

# Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No - 158 - WINTER 2018

## CHAIR'S COMMENTARY

### Thanks To Our Members

As winter sets in, I would like to extend an especially warm welcome to those of you who came along to our October display in the Ashley Centre and signed up as new members. I hope you will enjoy being part of the Society and find items of interest in our newsletters. Previous editions are available for you on our website. To all our members, new and long-standing, thank you for your support which helps to make us a stronger voice in Epsom. In 2019, the Society turns 60, and we would love to see our membership reach 2,000 to mark this milestone, so if you have friends and neighbours who have yet to join us, please tell them about the Society and encourage them to become members.

### Your Voice in Epsom's Future and Its Conservation Areas

Epsom is at a tipping point: it faces the dual challenge of the need to accommodate significant change over the next twenty plus years, while retaining all the qualities we hold dear. I would encourage everyone, if you have not already done so, to respond to the Council's 'Future 40' survey, the results of which will inform their revised corporate strategy; and also, when it is available (in November 2019, according to the current timetable), the Council's draft Local Plan. The greater the level of community involvement in planning for Epsom's future, the more likely we will be creating the places and Conservation Areas of the future for the next generation to cherish. It is almost inevitable that Epsom's existing Conservation Areas (21) will come under scrutiny as part of the Council's Local Plan review, and face continuing development pressures. Thanks must go to my fellow committee members Alan Baker and Bob Hollis, who have been busy responding to a number of planning applications for developments in Conservation Areas in recent months, latest progress chronicled in this newsletter.

It's encouraging that so many local individuals (ECS members and non-members) take a keen interest in the heritage of our built environment: one planning application to demolish a distinctive building in the Town Centre Conservation Area (24-28 West Street) and has attracted over 500 representations from members of the public, with only 4 in favour of demolition and redevelopment. At the time of writing, this application is awaiting a decision by the Planning Committee.

### The Society and Civic Voice

In October, I represented the Society at the Civic Voice conference in Birmingham, whose theme this year was 'Conservation and Regeneration', two interlinked and relevant topics for Epsom. Civic Voice (the national organisation for civic societies, of which ECS is a founder member) is currently campaigning to raise awareness of the importance of Conservation Areas and the threats they face. You can find out more on their website and Twitter account: @civicvoice. We are also tweeting about their research and its relevance for Conservation Areas locally.

I am honoured to have been elected a trustee at Civic Voice and am looking forward to starting my three-year appointment in the near future. This new role will provide opportunities for networking with other societies, exchanging ideas and learning from good practice. I anticipate it will be an enriching experience for the Society as it embarks on developing its own future plans, direction and priorities.

## **Satisfied Eye International Film Festival**

Like many of you, I took the opportunity of having a film festival on the doorstep to enjoy the wonderful range of movies and short films showcased at Epsom's first international film festival 26 - 28 October. The event received excellent reviews, which bodes well for a repeat performance.

## **Langley Vale Wood**

As you know, England's Centenary Wood is taking shape over in Langley Vale, overseen by the Woodland Trust. The Society has been very pleased to support this project. One of the last days for planting is 15 December. If you would like to be involved, details are available via the Woodland Trust website and Twitter account.

Finally, I wish everyone a very happy Christmas and New Year. 2019 promises interesting times for Epsom.

**Margaret Hollins**

## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

With apologies to Harry Corben I am starting with a little history. Many of you will know of the Furniss family and may have read *Talk of the Town*, written in 1992 by John Furniss, a member of our Committee in the 1980s. This provides fascinating descriptions of people and places in Epsom and I thoroughly recommend it. His is one of the oldest of Epsom families and have lived in Epsom or Ewell since 1585. They were involved in many lines of business and until his retirement in 1983 John was director of the family firm of Coal Merchants, Garden Suppliers and Fuel Oil Distributors. He was also closely involved in amateur operatics among other things.

In his book he describes how, as a young man in 1849, his grandfather Thomas tried his luck in America where he was employed in a New York suburb as a builder, got married and had two daughters. His wife died some years later and he returned to Epsom in 1871. Working as a corn merchant and without a house of his own, he found a triangle of land in West Street between the railway viaduct and what is now Station Approach and in the late 1870s built a house there, and set up there as builder, corn and seed merchant. His architecture had a Dutch influence (from New York – formerly New Amsterdam) and his shop was on the corner beneath a rather fanciful façade. It is said that he used reinforced concrete, its first domestic use in this area, following his knowledge of its pioneering development in America.

*24-28 West Street:* This is the house that John built. His business had moved to High Street in 1927 and the building was occupied by Leaders estate agents on the corner and a number of shops on the West Street frontage. It lies on a raised area and is one of the unique and attractive corners of Epsom. A current application proposes the demolition of the whole block and the erection of a new 5-storey building with retail frontage and 14 flats over. The architecture is uninspiring. The existing building is not listed or locally listed but was recommended for inclusion as an extension of the Town Centre Conservation Area because of its architectural and historical value. We have written objecting strongly to its demolition. John thought it looked a little out of place, but this is its great advantage and it should be preserved as a historical asset. We pointed out that this Society was formed some 60 year ago to be vigilant about threats to local heritage and this is just such a case.

*Land at Mill Road:* We have always felt that the development of this overgrown long narrow strip of land between Mill Road and the railway cutting would be very unfortunate, but permission has been granted twice in the past, but not implemented, and sites for housing are now being sought desperately and all stones are going to be turned. The principle has therefore virtually got to be accepted. But any proposal must be carefully considered as to its extent and design and the land near the railway bridge must be kept as a wildlife reserve. The present application is for 31 units of housing in six buildings ranging from one to four floors in height. We believe the designs lack sufficient architectural interest, are too crowded on the site and are too high. The layout of the parking between the buildings would damage

the street scene. We have therefore objected that the quality is inadequate and that permission should not be granted.

*117, East Street:* This is a small two-storey pitched roof house near the junction with Kiln Lane and it is proposed to replace it with a three-storey building with seven 2-bedroom affordable flats. We consider applications to replace houses with flats, and there are quite a lot of them, on their individual merits, and keep in mind the need to find sites for more housing units, but in this instance we thought the design unattractive and the effect on the street scene unfortunate. We therefore thought the proposal should be refused.

*1 Whitmores Close:* This was another example of replacing a house with flats, on a somewhat larger scale. Whitmores Close is a small collection of similar houses, No.1 being on the corner of Dorking Road. The proposed building would contain six flats and attempts to match existing designs but it is of much greater bulk and would be an intrusion in this prominent and visible location. It is too large for the site and the parking is inadequate. We have therefore in this instance also asked for the application to be refused.

*2 Pine Hill:* An appeal has been sent regarding the refusal by the Council for change of use from 10 bedroom HMO to 8 flats. We will confirm our objection to the inspectorate.

*Epsom Cemetery:* It may be of interest that an application has been made to extend the cemetery. It is proposed to add the field in Ashley Road between the existing cemetery and Clear Height Stables. This is in the Green Belt but is an acceptable use and would not cause any problem to the street scene. We did not therefore see the need to make any comment.

**Alan Baker**

## **CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE**

This has been a most interesting period for the protection of our local heritage and conservation areas.

A comment of mine in the Autumn Newsletter relating to the conversion of single large houses into flats caused a 'storm' of remarks. Unfortunately I had placed the note within a paragraph relating to Conservation Areas, whilst I meant large house conversions in general. Our committee discussed the subject at length and decided that each house conversion proposal should be individually reviewed.

The main new and ongoing applications are as follows :-

*6 The Grove:* The Client has amended their plans based on objections to the scheme. The landscaping to the frontage has been greatly improved and there are also minor alterations to the front elevation. This proposal relates to the conversion of the house into 5 flats. The building sits within The Church Street Conservation Area.

*59 Ashley Road:* A developer is proposing to demolish the existing house and to replace with a block of 6 flats. Although the design tries to replicate the design of the house, the new building becomes 3 storey and is different to the detached houses on the north side of Ashley Road. ECS have objected to the scheme based on the car parking and landscaping arrangements, along with the disturbance it would cause to the immediate neighbours.

*The Albion Pub:* The old pub has been renovated and has re opened as McCafferty's. This is one of the best facades of Epsom, with glorious painting and plasterwork. Always a pity that the original pub name cannot be saved as part of our heritage ?

*The Clock Tower:* This must be the best known building in Epsom. This is Grade 11 listed and permission has now been awarded to carry out much needed restoration work to the brickwork, roofs and windows. Also included are repairs to the previous renovation works. Maybe with us all acting as Clerk of Works we can get it right this time!

*24-28 West Street:* This scheme is mentioned within another section of this newsletter. I would like to confirm that the delightful featured façade on the south east frontage is a local ‘gem’ that enhances the heritage of Epsom.

*Horton Chapel:* Ecology and Site Access Arrangements – At present under Council review. We look forward to the start on site of this most interesting of projects.

**Bob Hollis**

## **THE DOWNS.**

At the last Conservators’ Meeting I was shocked and disappointed to learn that some comparatively minor but irritating vandalism had happened on the racecourse - damage to some running rails and the doors of some starting stalls had the springs damaged.

A continuing problem has been the chafer bug larvae – they live underground for a while then come up and eat the grass roots before emerging. At this stage, birds and animals find them very tasty and dig for them. So much damage was caused that some races on 13<sup>th</sup> September had to be cancelled and others run over a shorter distance.

For a trial period of one year, the Conservators will allow the racecourse to use the grassy area in front of The Derby Arms – technically a hacking area – as a car park for major events. The British Horse Society is not happy with this decision. Your committee members made their own views known, but as a Society we have no influence over the Conservators’ decisions.

I attend the Consultative Committee meetings twice a year but only by invitation, not by right. Nevertheless, we are keen to support the Racehorse Training Industry and it was a hard decision to oppose the South Hatch Stables application for development. We felt unable to support it because of the need to build commercial housing in the Green Belt in order to fund the major improvement envisaged. As I write, the Planning Committee has not considered the application

**Angela Clifford.**

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Welcome to our new members, including those who joined at our Display in the Ashley Centre on 20<sup>th</sup> October. Those ‘manning’ the Stand enjoyed talking to our members and the potential new members who came to look at the Exhibition. Many thanks to all who assisted on the day, particularly those who prepared the Display stands.



## **GDPR**

All those who have given ECS their email addresses should have received an email in the past week or so regarding their data and how we deal with it. If you thought we had your email address and didn’t hear from us, please contact me on the email address below. If you would like to be informed by email of matters which the committee consider important enough not to wait for the next Newsletter, and did not receive an email from me recently, please let us have your email address. I can assure you that sending general emails to our members is a rare occurrence.

## **Newsletters by email**

On the topic of emails, I would remind you that you can receive your Newsletter by email if you prefer. You would still meet your Road Rep when he/she collects your annual subscription. Again, just let me know if you'd prefer to receive your Newsletters by email.

## **National Trust Passes**

Civic Voice, of which Epsom Civic Society is a founder member, receive these passes to forward to their members. Despite many phone calls from me to Civic Voice and from Civic Voice to the National Trust, the passes have not been forthcoming this year. Apologies to all those expecting to receive them; hopefully they will be available next year. I will keep in touch with Civic Voice on this matter.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary. Tel. 01372 728570

email [membership@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:membership@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk)

## **BATTLING AGAINST THE ODDS FOR STREET TREES** (from the Tree Advisory Board)

The fight to preserve Epsom & Ewell's cherished leafy environment for future generations is entering a critical phase following a series of setbacks. The Epsom & Ewell Tree Advisory Board (TAB) had raised sufficient funding for more than 40 new and replacement street trees to be planted in the borough at a cost of £250 a piece. Yet, as things stand, it's far from certain whether any will be planted at all this year following the erection of a series of bureaucratic hurdles that are even blocking the replacement of failed or vandalised trees that were planted just two or three years ago.

After being given approval 'in principle' months ago for 41 out of 51 planting sites originally proposed by TAB, underground services survey checks that the Borough Council insists have to be carried out under new Surrey CC guidelines, have recently ruled out all but 13 of the sites. Now the 13 planting sites that have been tentatively 'approved' by EEBC require a further layer of approval from Surrey Highways – even where the land is EEBC owned – with that department having a potential veto over each and every location

TAB chairman Mike Ford said: "We've come to a sorry pass when voluntary groups and concerned councillors who've stepped up to the challenge of replacing lost public funding for street tree planting appear to be treated as nuisances by an officialdom which seems to have become fixated with the idea that street trees are a luxury that can no longer be afforded.

TAB volunteers will be outside Metro Bank on the first two Saturdays in December (1<sup>st</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>) selling 2019 calendars depicting Rosebery Park's trees (see next item) to raise funds for future street tree planting initiatives and to get across the message that environmental degradation is neither inevitable nor acceptable.

## **ROSEBERY PARK TREES**

As there is much in this newsletter about trees, I thought I would add news of the trees in Rosebery Park. A very attractive booklet has been produced by the Friends of Rosebery Park describing a trail around the park naming each special tree along the way. A 2019 calendar featuring illustrations of the trees has now been produced. Further information from [jltwhitten@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jltwhitten@yahoo.co.uk)

**Editor**

## **ECLIPSE'ED (Harry Corben, by invitation)**

On Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April 1764 there was an annular eclipse of the sun. It was a grey day and astronomers were so disappointed because they did not see it at its best. Annular eclipses do not obscure the entire sun but leave visible a ring of sunlight around the intervening moon.

The Duke of Cumberland owned the mare Spilletta and at Cranbourne Lodge in Berkshire on that day a foal was born with a white blaze and white off hind leg. After some 250 years details are of course obscure but there seems little doubt that this foal – Eclipse - went on to become probably the most famous race horse in the land. Even his own parentage is open to question as some say his real father was not Marske but a stallion called Shakespeare. Both had covered Spilletta in 1763.

The Duke of Cumberland died a year later and the royal racing stable and stud went to auction. William Wildman attended with the intention of buying Eclipse following the advice of Lord Bolingbroke. There was some doubt about the timing of the auction and Wildman may have been able to make a fuss and buy Eclipse for just seventy-five guineas. The auction was apparently conducted by one Richard Tattersall who went on to found, in 1766, the firm of Tattersalls which became, and remains today, the largest bloodstock auctioneers in Europe.

Wildman leased a stud farm at Gibbons Grove just beyond Leatherhead. It consisted of 220 acres with a farmhouse and space for 60 horses but is now, of course, a small housing estate, Givon's Grove. Eclipse was said to be a rather ugly horse and of course there were no horse boxes to take a horse from stables to race track. They had to be walked where necessary, and with heats a horse could run some 30 miles and need a rub down and hence the building of the hostelry the Rubbing House, an earlier version of the current one.

Eclipse was bad tempered and unruly, so much so that his handlers at Wildman's stables at Leatherhead/Mickleham considered he should be gelded in order to calm him, but instead he was entrusted to a 'rough rider' George Elton, who would ride him into the woods at night. Elton was later prosecuted for poaching and was transported. Eclipse is remembered today because his male line descendants include Desert Orchid, Arkle and all but three of the Derby winners of the last 50 years and he won many races. After a five day walk to Newmarket he beat Bucephalus the finest horse in the stables of Peregrine Wentworth, a Yorkshire MP.

Wilding sold Eclipse to Dennis O'Kelly, an Irishman with his own notorious life style and Eclipse was moved the seven miles to Epsom. 'Eclipse first, and the rest nowhere' said O'Kelly and so it proved. At Epsom there were no starting gates but only a man who shouted 'Go'. There were probably cock fights and gypsies who offered to tell your fortune, food and drink stalls and gambling booths and of course pickpockets, one of whom was whipped to his death.

O'Kelly had paid 1,100 gns. for Eclipse and appropriated Wildman's racing colours of scarlet with a black cap at the same time. O'Kelly lived at a house on Clay Hill - now West Hill - where Kingswood House School now stands. He made his money through roguery and gambling and was the companion of Charlotte Hayes, the madam of one of London's most notorious brothels. He was known on occasion as Count or Colonel O'Kelly. He was never poor though sometimes short of funds. In 1771 he bought nine acres on Epsom Downs and built Down House, with stables and in the eighties built the house and stables at Clay Hill. On West Hill, still stands a sign indicating Eclipse, at one time a public house.

Eclipse won many races at Epsom and elsewhere and the odds – at one time - were '70 to one on' - so that there was no point in racing him and he was put out to stud. He earned £25,000 - a very large sum in the 18<sup>th</sup> C. - at stud and this was an indication of his worth at that time. The Royal Veterinary College near Potters Bar has an Eclipse Building with a statue of the horse and his skeleton in a modestly sized room.

Most of this information was taken from 'Eclipse' by Nicholas Clee and published by Bantam Press and I am grateful for its help.

## **EVENTS**

### **Buffet Supper**

On 19<sup>th</sup> October at the United Reformed Church Hall, Church Street, Epsom, the annual Buffet Supper took place and we welcomed our Mayor, Neil Dallen and his lady, Anne, to the occasion. Mark Bristow was a splendid bar man providing a welcoming drink and serving replenishments to the seven tables whilst a generous buffet from Studio Foods was served directly to the guests. Our Chair, Margaret Hollins, could not join us as she was attending the Annual General Meeting of the national Civic Society in Birmingham where she was elected as a Trustee. Malcolm Boyd and Alan Baker were the welcoming party.

The speaker, Warren Ashton, addressed us at rather great length on the subject of origins of everyday speech. Fifty-six members and friends attended the supper and the event finished at 10.30p.m.

It has been decided not to visit Bill's for a pre-Christmas lunch or to attend the Christmas pantomime, Jack and the Beanstalk, due to lack of interest by members. We plan to attend the Mill at Sonning for their Christmas lunch and matinee next year and details will be in the summer newsletter.

**Sheila Wordsworth**



The Mayor at supper with his Consort Anne, Alan and Margot Baker and Malcolm and Josephine Boyd

**Woburn Abbey Visit – Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019**

Our next visit is to Woburn Abbey on 22nd May. The cost will be £49 which will cover the coach and tip, coffee/tea and biscuits on arrival and then a guided tour of the Abbey at about 11.30 a.m.; lunch is included – see below, and afterwards members can wander around the magnificent gardens with a planned, departure time of 4.00 p.m. Regrettably we have to leave early in the morning – see below. Any non members can book after 1st February and if anyone has any problems or enquiries please contact me on 01372 273517.

**Sheila Wadsworth**

**Application for the visit to Woburn Abbey on Wednesday 22nd May**

Member/s Name/s.....

Address .....

Tel. No. ....

No. of tickets @ £49 pp ..... Total Cost .....

Any dietary requirements or allergies? Yes/No Please describe them

.....

Lunch. Please circle your choice from (a) Beef Lasagne or Vegetable Lasagne served with side salad and coleslaw or (b) Mixed salad, new potatoes with homemade coleslaw with the choice of Ham, Stilton, Cheddar, Poached Salmon, Quiche Lorraine or Vegetarian Quiche.

Coach collection. Please indicate

- (a) 8.30 a.m. Epsom Downs, car park behind Tattenham Corner tea hut
- (b) 8.40 a.m. The Methodist Church
- (c) 8.50 a.m. The Street, Ashtead.

Please return this form with your cheque made out to “Epsom Civic Society” and a stamped addressed envelope to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashtead, KT21 1LJ. (01372-273517)

.....

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

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

Printed: Print Centre  
Unit 6,  
Epsom Downs Metro Centre  
Waterfield Tadworth KT20 6LR

Website: [www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk)

E-mail: [info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk)