

THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

Charity No. 257870



www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org

NEWSLETTER

No. 120

March 2014

NEW MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome two new members: Mrs Kate Benstead and Mrs Brenda Maynard

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

APOLOGY

We begin with an apology that the May meeting of the Society was inadvertently missed from our printed programme. It is an evening definitely not to be missed as John Davey will be speaking on Friday 16th May at 7.30pm on 'The Lost Industries of Lewes', using photos from the Victorian and Edwardian periods. A further reminder will be sent to all those on email, nearer the time.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

After the excitements of the AGM and the changes in the membership of the Committee there is little to report. The post of Secretary is still vacant and the filling of this position remains our most pressing need. There must be someone out there who could fill this post.

The Planning sub-committee continues to meet regularly. There seems to be no let up in the numbers of planning applications coming forward, particularly in respect of the new scheme to allow changes of use from redundant offices to flats with only limited grounds for objection.

The May Fair is looming on the horizon. Please volunteer to help man (and woman) the stand. This is a valuable opportunity to remind the public of our existence and gain new members.

Nic Beale

Townscape Contemporary Art Trail : East Grinstead

A contemporary Art Trail arrives in East Grinstead in the Spring and runs for a period of six months. The Trail was initiated by 'Example', a contemporary art group based in the town, and funded by Art Council England.

Each artist was asked to produce work specifically based around local themes, so we can expect to see; time lapse photography at the Bluebell Railway, a quilt composed of children's drawings, portraits of well-known faces round the town, fluorescent subway stencils and an artist in residence in our High Street Bookshop.

Suggested walks will take visitors and residents to well-known and unusual locations. Sites are chosen for easy access, making this a project the whole community can enjoy. Routes take participants from the Jubilee Centre in the west to the A22 subway on the eastern edge of town. One town centre piece links to a sister piece showing in Standen House, our local National Trust property.

Further information is available on www.exampleart.co.uk or contact Co-ordinator Hannah Buckley admin@exampleart.co.uk

Hannah Buckley

Alan Howson

Alan died in early January at the age of eighty-six. He was a long-standing and well respected member of the Society who had lived and worked in and around East Grinstead for almost all his life.

He took a close interest in local matters and had been a member of the Lions for nearly forty years. During that period he had served as both Treasurer and, on two occasions, as President.

Latterly, his concern for the town and its residents had manifested itself in attendance at the three-weekly Planning Committee meetings at East Court to bring to the attention of the Council such diverse matters as the Town Clock, the state of the Caffyn's site, loose tiles that were a danger to pedestrians in Middle Row and the colour of the tulips in the floral display in the High Street! At the meeting of the committee immediately following his death a number of councillors paid moving tributes to his devotion to the wellbeing of the Town.

The expression 'Public Spirited' sums up his attitude and it was fitting that a reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan was made at his funeral.

Nic Beale

North Mid Sussex County Local Committee (CLC)

This committee, consisting of our five local County Councillors, meets four times a year, at various venues in the district. The meetings are those of a Committee in public, rather than a public Committee meeting.

County Local Committees are designed to get local opinion on key issues affecting West Sussex. These concern largely infrastructure planning and applications for Community Initiative funding. Other issues may be raised in advance for inclusion on the agenda. Progress reports of matters raised previously are an important part of the CLC process.

The January meeting of the CLC was fairly typical. There was an up-date of progress on the West Street improvements and the designs for the proposed Bus Interchange. The refurbishment of steps at the Railway Station is causing problems because of costs and questions relating to the ownership of adjoining

land. As far as one could judge, this matter is unlikely to be actioned until the 2016/17 financial year.

The Controlled Parking Zone in East Grinstead is of immediate interest to residents. It is hoped that there will be a letter drop in March/April 2014 to residents within the new CPZ area and those outside, seeking comments and suggestions. The Parking Strategy Review Team will then review the feedback and the Committee will be updated in due course.

One matter is being progressed more quickly. This is the proposal to put 'School Keep Clear' markings around the gates of 14 schools in the area, to ensure that the instruction is enforceable by the police.

The Community Initiative Fund is administered by the CLC and grants are given to local community projects. These grants are for new initiatives or for 'one off' applications, which are expected to be matched from other sources.

Nic Beale

Open Forum Friday 21st February 2014

The annual open discussion meeting was well attended this year and a variety of topics, covering the whole spectrum of the Society's interests were discussed.

Nic raised the topic of a Town Mural on the wall of the Agora restaurant, at the junction of Cantelupe and the London Road. This is a project suggested by Stuart Scholes, with the purpose of highlighting the position of the Museum, and a grant of £5000 has been obtained towards the cost. Those who had seen the proposed design were unimpressed (describing it as 'official graffiti!') and felt that the grant would be better spent on the proposed Museum extension.

This topic led to a discussion of improved signage in the town, a tourist point at the station and improvements to Station Road, with the possible inclusion of 'soft' planting.

The subject of the Neighbourhood Plan was raised but this is on hold at present, as the District Plan has been sent back to the District Council by the Inspector due to flaws in the consultation process.

Concern was expressed at the infill of part of St Margaret's loop, by Martell's, to provide a turning space for their vehicles.

Road safety concerns were raised about the junction of Portland Road and Ship Street; the problem of drivers turning right into Aldi's from the London Road and the entrance to the new housing in Dunnings Road, which is on a dangerous bend. These are all topics for the West Sussex Highways Dept. and Nic suggested that they could be raised at the next County Local Committee. Further concern was expressed at the many London Road junctions, which operate at near or full capacity.

Planning permission is still being sort for the Old Convent development, amidst strong local opposition. Objections have been raised to the inadequate 'Section 106' money, the design of the housing and to traffic concerns at the junction of Moat Road and the A22, which is already classed as 'severe'.

Questions were raised about the 'Caffyns' site in the town but in spite of efforts made by the Town Council no improvement had been made to the site.

The Wallis Centre was discussed and its demise as a community facility has caused a great deal of local concern. East Grinstead Town Council was not willing to apply for a Capital Transfer of the building and the County Council has therefore declared it is surplus to requirements. It will either decide to redevelop the site itself or sell it to a developer. Local Groups will be able to carry on using the building until December 2014, during which time, they will need to find alternative premises. Many members voiced their concern over this further loss of a local amenity.

A trend has been noticed in the increase in the number of applications for the 'change of use' of office blocks in the town to residential accommodation. Fast track 'change of use' applications have been lodged for many unused office buildings in the town, amounting to 124 additional residential units at present.

Environmental concerns were voiced and the question of the European Habitat Directive in relation to the Ashdown Forest was raised. An Inspector is examining the issue this month. The work of the Society on producing a register of 'Green Spaces' was also discussed and commended.

As Archivist of the Society, John Bridle described his work in organising the Archive, some of which had been sent to the West Sussex Record Office for safe keeping.

The Chairman thanked all the contributors, to what had been a very stimulating discussion.

East Grinstead Library: Thirty years of Change

Following the Open Forum, Sue Young, local Library Manager, gave a fascinating outline of the changes, which had taken place at the Library over the past 30 years. She reminded us of the old Library at Southwick House, fondly remembered by many present, and the opening of the new building in West Street by Lord Gowrie in 1984. The new building attracted 1000 new readers in four days and staff had to work flat out to prepare and jacket the necessary book stock.

From the earliest days the building was seen as a community 'hub', containing the CAB, Registrar's Office, Careers Service and Social Services, as well as the greatly expanded library service. Over the years these partners have changed with the latest occupants to share the building, being the 'Children and Family Centre'.

One innovation introduced at East Grinstead Library in 1991, was the 'Help Point', originally known as 'CDT' (County/ District /Town) Information Service, which helped residents access information on local services. This was so successful that it was soon rolled out to many other areas of the County and is still one of the most valued services offered by the library. Much of its work is now completed 'on line' via the useful 'Love West Sussex' website, where residents may report their concerns, such as potholes and lack of street lights.

The Tourist Service was established on 1997 and has proved a tremendous asset to the town.

Technology has also moved on over the years, the Eighties and Nineties, seeing a huge growth in the use of computers in libraries, further encouraged after 2000, with a lottery grant to introduce the 'People's Network', free computer access for all and intensive training for the staff. Computer access is now no longer free but the 'Electronic Library' now allows access to a vast range of reference books on-line. The Fax and Scanning service provided at the library is still popular and readers are now able to issue their own books.

The provision of a varied book stock at the Library is still its core service, with books for children being given a high priority. Many activities are organised for children and the Summer Reading Challenge, which aims to keep children reading in the summer holiday, is as popular as ever. The Library supports 33 reading groups locally and hosts the only reading group for visually impaired people in the County. From April 2014, e-books and e-audio books will be available via the website.

The Library has developed and grown over the last 30 years but has always kept as its priority the provision of a first class service to the people of East Grinstead.

Sue Young – East Grinstead Library Manager

Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and District Plan (DP) update

Shortly after the publication of our last newsletter, we received a further request for consultation on a draft Scoping Report for the Neighbourhood Plan. This will be used to draw up a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which will also be subject to a consultation. We replied to this request and our response may be read in full on our website www.eastgrinsteedsociety.org

Briefly, we questioned whether or not this could be done while the DP had still not been finalised and in consequence the baseline from which the NP proposals could be measured was uncertain. Many of the matters that will need to be measured in the future depend not on the actions of the Town Council but on whether the DP recognises the infrastructure constraints from which the town suffers.

Meanwhile, the DP has been sent back to the District Council by the Inspector because he does not consider that they have consulted with neighbouring authorities adequately on where they want to build houses. This will have to be done before the DP may be resubmitted. All this means that the town is very vulnerable to developers who may exploit the situation whereby there is no DP in place and no plan for how the housing needs of Mid Sussex over the next few years may be met.

The result of all these uncertainties is that the Town Council has decided to step back from the process and take stock. There seem to be so many uncertainties about the lines being taken by Inspectors of other District and Neighbourhood Plans that advice was being sought from both the Department of Communities and Local Government and from Mid Sussex District Council about the changing advice and guidance and how this would affect the NP.

Nic Beale

1914 – 2014 : How East Grinstead will be commemorating the centenary

There will be a wide range of events and exhibitions in and around East Grinstead to commemorate the anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. Chequer Mead is planning a school art competition and a photographic exhibition of those prominent townsfolk, whose ancestors fought in the war. There will also be two speakers giving a presentation on the battlefields of WW1.

The Town Museum has an exhibition titled 'For King and Country', which starts on June 23rd and runs through to mid -January 2015. This is very much aimed at reflecting local people's experience of the war years. As a result of the extensive research already undertaken, there will be an established database in the town of all those who served, as a legacy project for this work.

The Town Council will be in the forefront of the events, with an Edwardian themed Garden Party to be held on August 3rd in the grounds of East Court. The day would reflect the Eve of War and among other attractions would feature the East Grinstead Concert band, who celebrate their own 40th birthday this year.

The Royal British Legion is working closely with the Town Council for the special Ceremony on August 23rd, when a commemorative paving stone, recording Private Godley's Victoria Cross is unveiled at the War Memorial. Although we are not at present able to reveal the full programme for the day, we can promise that it will be a very special and memorable occasion. The High Street flower beds will also have a special floral theme for the summer.

Much of the programme is subject to a funding bid that the Town Council has made. Should the bid be successful then this would enable a full series of events to take place without recourse to the public purse.

Simon Kerr

MEETINGS 7.30pm, Main Hall, East Court - £1.00/member, £1.50/non-member

Friday 21st March

Friday 4th April

Friday 25th April

Friday 16th May

'WICKENDENS' 1907 – 2010 by Geoff Wickenden

'CHINA ANCIENT & MODERN by Brian Phillips*

'KEEPERS OF THE PEACE' by John Darwood

'LOST INDUSTRIES OF LEWES' by John Davey

* 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)

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EXTRA COPIES : Newsletter back issues may be ordered for £1.00 each from Mr M.J. Leppard, 20 St George's Court, East Grinstead, RH19 1QP

NEXT NEWSLETTER : Closing date for contributions for the November Issue –30th October 2014

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