

THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

Charity No. 257870

www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org

NEWSLETTER

No. 122

April 2015

NEW MEMBERS

The good news is that our membership is growing ! We are delighted to welcome: Marjorie Rugg, Roy Adderley, Karen Bush, Richard Lawrence, Sylvia Montague, Colin and Janet Johnson, Frances Hawke, Lesley Alden and Alan and Janice Ward.

We are a local amenity society uniquely concerned with many facets of the welfare of the town. 'For the good of the town' is our broad objective, which is reflected in the range of activities in which we participate, including planning matters, addressing heritage concerns, town trails and the upkeep of our website.

It is therefore very encouraging to have so many new members, who will undoubtedly bring their own talents to our society.

If you have any friends or acquaintances, who may be interested in joining, please do not hesitate to put them in touch with our Membership Secretary, Mike Lyons on mike@mikelyons.me.uk

Joan Roberts & Barbara

Stovold

ERRORS & OMISSIONS

There is an error in our programme for 2015. The guided walk on the updated **Town Trail on "19th and 20th Century East Grinstead" will be held on Sunday 7th June 2015 not the 8th** as printed. The walk will start from the High Street Bookshop at 2.30pm and will be led by Christopher Wheatley.

In addition the details of our meetings were omitted and should read as follows :

'Friday meetings start at 7.30pm in the Main Hall, East Court, with a charge of £1.00/member for coffee. Non-members welcome at £1.50/person for Friday meetings and £2.00/person for other events, children free.'

MAY FAIR

An early reminder that we shall have our usual stall in the High Street to raise funds for the Society, so whilst you are spring cleaning, please put on one side any books, jewellery or bric a brac to stock our stall.

Following a suggestion by our former President, Michael Leppard, an application has been submitted to English Heritage seeking 'listing designation' of the town War Memorial.

The **East Grinstead War Memorial** was unveiled in a ceremony on 23rd July 1922 by Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Charles Madden, Commander - in - Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, then living at Herontye. He pointed out that some 1,000 of East Grinstead's then population of about 7,000 had served in the War.

The War Memorial was entrusted to the East Grinstead Urban District Council (U.D.C) and is now the responsibility of the Town Council and the scene of an impressive ceremony every Remembrance Sunday.

The War Memorial was designed and made by sculptor, **Ernest G. Gillick**, of Chelsea, who was also responsible for some of the statuary on the front of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The application for listing seeks to safeguard its position in the High Street, to recognise its aesthetic significance in the conservation area and to underline its importance to the town when people gather to remember the fallen on Remembrance Day.

OPEN FORUM

Friday 20th February 2015

Nic Beale chaired our annual discussion meeting and, as usual, a wide variety of topics concerning the town were aired.

The first question raised concerned the future occupants of the former **Caffyns site** in the town. Nic was able to confirm that the area would shortly be occupied by a 72 bed Travel Lodge Hotel, a Wilkinsons Store and 12 flats. Several members commented on the lack of parking for the site. The view is that Travel Lodge guests would use the town's public car parks but concern was expressed that this would prove impractical.

The subject of the **Mid Sussex District Plan** was raised and discussion centred on the necessity of infrastructure improvements before more housing was committed to East Grinstead. Nic commented that the '**infrastructure deficit**' had been one of the main topics highlighted in the Society's submission to Mid Sussex District Council. He mentioned that the number of houses designated for East Grinstead had not yet been decided but that the position would be clarified on 3rd March*, when the District would outline the total housing allocation for the District.

(* At this meeting the assessment of the District Council's housing need was 650 houses per year. A total of 13,000 houses over 20 years or 11,050 between 2014 - 2031. These are not allocated to any particular town or area in the District.)

East Grinstead Town Council is interested in the detail of the District Plan, as it would obviously affect the Neighbourhood Plan.

The loss of the **Parish Halls** and their replacement by housing has caused concern to many members, as the venues for community hire at a reasonable rent continue to diminish. The reason for the closure, given at a public meeting, was that the lack of income from the halls meant that they were no longer a viable proposition for continued hire.

As the Halls were administered as a Charity for the good of the town, the proceeds from the sale must be used in a capital project and they will therefore be spent on **Chequer Mead**.

Margaret Collins mentioned that the **Wallis Centre** will also be closing at the end of February. West Sussex County Council has pulled out the Youth Workers based there and the groups meeting at the Centre have had to find alternative accommodation. The Trustees of the Wallis Centre have been left with a small amount of money for the youth of the town.

The topic of the increase in **traffic** throughout the town was raised and in particular the possibility of traffic lights at the junction of the Lingfield Road and the A22. Nic reminded the meeting that the **Atkins Report of 2012** had highlighted the inadequacy of the junctions on the A22 and a recent traffic survey on behalf of Mr David Peacock, (**The Jubb Report**) had confirmed the huge traffic problems in East Grinstead and the fact that the road infrastructure is inadequate for more housing.

Great concern was expressed, as a further housing estate on the land at **Hill Place Farm** is being proposed. Turners Hill Parish Council is also concerned at any increase of traffic in the village.

Attention was also drawn to the importance of maintaining the **strategic gap with Crawley**.

It was mentioned that the cumulative effect of small housing developments and office conversions to housing, had not been considered or looked at on an incremental basis by the planning authority.

The effect of increases in traffic and housing was also discussed in relation to the **7km protection zone around the Ashdown Forest**. Further housing development will require alternative green spaces known as **SANGS (Suitable Area of Natural Green Space)**

The protection of the environment is of particular concern to the Society and a short report was given on the progress of the '**Register of Green Spaces**' undertaken by two members, Phase One of which has been sent to MSDC and EGTC to inform the development of the District and Neighbourhood Plans. The clearance of **St Margaret's Loop** was highlighted but this is a difficult task due to its ownership by Martells / Sustrans and EGTC and the amount of rubbish to be cleared.

The topic of **housing costs** in East Grinstead was raised and the difficulty of quantifying the need for housing.

Offices are being changed into flats, under '**permitted developments**' as legislation has allowed easier permission for development. Parking may be a problem in this situation, although planners hope that more use will be made of public transport.

A query was raised on the **pedestrianisation** of the High Street but the meeting did not have strong feelings on the subject.

The junction of Ship Street and Portland Road was highlighted as a black spot for accidents, as there are no stop lines there.

The Chairman closed the discussion thanking all those who had raised such a wide range of topics.

Joan Roberts

The History of the War Memorial Trust

A talk by Alan Tyler, Director and former Chair of the WMCL

Alan explained that the War Memorial Company Ltd (WMCL) is also known as the War Memorial Trust.

On the 21st March 1944 a special meeting of the U.D.C. was held to consider an approach by **Alfred Wagg**, local philanthropist and Merchant Banker, about the possibility of acquiring **East Court Estate** as a **War Memorial** and for the Mansion House and small area of land around it to be used for new Council Offices.

Following a public meeting in 1946, a **War Memorial Committee** was formed and a development plan was drawn up, to be funded by public subscription. It was realised by 1949, that the scheme was too ambitious and the **War Memorial Company Ltd** was formed as a registered charity with two major objectives:

- To maintain the estate as a memorial to those who lost their lives in WWII, to include a public park with playing fields, a library, concert and lecture halls and educational and recreational facilities.
- To encourage and promote the use of such facilities.

Unfortunately, due to post-war austerity, they were unable to fulfil all of these objectives.

By 1950 the **Garden of Remembrance** had been completed (it was sold to the EGTC in 1997). At this time the **Playing Fields** were laid out. In 1959 a lease was agreed with **EG Football Club and EG Target Shooting Club**. In 1960 land was sold to East Sussex County Council to build **the Police Station and the Magistrate's Court**.

However, due to the national **Local Government Boundary Changes of 1973**, the Police Station is now owned by West Sussex County Council and the Magistrates Court building by the EGTC. Similarly, following these same boundary changes, the playing fields were leased to MSDC.

The WMCL now retains some 100 acres of land, which includes **Ashplats Wood, a Site of Nature Conservation Importance. (SNCI)**

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In September 2014 the **Directors of WMCL, entered into an agreement to lease East Court, including Ashplats Wood, to MSDC for a 125 years.**

MSDC hope to use the area as a '**Suitable Area of Natural Green Space (SANGS)**', with a view to mitigating against increased footfall and pollution caused by housing development within the protected 7km Zone. This Zone includes East Grinstead. The Ashdown Forest is designated under the European Habitats Directive, which protects ancient heath and woodland. Further housing development risks seriously damaging the Ashdown Forest.

Although it is not part of the WMCL Directors' remit to take a view on housing development in East Grinstead, the designation of East Court and Ashplats Wood as a SANGS would have serious consequences for the town, which has been experiencing severe infrastructure deficit, particularly in relation to traffic flow north/south and east/west through the town.

Alan Tyler acknowledged that the issue of the lease to MSDC was controversial and has caused concern among some members of the WMCL.

Barbara Stovold

CHAIRMAN'S MISCELLANY

The **District Plan** has not yet been finalised but the latest information on new **housing numbers is that 11,050 for the District as a whole are proposed, over the 2014/2031 period.** Of that number, approximately 1,800 are required from the **Neighbourhood Plans of the twenty parishes in the District**, while the remainder are provided by strategic allocations in the Burgess Hill area, and permissions already granted but not yet completed. If this balance was to be allocated pro rata to Parish populations then some **360 additional houses would be attributable to East Grinstead** via the Neighbourhood Plan. This is only a suggestion at present but there will be further discussion between the Town and District.

The **East Grinstead Draft Neighbourhood Plan** is nearing completion on the basis that it will be without strategic housing allocations. There will be scope to deliver a small number of homes through localised allocations and a commitment to consider a partial review of the plan once a **definitive housing strategy** has been clarified within the **MSDC District Plan**. The draft plan is expected to be ready for the Council to consider and **sign off for public consultation by early April**. However, due to the imminence of the National and Local Elections, this will have to be delayed and so, if approved, the **public consultation period will be June and July 2015**.

Another issue, which will loom large after the elections, is the report of the **Airports Commission on the future of London's Airports**. There is no news to report but I notice that **Gatwick Airport Ltd** is advertising further financial concessions in the national press.

None of these address our concerns regarding the severe infrastructure impacts on the area outside the enlarged airport boundaries.

Local Planning issues continue to take up our time. We were very pleased that the appeal by the developers against the refusal of planning application

for the **Great Harwoods Farm** scheme was lost.

The proposed Hill Place Farm development is going through its initial phase as I write. This outline application has been opposed by both the Town Council and the Society on various grounds, but predominately the proximity to a listed structure, Imberhorne Viaduct, the traffic implications of the development and its position outside the town's natural boundary.

This application generated a most revealing report on local traffic conditions : the **Jubb Report**, commissioned by David Peacock of Barredale Court. It brought the **Atkins Report** up to date and refined the process of assessing the traffic implications on the A22/A264 and adjacent roads and junctions of further housebuilding. It demonstrated that **the current position was even worse than that which had been predicted in 2012**, even before the proposed Hill Place Farm development was taken into account.

It has long been a source of irritation to me that **West Sussex Highways Dept.** only considers the traffic effects of any proposed development on an incremental basis and do not take a view of the **overall effect of a number of schemes on the traffic conditions as a whole.**

Finally, the proposed plan to develop the site of the informal open space at the junction **of Blackwell Farm Road and Holtye Road** has raised its ugly head again. We shall continue to oppose it.

Nick Beale

<p>MEETINGS 7.30pm, Main Hall, East Court - £1.00/member, £1.50/non-members Friday 17th April 'Hidden Houses in Sussex' an illustrated talk by Gordon Gould. Monday 4th May May Fair : Society Stall in the High Street 10am - 4.00pm Friday 8th May 'Surviving Siberia - a lost Polish childhood 1940 a talk by Genek Wojtowicz * * This is a meeting of the Friends of East Grinstead Museum, but members of the EG Society are welcome to attend (8.00pm Main Hall East Court, £2.50 per person) DISCLAIMER: Unless otherwise stated any opinions given may be those of their author only. EXTRA COPIES : Newsletter back issues may be ordered for £1.00 each from Mr J. Bridle, 7, Dexter Drive, East Grinstead, RH19 4SU NEXT NEWSLETTER : Closing date for contributions for the November Issue 30th Oct 2015 JOINT EDITORS : Joan Roberts peterandjoan958@btinternet.com ; Barbara Stovold barbara@stovold.fsnet.co.uk Copyright : The East Grinstead Society 2015</p>
