century Epsom remained a country town and consuming locally grown produce.

On its west side until recent times, Church Street began with three distinctive 20th century buildings, of which two were in the art-deco style of the 1930s while the third has replaced another of similar vintage and character. No 2 was built in 1937 as the municipal electricity undertakings offices and showrooms, nationalized in 1948; as with the gas showrooms in High Street West, its closing about 1990 was much resented by local consumers. It was then converted to a pub-restaurant, the Litten Tree and subsequently The Vestry, which was permitted to fence off a section of the wide pavement outside as an alfresco refreshment facility. No 4 was opened as the Capitol super-cinema (as the term then had it) with 1500 seats as well as a cafe-restaurant. The opulence of the interior decor of the cinemas of that period was supposed to have been influenced by the luxury transatlantic liners. Neon lighting proclaimed the presence of both the cinema and the restaurant, and the foyer was approached by a flight of eight shallow steps. Unlike the Odeon in the following decade, the Capitol was not part of a national chain but its owner-managers had a flair for eye-catching publicity stunts and a variety of these were put on, both inside and also more widely in Epsom. Up to 1937 Sunday cinema shows were illegal and live entertainment by well-known artistes were staged instead. Following local referenda, which permitted the citizens of individual towns to make the choice and usually, but not invariably, voted in favour, Sunday film shows began in Epsom in 1938. Meanwhile the restaurant, in addition to waitress service of light meals and refreshments, was the venue for other popular activities including that thirties favourite, the-dansant, as well as other social functions, some of a more formal character. By the onset of WWII such events were going into some decline. In 1947 there came a change of ownership and with it change of name to The Granada, the new company being the fore-runner of the well-known TV group of current times. The restaurant facilities, stage shows and stunts continued to form part of their repertoire, but despite this, the whole cinema-going habit was in decline nationwide and the Granada closed in 1960. For a time it continued being converted to a Keymarket super-store but it did not survive for

long in this guise and was then demolished. In its place the present store premises were erected, initially housing the famous London furniture firm of Maples of Tottenham Court Road and later by Allied Carpets, the new building being given the name of Capitol House as a link with the past, but as these words are being written, the site together with No 6 is once again under redevelopment.

Thirdly at No 6 were the motor showrooms and servicing centre opened in 1935 by the local firm, Woodcote Motors, previously T.Hersey Ltd, which had traded prior to that for many years in South Street as Epsom Cycle Works and later as Epsom Motor Works; the premises are still to be seen just inside South Street past Waterloo House/The Assembly Rooms. Tom Hersey was a well-known local character of forthright views. The ground floor of No 6 with the showrooms had vehicle access on the north side while the servicing area on the upper floor was approached by a ramp on the south side and in front the forecourt contained refuelling facilities. It was later acquired by University Motors and then by H.P.Edwards and subsequently by other motor firms, in the course of which changes the forecourt pumps were eliminated.

These three good examples of 20th century art-deco were of course erected on the sites of much older properties, residential with gardens and dating well back into the previous century, if not earlier. For example, early patrons of the Capitol would have seen a front garden on one side, perhaps both, as they went in to see their film.

Next past the car showrooms comes the Baptist Chapel of 1907, a plain building now approaching its centenary and originally within an all-round wooden fence including a neat piece of ground on the north side. Had the Southern Link Road Extension so confidently expected in the 1990s been carried out the centenary would have been denied since the plan was for the chapel to be demolished and the new road to begin on the site on its course to link up with Ashley Avenue. At No 8 stood Cromwell Lodge, an early 18th century timber framed cottage, which despite being listed suffered the same fate as some other old buildings in the town, a period of "constructive neglect" followed by sudden demolition. The empty site then stood derelict for some years except for the unannounced appearance of an advertising hoarding, much to local chagrin and protest in which the Epsom Protection Society voiced its anger. Its neighbour at No 10, Hope Lodge, also 18th century, still survived for some years as offices. At one time its future too seemed questionable, but latterly was reconverted to residential in the form of flats having had an extension built on. The site at No 12 was formerly occupied by a very large and attractive house with extensive gardens whose name lingered on long after the house been forgotten - Silver Birches. It was once described as being as old as any in Epsom and contained materials from the original Merton abbey (presumably from the pre-dissolution era) and Nonsuch Palace.

The site had stood empty once demolition of the house in 1984 as a somewhat non-descript open space serving little more than as convenient short-cut between The Parade and Church Street with a small parking area for users of the Clinic in the latter, but announcement of development proposals not only gave rise to fierce local debate but also attracted the attention of a band of professional protesters who set up an encampment there, to be joined by TV crews from home and abroad who scented a good story. After some weeks of stalemate however the protesters went on their way to a new trouble spot, the expected "battle" was avoided and development was eventually implemented. Today the large car park takes up the space and one has to say that few Epsomians would now deny that it fills an undoubted need and some might think that the present vista is better than it was before.

Crossing back over the road, the two post-WWII office blocks are too new to merit much comment, except to mention that one of them is actually the second to be built on its site since the 1960s. It may also be commented that up to 1934 one of the large houses that stood there was Bromley Hurst at No 33, notable for having been bought by the UDC from its own Town Clerk as its offices, although criticised by a contemporary observer as not particularly suitable for its purpose, and relinquished when the new Town Hall was built in 1933/34 in The Parade (to be extended in 1992). Bromley Hurst was demolished in 1934. Three years later the Council built the new fire station with its accommodation block for firemen; this was on the site of an earlier station dating from 1911 and it is interesting to note that Nicholas Pevsner, the famous writer on architecture and townscape gave the new building a word of praise. Up till the war in 1939, fire services were another municipal responsibility, but at that juncture the Government created the National Fire Service and after the war the task was devolved back to county level. Epsom's first "official" fire force seems to have been established in 1869 when the engine - horse-drawn – was reportedly kept at the Clock Tower (although this seems to raise one or two questions and presumably the horses were stabled elsewhere. There may well have been earlier fire-fighting arrangements, possibly private and insurance company based - after all this was at a time when many of the houses were still of wooden construction. Later in the 19th century, a fire station had been established backing on to the railway embankment close to Epsom Station at a point, now the east end of Station Approach. It was shown there in an 1896 map and was doubtless the one replaced in 1911.

Moving on past the fire station, Nos 39 and 41 proclaim themselves as the Conservative and Epsom Clubs respectively, both occupying former Victorian houses modified for their purpose, the former in particular having a newer entry hall grafted on to its front. The Epsom Club had in 1914 broken away from the Epsom Town Club, which as already has been mentioned had owned and used the Public Hall from 1883; it would seem that the latter organisation did not survive the demolition of its erstwhile home in 1934. Tucked away behind No 41, there had formerly stood a small 18th century house, Hollies Cottage at No 43, which had been listed.

This brings us to the United Reformed Church which has an interesting background in the evolving history of Epsom. At this point the writer wishes to stress that the ensuing notes are not intended as a definitive statement of the history of non- conformism in Epsom, which he is certainly not qualified to give, but as elsewhere are intended to indicate the context in which extant buildings have come into existence. Non-conformism, in the sense of reluctance or inability to accept certain elements of the doctrine or practice of the new Church of England had early become manifest in the 16th century but those who felt such doubts often continued to be practising members of their local churches, especially perhaps during the Cromwellian Commonwealth. This situation changed with the Restoration in 1660 and the Act of Uniformity two years later which aimed to enforce subscription to the 39 Articles and certain other provisions, and clergy who would not conform were ejected from their churches, taking like-minded members of their congregation with them. These "dissenters" would then meet in private premises but were frequently subject to persecution by the authorities, in spite of which non-conformism persisted; but 1688 brought the "Glorious Revolution and the accession of William and Mary in place of the deposed James II and in the following year the Act of Toleration afforded relaxation of the Act of Uniformity.

In Epsom the illegal meetings, or "conventicles", had been held in houses in or close to Church Street. Subsequently a purpose-built Meeting House on land facing the street - the site that is still in use to-day - was and is probably in use by 1724 but apparently closed by 1785, later to be sold off and falling into disrepair. The non-conformist cause was kept alive at Bugby's Little Chapel built in or about 1779 off East Street by the Rev William Bugby, one of its earliest Ministers in the Calvinist tradition. The chapel in Church Street was re-acquired, restored end reopened. It was extensively renovated and enlarged in 1846, but following disagreements a number of members seceded and set up a temporary wooden Protestant Evangelical Chapel in The Parade in or about 1850, until the breach was healed in 1878. Just prior to this however the Parade congregation had decided on a new, more permanent building and obtained a site in Station Road but with the reunion this came to fruition in 1883 as the Sunday school and Lecture Hall, an imposing building with tall spire; it also became the venue for Sunday evening services. Then in Church Street a new Congregational Church -also with a spire - was built on the site of the older chapel, opening in 1905, the other building being officially registered as the Congregational Church Hall in 1917, though frequently known as the Lecture Hall. Financial pressures led the Church to agree in 1930 to permit the construction of two lock-up shops in Upper High Street on the forecourt of the Hall, which resulted in its virtual disappearance from public gaze - unless one knew where to peer through a. narrow opening - except for a brief period when the site of the new post WWII office blocks inside Church Street were levelled, revealing a different perspective of the building.

Like other properties in Church Street, the Congregational Church was separated from the roadway, having a low brick wall with ironwork fencing and gate and these may have been surrendered during the course of WWII to assist the nationwide scrap metal drive. In July 1961, the main church was badly damaged by fire. The front was rebuilt to a completely revised design at its west end surmounted by a golden ball and cross atop a slender aluminium spire, presenting a much more modern appearance, and with the nave much modified. The new church was opened in 1964, the Lecture Hall having served as the venue for worship in the meantime. A post-WWII plan for a new church hall adjacent to the church was not initially realised but an opportunity in the late 1980s to acquire a parcel of land to the rear of the church enabled a new scheme to be drawn up to concentrate activities in a single site and with this being implemented in the early 1990s, the Lecture Hall was demolished. By this time, in 1972 in fact, two important strands of the non-conformist movement, the Congregationalists (also known formerly as the Independents) and the Presbyterians had come together in a reunion, formalized by Act of Parliament in that year, assuming the title of the United Reformed Church. In 1988 the church celebrated its tercentenary with the base date of 1688 already referred to, although as mentioned there had been earlier activity in Epsom (and elsewhere), and a display was mounted in the new church.

Before we move on from the URC, the writer makes no apology for the following paragraph by way of a diversion from our exercise in Church Street. He is aware that comparatively few in Epsom have seen or even know of the existence of the Bugby Chapel, but it is a little gem of a building with historical overtones. It must look much as it did 200 years and more ago and it has a number of old gravestones against its walls. 30 and 40 years back, it stood - behind the GPO building - in a little wilderness with some excellent and prolific blackberry bushes and flowering shrubs around - all uncultivated but of a flavour to which the writer can readily testify. In that era one or two paths led through from East Street and if one wished one might park one's car in that road without hindrance. Today one must go round by Church Road, turn off by Truelove's funeral parlour along Hawthorn Place and walk nearly to

the end, still entitled Prospect Place. There it stands, though in the intervening years it has served for a time as a synagogue and in more recent times as an office building. The door bears a descriptive nameplate The Meeting House and it now stands in a grassed area, its external walls treated in a lightly coloured shade, but its main features little changed. Between it and East Street but shut off from the latter are lines of pleasant new houses and a few older ones.

It might also be mentioned at this point that Epsom's Methodists had their first meeting place in a cottage on the Common and later in a barn in Furniss Yard (presumably behind the corner of West Street and Station Approach). They then moved to a distinctive and substantial building off Waterloo Road and approximately behind the site of the future Post Office later to be erected in the High Street. This new church was in position in 1896 and probably earlier. Finally in March 1915 they moved to the present location in Ashley Road which offered more scope for the development of church activities.

On the Methodists moving from Waterloo Road, their building seems to have been taken over by the Wesleyans. It was still marked on a 1932 map but was apparently no longer there by the end of the war in the mid forties. Instead the site was occupied by the Forresters Hall, which was rather a planer and smaller structure. (The Forresters were one of a number of Friendly Societies with a self-help motivation, which flourished up to the war when there was not very much in the way of social assistance but seemingly declined thereafter. It was demolished in the 1970s, regretted by some Epsomians. A colleague has told that the Saturday evening dances were a well recognised meeting spot for the young people of that time. With the disappearance of the Forresters Hall its vacated site became used for market stalls and car parking.

Another Baptist Chapel was established in the Dorking Road possibly post WWII approximately opposite The Hylands. It was formerly known as Salem but this name is no longer used. It is in the strict Baptist and Calvinist tradition and has no remembered links with Bugby's chapel.

So after this digression on the subject of faiths which stood aside from the Anglican Church, and the various marks they have made on the fabric of the town, let us return to Church Street and, leaving the United Reformed Church behind, we come to the Hermitage at No 45. At first glance, nothing very exceptional - but it can lay claim to being the oldest house in Epsom, the sole survivor from the pre-spa village. True it was much renovated in the past 20 years to fit it out for a further lease of life, this time as offices, but it contains elements dating back to 1600 and inside, its floor level is quite lower than its surrounds and its exterior was worked upon with the minimum of alteration. Immediately beyond are the old stables from another old house Acacia House or The Acacias which formerly stood where the modern villas are located now. There is also part of an old, possibly 18th century wall, one of many still to be found in Epsom.

Across the road and past the car park are the County Ambulance station and next to that the Police Station. Incidentally outside are three fine trees, one a magnificent cedar which unlike those a little further up, was able to survive the 1987 great storm. When opened in July 1963, the Police Station was occupied by the local unit of the Metropolitan force but some ten years or more later, their duties were taken over by the Surrey Police. Prior to 1963, Epsom's first station had been in Ashley Road from 1855; it was partially destroyed during World War II by a V1 flying bomb in July 1944 then rebuilt and reopened in February 1946. After the Met

moved out, the building was taken over by other occupants including Martin's Bank, a firm later to be absorbed by Barclays but subsequently demolished.

On the corners of Worple Road and Grove Roads with Church Street, there are a few fair-sized 20th century houses, but before crossing these side roads, there is one other building to mention, which has long since vanished and the location of which is uncertain, though its appearance is known from-a painting of 1823. This shows an attractive large two-storey house in its own grounds and described as the Charity School; the concept may have been introduced in Epsom a hundred years or so earlier, funded by donations by public-spirited citizens, though probably not in this same building. Early in the 19th century a national scheme for education of the children of poor families was instituted with a religious basis and the school in Church Street may have come within its ambit. It seems possible that it was superseded when in 1828 a new national school was built on the corner of East Street and Hook Road (then Kingston Lane); this was later rebuilt and enlarged, and lasted up to 1964, latterly being known both as Hook Road School and also as the Church of England School, catering for children up to age 11 - it is not to be confused with Pound Lane School built in 1907 further along Hook Road.

The Church Street Conservation Area reaches south to the foot of Burgh Heath Road, taking in Grove Road, Laburnum Road and parts of the nearby Church Road, Worple Road, Heathcote Road and The Parade. The stretch of Church Street south from Grove Road sets the tone for the area. It is narrow, almost enclosed in appearance, with a varied array of large buildings of good quality. The Cedars (13) (No 14) is of late 17th and early 18th century construction with later extensions and it has an imposing brick front and doorway. It takes its name from two magnificent cedars of Lebanon, sadly blown down by the great storm in 1987. Today two young cedar trees, one grown from the seed of the old ones, stand outside. The builders used mathematical tiles for an extension, which may be seen on the Worple Road side. Next door at No 16 is Cedars Cottage, a more modest 18th century building with 19th century bay window. Built as coach house and stables for The Cedars, this was privately occupied until quite recently. No 18, of the late 17th century with a 19th century porch, was the Vicarage until post WW1. There is a 19th century extension beside it with an interesting tile-hung tower, containing pleasant two-storey accommodation and a single-storey coach house. Then comes No 20, Richmond House (14), the central part of the late 17th century with a new early 19th century frontage. This is perhaps the finest house in this row, with its pilasters and pediment. It was converted and extended in 1995 and used as a private nursing home.

A detour can be made to Grove House (15), though it is not actually in Church Street. It is a large mansion, built around 1770, which stands in its own grounds and which has now been divided into apartments. It can be reached by a short diversion along Grove Road and into The Grove, taking the first turning to the left.

Returning along Grove Road to Church Street, we pass Beechwood (No 57) by the corner behind its old walls. This was built around 1870, and is used as offices. Between No 57 and the Church lie Nos 59 and 59A, Stone House (16). Formerly the two addresses formed a single residence. Stone House is an 18th century updating of a 17th century timber-framed house, while 59A is a 19th century extension. It has a modern doorway, put in when the two properties were separated. Right behind them, visible from the church forecourt but not from the road, is Church House (17), occupied by the parish offices and two halls on two floors.

This started life as a brewery and up to its closure in 1922, this brewery spread halfway across the church forecourt, shutting off the view of the west door from the road.

Across the road at No 24 is the early 18th century Park Place House (18) with later side wings, which was formerly Parkhurst. This stands end-on to the road, with its doorway entered on the south side up a semi-circular flight of steps. Nos 24A/B in its grounds formed the coach house, stables and accommodation for the outdoor staff. Tradition has it that Charles II provided stabling here for Nell Gwynne's horses, but as these buildings are early 18th century, they were not the ones used by the King's mistress. Today the two buildings are occupied by a single owner. Next again, and directly opposite the church forecourt, is Ye Olde King's Head (19), a weather-boarded house built in the late 17th century and converted to a pub in the following century. Its inn sign has for many years, displayed Charles II, who is further commemorated next door by Charles Stuart House. This is an office block built in two stages in the 1980s, on the site of the former Farm Garage (Ford sales and servicing).

Finally on this west side we reach No 50, National Counties House (20), the headquarters of the building society of that name since 1994; it was previously known as Ebbisham House. The centre section, dating from 1722, was built for an Epsom merchant and the original wrought iron gate is still in use. The two wings, added more recently echo harmoniously its 18th century design. Across the road, behind the wall that runs along Pitt Road and Church Road, stands Pitt Place. This is a modern apartment block which perpetuates the name of a splendid property on the same site, developed in 1770 from an older farmhouse. This was the place where the debauched life of the 2nd Lord Lyttelton came to an end at the young age of thirty five in 1779. Despite being under a preservation order the building was bulldozed in 1967 and, of its complex of out-buildings, only the 18th century ice-house was spared. The 18th century wall separating it from the church forecourt also survives. Today this forecourt is mostly used as a car park while at one time it was the site of the maypole with its annual observance.

And so we come to the Church of St Martin of Tours, Epsom's parish church. No doubt a church has stood on this very site since Saxon times, and one is certainly mentioned in the Domesday Book. The early church would have been built of timber but in the 13th century it seems to have been rebuilt in stone. This was replaced about 1440 by a new and larger church with a tower surmounted by a slender spire at the northwest corner, and this in turn gave way in 1824/25 to a still larger building, although the old tower was retained. Then around 1900 plans were drawn up for a massive new church in Gothic style, with a porch in a large square tower on the north side. In the event, only the eastern half was built, so that the chancel and transepts are of 1908/09, leaving the smaller 1824 nave along with the tower of c.1440. Oddly the two halves are at a very slight angle to each other, obvious in aerial views and easily visible from inside. This is the building that remains today, except that the spire was removed after storm damage in 1947. The tower is the oldest surviving structure in Epsom.

T.E.J.Dethridge (c.2005)