

THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

Charity No. 257870



www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org

NEWSLETTER

No. 131

November 2019

Another year has passed with frightening rapidity and so this edition contains our A.G.M. report.

We offer a warm welcome to new members, Simon and Susan Fishburn, Julie and David Goode, Gene Adams, James Baldwin, Susan Berkshire, Liz Ostermann, Anne-Noelle and David Pinnegar.

Joan Roberts and Barbara Stovold

Annual General Meeting 2019

Our President, Margaret Collins, welcomed all members to the meeting and a short silence was held in memory of Michael Leppard and John Bridle.

Chairman's Report

Chairman, Nic Beale, began his annual report with a personal tribute to Michael Leppard and John Bridle

He then reported that last year, even though the **District Plan** had been adopted by the **District Council**, there had been a shortfall in the gross number of houses required by the Government. After a call for sites, a **Draft Site Allocations Development Plan (DPD)** has recently been produced for scrutiny and consultation. This document suggests a further **772 houses should be built in East Grinstead**. This number is made up of 550 on Imberhorne Farm, stretching parallel with the Worth Way as far as Gullede; 200 on the backland in Felbridge along the Crawley Down Road and 22 on the Police Station site at East Court.

Quite apart from the implications for all services in East Grinstead; schools, medical, dental, social etc, there is our road system and its inadequacy to be considered. The Town Council has already met Felbridge District Council and they have agreed to liaise on their responses to the District Council, regarding the Crawley Down Road scheme.

There is an appendix to this document, which highlights the **A22/A264 junction at Felbridge**, the **A22 Imberhorne Lane Junction** and the **A22 Lingfield Road Junction**. The first of these does not include the Crawley Down Road junction with the A264, which is very acute and difficult enough without additional traffic.

The Imberhorne Farm scheme would release land to facilitate the enlargement of Imberhorne School to incorporate Imberhorne Lower School from Windmill Lane. This would allow 200 houses to be built on this site and further add to A22 traffic problems.

Nic remarked that there are a number of matters from last year's report which have still not been resolved. There is no confirmed information about the plans of our neighbouring authorities Tandridge and Wealden, who work on a different timescale from Mid Sussex.

The derelict offices in **Wood Street**, overlooking the ring road are being turned into flats, each block with a further storey added.

Queens Walk is being improved at the car park end but the London Road end is still looking scruffy. There is a scheme to build 17 flats over EWM, Costa Coffee and Boots Opticians, with access from Queens Walk and a proposal to remove the London Road entrance arch. Whether or not this will lead to the complete refurbishment of the pedestrian walkway is uncertain. The wall of the building in Queens Walk opposite the opticians is in different ownership from the walkway.

Earlier this year, there was a consultation promoted by MSDC on the **East Grinstead Conservation Area**. It is important to note that much of the base information for this appraisal came from Michael Leppard's book on the history of the town and the important buildings therein. This had been preceded by a walk round the Conservation Area with representatives of MSDC, the Town Council and your Chairman. **The major points raised covered the importance of the Portlands; the need to be more rigorous in making sure that appropriate materials are used when repairs are carried out on buildings; and the subject of unsightly refuse bins in Middle Row and the Churchyard; as well as inappropriate shopfronts.**

Minor changes to the boundary have been suggested by MSDC to incorporate the **Museum** into the Conservation Area, which we support. We added the suggestion that **Chequer Mead** should also be included. At present, the Car Park for Chequer Mead, the old Playfield, is in the Conservation Area but the Theatre is not, although it is based on the old school. We have yet to see the final conclusion of this appraisal.

The Planning Sub Committee of the Society has considered about 350 planning applications this year. The details of the planning permission for **Hill Place Farm** are being discussed and it still has only one entrance/exit on the Turners Hill Road. Outline Planning Permission has already been granted but the reserved matters have yet to be agreed. The developers have been very intransigent in addressing points made by the Council and neighbouring residents. These include the design of the houses and roads, the provision of parking, water run-off and compliance with the District and Neighbourhood Plans.

There is a scheme to demolish **Ashplatts House** and put 35 houses on the site.

The District Council has sold the land at the bottom of **Blackwell Farm Road** on the condition that ten affordable houses are built on the site.

At **Evergreen Farm** near the entrance to **Standen** on the West Hoathly Road is a disused landfill site, which was inadequately capped when it was closed in the 1990's.

The work required to cap it would apparently involve the importation of about 150,000 cubic metres of capping materials over a period of about 80 weeks. This obviously has huge implications for traffic throughout East Grinstead, as these materials will have to be brought in from as yet unknown sources well outside the town.

The scheme is poorly explained and seems to have been prepared on a desk top without adequate knowledge of the area. We wait to see the outcome as more details become available and when the many objections have been considered by West Sussex County Council.

The **North Mid Sussex County Local Committee** now only meets three times a year, which means that any matter that is referred to the meeting takes an age to be resolved. The **Oaks traffic calming** is still waiting completion. There are road repair schemes and other parking matters that are still unresolved. The **Toucan crossing** outside Sackville School is now in place.

Our President, Margaret Collins D.L., and our committee members, have worked very hard throughout the year, together with those non committee members who contribute to the running of the Society. I offer them my grateful thanks.

We have a most interesting programme of talks next year and suggestions for the future are welcome.

Our membership has held up well and we are pleased to welcome several new members.

I am retiring as Chairman at this meeting and would like to thank you all for your support and forbearance. I believe the position of Chairman should not become hereditary and that there should be a shakeup every so often, so that new ideas are encouraged. If elected, I shall continue on the committee to concentrate on planning matters providing the new Chairman agrees. **Richard Maynard and John Collins** are retiring this year. Our grateful thanks go to them for their hard work and we welcome **James Baldwin**, who has recently been co-opted onto the Committee.

In reply to a question, Nic confirmed that Chequer Mead was included within the response to the Conservation report and that it was suggested that the Museum also be included.

Treasurer's Report

Hon. Treasurer, Mike Lyons, noted that the end of year balance was up from £4230 to £4461 and that The Society's financial position continues to be healthy. Mike highlighted key points from the accounts:

Income was down by £220, as although subscriptions were up, attendance at meetings was slightly down. There were no sales of Town trails or Bulletins but the May Fair produced the best sales to date - a total of £308 from the tombola and sales of jams and chutneys. Thanks to all who gave donations. Sundries were increased due to a talk by Joan Roberts to an outside organisation.

Expenditure was £60 down on last year. Hall Hire and Lecture Fees accounted for the largest amount of expenditure for the year and refreshment costs were up due to last year's 50th anniversary celebration. Insurance costs have been reduced by shopping around with no impact on the cover provided and **sundries** were reduced from the previous year.

As finances are healthy, Society memorials for John Bridle and Michael Leppard are being considered by the Committee and any suggestions would be welcomed.

As there were no questions from the floor, the motion that the Treasurer's Report for the year ended 31st August 2019 should be adopted was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously.

As current reserves are sufficient, Mike recommended that the **annual membership and renewal subscription remain at £10**. This motion was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously.

Membership

As membership secretary, Mike Lyons, reported that the number of members remains fairly constant and now stands at 104, plus 6 honorary members. 13 new members have joined during the year. New members are always welcome.

Elections : Officers and Committee

Barbara Stovold, Alan Ward and Mike Lyons have indicated their willingness to continue in their respective posts as Vice Chairman, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer. In the absence of other nominations, the motion that they be elected as Vice Chairman, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer respectively was carried unanimously.

Shirley King, Ann Edwards, Janice Ward and Richard Lawrence have indicated their willingness to continue on the committee. There being no further nominations, the motion that they be re-elected as committee members was carried unanimously,

Richard Maynard and John Collins are standing down and Margaret Collins thanked them for their hard work. Margaret also thanked **Nic** for everything he has done for the Society as Chairman and was pleased that he is willing to stand for the committee.

Nic Beale, James Baldwin and Keith Hodgson have indicated their willingness to stand for election to the committee. In the absence of any other nominations, the motion that they be elected was carried unanimously.

James Baldwin has indicated his willingness to stand for election as Chairman of the East Grinstead Society. In the absence of any other nominations, the motion that James be elected was carried unanimously.

Any Other Business

Joan Roberts provided an update on **Glenvue**, which was closed by WSCC. It has now passed to **Age UK** and is in full use, with the facilities being improved. For individuals with moderate dementia there are two sessions a month on Saturdays, which enables their carers to have a break.

Concerns were raised about what will happen to the subway near **Sackville School** now that the Toucan crossing is in place. The question will be raised at the County Local Committee.

The question of local reports on traffic was raised, including the **Atkins study, and the Jubb report**.

There is no further news on the **Bell Hammer site** and it is thought that any previous planning application has time expired.

It was suggested that the **East Grinstead Society Bulletin should be digitised and placed on the Society's website.**

It was also suggested that **a map of the town** should be available at our meetings to help identify areas under discussion.

It was reported that the **Town Action Group** is working to plant a Community Orchard in North Downs Terrace, off Dormans Park Road. (see report elsewhere in this newsletter)

There being no further business the President thanked all those attending the A.G.M. and closed the formal part of the meeting.

James Baldwin, as new Chairman, thanked Margaret Collins for her work as President and Nic Beale for all his hard work and being such a hard act to follow. He acknowledged the importance that the Society has in protecting the town and providing an interesting social scene.

James then welcomed Mary Nicholls, who gave a short talk on the work of East Grinstead Street Pastors, which began in 2012.

Street Pastors were founded in Brixton in 2003 by Rev. Les Isaac. It is an initiative of the Ascension Trust, a registered charity established in 1993. There are now over 500 groups in this country and across the world.

Members of the group undergo 15 sessions of training on their roles and responsibilities, risk assessment, health and safety and first aid before beginning their work. They go out on Saturday nights from 9.00pm – 3.00am on Sunday, patrolling the town to help anyone in need. They are in teams of three and wear a street pastor's uniform and carry ID. They carry water, sick bags, a mobile charger, flip flops and lollipops.

The group is a Christian organisation and there is always a prayer team back at their base in West Street Baptist Church, when they are on patrol. They meet late night revellers, young people unable to get home and the homeless. The aim of the pastors is to assist anyone, who needs help. Young people congregate all around the town; in the skate park, East Court, the Football pavilion, the Bowls Club and the Churchyard and may need help in a variety of ways.

There are currently 18 Street Pastors and their commitment is one night a month. There is no age limit for Pastors, who work alongside the police, and volunteers are always welcome.

Joan Roberts

James Baldwin

(We asked our new Chairman for a little information about himself – and here it is)

“What an honour to be your new Chairman! I am proudly local and can trace my links to the town to the 1880's, when my great grandfather came from London. I have always lived here except for spells at university and working in Chicago. I have three children and four grandchildren all living locally, so I have an eye to their future too!

I am hoping that my past experience as a Town, District and County Councillor, including as Town Mayor and Council leader, will help my work for the Society. Certainly, the issues that motivated me in local politics are still very much key to the Society's priorities. These priorities are as clear as they were at our foundation: enhancing and publicising the Town's heritage and protecting it from over-development.

In terms of work, my career was largely spent with BP as an Audit Manager. I have spent the last ten years in a similar role within the Civil Service, now focussing on the Coastguards and UK and Irish Lighthouses.

I am very grateful for the strong platform Nic Beale helped to build and thank him for his continuing commitment to the Society. We are well placed to continue to be a constructive voice for the Town and I look forward to the future with confidence.

James Baldwin

Town Action Group

The East Grinstead Town Action Group was set up at an open Coffee morning at St Mary's Church last October, when members of the public were invited to talk about their suggestions for making the town "**a greener, kinder and more environmentally aware town.**"

Their biggest concern appeared to be the amount of litter around the town, so we have organised many 'litter picks', including one to coincide with the national 'Keep Britain Tidy' campaign fronted by Chris Packham. We continue to hold these regularly but our aim is to encourage and educate the folk of E.G. to keep the town tidy and to take pride in our town.

We also want to "green" the town by introducing more planting and wild flowers around the town and neighbouring streets, and to encourage the development of community groups. We are developing **a Community Orchard at North Downs Terrace** on an area of land owned by Clarion Housing. We shall be planting Sussex varieties of apples soon and hope to host an official opening in the spring.

We want a Cleaner and Greener Town ... come and help us

Anne Stone

Contact TAG via ... anne.stone@gmail.com

Michael John Leppard 1937 – 2019

Michael was born in East Grinstead in 1937, lived in the town most of his life and was influential in several different societies and organisations.

He attended the former Grammar School in Windmill Lane and from there went on to University College, Oxford, where he obtained a degree in Theology. He then taught at various schools in Sussex before moving to Sackville School, where he taught until his retirement. Many Sackville staff have paid tribute to him; "He was a brilliant teacher, whose lessons were innovative and memorable. He was kind, thoughtful, encouraging, generous and supportive."

Michael was a founder member of the East Grinstead Society, later becoming Chairman and President. He produced the 'Bulletin', the Journal of the Society, containing detailed and accurate accounts of East Grinstead's history, carefully researched and well written. He went on to write two books; 'A History of East Grinstead' (2001) and '100 Buildings of East Grinstead' (2006), which are his memorial and will be read for many years to come.

In 1976 Michael became honorary curator of East Grinstead Museum, then housed at East Court. He continued as curator for the next 35 years, keeping records, buying suitable items and far too many books! In 1995 the Museum was awarded a Heritage Lottery grant and the new Museum was built in Cantelupe Road. Michael regarded it as his second home but in 2011 there was such pressure on the book shelves in the Research Room that some of his books had to go. Michael did not like this and he stopped editing the Museum magazine 'Compass' and stepped down as a Museum Trustee.

Michael was also involved with the Town Council, acting as transport co-ordinator and frequently being consulted on suitable local names for new roads and housing estates. In 2014 he was presented with the M.S.D.C. Community Champion Award for public service.

Michael wrote this 'Afterword' at the end of his book 'A History of East Grinstead':

"How the story (of East Grinstead) develops is something we all have a part in, as neighbours and citizens, in our personal lives and in our participation in organised life, negatively or positively according to our attitudes and actions, regardless of age or status."

Surely a fitting last word from such a dedicated member of our Society and of our Town.

(Adapted from the tribute paid to Michael at his funeral by his best friend.)

Joan Roberts

Congratulations to CARE

We are delighted to hear that CARE East Grinstead has been awarded the **Queen's Award for Voluntary Service**. The Lord Lieutenant of West Sussex, Mrs Susan Pyper, presented the award on behalf of Her Majesty.

This is the highest national honour a voluntary group can receive. It is awarded for exceptional work done by voluntary groups in their communities. Only a small number of the many thousands of charities across the UK receive this award. It represents a tremendous achievement, particularly for a small charity like CARE, which has served the local community for 31 years.

As we heard at a previous meeting, CARE provides transport to medical appointments, small DIY and gardening jobs and help with shopping. If you are interested in volunteering please phone 01342 410086.

Margaret Collins

Valete - John Bridle 1932-2019

It was a sunny summer day, when we bade farewell to John W. Bridle, after he had given over twenty years of service to the Society. For much of that time he ensured continuity of purpose and interest for all members, as Secretary, Vice-Chairman and Chairman, throughout being aided by his wife Jean.

John Bridle was born in Leeds in 1932 and educated at Harrogate Grammar School before entering the R.A.F. for National Service.

He then joined the Civil Service and undertook postings to Prague and Bucharest, amongst others, before returning to London. He met Jean in 1985 and on his retirement in 1987 they were married.

They settled in East Grinstead. He was an avid reader and a life-long member of the John Buchan Society, making every attempt to attend their annual gatherings. John was an approachable, courteous person, who was passionate in his support of the Society and Town, but also made time for golf, rambling in the Yorkshire Dales and the cliffs around Tintagel in Devon.

In 1998 John and Jean became involved in the East Grinstead Society at the time that Doreen Yarwood and Laura Sansom were active, and the second edition of the Town Trail was being prepared. John became Honorary Secretary in 2002. In 2004 he became Vice-Chairman and in 2011/12 Chairman.

Latterly he was busy with Jean's help in developing a Society archive in the Town Museum and contributing to the smooth running of the Society in difficult times. It is no exaggeration to say that we owe John an enormous debt of gratitude for keeping the Society on an even keel through the stormy days of the District and Regional Plan development.

There was joy in what he accomplished and he leaves the Society in good shape. It is now up to us to carry things forward in his memory.

Christopher Wheatley

EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY MEETINGS 7.30pm, Main Hall, East Court - £1.00/member, £3.00/non-member

The next meeting of the Society is on Friday December 13th 2019, when Melanie Gibson-Barton will speak on "The Bear Essentials ; a History of the Teddy Bear" - your Teddy Bears will be very welcome, as will your children's, or grandchildren's.

There is no meeting in January 2020. Meetings resume on February 20th 2020.

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EXTRA COPIES: Newsletter back issues may be ordered for £1.00 each from Hon. Secretary, Alan Ward, 7 Heathcote Drive, East Grinstead, RH19 1LZ 01342 321725

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