



NEWSLETTER

2016, Issue 3

June 2016

Chairman's Notes

Some may have noticed the report of a skeleton found in Fir Tree Road recently. I initially thought it to be associated with a number of possible Saxon burials found in the area towards Banstead cross roads. However, a little investigation by Jeremy Harte discovered that it was on a building site in the section of Fir Tree Road leading up to Epsom Downs and that it was investigated by an archaeologist brought in by the police – we've yet to find out whom. It is also thought to be prehistoric, probably Iron Age. However, the newspaper report stating IA coins were found with it was just plain wrong! This shows yet again how easily misconceptions can be generated. People it seems believe what they read in the papers!

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At the time of writing this piece the old Star pub on corner of High Street and Cheam Road has appeared on the market, for £950,000. This building has been empty since 2012 when it was closed by Hall & Woodhouse and reverted to the owners. At that time they were keen to renovate and re-let as a pub (see EEHAS Newsletter April 2013). Unfortunately suitable new tenants have not been found and it appears the owners have finally decided to sell on. This is of course a crucial building in the EVCA as well as being one of the oldest in the village, so it is especially important a suitable and sympathetic buyer is found who will treat the structure with more understanding than the developers of the old Threshers building, 15 High Street!

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July 6th Archaeology of the NESCoT site, by Alexis Haslam

August 3rd Members' evening/party

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September 7th Magna Carta through time, by Claire Kennan

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at St. Mary's Church Hall, London Road, Ewell KT17 2BB

Doors open 7.45 for 8pm start. Members free, visitors £4, includes refreshments.

April Meeting - Langley Vale Memorial Wood – Paddy Byrne

Steve Nelson

Paddy Byrne spoke to us about the Woodlands Trust and specifically their current flagship project – the Centenary Wood at Langley Vale. He outlined the work of the Trust from its establishment in 1972, by Ken Watkins, who formed the first Woodland in Devon as an initiative to nurture interest for “natural” woodlands at a time when few others were interested. The Forestry Commission being the only official body involved with trees and woodland development. However, the FC is primarily a commercial enterprise. The Woodlands Trust was and still is concerned over the loss of ancient or natural woodland cover. While some 44% of Europe is covered by trees it is only 13% in UK of which less than 2% is classed as ancient woodland. Since its establishment the Trust now runs some 1200 woods across England, Wales and NI.

Paddy explained what is meant by “ancient” or native woodland and how to recognise it – essentially it is that which has existed since c1600, an arbitrary date taken simply as that when identifiable mapping becomes available. It consists in the main of broad-leaved trees. Many of our now well recognised trees are not indigenous; the Sycamore is not nor is the Weeping Willow, an import from China. Other indicators are underwood bluebell cover, particularly the smaller old bluebell variety. There used to be a train of thought that the date of establishment of a wood could be estimated by the extent of bluebells present, although it is debated how valid this is. The exploitation of woodland has, of course, changed over time from largescale clearance in prehistoric times to the cutting down of trees in the post medieval period. However, woodlands decreased alarmingly during and after WW1 and WW2. While the Trust’s original aim was the protection of ancient woodland there is now a change of emphasis to the establishment of “new” natural woods.

The Trust’s current principle initiative is their Centenary Project, creating four new woodlands over the country as a legacy and commemoration of the First World War. Langley Vale is intended to be the largest of these. The site of 640 acres stretching from just south of the race course and Langley Vale “village” to the M25 was acquired in 2014. This is particularly appropriate as much of the area was used for training purposes in WWI. Paddy mentioned the possibly unique survival of the “flag pole” in Round Wood which became known as Gas School Wood locally, as flag poles there indicated the wind direction predicting which way bonfire smoke, used to simulate gas attacks, would go. The area was formally largely arable farming and, incidentally, some of the northern area was field walked as part of EEHAS Hinterland Project a few years ago. Since 2014 the Trust has been fundraising – some £9m is required. The project is currently at the stage of discussing the various environmental impact assessments that have been completed, with planning authorities and the Forestry Commission. A full archaeological survey was completed by SCAU in October 2014. The next, eagerly awaited stage will be to actually start planting. This is expected to be in November this year. Meanwhile you can become involved in the Seeds to Trees initiative or actually Buy a Tree to dedicate in commemoration of WWI or volunteer to help with the tree planting.

The Woodlands Trust is clearly a well organised charitable body with some 300 full and part time staff in offices across England, Wales and NI but is also heavily dependent on and committed to its volunteer sector. It is also extremely successful at fundraising – at least half of the £9m required for Langley Vale has already been raised.



May Meeting - History of Kingston, “That Famous Place” - Shaan Butters

Lou Hays

The subtitle, “That Famous Place”, is taken from Shaan’s most recent book on the history of Kingston upon Thames. As an acknowledged local historian, she has written a number of books and this latest is an updated and newly entitled version of a previous edition; it has been written with not only historians and students, but also the curious public in mind and is complete with Bibliography and notes for those interested in research.

The heart of the story covers the development of the area from prehistoric times through its metamorphosis from a ‘place’, into a full town and eventually to a Royal Borough.

There has been activity for hundreds and thousands of years in the area surrounding Kingston, Richmond, Ham and Kew. Finds including a mesolithic adze and 35 usable neolithic hand axes in the river at Kingston bear witness to this activity. Sites of possible Roman buildings and Saxon homesteads illustrate that human movements continued in the area.

Shaan took us quickly from the stone age, through the Bronze, Iron, Roman and Saxon periods. She covered the blend of fact and mythology surrounding the Coronation Stone; to the Domesday records showing it to be a rural area. On through the fluctuating fortunes as trade waxed and waned in parallel with the events of the age. The building of Hampton Court had a positive impact; the balancing act of sides taken in the Civil War; the positive benefit of coach travel was eventually adversely affected by the advent of railways which brought a different prosperity together with problems of over population.

We chased through the events of the 20th century and the growth of the aviation industries

and other light industries bringing us to the most recent changes wrought by the University and the cultural impact that this has had.

These notes are only intended to give a flavour of what was a fascinating insight into the history of Kingston, but brevity can do small justice to the talk which was delivered with panache and an in depth knowledge by Shaan Butters. For those wanting the full story, it can be found in her book, "That Famous Place". Our sincere thanks to Shaan for her lively and absorbing talk.

History of Epsom Speakers Club

Elizabeth Bennett

Epsom Speakers Club is part of an organisation called Toastmasters International, which was founded by Ralph Smedley in California in 1924 to teach Public Speaking and Leadership skills. TI has no connection with the toastmasters in red coats who officiate at formal banquets.

ESC itself was founded in October 1966, and is one of the three oldest TI clubs in this country. It was originally known as Epsom Toastmasters. It received its Charter at the appropriately named Charter Inn, a pub in Epsom High Street which has long since disappeared. The Charter dinner was held on Friday 24 February 1967 and was attended by the Mayor. The first AGM was held at the Spread Eagle Hotel on 15 June 1967 and Club meetings from then until 16 February 1970 were held at the Spread Eagle. The venue for earlier meetings is not given in the minute book.

A committee meeting on 7 January 1970 decided to look at Bourne Hall and the Queen Adelaide as possible venues. The first club meeting at Bourne Hall was held on 16 March 1970, a month before the official opening by the Lord Lieutenant, The Right Honourable The Earl of Munster P.C. K.L.I., on 17 April 1970. A committee meeting on 18 March decided to make the arrangement permanent. ESC has met at Bourne Hall ever since and is probably the longest regular hirer of the facilities.

ESC was originally a male only Club and remained so until a resolution was passed at the 1986 AGM "That club rules be changed to admit ladies". Before that it held "Bring a Guest" evenings when ladies were welcomed. One or two attended regularly as guests and one of these became the first female President in the 1990/91 season. In the 1970s Bourne Hall provided a bar for the club's exclusive use and there were dinner meetings every three months. The President's Dinner, also held at Bourne Hall, was a formal black tie event with the Mayor invited as the principal guest.

Rising costs forced the Club to discontinue these events, except for an annual informal President's Dinner and a buffet dinner in 1991 to celebrate its Silver Anniversary, which was attended by a number of former members. Like many clubs ESC has had its ups and downs. It has survived this roller coaster, and plans are going forward to celebrate its Golden Anniversary.

This article could not have been written without information provided by past and present ESC members and my thanks go to them.

LOCAL FINDS

Thanks to Jeremy Harte of Bourne Hall Museum for this information.

Saxon Coin

This Saxon period coin, a fine example of a silver “sceat”, was found by a metal detectorist in 1996 near the junction of Banstead Road and The Bridle Path. It is thought to have been minted in The Netherlands in around 700-750. Formally it is a “Series E, secondary phase variety c-related (sub-variety h)”, but colloquially known as a “porcupine” sceat.



Portable Antiquities Scheme / CC BY

Mirror Case

This fourteenth-century punched-point mirror case was found by Nathan Brewer in Nonsuch Park.



Forthcoming Events

Jutland: Family activities

Friday 3rd June 2016, The National Archives, Kew

This afternoon will feature a number of nautical craft activities that help tell the story of the Battle of Jutland. Children will also learn about Jack Cornwell whose valour during the battle was recognised when he was awarded the Victoria Cross, making him the youngest recipient of the medal during the First World War. This event will be run in conjunction with the Scout Association.

For ages 5-10. Registration is required. Free. For further information:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/jutland-family-activities-tickets-22785078784?aff=culture24>

Surrey in the Great War: A County Remembers Showcase Day

Sunday 5th June 2016, 1-6 pm, The High Street, Caterham, CR3 5UE

One hundred years ago, Surrey was playing its part in the first global war between modern, industrial nations. It was a conflict which called for previously-unthinkable sacrifices by the county's people, young and old, rich and poor. How did Surrey respond? Surrey Heritage, through its four-year Heritage Lottery Fund-supported project Surrey in the Great War: A County Remembers, calls you to enlist to help to investigate this question. They're hosting a gazebo at the Caterham Festival street party, to showcase Surrey in the Great War. Visit their gazebo to discover local displays on east Surrey life on the Home Front; find out about volunteering opportunities; and bring your family WW1 memorabilia and stories to be looked at by their team. Family craft activities will be available.

For further information:

Contact the project team on 01483 518239 / 518238 or surreyinthegreatwar@surreycc.gov.uk or visit the project website: <http://www.surreyinthegreatwar.org.uk>

Eye in the Sky: Gathering First World War Intelligence

Tuesday 7th June 2016, The National Archives, Kew

Their experts will offer insights into the processes and circumstances under which these images were taken, how intelligence gathering changed as a result of the war, and what these photographs meant from a tactical perspective. They are proud to present a new set of events that delve into the shadowy realms of espionage and intelligence gathering. This season they will be looking at how intelligence was collected during the First World War and how a nation's secrets are ultimately protected or betrayed by the will and whims of individual personalities.

Registration is required. Cost £10.00 (Friends of The National Archives: £8.00). For further information:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/eye-in-the-sky-gathering-first-world-war-intelligence-tickets-22784199153>

Ordnance Survey Ancient and Modern

“History of the Ordnance Survey”, by Colin Brown. A talk to KuTASoc onThursday 9th June 2016, 8 pm, Surbiton Library Halls, Ewell Road, Surbiton.

The Somme

Saturday 11th June 2016, Bourne Hall Museum, Ewell

Just 141 days later, when the offensive ended, a huge total of 420,000 Allied men had been killed or wounded, including 70 men from Epsom and Ewell. Learn about one of the darkest days for the British Army and discover why the human cost was so high. See the weapons and equipment that the troops used to live and fight.

For ages 7-13. Cost £5.00 (including one accompanying adult).

Somme Day

Saturday 18th June 2016, Bourne Hall Museum, Ewell

The battle was marked by terrible losses and seemed to epitomise the futility of trench warfare. On the first day British casualties were 57,000 and by its end the loss on both sides would be more than 1.5 million men. Learn what it was like for the Tommy, see his equipment and weapons. See the working drill for a machinegun, the weapon that cut men down in their thousands.

2016 Subscriptions

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 2016 became due on 1st January. Subscriptions can be paid at the monthly meetings, or by post to the Treasurer, Jane Pedler, or the Membership Secretary, Doreen Tilbury. Subs are £10 for ordinary membership, £14 for family membership, £6 for student, or £14 for corporate and school memberships. A slip is provided below:

2016 Subscriptions

I (we) wish to renew membership for 2016 Amount enclosed.....

Name and address.....

.....

.....

E-mail address.....

Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society

Founded 1960 Registered Charity No.259221

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If you are interested in this post please contact the Secretary.

If you wish to contact any of the committee please e-mail info@epsomewellhistory.org.uk

Please send copy for the next newsletter to the Newsletter Editor by 12 August 2016

Visit our website

www.epsomewellhistory.org.uk

Gift Aid

Just a further reminder that if you pay tax EEHAS, as a charity, can claim Gift Aid on your subscription or donations, at no cost to yourself. In order for us to do this you need to sign a Gift Aid Declaration form which is available at meetings and can also be found on the Society website on the Membership page.

***** PLEASE NOTE: For new or renewing members, there is a new Gift Aid form *****

You can see a colour copy of this newsletter on the Society website from mid June
www.epsomewellhistory.org.uk