

THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

Charity No. 257870



www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org

NEWSLETTER

No. 121
November 2014

NEW MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome some new members: Jan Barnes, Brian Hall, Phillip Piddlesden, Bob Mainstone, John & Margaret Waters and Margaret Mowbray.

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

Summer at East Court

The Town Council arranged for three free events this summer at East Court, including for the first time, a themed event, as well as 'East Court Live!' our established programme of concerts. This year an events management company was contracted to supply and install the staging and public address system and to run the bar and refreshment facilities, as well as create artwork for publicity at both the concerts. This enabled us to manage the events in a proper professional manner with a minimum of Town Council employees' time being involved.

The two 'East Court Live!' events featured tribute acts, and in addition gave space in the programme for local groups, such as the fantastic InChoir Community Choir, who really raised the roof with a bravura performance. By popular request, the first concert saw a return of Fisher Stevens with his Elvis Tribute and the smooth Rat Pack sounds of Stephen Dunnett. The second concert was tuned for a younger audience, with two high energy acts bringing us the sounds of Jessie J and Kay T Perry, both backed by a live band. As far as the weather went, the first concert was baking hot and the second more problematic with a torrential downpour threatened, which caused us to move it indoors to the Meridian Hall. Despite this the numbers attending were impressive with around 600 people coming during the day.

Our themed event was an Edwardian Garden Party to mark the eve of the outbreak of World War One; a party very similar to those actually held at East Court 100 years ago. The East Grinstead Concert Band played throughout the day and traditional games and entertainment drew the crowds, many of whom arrived in suitable Edwardian garb.

Many favourable comments on all the events have already reached the organisers, who are happy to receive suggestions for a possible 2015 programme.

Simon Kerr

Miss G. Emmens

We are sad to record the death of Miss G. Emmens, an Honorary member of the Society for many years. She worked in the City of London, and held the post of Honorary Secretary from 1978 – 1994. She took a great deal of interest in local affairs and was a member of NADFAS (National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Society)

John Bridle

Private Sidney Godley V.C.

A commemorative paving stone was unveiled at the War Memorial on the 23rd August, in honour of Private Godley, who was one of the first recipients of the V.C. in the First World War and the first non - commissioned soldier to receive the award in that conflict.

Sidney Godley was born in East Grinstead and was sent to the Western Front with the 4th Royal Fusiliers, when he was twenty five. He took part in the Battle of Mons, where he was badly wounded defending a bridge. He protected British positions in the face of a fierce German attack, until he was captured. Pte Godley spent the rest of the war in captivity but survived to return home, where he died in 1957 in Loughton, Essex.

Pte Godley was one of the first to be recognised through a government scheme, marking the birthplace of those awarded the Victoria Cross with a memorial plaque. Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, attended the unveiling and paid tribute to the brave, young soldiers, 'who came from towns and cities just like ours but went on to carry out astonishing acts of valour in service of their country'.

Joan Roberts

Annual General Meeting 2014

Our Society President, **Margaret Collins**, welcomed everyone to the meeting and commented on the sad loss of Alan Howson earlier in the year. He was a man totally committed to the town and would be sadly missed by all.

The minutes of the previous AGM were approved and the President then called upon the **Chairman, Nic Beale**, to present his annual report.

Nic began by thanking all the members of **the Committee** and many other stalwart supporters for their hard work throughout the year. He commented that 2014 had been a busy year and much time was spent on planning and related matters within the town.

2014 saw the installation of **the McIndoe Statue**, to which the Society had made a donation in 2013. This project had caused considerable discussion on the design and siting of the statue but the end result honours the man and is a credit to the town.

The lack of **District and Local Plans** continues to frustrate us and both have suffered delays and have had to go back to be rewritten with additional information and evidence. It is unlikely that they will go through all their necessary stages in the year ahead, so it may be 2016 before either is in place. One of the effects of this is that it creates a feeding frenzy by developers, who use the excuse that the District has not been able to demonstrate that it has a five year supply of housing sites, because there is no plan in place. These tend to get approved by MSDC, notwithstanding the environmental and infrastructure deficiencies stated in the only approved Plan of 2004.

The Society's Planning Sub Committee have reviewed and commented on approximately 300 applications, since the last AGM. Many of the applications have been **Permitted Development Orders**. This is relatively new legislation, which allows interested parties a fast tracked route to converting unused office space into flats. It is often better that the office spaces are used, rather than standing empty but we are alert to instances where we could envisage a future business use, when the economy picks up. We must have some such premises available for start-ups and expansion, to avoid the town becoming merely a dormitory without space for local employment. The fast track route was initially to last for three years but it now looks as though it may be made more permanent. The grounds for resisting such changes are limited, mainly related to traffic and parking issues.

When considering other applications our comments fall into three main categories, the **impact** they will have on our inadequate **road network**, the implications of **the Habitats Regulations**, as we are within 7km of Ashdown Forest and the gradual **erosion of our natural town boundaries** with expansion into the strategic gaps.

One way of mitigating the potential effects of our closeness to Ashdown Forest is the creation of **Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS)**. Very recently MSDC have entered into a lease with the War Memorial Company to create a SANGS at **Ashplats Wood and East Court**. The exact boundaries of this are uncertain at the time of writing, as is the impact upon the queue of site applications and the number of houses that it will support, but we follow its progress with interest.

One other "**accommodation**" issue has been given considerable publicity in recent weeks. That is the question of a permanent Traveller's **site** in Imberhorne Lane. The Society has sent a reply to the Consultation Document pointing out the unsuitability of the proposal.

The Society is continuing to work on its project of recording the **Green Spaces** in the town, as well as attending **County Local Committee Meetings**, where we raise parking, road safety and traffic issues.

The question of **airport expansion** has been given national coverage and we have added our comments as well. **Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL)** produced a consultation document on "**A Second Runway for Gatwick**" and followed it up with a series of exhibitions in surrounding villages. The document devoted itself to the airport and its immediate vicinity. Any questions about protected flight paths; the infrastructural changes required for the influx of new workers and the transport implications for the area, were met with a bland reply that such matters would be dealt with later in negotiation with local Councils . We subsequently heard on national radio that their final submissions had been

made to the Airports Commission before the consultation period had even been completed.

On a more positive note John Bridle has been reviewing the contents of our **Society Archive**. Some of the archive has gone to the West Sussex Record Office and the remainder is held in the Jubilee Hall, where it will be more accessible.

Our Website is being refreshed, as it is getting an increasing number of hits, because of the Bluebell Railway and other tourism initiatives. We are most grateful to David Kirk for all his hard work in the past and hope that the updated website will be available in the New Year.

The May Fair was lucky with the weather but we decided not to sell homemade cakes and preserves, due to Health and Safety issues.

We are looking forward to the very interesting **programme of speakers**, arranged for us by Shirley, and hope that members will invite their friends to attend. We are looking for **new committee members** but if you feel unable to take on this commitment, there are a number of small tasks, for which you could volunteer. Please ask any member of the Committee for further details.

Nic thanked **Margaret Collins**, our President for her continued interest and support and for chairing the meeting today.

Mike Lyons, Honorary Treasurer, presented accounts for the year to 31st August 2014 and reported that the Society's financial position remains sound, with a surplus of £3551.49 to be carried forward to the next financial year. Membership had remained essentially the same at 106 members and costs and expenditure had been similar to the previous year. It was therefore recommended that the subscription should remain the same. This motion was carried unanimously. A vote of thanks was extended to Chris McCrory, Hon. Auditor, who had agreed to act in that capacity for the following year. The accounts were agreed and adopted unanimously.

A motion that Mr Nic Beale, Mr Richard Maynard and Mr Mike Lyons be elected as **Chairman, Vice Chairman and Hon. Treasurer**, respectively, was carried unanimously. The motion that Mr John Bridle, Mrs Shirley King, Mrs Joan Roberts and Mrs Barbara Stovold be elected to the **Committee** was also carried unanimously.

Under **Any Other Business** comments were made by members on; the inclusion of the Green Spaces Register in the Neighbourhood Plan; the Gatwick Airport Plan; Health and Safety issues regarding the Veterinary Surgery in Portland Road and the Habitats Directive.

East Grinstead in Bloom

A talk by Mrs Julie Mockford, Chair of 'East Grinstead in Bloom'

Julie described the work of the organisation, which was established twenty years ago with the object of encouraging communities to work together to improve the local environment.

Funding is provided by the Town Council and from the profits of the production of a calendar of local photographs.

Julie explained that the South East in Bloom area stretches from Dorset, to include Hampshire, The Isle of Wight, West and East Sussex, Surrey and Kent. She is now a judge for South East in Bloom, which has given her insight into the work undertaken in the whole region.

The local 'In Bloom' group has gone from strength to strength, entering more categories this year and achieving the most awards ever. Awards included a silver gilt medal for Felbridge; a silver gilt in the 'Large Town' category for East Grinstead (this was only ten points off a gold award!); an 'In the Spotlight' award for promotion in the media; a 'Best allotment' award for Mount Noddy and a 'Best War Memorial' award, as well as a silver medal for St Swithun's Churchyard (this was the second highest award in this category in the Region)

A local committee of twelve, co-ordinates the work of local volunteers and a number of new projects have been undertaken.

'It's Your Neighbourhood' projects have been set up by volunteers at Hurst Farm Pond conservation area, the Compass garden at Mount Noddy, which is being replanted and the Town Twinning Millennium garden, which is being looked after in conjunction with Town Twinning members.

A future project will be in Windmill lane, where the Town Council will fund the planting of a wild flower meadow and some fruit trees. Work will also be undertaken at the Railway Station, with new perennial beds at the top level and bulbs planted for the Bluebell Railway.

Emphasis is now being placed on work with schools. At Imberhorne School, Noreen Daw, a teaching assistant at the school, won the RHS School Gardening Champion of the year 2014 award, for her dedication to school gardening and her work in encouraging students, many of whom have gone on to study or to get apprenticeships in gardening and horticulture.

This year has been particularly successful for the 'In Bloom' team and many local people have commented on the beautiful hanging baskets in the town and on the imaginative displays in the High Street. These are largely due to the design skills of Jenny Watson, part time Town Council gardener, who works closely with the nursery and the hard work of John Aynsley, who has been up early every day to water all the hanging baskets, which have given so much pleasure to residents and visitors alike.

This fascinating talk was greatly appreciated by the members, who paid tribute to the work of this valuable organisation.

Joan Roberts

The McIndoe Memorial

Sir Archibald McIndoe was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, where he did his medical training. He wanted to further his career in the U.K. and moved to London in 1930. When he could not find work, his cousin, who specialised in plastic surgery, offered him a job in his private practice as a clinical assistant. He continued his career in plastic surgery, working for various London hospitals. In 1938 he was appointed consultant to the RAF.

When WWII broke out, plastic surgery was divided along service lines and Sir Archibald moved to work in the recently built Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead. There he treated airmen with very deep burns and serious facial and

bodily disfigurement. He also recognised the importance of rehabilitation and, with his patients, formed a drinking club called the 'Guinea Pigs', so called because of the experimental nature of the surgery they underwent. The men were made very welcome in the town and East Grinstead became known as the 'Town, that didn't stare'.

The memorial statue stands in front of Sackville College and was unveiled by the Princess Royal on June 9th this year. It was funded by public subscription, including a donation from the East Grinstead Society, and was sculpted by Martin Jennings.

By a strange coincidence, unknown when the statue was commissioned, Martin's father was one of Sir Archibald's patients.

Barbara Stovold

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

Friday 21 st November 2014	'Coasting along Sussex' by Geoffrey Mead
Friday 5 th December 2014	'A Sense of Place' by Christopher Wheatley
Friday 6 th February 2015 *	'Kitty Hunter and the Crawfurds of East Grinstead' by Dr Raymond Crawford
Friday 20 th February 2015	Open Forum – a chance to discuss topics of interest to Town
Friday 6 th March 2015 *	'Shops & Businesses in East Grinstead between the Wars' by Jean Glynn
Friday 20 th March 2015	'The Town Preparations for World War II' by Michael Leppard

* 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 M.J. Leppard, 20 St George's Court, East Grinstead, RH19 1QP

NEXT NEWSLETTER : Closing date for contributions for the March 2015 issue – 20th February 2015

JOINT EDITORS : Joan Roberts peterandjoan958@btinternet.com ; Barbara Stovold barbara@stovold.fsnet.co.uk

