

THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

Charity No. 257870



www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org

NEWSLETTER

No. 133
November 2020

We are approaching the end of what has been a very strange year for us all. We should like to extend our sympathy to any members bereaved by the pandemic, or who have suffered themselves from Coronavirus. We do hope that everyone stays safe during this second wave of the pandemic and look forward with hope to a vaccine becoming available next year.

Joan Roberts and Barbara Stovold

A Message from our Chairman

My report to our A.G.M. said there was no doubt that we needed a spirit of optimism more than ever in 2020. I noted the negative impact of the virus on our Society and in particular the loss of historical and social engagement from the lack of meetings due to the necessary health regulations. Looking ahead, I noted that we have been able to carry over the excellent meetings programme to 2021. So we are ready to go as soon as conditions allow.

I also stressed that the work of the Society carries on regardless of the virus. We continue to promote the Town's heritage through our website and social media engage with the many enquiries received on heritage issues. In recent days I have had enquiries about the town's history from the BBC Travel magazine and from Channel 5 on a series they are planning on Britain's lost railways.

We are also not neglecting our core role. Led by Nic Beale, we continue to act as an effective watchdog, protecting that heritage through the work of the Planning Sub-Committee. This work is vital in pressing, not only our concerns on the need for adequate services, infrastructure and roads to cope with the proposed further growth in housing, but also in providing a view on specific individual planning applications.

My A.G.M. report also referred to the loss last year of our stalwart members, Michael Leppard and John Bridle and their generous legacies to the Society. We are still finalising the provision of a memorial bench, outside Chequer Mead, for John and a commemorative plaque for Michael in the High Street. We continue to develop options for Michael's legacy, including a focus on promoting local historical research, and shall give you more news in due course on the outcome of our considerations.

I also used my A.G.M. Report to thank the retiring members of our committee: Nic Beale, Barbara Stovold, Ann Edwards and Keith Hodgson. Please note that we would always welcome new volunteers for the committee !

I must also thank Barbara Stovold and Joan Roberts for all their work on this and previous newsletters. This is the last one they will be producing. I welcome Richard Lawrence as our new Vice-Chairman and am confident that our new Committee will provide a continuing enthusiastic lead to the Society.

There are two recurrent themes in this message: resilience and change. Our resilience as a Society in adapting to these difficult circumstances and in continuing effectively to deliver a vital mission for our town and our recognition of change and the need in 2021 to bounce back to our social selves with our regular meetings programme.

I can promise that we shall make the most of that return as soon as it is possible, with an emphasis on strengthening our profile in the town and in increasing our membership. So, I shall look forward to seeing you all, eventually, at one of our meetings!

James Baldwin

John Bridle's Bench

At last the memorial bench has arrived, just before the start of the second 'Lock Down'. It is similar to the two seats installed by the Society next to the McIndoe statue in the High Street. At present it is stored on the stage at Chequer Mead. It will be placed in front of the theatre on the left-hand side as you view from the front and will probably be installed in the Spring when the weather is better. We shall have a ceremonial 'ribbon cutting' and then gather inside for light refreshments.

Barbara Stovold

Michael Leppard's Legacy

Founder member of our Society, Michael Leppard, left a generous legacy in his will to enable the Society to carry out research into the history of our town. An outstanding local historian, this is not the only legacy he left to us. In 1969 Michael began producing 'The Bulletin of the East Grinstead Society'. Each issue was packed with carefully researched articles on the history of our town and it makes fascinating reading.

Thanks to the work of, Stephen Metcalfe, the 'Bulletins' have now been digitised and are available on the Society website. They make a compelling read and are an outstanding contribution to the history of our town.

The Committee have also been working on establishing a plaque in memory of Michael and his work, to be erected in East Grinstead High Street.

Joan Roberts

East Grinstead in Lockdown

As one would expect, East Grinstead Groups, Organisations and individuals have all responded to the challenge of assisting those of our community, who are in most need.

East Grinstead Emergency Action Group

The East Grinstead Emergency Action Group was formed during the first Lock Down, by the Town Council, Age UK and 'The Mug Tree', to help elderly, vulnerable and self-isolating residents in need of assistance. The Town Council co-ordinated the scheme and a team of volunteers manned the phone. Volunteer help was given with 'Click and Collect' shopping from Waitrose, collecting prescriptions and delivery of cold food and sandwiches. Hot meals could also be ordered and delivered.

CARE – East Grinstead & Lingfield

A small group of drivers has enabled CARE to continue to offer an invaluable service to the vulnerable members of our local community. Due to Covid -19, because many of the drivers are themselves vulnerable and could not offer to drive clients, CARE is limited to offering them transport to hospitals and other medical facilities outside East Grinstead. If more volunteer drivers feel able to help, CARE hopes to re-instate local driving jobs to G.P.'s and the QVH. A telephone befriending service has been established and volunteers are continuing to call clients, who live on their own, regularly.

East Grinstead Foodbank

Our local Foodbank is hearing many sad stories of those experiencing financial difficulties, caused or exacerbated by the Pandemic. Like most foodbanks, East Grinstead is seeing an increase in need. Client numbers are up. In May they had reached an increase of 81 percent for the time of year and numbers continue to increase. Pre-packed parcels for clients are prepared, ready for swift, minimal contact on handover or delivery.

The Foodbank has also been busy preparing for Christmas. Festive bags are given to individuals and families, who are nominated by referral partners and churches. Essential items have been stockpiled but festive goodies are also needed. Cartons or tubs of chocolates, boxes of fancy biscuits, Christmas cake bars and tubes of crisps are all needed and may be left in the collecting bins in Sainsbury's and Waitrose, or put in the collecting box at the entrance of the Jubilee Community Centre in Charlwood's Road by 7th December. (The early date is to allow for packing and distribution on the 10th December, to get the bags out to schools, allowing time for families to collect before schools break up.)

Individuals have also worked tirelessly to support others in this difficult year.

Sarah Howland was recently presented with the '**Outstanding Contribution to the Community Award**' by the High Sherriff of West Sussex, Dr Tim Fooks, accompanied by Town Mayor, John Dabell.

The award was in recognition of Sarah's work in setting up the '**Stone Quarry Community Café and Fridge**'. This initiative was originally set up to provide a café and meeting place for local residents but has now expanded into the 'Community Fridge', which distributes surplus food and makes meals for people struggling to cope. It is open to everyone to select their food and make a donation.

At half term, assistance was given to those who normally receive free school meals by providing children's lunches. Much of the fresh food and vegetables received from supermarkets is cooked and frozen to provide ready meals and soups. 900 meals have been distributed, of which Sarah has cooked 700 ! During this Lock Down the Quarry Café and Community Fridge are open on a 'takeaway' basis only on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10.30am – 4.00pm.

East Grinstead Library

West Sussex libraries have continued to offer a service to the public during the Pandemic and East Grinstead Library staff have worked hard to keep a much appreciated service going during Lock Down. A 'Select and Collect' service is in operation, with all reservations remaining free. You may not know exactly what you would like without browsing or you may want a more general selection of books, in which case, library staff can put together a selection for you to borrow. To access this service, just phone the library, or go online and complete a form.

If you are unable to collect because you are vulnerable, are shielding or have caring responsibilities, there is an 'Essential Delivery Service' and items can be delivered to you at a pre-arranged time. Phone the Library for further details.

Currently, there are no charges for overdue items, however, keeping your loans up to date and returning items requested by others, is appreciated, if possible.

Margaret Collins/ Joan Roberts

Sad News

We are sad to report the deaths of several members of our Society in the past year.

George Topping

George moved to East Grinstead from the North East many years ago but never lost his 'Geordie accent'! George participated keenly in the local community and was a stalwart member of the Society. His enthusiastic questioning of our Speakers and fund of comments and stories were much appreciated by everyone.

He will be sorely missed and we extend our sincere sympathy to his family.

Joan Roberts

Diana Rees

Diana and her late husband, David, both gave service and support to the East Grinstead Society for many years. Diana was very involved in the community. She was a reader with the East Grinstead Talking News and was also a very knowledgeable, informative volunteer Guide at Standen. She was committed to the East Grinstead Society and every Christmas took delight in providing the home baked mince pies for our Christmas meeting. She was a great friend and will be missed.

Our condolences are with her daughters Susan, Janet and Carol and all her family.

Margaret Collins

Roy Adderly

Many members will remember Roy as the librarian at the old East Grinstead Library at Southwick House. He moved to the new Library building, when it was built in West Street, and worked there until his retirement. He was an excellent Information Librarian with an extensive knowledge of the town. On his retirement, he joined the U3A and participated fully in its groups and activities.

We extend our sympathy to all his family and friends.

Joan Roberts

Chequer Mead Theatre versus Covid !

During the first 'Lock Down' time was not wasted. New toilets for men and women were installed and a garden restaurant was set up. This had beautiful cane chairs and parasols, with overhead coloured lighting for weekend evening performances by invited professional groups and singers. To make it even more special, we had a glorious summer !

Catering for visitors was brought 'in house' with the waiting on tables done by the Chequer Mead staff. This new restaurant is called 'The Apron' and is excellent. In the cooler months, the facility is available in the bar area. Pre-booking is advisable and can be done through the website.

The Management, despite this second 'Lock Down', are hoping to put on a shortened Panto, so keep your eyes open for advertisements. As the saying goes "**The Show must go on**"...

Sadly, one of the activities, which could not 'go on' was the **Chequer Mead Fancy Dress and Stage Costume Hire**. We opened in October 2008 and closed in March 2020 – a period of about ten and a half years – an amazing 'run'.

We were open every Saturday morning, and at other times, by appointment. The service was run by a team of 8 volunteers on a rota basis. We provided costumes for fancy dress parties, themed events, many 'amdram' groups, schools and community occasions. We had great fun running the store and many of our customers said how much they enjoyed visiting us.

We were soon aware that we could not possibly comply with Covid restrictions and we advised some of our long standing customers that we would be having a 'Clearance Sale'. One group took most of the costumes. There were 11 six foot long rails, each with 70 costumes, together with 35 boxes of individual items, which they managed to cram into a Luton van and 3 cars !

***In the end the grand total raised by the Costume Store for the Theatre was £56,980.50 gross.**

Barbara Stovold

***A simply amazing amount – Congratulations Barbara and team !**

Good News

East Grinstead Station

East Grinstead Station is one of four stations on the Southern and Thameslink routes in the South to benefit from Network Rail-delivered accessibility improvements.

Paul Johnson, Chairman of our local Disability Access Group writes in the 'Disability Access Newsletter' ...: "This is great news for us. Don't expect it to happen immediately, as there is the present problem of the landslips between East Grinstead and Dormans to be overcome and it may be a number of years before the improvements are in place... This has been a very long campaign to achieve recognition of the serious hazards all mobility impaired, the elderly frail, parents with buggies and young children, and passengers with luggage encounter when having to cross the present platform bridge; let alone those in wheelchairs, manual and powered, who are escorted by staff across the tracks at risk to their own and station staff safety. "

Although it may be some time before the improvements are put in place, this is excellent news for all travellers to and from East Grinstead Station.

Joan Roberts

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

The next meeting of the Society will be advised by the Secretary.

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 Hon. Secretary, Alan Ward, 7 Heathcote Drive, East Grinstead, RH19 1LZ 01342 321725

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