

# THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

Charity No. 257870



[www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org](http://www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org)

## NEWSLETTER

**No. 125**  
**November 2016**

### **New Members**

A warm welcome to new member, Liz Ostermann. Membership Secretary, Mike Lyons, mentioned at the AGM that our membership has remained at just over a hundred members for some time. I would be good to increase that number, so please invite friends or neighbours to join us at our meetings. Who knows, they may enjoy themselves so much that they decide to join us! If so contact Mike on [mike@mikelyons.me.uk](mailto:mike@mikelyons.me.uk)

**Joan Roberts & Barbara Stovold**

### **Brickbats and Bouquets**

**Bouquet to the Town Council** for displaying large poppies around the town. They are attractive and a poignant reminder of Remembrance Day.

**Brickbat to the Cinema** for scruffy signage and dirty windows.

**Bouquet to 'The Crown'** for restoring its original name from the 'Bar Kuba' and returning it to its original décor from the former bright pink frontage.

**Brickbat to the old Post Office** for large plants (buddleia!) growing from the top of the downpipes on the front of the building.

**Bouquets to Councillor Dick Sweatman and Richard Maynard** for renovating the Society's seat in memory of Cedric Harland in the garden at Chequer Mead.

**Any more Brickbats and Bouquets? – just let us know.**

**Joan Roberts**

### **Changes at Chequer Mead Community Arts Theatre**

Chequer Mead was officially opened by Sir Derek Jacobi on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1996 and is now approaching its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. It has had its ups and downs as all theatres, but in this year, significant changes are being made to the building which will alter its use as described in the original applications for funding.

On 19<sup>th</sup> May 2015, the Trustees posted a notice of their proposal to lease the Alfred Wagg Studio to the West Sussex Police for a period of 21 years. This would enable them to vacate the old police station at East Court and create, what is described as a "police hub" in a more convenient location.

The notice was put in all the usual places and the public invited to make representations. The few received were against the idea, as it was considered inappropriate to locate a police station adjacent to a community arts centre. It was also pointed out that with the sale of the Parish Halls, £170,000 of which is funding the renovations required, and the loss of the Wallis Centre, community space is increasingly limited.

The lease was eventually signed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August this year and work commenced on the 5<sup>th</sup> September. It was an unfortunate oversight by the Trustees, that regular users of the Alfred Wagg Studio and the Gallery, also involved in substantial modifications, were not advised until the end of August. This affected Bullfrog Productions, Chequer Mead Fancy Dress and Stage Costume Hire, the Greenstede Quilters, and the Embroiderers' Guild.

I understand the income from the police compared with the income which could have been received from an improved studio has been carefully assessed. I do hope these figures stand up to any future scrutiny.

It is my sincere hope these changes will enable the theatre to go forward for many years with renewed vigour and increased community, artistic and cultural commitment for us all to enjoy.

**Barbara Stovold**

### **East Grinstead's Green Army**

A new group has been formed to make the town a greener, cleaner, more pleasant place in which to live and work. The group is under the umbrella of 'East Grinstead in Bloom' and is organising its first event – a litter pick – on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November at 2pm, meeting at Windmill Lane Community Garden. Even if you are unable to litter pick, you are welcome to show your support by joining the group for tea (and cake) at 3.30pm at St Mary's Church Hall.

Following our work on the Register of Green Spaces, we do hope that some members may be free to support this new initiative to improve our town.

**Joan Roberts**

### **Annual General Meeting 2016**

**Mrs Margaret Collins DL**, President of the Society, welcomed everyone to the meeting and following the approval of last year's AGM minutes, Nic presented his **Chairman's report**.

He commented that it had been a busy year with a lot to report and as everyone was aware, the **Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan** for the town was held yesterday. He was pleased to say over 90% of the votes cast were **for acceptance of the plan**. The significant points of the final version are sixteen town wide policies and eight site specific ones. On **housing** particularly, the plan has been prepared in close consultation with the District Council to ensure that it is consistent with the District Plan and complies with the government's **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**.

**The plan aims to protect and enhance existing open spaces and generally improve the residential environment.** It demonstrates how the town will develop between 2016 – 2031. The Neighbourhood Plan excludes strategic development. Now the plan is approved there will be stronger grounds for protecting the town from **unwanted developments** and refuting the arguments from prospective developers that their applications should be accepted because there is no plan in place.

**The District Plan** has now reached the stage of examination by an independent examiner to ensure that it complies with the requirements for such a document. The revised Plan has led to the District **increasing its housing requirement as a whole from 650 to 800 per year**, suggesting a 600 unit development at Pease Pottage and increasing the density of dwellings per hectare within built up areas.

**There will be more emphasis on starter homes and other affordable dwellings.** There will be a 'mid- term review' to ensure that targets are being met and that there will be a continuing five year land supply.

The **examiner of the District Plan** has come back with questions to be answered by MSDC. One little snippet refers to **East Grinstead**. MSDC admits that there are promoters of a site for 550 dwellings at land west of **Imberhorne Lane** but says that this is **unsuitable due to the lack of proposals to resolve the longstanding and clearly evidenced traffic constraints in East Grinstead**.

They go on to say that this site has been previously identified as a strategic allocation but has been ultimately proven undeliverable. There has been a rush by promoters of strategic sites before plans have been finally accepted, on the grounds that the councils have been unable to demonstrate a five year supply.

We continue to monitor **planning applications** and have submitted our comments on about 350 applications to the Town Council and MSDC. Some of the more notable items considered this year include **Pearson's old bicycle shop, the Wallis Centre**, which will probably be developed for housing, the development of the **Martell's site in Queens Walk**, which has received MSDC approval and the vineyard at **Mill Place Farm, Kingscote**, where there is a plan to hold wedding receptions. Work is also being undertaken at **Chequer Mead to provide premises for Sussex Police**.

There have also been a number of planning applications from developers, who are promoting schemes for converting empty **office accommodation into flats**, under the Permitted Development legislation. The argument that all these extra flats add to the town's **parking problems** falls on deaf ears, as there is a presupposition that developments near town centres do not need parking provision, as the inhabitants can use bicycles and public transport. We try to take a balanced view of the many varied applications but **overdevelopment, damage to our heritage and road safety figure largely in our deliberations**.

The **Town Council is concerned about the loss of office space, as is the Society**. MSDC, as the planning authority, have been asked to consider an Article 4 exemption for East Grinstead with regard to Permitted Development applications for the conversion of offices to flats. This would not prevent further conversions but it would require full planning applications rather than the Permitted Development rules applying.

**Parking** in the town has figured in our thoughts this year. You will remember that, when the **Controlled Parking Zone** was introduced, we were promised a review of its suitability within a year. Your society, and particularly your President, has been lobbying the North Mid Sussex County Local Committee of WSCC for a consultation on the CPZ. For various reasons this has been delayed but the latest news is that revised plans for part of the town following the consultation will be revealed in December. The area consulted upon covered **Imberhorne, Gardenwood, Hurst Farm Road, Herontye and the Town Centre but not the Charlwoods area**, which will be dealt with under a separate scheme. Do not get too excited too soon, as any changes will have to be funded and whether or not WSCC have any money in their budgets for such measures is unknown.

You will be aware that **Patrick Dale Wood, the first chairman of this society**, died earlier this year. Michael Leppard has produced a special Bulletin which will be circulated with this Newsletter giving details of his life and works.

The committee thought it appropriate that some **tangible record of his significance to the town** should be established and to that end have commissioned a **seat**, which has been placed near the southern end of the High Street adjacent to both Sackville College and the McIndoe statue. **The Town Council decided to provide a similar bench at the same location and the area looks smarter now the old, decaying benches have been removed**.

I now come to the committee, with John Bridle and Frances Hawke not seeking re-election and only Alan Ward, who was co-opted during the year, hopefully joining us, our number continues to decrease. If re-elected this evening it is my intention to stand down next October. I shall have served five years as Chairman by then and it will be time for someone with fresh ideas to take over. I cannot end this section without giving my annual thanks to John Bridle. This year he insists that he really is leaving the committee and he will brook no opposition. Thank you, John, for all you have done.

I am as ever grateful to our President for her calming influence and wise counsel and thank the committee for all their hard work throughout the year.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Hon Treasurer, Mike Lyons, noted that the end of year balance was down from £3728 to £3262 but in spite of this, the Society's financial position remains sound.

Mike explained that the end of year balances over the last 10 years have averaged approximately £3000.

He outlined the main features of this year's accounts. Subs, meetings and gift aid were all marginally down. Sales of publications were also down, but in previous years we have sold many additional copies of the Bulletin and French and German translations of the 'Town Trail'.

Donations are up but May Fair Receipts were considerably down, from a peak of £195 in 2013 to £54 this year. The Committee will be looking at the format for next years' Fair. Under sundries, there was a refund from the demise of the 'Federation of Sussex Amenity Societies this year.

Expenditure was mainly the same as before except that there were no costs for the website this year. Lecture fees were up from £210 to £470 but the 2015 figure was unusually low, as many speakers gave their time for free. £ 470 is a reasonable cost, as it was £500 for speakers in 2004. The Patrick Wood Memorial bench cost £750. The legacy of £1000, which was 'ring fenced' for special projects, has now been used up for a donation to the McIndoe Statue; our Website; Display Boards and the Patrick Wood Memorial Bench. In summary - the Society's financial position remains entirely satisfactory.

The Treasurer invited questions and Michael Leppard asked if members or friends could contribute to the cost of the Patrick Wood memorial bench. Mike said that he would be pleased to accept donations.

As current reserves are sufficient, Mike recommended that the annual membership fee and renewal subscription remains at £10 and this motion was approved..

Mike thanked Chris McCory for his expert services as accounts examiner and as he was prepared to continue in that role for a further year, it was resolved that he be reappointed for the coming year.

The Treasurer's report was approved unanimously.

As Membership Secretary, Mike reported that the number of members remains fairly constant and now stands at 98 plus 10 honorary members. The Society reached a peak in membership of 113 members in 2008.

### **Elections: Officers and Committee**

**Nic Beale, Richard Maynard and Mike Lyons** indicated their willingness to continue as Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer. In the absence of other nominations, the motion that they be elected as Chairman, Vice- Chairman and Hon. Treasurer respectively was carried unanimously. There were no nominations for the post of Hon. Secretary.

**Alan Ward indicated his willingness to stand for the Committee, together with Shirley King, Joan Roberts and Barbara Stovold.** There being no further nominations, the motion that they be elected as committee members was also carried unanimously.

Under **Any Other Business** a vote of thanks was recorded to **Councillor Dick Sweatman** for his hard work in renovating **the bench dedicated to Cedric Hartland at Chequer Mead**.

**Michael Leppard** announced that he had some of the earliest Society publications for sale, together with copies of his newest publication – **‘A History of Sackville College’**. The Chairman commented that he had been in contact with the widow of Patrick Wood to inform her that the Society had erected a bench in her husband’s memory. She had been touched by the gesture and he would also be sending her a photograph of the bench. There being no further business the President thanked all those attending the AGM and closed the formal part of the meeting at 8.15pm.

### **Following the A.G.M., Michael Leppard gave a talk on’ What do we really know about the East Grinstead Martyrs?’**

Michael opened his talk by saying that the two irrefutable facts were that **Anne Tree, Thomas Dungate and John Foreman** were burnt in East Grinstead on July 18<sup>th</sup> 1556. Where they were burnt is not known, although it would have been ‘a high and public place to strike terror into the people’... The High Street is the most likely place of execution, possibly in the middle, away from the buildings.

We do not know where they were held the night before the execution, possibly in the lock up attached to the sessions house near the War Memorial but they were burnt on Market Day, which was on a Saturday. Heretics were not in conformity with the doctrine of the church – they were not witches or Quakers

We have three sources of information on the Martyrdom;

In 1559 Thomas Bryce published ‘The Register’, a versified account of the Protestant martyrs, which contains a verse on those burnt in East Grinstead.

Foxe’s ‘Book of Martyrs’ covers all Christian history and mentions the exact date of the execution.

A legal document by Richards Brisley, Vicar general of the Bishop of Chichester, records that Anne Tree of the parish of East Grinstead was accused of ‘heretical depravity’ and that she was excommunicated as an ‘obstinate and persistent’ heretic.

The ashes of those burned as heretics would have been distributed in ditches or on dung heaps, not buried under gravestones. When the main road was lowered in 1828 to improve access for vehicular traffic, ashes were found in the High Street, which many believed were those of the martyrs. In 1907, Lady Musgrave paid to have the memorial stones in St Swithun’s churchyard laid.

In 1856 the Pearless family at the Hermitage planted a tree and buried a scroll quoting from Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, in memory of the martyrs. The scroll is now in the West Sussex Record Office.

There is no contemporary evidence that Anne Tree came from West Hoathly but Ursula Ridley had a brass memorial to her placed in West Hoathly church in the 1940’S.

There is, in fact, no proof that any of the Martyrs lived in East Grinstead. The fact that they were held here does not necessarily mean that they lived here. Foxe’s Book of Martyrs mentions a Henry Adlington, who was burnt in Stratford Broadway, as coming from ‘Greensted’ but this, could well be the village of that name in Essex, not Sussex, which is more likely.

There are no other Martyrs from East Grinstead. Thomas Hoath, who worked in East Grinstead from 1549 – 1552, as his signature as a witness to wills proves, was a monk in Warbleton but was in trouble for heresy in the 1530's. He recanted and when the monasteries were dissolved he assisted clergy for payment. He was part of a 'network' of heretics and was eventually burned in Lewes.

John Smyth, who was an East Grinstead parishioner, was excommunicated in absentia, in 1556 and his goods were seized.

The punishment for heretics was burning, as it was considered that they would go straight to hell, as punishment for their sin. Efforts would be made to try and persuade them to recant to avoid this fate.

It is interesting that in the 1850's there was a move back to Catholicism, with Roman Catholic Bishops being appointed in 1850 and the Pope having ambitions to re-convert England.

In 1851 Mark Anthony Lower started the cult of the Martyrs as an anti - Roman Catholic move.

Michael closed his talk by mentioning the further information could be obtained from: 'Sussex Notes and Queries' Vol 1 P. 51 – 53 1926 and his article in the Society's Bulletin 87 (Winter 2005 – 06)

**Joan Roberts**

### **Dementia Friends East Grinstead**

Did you know that there is now a Dementia Friends Group in the town, set up to make the town a better place to face the challenges of dementia by helping people understand dementia and its problems, In July, the East Grinstead Dementia Action Alliance, which allows local businesses and groups to sign up to show that they have a plan to become dementia friendly, was established. Dementia awareness sessions are available for your club or organisation, by contacting Julie Holden at the Town Council.

**Joan Roberts**

**MEETINGS** 7.30pm, Main Hall, East Court - £1.00/member, £3.00/non-member

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016 'My walk from Felbridge to College Lane in 1952' by Peter Pollard, who was born and brought up in East Grinstead

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2017 'Vision Aid in Ethiopia' a talk by local optometrist, Margaret Lawrence.

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**EXTRA COPIES:** Newsletter back issues may be ordered for £1.00 each from Mr J.W. Bridle, 7, Dexter Drive, East Grinstead, RH19 4SU

**NEXT NEWSLETTER:** Closing date for contributions for the next Newsletter is Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2017.

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