



THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

Charity No. 257870



<http://www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org>

NEWSLETTER

No.133
April 2021

A Message from our Chairman

Welcome!

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Society Newsletter. We are all suffering from the impact of Covid restrictions but the Society has not been idle. The important work of the Planning Sub Committee has carried on and ensures our voice is heard on all planning applications. On this note, there is an important piece elsewhere in the Newsletter on the proposed housing schemes for Imberhorne Farm and Crawley Down Road.

You will all know of the fundamental role played by the late Michael Leppard in the formation and work of the Society. I am delighted to tell you we have been in receipt of a generous legacy from Michael: more news on this elsewhere.

Looking ahead: what of our meetings?

We have so missed members' meetings! We can't be sure at the moment on the date we can guarantee a resumed programme as we (like everyone) await the further relaxation of lockdown so we can meet up again. We have speakers eager to join us and will let you know as soon as possible when we can resume this vital part of our activities.

James Baldwin

Commemorations

Prior to the receipt of the legacy discussed below, we had already agreed to commemorate Michael Leppard with a plaque in the High Street. We have the plaque and are waiting until after Covid restrictions are lifted in June to install it. It is planned that the plaque will be placed on the face of what is now "The Market Square" (see our banner photograph). Fittingly this building replaced a 15th century hall house whose demolition in 1968 was the catalyst to the formation of this Society.

We also have a bench made to mark the service of John Bridle to the Society. This will be installed at Chequer Mead also after June.

The Leppard Legacy

Your Committee has been active in considering projects to use the legacy left it by Michael Leppard. We have agreed so far a couple of small projects, meeting his desire that the legacy should promote interest in, and the study of local history. Initially, these cover:

- The Leppard Prize: an award to the best piece of original research in local history by a Year 8 pupil at Sackville School
- The resumption of The Bulletin – more details below

We would welcome any suggestions from Members for worthwhile projects that could draw on Michael's legacy to the Town's benefit and/or improve knowledge of the Town's history and heritage.

The Bulletin

The Bulletin is back! Editing the Bulletin was a fundamental part of Michael Leppard's service to The Society. It is fitting this legacy enables us resume its publication as an expression of our commitment to promoting interest in local history. Under the new editorship of Caroline Metcalfe, we have now issued edition 123 of The Bulletin, the first since Spring 2018. This will join the other 122 Bulletins on line on the Society's website and will be followed by a further edition in the Autumn.

The Society: Looking Back Thirty-Three Years

We mentioned above the rebirth of The Bulletin. Past issues still provide a treasure trove of interesting reflections, and hopefully pointers for our future. Take the Autumn 1988 edition for example and its look at the Society's progress in the twenty years since its formation.

Firstly, note was made of the Society's role in advising on planning applications. This remains a key role, but one that 'inevitably brings criticism: on the one hand for creating another planning authority, on the other for failing to influence or prevent what is beyond our powers.'

Secondly, the need to refresh membership! We need to grow our membership as much as the Society did in 1988 to ensure now, as then, we don't 'constantly come across those who have never even heard of us, including many who prove to have similar aspirations and concerns.'

Thirdly, what of our meetings? In 1988 there was emphasis on regular meetings planned further ahead. We had progressed well on this prior to Covid and will get back to these and the vital social component they present as soon as Covid allows.

The 1988 article concludes with the accurate statement that 'our task will never be over' and we can be reasonably optimistic and go on in good heart.' I think that sums up well the Society today!

Houses vs Traffic: Again!

The Society has always sought to protect the Town from overdevelopment; not least from the havoc that would cause to the Town's already overstretched roads. Our response to the District Council's proposals for 200 houses on Crawley Down Road and 550 on Imberhorne Farm reflected that position. These plans are to be reviewed and we have noted the activities of the Infrastructure First (IF) Campaign Group in opposing them. You may find the IF website of interest in outlining the current position at: www.infrastructurefirst.co.uk

Sackville House

Members will have noted the extensive scaffolding, which has been outside and above the Grade II, listed Sackville House, one of the oldest buildings in the High Street. In March last year the Landmark Trust, who own Sackville House and who allow it to be used for holiday lets, put in two Planning Applications as follows:

"Replacement of roof covering, using Horsham stone slate and handmade plain clay tiles; replacement of timber window; replacement of metal-framed roof light, repair of structural frame; introduction of cast-iron rainwater goods to south range; introduction of mechanical extract fan; external redecoration. Scenario A- Best case scenario and Scenario B -Worst Case Scenario"

Subsequently, the removal of a double layer of Horsham stone slates and other investigations and the pause in lettings due to the Covid crisis, enabled the Landmark Trust to undertake far more extensive repairs. So much so that in February 2021 a new application was submitted for:-

"Repairs to wall framing, infill panels and roof members, repairs to chimneys, renewal and part alteration to roof coverings, repairs and part renewal of windows and dormers, renewal and alteration to roof windows, renewal of door canopy to new detail, repairs and part renewal to ceilings and skeelings, external and internal redecoration, renewal and part alteration to insulation, alterations to rain and foul water drainage systems, alterations to extract ventilation system.

There is a wealth of fascinating detail of the investigations and proposed repairs on the Mid Sussex District Council Planning Portal at:-

<https://pa.midsussex.gov.uk/online-applications/simpleSearchResults.do?action=firstPage>

Activities in the High Street

A number of cafes and restaurants in the High Street have set up temporary eating areas outside their premises in order to follow Covid rules and give customers the chance to return to eating out. Some concern had been expressed in certain quarters about the impact of these structures in what is the historical heart of the Town and zoned a Conservation Area.



The Society recently posted this commentary on its website:

"There has been significant debate on Facebook regarding the temporary structures around the Tasting Rooms and By the Fountain to encourage al fresco dining. The East Grinstead Society is passionate about protecting our beautiful High Street but equally recognises it needs to be a living space!"

So, on balance we are supportive about the initiative as good for the Town, its well-being and prosperity. That said, we are concerned there seems to have been little consultation about the design of the structures to ensure they can fit in as well as possible with the incomparable street scene. We would like to see efforts made now to soften their impact whilst still providing the much-needed benefits of outdoor dining."

Now that alfresco dining is in full swing we are happy to report that the overall look of these structures seems to blend in quite well with the ancient buildings.

The East Grinstead Town Council has also reminded us on Facebook that the Thursday Market is up and running again and encourages residents to support this initiative.



The Bookshop has, once again, set up chess tables on the pavement outside the shop and John Pye recently posted a photo showing enthusiastic youngsters parking their skateboards for a while to become involved.

All these initiatives help to increase the vibrant atmosphere of the Town! (Note al fresco diners in the background!)



Commemorative Benches

From East Grinstead Town Council Facebook Page:

"East Grinstead Town Council has placed two commemorative benches for the Covid pandemic, one bench to remember all who have been lost or suffered through the lockdowns and one to thank the great efforts of so many who have and continue to help to bring us through."



"The two benches were placed at the McIndoe Lawn on 24th February, unveiled by Cllr Helen Farren (Chairman of the Amenities and Tourism Committee). Cllr Farren said, "These benches are our permanent memorial to all affected by the Pandemic, through the grief of losing a loved one, the loneliness of shielding and even being restricted on going outside. We also wanted to separately say thank you to all those working so hard to keep us safe and bring us through".

One of the benches is a bespoke steel bench with representative images of all groups of people touched by the pandemic and with the inscription:

"For many months, to sit outside was but a wish"

The second is an EGTC standard bench, with the inscription:

"Recognising all those who helped to overcome Covid 19 NHS, Key Workers and all volunteers"

It is hoped as people sit on the benches by the McIndoe Statue they will reflect on the struggle of the second world war where pioneering surgery was developed, through to the 2020/21 pandemic where again pioneering science was needed to bring us back to being able to enjoy the simple things like sitting on a bench in the sunshine; while still remembering those who did not make it."

Corrigendum

Avid readers will have spotted that this issue is No 133, the same No indeed as the last issue in November 2020! The November issue should more correctly have been No 132 as the April 2020 issue was not published owing to the cancellation of the Open Forum.

Just thought you would like to know that!!

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.

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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 or are available on the Society's website: www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org

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