



THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

Charity No. 257870



<http://www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org>

NEWSLETTER

No.134
November 2021

A Message from our Chairman

Welcome to the second edition of the Society's re-launched newsletter! This edition discusses our successful AGM and, in particular, our campaign to restore the High Street drinking fountain. We also include our regular feature of a look back at an extract from a past Society Bulletin.

Looking ahead, you'll find our future meeting programme. We are excited to be resuming meetings after our move to the Jubilee Community Centre. As agreed at the AGM, subscriptions going forward will be £15 after last year's suspended sub. But this will now include free coffee and biscuits and meeting charge for members. Guests – who are very welcome – will pay £5 per meeting but this is refundable if they join at the meeting.

Meetings are our lifeblood in spreading knowledge on local history and heritage and providing a social event for us to get together. I am hoping that our varied meeting programme will provide a platform to grow our membership as this is key to maintaining our profile and influence on the Town's future development.

I always welcome ideas for activities and speakers to increase your enjoyment of the Society – please contact me with your thoughts!

James Baldwin

AGM - Face to Face Again!

We had an excellent turn out for the AGM on October 14 at the Jubilee Centre and were glad to welcome several guests including the Town Mayor. All the existing Officers and Committee were re-elected, although we are missing a Vice Chairman. Andrew Brock was elected to join the Committee.

James Baldwin's Chairman's report stressed how busy 2020/21 had been despite Covid. The service of Michael Leppard and John Bridle to the Town had been marked with permanent memorials: a plaque to Michael in the High Street and a seat in John's honour at Chequer Mead.

As reported last year, we received legacies from Michael Leppard and John Bridle. We have ring-fenced Michael's legacy, in line with his wishes, for support to projects to enhance the Town and promote the study of local history. Our first project has been the institution of an annual prize for Sackville School years 7 and 8 for original historical research. The first awards were made in June. The Prize will be awarded annually, comprising a gift voucher of up to £50 and we are now looking at options to offer something similar to the Town's primary schools.

James told the meeting of the exciting project to develop the options for restoring the High Street drinking fountain as a Jubilee project. These options will then need to be discussed with a range of stakeholders before they can be progressed. More on this elsewhere in the Newsletter.

He highlighted the work of the Planning Sub -Committee, chaired now by Mike Lyons. During the year, they looked at no less than 467 applications! The sub committee's work is valued by our local Councils and is a key part of the Society's mission to fight against harmful growth that threatens the Town's heritage and well-being.

James concluded by stressing the importance to the Society of growing its membership and enhancing its profile. To this end we have an active website, a Facebook page and, of course, the resumed Bulletin and Newsletter. The meeting programme (see later) has been drawn up with many of the lectures postponed from last year being scheduled at last!

He looked forward to a successful 2021/22 for the Society.

Michael Leppard - Plaque Unveiling

On September 14th the East Grinstead Society President Mrs Margaret Collins DL unveiled a plaque in the Town's High Street honouring the Town Historian Michael Leppard who passed away in September 2019. Michael was without doubt the most respected authority of his time on the history of East Grinstead and the surrounding area. This was built up over many years of tireless voluntary dedication to this subject.



From L to R: Cllr John Dabell (Town Mayor), Shirley Knight (EGS), Peter Freeland, Mrs Freeland, Mrs Margaret Collins DL (EGS President), James Baldwin (EGS Chairman)

Michael made a unique contribution to the community, particularly for his significant role in the establishment of the East Grinstead Society (EGS) in 1968.

Following the unveiling, assembled guests, including Town Mayor Cllr John Dabell, retired to the “By The Fountain” restaurant for refreshments and life long friend, Mr Peter Freeland, shared his memories of Michael’s exceptional talent and dedication over many years, often with a dash of humour.

Sackville School – East Grinstead Society Prize

As mentioned in James Baldwin’s report on the AGM, the Prize was established by the Society as a memorial to Michael Leppard, as one of its founders and a former Sackville School teacher, to encourage the study of local history. The School really came up trumps with four outstanding winners covering projects on the Guinea Pig Club and Whitehall bombing.



The picture shows James (extreme right hand side) with the winners and Sackville School staff, with the School Head Mr Julian Grant on the left.

Michael Leppard School Awards Scheme to be extended?

Building on the success of the Leppard History Prize at Sackville School, the Society is now investigating with local schools developing a Painting Prize and Photography Prize, both based on an East Grinstead theme. More news on this in the next Newsletter!!

Society Judge for Rotary Club Speaking Competition

The Society is pleased that its Chairman, James Baldwin, has been invited to join the Rotary Youth Public Speaking competition judging panel. James will provide a report in the next Newsletter.

The Jubilee Fountain

The Society is looking at options for renovating the Jubilee Fountain in the High Street. The fountain was the original gift in 1887 by Revd. C W Payne-Crawford and the original waterspouts, which were in the form of dolphins were variously replaced by iron and concrete replicas, all of which have disappeared over the years. The fountain was renovated in 2005 with help from the Town’s Rotary Clubs and cleaned most recently in 2017, again with the Rotaries’ help. There has been no water at the fountain since the 1970s.

We have investigated the possibility of further cleaning and renovation in time for next year's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. We have received quotes from contractors for this work and discussed the practicality of reinstating the water with SE Water, who have been most helpful. Several Victorian fountains have been successfully brought back into use elsewhere in order to provide reusable bottle filling and so reducing the volume of discarded plastic bottles. There is a "Drinking Water Fountain Association" which gives technical guidance on these matters.

We have worked out an initial investigation programme with SE Water, which may or may not demonstrate whether the water can be reinstated. SE Water hope to commence this work as soon as practicable.

The East Grinstead Society is fully behind this project and is confident that sufficient funds can be sourced for the initial capital works.

Platinum Jubilee 2022 - Improvements at St Swithun's

East Grinstead Town Council has set up a Platinum Jubilee Celebrations sub-committee to look at what improvements could be made in the Town as part of planned celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee next year. The Society is hoping to be asked to be part of this sub-committee.

As part of this, the Council is planning to refurbish, repair and replace the wrought iron gate which, until recently, stood at the end of the footpath running along the churchyard and exiting onto Church Lane. The Council has also asked the Church's historical fabric group to consider, refurbishing the archway and getting the electrics back in working order. As a further improvement idea, EGTC has asked if the Society would consider replacing the kissing gate and refurbishing the railings along the stretch of the footpath, so that the area is wholly improved ready for the Jubilee next year.

We are positive about cooperation on this and further talks are underway as to how best to coordinate and tackle all these improvements!

Membership

We welcome Mrs Effie Visser as a new member of the Society.

Jean Glynn - AN APPRECIATION

Jean Glynn MBE, former Town Mayor, District and Town Councillor died in September. Her service to the Town over 70 years plus is certainly worth marking. James Baldwin has adapted this tribute from the eulogy given by Paul Johnson, himself a former Mayor, at Jean's funeral.

Jean was brought up in East Grinstead, and lived in the Town all her life. Her early working life was spent at the Queen Victoria Hospital where she worked in a team with Sir Archibald McIndoe.

She began her political career on the old East Grinstead District Council and then moved on to spells on the District and Town Council. Following her retirement from elected office she remained engaged in political activity to the end of her life. Jean was both determined and statesmanlike in her political work, winning respect from all sides of the argument and someone dedicated to the welfare of the Town and its people.

She had a life outside politics. She was a superb pianist, including playing at Age Concern and Chequer Mead and a lively conversationalist.

The Town will miss her contributions to its life as someone who gave so much to it over her long life.

We were also saddened to hear the news of the death of long time member **Roger Tullet** who passed away in August.

The Town as it Was

A fascinating piece from a 1971 Bulletin from Mrs Dempster on East Grinstead in the early 1900's.

"The Town was lit with 'rather dim' gaslights. There were no cars, only carriages and carts. Children played hopscotch and marbles on the pavements and sent hoops down Ship Street, along Portland Road and the High Street!"

In the Spring, sheep were herded through the Town en route to lowland pastures, as far away as Rye. On market days, cattle were driven through the Town – 'terrified pedestrians ran for cover in the shops as bullocks careered along the pavement!'

There was also real poverty in the Town. Children were seen going to school in worn-out boots with 'legs red and swollen with cold and clothes in rags'. Tramps were 'prolific': rows could be seen from 5pm outside the workhouse (now St Leonard's) waiting to get in for the night".

Whatever our problems today: would we ever want to go back to those days?

EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY MEETINGS 7.30pm, Jubilee Community Centre – free to members, £5.00 for non-members (reimbursable if joining the Society at the meeting).

Wednesday 17 November 2021	Rex Whittaker: Being a Local Representative
Wednesday 8 December 2021	Kathryn Ferry: The Sisters of St Margaret and Christmas drinks
Wednesday 16 February 2022	Michael Hodge: Growing Up in 1950s Stone Quarry
Wednesday 23 March 2022	Paul Reader: Wakehurst, Kew and the National Trust
Wednesday 20 April 2022	John Pye: Reflections of a Bookseller
Wednesday 18 May 2022	Ian Gledhill: Art Deco
Wednesday 15 June 2022	Ros Black : Scandal, Salvation and Suffrage
Wednesday 13 July 2022	Summer Drinks and Open Forum
Wednesday 14 September 2022	Andy Thomas: Lewes and Bonfire Night
Wednesday 12 October 2022	Jeremy Clarke: East Grinstead in Manorial Records
Wednesday 18 November 2022	AGM
Wednesday 7 December 2022	TBA and Christmas drinks

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EXTRA COPIES: Newsletter back issues may be ordered 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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