



NEWSLETTER

2020, ISSUE 3

July 2020

Chairman's Notes

In the Society's last Newsletter back in April we were only just becoming aware of the full impact of the current crisis. Since then the restrictions on individuals, socialising and meeting rapidly became more stringent. Bookings for the Church Hall have been cancelled until August 2020 and most speakers engaged for this year have indicated they are willing to postpone till next year. Reinstating the lecture programme will depend on the hall opening and government guidelines on social distancing, etc.. Currently it looks likely that August may still be too early to think of meeting. We find ourselves in this uncertain situation along with every other club, society and voluntary organisation. Whether it is feasible to hold meetings as physical events but with social distancing is doubtful. However, this is something the Committee will continue to monitor. We are still having "virtual" committee meetings.

As we have said before do please check on the EEHAS website, which Nikki Cowlard updates at intervals, for developments and for other information.

Inside this issue:

<i>A Pretty Rustic Chapel</i>	2
<i>Worcester Park Powder Mill</i>	4
<i>Bus Quiz</i>	7
<i>A Curious Boundary Post</i>	8
<i>Membership Matters - Obituary for Isobel Cross</i>	9

Lecture Diary

***** PLEASE CHECK WEBSITE TO CONFIRM *****

August 5th Members' Evening.

September 2nd Sergeant Green : David Brooks.

October 7th 60th anniversary talk : Jon Cotton.

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.

A Pretty Rustic Chapel

Jeremy Harte

A lost curiosity among Epsom buildings has recently come to life in a previously unidentified photograph. The story begins in 1835 when James Harrowell took up the post of butler to Henry Gosse at 20 Church Street. James, who like his wife Mary was a Wesleyan Methodist, was disappointed to find that there was no chapel in the town, but they walked over each Sunday to services at Cheam Road in Sutton and then returned to talk over the sermon with their fellow-believers. At this stage Methodism was largely confined to Epsom Common, and people met to listen to a lay preacher on Stamford Green unless the weather was bad, when they could hold class meetings in their cottages.

The Harrowells seem to have imparted new energy to their fellow-believers, for by 1847 the elders were ready to purchase a chapel building. Their choice fell on a barn at TQ 2063 6083, which was then at the foot of a pasture field (216 on the Tithe Map): however in 1859 the railway line to Leatherhead cut it off from the fields, so that the only access was from the High Street, down the alleyway between 102 and 100 High Street. The railway extension had been anticipated for some years and this probably helped lower the price of the barn.

It was soon adapted and became known as the Pretty Rustic Chapel. 'Being surrounded by farms and fields, there were occasions when a chicken would stroll down the aisle and one morning the service was stopped because a donkey tried to get in. However, it did not matter. There was much rejoicing at the first chapel in Epsom'.

So the history stood until recently, when we were cataloguing two boxes of early glass slides at the Museum (OP 5321 to 53 and 7818 to 82). These were taken by a Mr. Wood to illustrate his talk on the town and its history, and must be the earliest colour photographs of the area. Most of them matched up with his slide notes, but there was one (OP 7834) which he had evidently taken but then decided not to incorporate in the talk. I was stumped by this until Ian West came to my help and identified it as the Old Methodist Chapel. At this point the penny dropped and I realised that my precursor Seán Khan had actually taken photographs of the same building while it was being pulled down in February 1980 (OP 7298 to 7306). It was in a poor state by then but in the 1939 photo it still has some charm.

So what did the elders of the Methodist church get for their money? Evidently a long, thin, weatherboarded barn which they converted by replacing the walls in red brick. The front wall had a central porch with two Venetian windows on either side; the back one had plain arched windows. Inside, there was a partition dividing off the eastern quarter of the chapel into a room with a fireplace. In the centre was a wooden turret which suggested a belfry without putting too much strain on the roof, and two brick octagons at either end, each of them rising into a sort of pinnacle.

The chapel remained in use until 1863 when the Methodists felt that they needed more space, so they built a new place of worship on the corner of Waterloo Road and Station Approach. This time they got a real architect, E. Bassett Keeling MIBA of London, and his projected drawings show elegant ladies in crinolines being escorted to Sunday worship. You get the impression that as Methodism made its way eastwards from the Common it was ascending the social scale. This is the building better remembered as Foresters' Hall, since the Ancient Order of Foresters took it over when the church moved a third time to its present premises in Ashley Road. Meanwhile the pretty rustic chapel became a commercial school, and figures as such on the 1870 OS. In aerial photos of the 1940s it still has the

central turret but this was lost by the 70s, along with the porch. The brick pinnacles were still present at the time of demolition. By the time the salvage merchants rolled up in 1980 there was little left to save apart from the slates. Bricks and timbers were also being sold.

Sources:

Museum photographs and maps as quoted, with

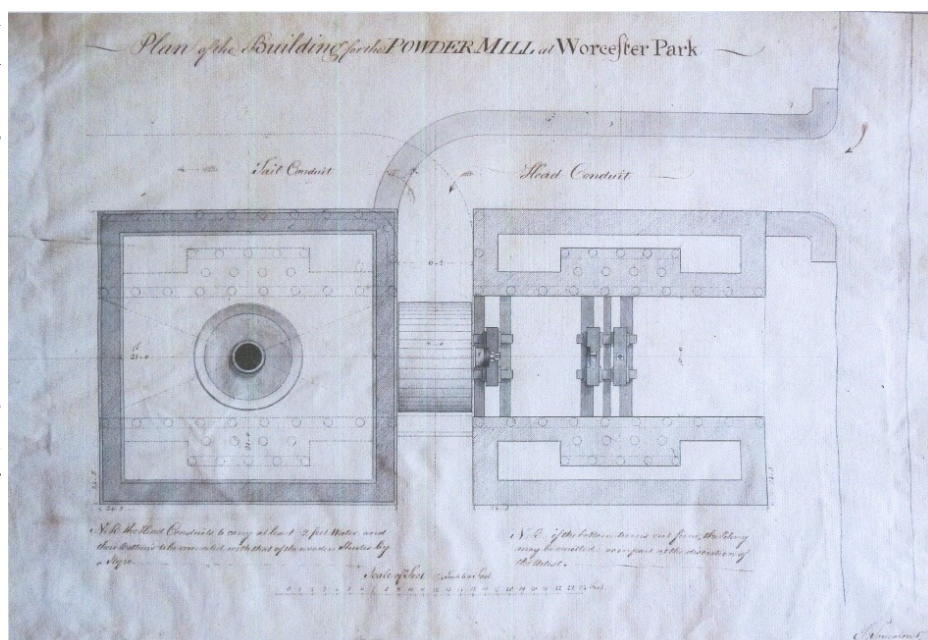
<https://www.epsommethodistchurch.org.uk/about-us/church-history/1847-the-pretty-rustic-chapel.html> supplemented with notes by Tom Styche in the museum file for Epsom Methodist Church. Details of the Harrowells come from Epsom & Ewell History Explorer, <https://eehe.org.uk/?p=25565>.



Slide OP 7834



The site is assumed to be that of the mills, operating apparently from c 1720 by William Taylor and later his son, also William. A short history of the mills was published by Alan Crocker in 1996 (Gunpowder Mills Study Group Newsletter 19) and the biography of the Taylor family is on the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer website. Alan Crocker's report notes the set of seven drawings prepared by John Smeaton in 1771 and 1772 for a new construction at Worcester Park. These survive in the library of the Royal Society. Smeaton was an important early engineer, sometimes referred to as the father of civil engineering, who produced a prodigious amount of work covering a huge range of engineering projects, not least being the Eddystone lighthouse.



The work of recording the archaeology on the site is continuing at the time of writing but the developers have agreed to release some details (the images remain their copyright). The most impressive of the surviving works are the conduits and bases of a water wheel structure that closely matches Smeaton's plan drawing of 1771. This shows the vaulted head conduit channelling water from the Hogsmill to the water wheel with a lower tail conduit taking it back out. The brickwork of this structure is almost monumental, much more substantial it seems than the mills in Ewell at Ewell Court House (see the Mills of Ewell EEHAS website).



It seems that the design and density of the new build housing will not allow for much of the remains to be retained, so their “preservation” will be by record – a pity bearing in mind the historic significance of John Smeaton. However, the level of recording being carried out by Cotswold Archaeology is impressive. Cotswold have produced a 3D image of this structure which allows for an all-round view. We understand that a full report will be published in due course and we await that with interest.

Bus Quiz

Jeff Cousins & Doreen Tilbury

Back in April 2017 Doreen Tilbury asked:

“Yet another request arrived in January this year for the location of the No. 406 OLD 768 (Fig. 3). I think I need the help of members this time – I have had one suggestion but would be pleased to receive any others. Does anybody recognise the old house wall on the right (is it even there now?), or the road layout? As you can see, the bus is headed for Kingston and the destinations list shows Tolworth, Stoneleigh, Ewell, Epsom, Tadworth, Kingswood, Reigate. It is such a long route I feel it could be anywhere along it but our correspondent may have an inkling it is somewhere local to us.”



This has probably been recognised as just west of the centre of Redhill, on Hatchlands Road.

It would have been easier if the picture had been in colour, as the bus was probably green. Before the 406 turned red, it used to run all the way from Kingston to Redhill, via Epsom and Reigate. The southern portion of the route became the 460, just swapping the last two digits.

On the next page there is another 406 bus picture. Does anybody recognise where it was taken? (For those of you reading the black & white printed edition, the bus is green but the bus stop is red.)



A Curious Boundary Post

Jeff Cousins

Whilst out walking the dog, I noticed a strange (in more ways than one, as it turned out) boundary post on the border between Epsom and Ashted Commons. The Tilburys recognised it as an Epsom/Ashted Manor Boundary Marker. The initials JSS stand for James Stuart Strange, Lord of Epsom Manor, 1878-1908. The link below to Epsom & Ewell History Explorer gives further details:

<https://eehe.org.uk/?p=28295>



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Obituary

Isobel Cross

Nikki Cowlard

We are sad to announce the death in April of Isobel Cross, a long-time member of EEHAS. Isobel joined the committee in 1994 and took on the role of writing up the monthly lectures for the newsletter from 1995 until her retirement from the committee in 2017. She was involved over many years in helping staff buildings for Heritage Open Days in Epsom and Ewell. She was a stalwart volunteer for the Museum shop in Bourne Hall from its opening in 1994, and was the shop representative on the Museum Action Group from that year onwards. She acted as shop secretary for several years, and was one of those who established the shop in its current location. Her contribution was recognised when, in 2003, she received an award from the council for her voluntary work. Isobel was particularly interested in archaeology and dug at Hatch Furlong in the 2000s and was part of the finds team in Church Meadow (2012-4). Outside the society she was a keen sailor and enjoyed travelling in her later years. She died peacefully at home on 10th April, age 79. Donations can be made in her memory to the RNLI via:



<https://www.dignityfunerals.co.uk/funeral-notices/10-04-2020-isobel-margaret-cross/>

2020 Subscriptions

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 2020 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 £15 for ordinary membership, £22 for family membership, £6 for student, or £22 for corporate and school memberships. A slip is provided below:

2020 Subscriptions

I (we) wish to renew membership for 2020

Amount enclosed.....

Name and address.....

.....

.....

E-mail address.....

Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society
Founded 1960 Registered Charity No. 259221

Useful contact details

President: Jon Cotton MA, FSA

Chairman: Steve Nelson

Secretary: Nikki Cowlard, 1 Norman Avenue, Epsom KT17 3AB (01372) 745432

e-mail info@epsomewellhistory.org.uk

Treasurer: Jane Pedler

Archaeology Officer: Frank Pemberton

Conservation Officer: Nikki Cowlard (see details above)

Membership Secretary: Doreen Tilbury, 31 West Hill Avenue, Epsom KT19 8LE

(01372) 721289 info@epsomewellhistory.org.uk

Newsletter Editor: Jeff Cousins info@epsomewellhistory.org.uk

Programme Secretary: Vacant

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

Please send copy for the next newsletter to the Newsletter Editor by 12 August 2020.

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.

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