

When the Railway came to Epsom and Ewell.

By Museum Curator

Today the marketing departments of railways are for colourful promotions of railcards, but their scope hasn't always been so limited. Suburban development in the 1930s came about through a partnership between local speculative builders, who put up the houses, and the newly electrified rail companies, who provided the only realistic means by which their new residents could get to work each morning in central London. The builders were often working on a small scale, with some estates consisting of as few as 20 houses, and they did not have the means to market their product over the whole London catchment area. So it paid for the railway companies, working on a much larger scale, to advertise the new life in leafy Surrey or Middlesex that would be available to anyone who could afford a mortgage with their season ticket.

That was why the Southern Railway brought out a series of housing guides covering different areas, and one of these, covering Surrey and east Hampshire, has just been made available for us to copy. There is no date, but one page (p97) quotes 1936/7 rateable values. Epsom still appears as an Urban District, not a Borough, so the book must reflect the situation in 1936 or early 1937.

A DELIGHTFUL OLD-WORLD VILLAGE



EWELL SURREY
(25 mins. Waterloo).
AND AT BANSTEAD
(30 mins. London Bridge and Victoria)

ATTRACTIVE HOUSES

Occupying High and Healthy Positions
amidst Charming Rural Surroundings:
Close to Stations, and with all Modern
Conveniences.

MORTGAGES ARRANGED ON VERY ADVANTAGEOUS TERMS

For all available Properties apply to the Local Agents:

WILTSHIRES
AUCTIONEERS AND ESTATE AGENTS,
EWELL
STATION APPROACH & HIGH STREET.
*Phones: EWELL 1665/6.

BANSTEAD
ADJ. RAILWAY STN.
*Phone: BURGH HEATH 2634

FREQUENT BUS SERVICES TO ALL PARTS.

What an idyllic place this neighbourhood was in 1936! Epsom was 'still in many ways an old-fashioned country town' while Ewell was generally admitted to be 'one of the prettiest of the Surrey villages near London'. The most important part of the village's history for the authors, naturally enough, lay in the construction of new property for Londoners in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. 'Houses in mellowed red brick, with well-matured gardens and fine trees' abound, and 'round about their walls wind the few roads of older Ewell, with a new view at every turn of picturesque buildings, fine groupings of trees, or sunlight on water'.

Amongst these new views would have been the rubble and dirt as Ewell House, Ewell Grove, Purberry Short and Persfield were either demolished or stripped of their gardens for speculative building. However, the authors of *Southern Homes* seem oblivious to this contradiction in their story, and go on to say that 'a large portion of the beautiful Nonsuch Park grounds has been sold for building purposes', clearly under the impression that this would in no way diminish their beauty.

The focus of the region was Epsom, whose population had already risen over 27,000. Prospective purchasers were reassured that the town had 'schools, shops, banks, cinemas, hotels and churches', these being the things that mattered most, and presumably in that order. Sporting opportunities included cricket, tennis, and three golf

clubs – Epsom, Woodcote Park, and Cuddington – while ‘the rambler is at the very gate of beautiful upland country’. The electrification of Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner stations promised further development to the south of the town, while Ewell already had ‘frequent electric trains during morning and evening business periods and every 20 minutes other times’.

The book, which covers about sixty Surrey locations from Ashted to Worplesdon, opens each entry with a picturesque view of old village centres and rolling countryside, although in less promising areas a neo-Georgian bank or Art Deco cinemas may have to stand in as evidence for local amenities. After that come specimen photos of local builders’ work, usually choosing something traditional with tile-hanging and gables, although the Ewell section does include one property from Stoneleigh with a hint of modernism. The guide then gets down to business on the asking price for houses before concluding with details on the rates, utilities, ticket prices, and cost of fuel. Wiltshires the estate agents, who had two branches open in Ewell and one in Banstead, offered ‘mortgages arranged on very advantageous terms’



Parish Church, Ewell
New houses, Ewell East

Shopping district, Stoneleigh
Type of new house, Stoneleigh

The price of houses ranged from a little over £600 to upwards of £1400, though the builders were careful not to confound the different sectors of their market. Along Epsom Road and East Street – where, the guide admits in a rare moment of unpicturesque candour, ‘there is now an almost continuous belt of modern houses and bungalows’ – houses came in two classes, some costing £550 to £800, and others £1150 to £1750. The two categories, one gathers, did not mix. Above the thousand-pound barrier, the quality was highest at Woodcote Green, where ‘all the natural beauties of the original park are being preserved’ by Harwoods. The standard rate



here was £1100 to £1400, but you could commission a house to your own liking for anything up to £3000. The St. Norman’s Estate, off Reigate Road, similarly offered a price range of £1095 to £1420, while Gleasons were developing the Nonsuch Park Estate at £980 to £1365, the houses being of ‘a very superior character’ and within a few minutes’ walk of Ewell East station.

Houses at Purberry Shot were going for £1000 while in the former Ewell Castle Farm, off the Bypass, G.A. Gale were selling them for £975. Prices were £875 on the Chase Estate, £825 on the Hazon Farm Estate, £775 to £945 on the Davis Estate (off Kingston Road) and £795 for the Corner House Estate where

Reigate Road meets Ewell High Street.

A little further down the ladder, Ewell Court Estate was selling for £630 to £835, Park Lawn Estate at West Hill for £655, and the Crossways Estate for only £620 – but then this was off East Street and the most idealistic purchaser could hardly help noticing that it bordered on the older developments of working-class housing outside Epsom and between the railway tracks. The guide mentions Stoneleigh only in passing, but then its construction was almost over by 1936.

Development on these lines was to continue until 1939, by which time the old Ewell of ‘quaint old inns... occasionally intersected by by-ways and narrow lanes’ would be swept away for good. But the Southern Electric guide survives as a snapshot of the process by which village Epsom and Ewell were enveloped in the network of suburban development that forms the groundwork of today’s Borough.

A recent visitor to the LHC came with a cryptic question

With a LHC Volunteer

“Can you help? - I want to trace a one legged man called Shep.”

The only information our enquirer had was the Shep apparently ran a horse riding school from stables just off Epsom Road, Ewell back in the mid 1960s and thought that Shep was a nick name; he also seemed to think he had a house in Downs Avenue. He didn't know Shep's real name but guessed, quite logically, that it might be Shepherd. That was all the information we had to go on.



A look at a map of Ewell didn't trigger any memories of the name of the stables or the road it was in. The 1965 voters list for Downs Avenue did not help either.

However, a search of the photos in the back office came up trumps - not only with the name of the stables but also the last name of the owner, which was not Shepherd; however, his work had a lot to do with sheep. And a close look at the photo showed that the owner was indeed a one legged man.

A quick look in Ancestry came up with initials, and an address in Ewell, off Epsom Road, also that “Shep” was still there in 1984 when the telephone directories on Ancestry cease. To say the enquirer was happy when he left would be an understatement. He also made an unsolicited donation to the LHC.

Ed: Result or what? Well done. You will understand that for confidentiality reasons, we can't divulge the real name or address of Shep.

Bob's Your Uncle! Or not as the case may be!!

With a LHC Volunteer

On the day of our ‘Who Do You Think You Are?’ event last October a local lady was passed on to me after others had resolved her earlier questions with a query about her uncle who was in the RAF in WW2. She had seen, and purchased from a ‘junk shop’, a photo of a group of flyers in which she thought that the central figure looked like her uncle – could I help?



It transpired that her brother disagreed with her as to the likeness but she was convinced. I was now faced with

resolving a family dispute! Further questioning established that her uncle had been a rear gunner in a Wellington squadron. This was supported by other photos she had of him standing with a crew beside a Wellington, even though she was unaware of the type of aircraft in the photo.

Having studied the picture I had to inform the lady that this could not be her uncle. As a result, she lost all interest in the photo. But she was kind enough to allow me to keep it so that it could be sent to the RAF Museum at Hendon to see what they can make of it.

Now your question is, can you determine why I informed the lady that the central figure in this photograph is NOT her uncle? While we are waiting to hear what Hendon says, what can you make of it? Answers please to Bert – leave them in the back office- or by email to EpsomandEwellLHC@yahoo.co.uk

And here's a coincidence

By a LHC Volunteer

During the afternoon of the WDYTIA? Event I was assisting a lady who was researching the name REED, and when I mentioned that it was also my surname the person sitting on the other side of me, who I think was from the East Surrey Group, piped up and said that her maiden name was also Reed. As far as we could tell none of us are related but it did seem quite a coincidence to get three people sitting next to each other all with a strong interest in researching the same surname.

New Additions to the Website

<http://www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk>

Webmaster, has added a wealth of new information and pages to the website. A full list of the additions can be found at

www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/WhatsNew.html

Here's a taster of some of the items for you.

New pages:

Horton Manor and the Mynne family

www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/HortonManor.html

Woodcote Park

www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/WoodcotePark.html

Did you Know

www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/DidYouKnow.html

Sytus

www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/Sytus.html

Ashley Centre

www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/AshleyCentre.html

Epsom & Ewell Cemetery Burials

www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/EpsomCemeteryBurialsA.shtml

Thirties Ewell www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/ThirtiesEwell.html

Shawley Way www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/ShawleyWay.html

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Memorial

www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/WarMemCWGC.html

Epsom College War Memorial www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/WarMemCollege.html

Christchurch - Baptisms www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/ChristchurchBaptismsAtoM.shtml

Christchurch - Marriages www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/ChristchurchMarriages.shtml

Horton Cemetery Burials www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/HortonCemeteryBurialsA.shtml

St Mary, Ewell - Banns www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/StMaryBanns.shtml

St Mary, Ewell - Baptisms www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/StMaryBaptismsABCDE.shtml

St Mary, Ewell - Burials www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/StMaryBurials.shtml

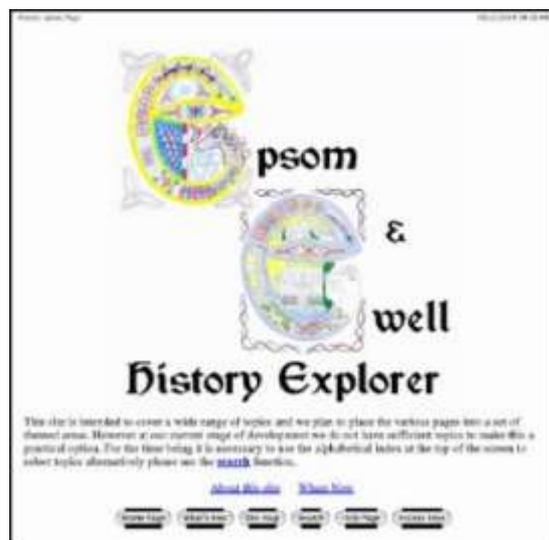
St Mary, Ewell - Headstones www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/StMaryHeadstones.shtml

Revised pages:

Newsletter No. 23

Page 4 of 9

January 2010



Family History page which now lists the local records that are now available on this site.

www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/Family_History.html

Ewell Court House with some new images www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/EwellCourtHouse.html

Go on, have a look. It's amazing how much work has gone into building a first class website and a remarkable new resource for local and family historians from anywhere in the world, especially the new 'Family History' page. Many thanks all volunteers involved in supplying and checking information.

You might like to know that there have been 9,313 visits to the Home Page of the website since it was launched in mid 2006 and that in November/December 2009 alone the total number of visits to the Family History Pages was 4,552. It seems the website is getting ever more popular. I think it's time for a press release to the specialist Family History magazines to let them know about the website.

'WDYTYA?' - So, 'HWDYTIW?'

The 'Who Do You Think You Are?' event took place last October. So, 'How Well Do You Think It Went?' From what I hear, it was another successful event for our Local and Family History volunteers, although it was a quieter day than last year - but it did clash with other family history events in Surrey on the same day, which may have reduced our numbers. We ended up with 60+ enquiries and we also sold about 20 of the Genealogy Starter Packs at £2 each, so paying for the second hand filing cabinets were acquired earlier in the week.

Our thanks go to the person who provided us with these pictures of the event. And many thanks to everyone who participated; another good day's work by our Volunteers.



When the Gibbet was the Scourge of Ewell

With thanks to a LHC Volunteer

The following article was published in a newspaper around 1970, but we have no record of the source or which paper. If anyone knows, please let us know.

The creak of chains against wood is heard as a corpse drying in the sun swings against the gibbet in West Street, Ewell. The moaning of a prisoner comes from the Watch House in Church Street. Carriage wheels rattle as a coach swings sedately through the elegant gateway of

Bourne Hall, while in the stocks at the junction of Church Street a battered figure tries yet another position to ease his bruises. Not perhaps the friendly, easy-going Ewell residents know today, but an authentic picture of Ewell's more turbulent past. Many changes have come to this village since the days of the gibbet and stocks, but reminders of the past abound in the village.

Recently, a fire destroyed papers and machinery in an office in Ewell High Street. The office and its next-door

cottage are the oldest buildings in the High Street, but few people know how much older the village is than it appears.

People were living at Ewell over 4,000 years before Christ was born. Most of the remains indicating the existence of these people were found in Ewell at Tayles Hill, Purberry Shot and the girls' school in West Street.

Many relics were also uncovered on the banks of the Hogsmill.

Between 4,000 and 2,000 B.C. the semi-nomadic people of the new Stone Age passed through the borough, leaving their flint implements and pot warming stones scattered behind them. The track across Priest Hill Farm, Ewell, once the main road to Reigate, was probably used by the Neolithic dwellers in Banstead, on their way to the spring.

There were Iron Age settlements at Purberry Shot and Tayles Hill as well as in Nonsuch Park from this time until the Roman occupation. The people who lived there were by no means savages. They had coinage, and had used it since about 150 B.C., and they traded with the Continent.



With the Romans came a civilization and the (almost) arrow-straight Stane Street from Chichester to London Bridge was constructed in about 60 A.D. It entered the borough near Chalk Pit Road, cut through Woodcote Park, Epsom, and arrived at the old church tower in Ewell. Here it changed direction and crossed Ewell Bypass into Nonsuch Park. The road, excavated at various times in the last few years, was up to two feet thick and much of it still exists in an almost usable state though about two feet underground.

Roman remains have been found throughout most of the borough and include coins, tools, pottery, ornaments and bricks. Ewell was probably a Roman wayside resting place on the long journey from the coast. There may have been a moot circle on the site of what is now Ewell Churchyard, and here the early invaders who followed the retreating Roman forces would have sat in parliament.

Following the Battle of Hastings in 1066, William the Conqueror returning from a reconnoitering trip to London, watered his horses at the spring before joining his main forces at Dorking. He travelled by Stane Street.

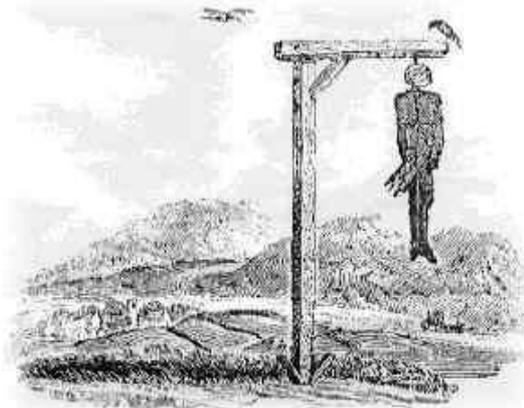
At this time there were two mills by the Hogsmill at Ewell, on the sites of which there are still two mills today, though not in use as such. During the Middle Ages, Epsom and Ewell and Cuddington were ruled through the manorial system, and Ewell manor was probably administered through Ewell Court or Worth Court.

One thing that most people in the borough do know something about is Nonsuch Palace. Since its excavation in 1959, the building has received more publicity and the layout of its grounds dictated the present shape of the borough's road system in this area.

Horse races were held on Epsom Downs from Tudor time, but it was not until 1779 that the Oaks was instituted and the Derby followed in 1780. This really laid the foundations for the flourishing racing businesses which are scattered over the Downs today.

There are many colourful stories about Ewell's murky past. But one thing that is no legend is that there was a gallows in what is now known as the "Gibraltar" end of West Street.

Originally known as Gallows Lane, West Street comes to a sudden end at the railway line, and it was here that Gallows Green originally lay. There were hangings on this spot until the early Victorian days.



Up to this time the gallows were used not only for hanging murderers but, in Tudor times at least, for also getting rid of vagrants and the unemployed. It was enough for a man to be out of work for him to be hanged out of hand.

Near to the gallows stood the workhouse, some old almshouses and a few cottages. The workhouse was the home of orphans, fatherless children and the feeble, either in body or mind. In 1781, the master of the workhouse was John Bulley, who was greatly feared.

Another reminder of the past is still to be seen at the corner of High Street and Church Street. It is the old Watch House, now under the protection of the National Trust. Here, prisoners awaiting trial at other towns spent the night.

Part of the Watch House was divided off and used as a fire station. The engine there was capable of throwing water as high as any house in the village. It last attended a fire in High Street in 1869.

The old church tower, which still stands only a short distance from the present church, is a memorial to the inconsistency of the Victorian residents of Ewell. The Victorians demolished the old church "in the proper style" and several arguments were put forward for St. Mary's Church to go the same way as its neighbours.

The old church was in fact demolished on the grounds that the tower was unsafe, and a new one built close to it on ground given by the then Vicar, the Rev. Sir George Glyn. The Vicar made it a condition that the old tower was left standing, and to this day it remains a memorial to "the proper way of doing things."

Ewell also has its own ghost. W. Holman Hunt, visiting the village in the 1840's reported that while walking home from Ewell East Station with the station master one night, he encountered a "stately tall man, wrapped in white drapery round the head and down to the feet."

The figure, he said, stopped and looked at the two men, and after walking round them continued on its way. They did not follow it, but decided that it must be a ghost.

Visit to the Imperial War Museum

By a LHC Volunteer

A group of volunteers recently visited the Imperial War Museum. Apart from the displays on the First and Second World Wars they saw an exhibition about the evacuation of children in the days following Neville Chamberlain's announcement of Britain's declaration of the war against Germany. The exhibition includes photographs of children, with luggage labels attached to their coats, leaving London to be safe from the mass



bombing which was widely expected to occur and arriving at their rural destinations. There are also letters written by the children to their parents, some telling how much they are enjoying the experience, others saying how miserable they are and how badly they are being treated, which were really distressing. The exhibition also tells the story of the London blitz and the fate of several thousand of child victims killed during it. Equally sad are the accounts of the children who drowned when the ship carrying them to safety in Canada was torpedoed and sunk. The exhibition incorporates the reproduction of a suburban 1930s house furnished and decorated in the style of the period and stocked with tinned and packaged goods then available, albeit in very limited quantities and with some of the toys and games that children might hope to have.

It was a really worthwhile visit and highlighted the stresses and distractions of life in WWII Britain.

Upcoming Events

Open Day for Epsom & Ewell Councillors at the Local History Centre

We have issued an invitation to the Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillors to visit the Local and Family History Centre to see something of the work of our volunteers. The dates are as follows:

Saturday, 9th January from 10.00 am to 2.00 pm

Tuesday, 12th January from 3.00 pm to 6.30 pm

Some of the things we propose to show them include:

- A demonstration of Census returns for Ewell (Epsom are being done) on a programme, which enables many family details of an individual to be found with a click of the mouse.
- The Workhouse records for Epsom & Ewell
- War memorials and facts about those mentioned on them.
- The People's War
- Early 20th Century Council Minute books.
- St Martin's Church cemetery records
- 19th century Marriage, Baptism & Death details for St Martin's and St Mary's Churches.
- Family History Recording packs and an example of a family history.
- The flour and gunpowder mills.
- Local Schools' records
- Langley Vale
- Early maps of Epsom & Ewell
- Examples of all the events and displays we have run in recent years
- Future work we are proposing on Railways, The Grandstand and Local Pubs.

Unfortunately we don't know how many councillors will drop in on these two days, but we do need volunteers to be on hand to handle any queries. I know many have already agreed to be there, but if any more of you wish to help, we look forward to seeing you.

Some Interesting Stats on the Work of Our Volunteers

We thought you might like to know something of the work the thirty volunteers have been undertaking in 2009:

Total hours given to the LHC by Volunteers*:	**5,152 hours
Total hours the LHC was open and manned by Volunteers:	385hours
Total number of personal visits to the LHC by Enquirers:	545
<i>Number of Local History visitor enquiries</i>	226
<i>Number of Family History visitor enquiries</i>	319
Total number of enquiries by letter, phone, email	105
Total number of enquiries	650

* *Includes manning the LHC, preparing displays, researching and dealing with enquiries, updating Census and BMD records and digitising the photo library.*

** *Equivalent to 644 8-hour days.*

Welcome to Two New Volunteers

We have had 30 active volunteers working with our Local and Family History Centre for most of 2009. I'm now delighted to announce that this increased to 32 in December with the addition of two new volunteers. We hope they will enjoy working with our group. Please give them a warm welcome when you meet them.

The National Archives - Changes to Opening Hours

Those of you who visit The National Archives might like to know about some changes to the opening hours.

From the 4th January 2010 The National Archives will be open for five days a week (Tuesday to Saturday). They will also increase their opening hours and document ordering times on these days as below:

Day	Opening times	Document ordering times
Monday	Closed	n/a
Tuesday	09:00 19:00	09:00 17:00
Wednesday	09:00 17:00	09:00 16:15
Thursday	09:00 19:00	09:00 17:00
Friday	09:00 17:00	09:00 16:15
Saturday	09:00 17:00	09:00 16:15
Sunday	Closed	n/a

This means that TNA will no longer offer any on site public services on Mondays, including the bookshop, café and museum. Their website and online services will not be affected. www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Closure Dates 2010

Furthermore, the closure dates for TNA for 2010 are as follows

Easter	Friday 2 April to Monday 5 April 2010
May Bank Holiday	Saturday 1 May to Monday 3 May 2010
Spring Bank Holiday	Saturday 29 May to Monday 31 May 2010
August Bank Holiday	Saturday 28 August to Monday 30 August 2010

An Interesting Website for Historical Directories

Courtesy of the University of Leicester

I came across this fascinating website the other day and thought I would share it with you. Historical Directories is produced and owned by the University of Leicester. It is a searchable digital library of local and trade directories for England and Wales, from 1750 to 1919. Within the digital library you'll find high quality reproductions of comparatively rare books, essential tools for research into local and genealogical history.

I've already used it, at no charge, to trace ancestors' businesses in the 1880s in Yorkshire and Lancashire. Have a look, it is especially good for Kelly's Directories.

Have You Got News for Me?

We hope you've enjoyed reading this newsletter. Thanks to all those who provided information and stories. But to keep the momentum going we need more, so I make no apologies in repeating this message, as it always seems to be the same people providing material. I'm sure many more of you have experiences, contacts with enquirers or local or family history information that would interest us all. And you can see from this current issue, we like gossip and comments as much as more serious subjects.

So, please don't be shy. If you have any

- reports on visits to various sites or centres
- interesting facts about local history or genealogy
- intriguing Information Requests
- new research documents the LFHC has received
- forthcoming projects or events
- or just strange tales to tell

please let the editor know - supporting photographs and pictures, if available, would be most welcome. It will help make the newsletter more interesting for us all.

The next publication date will probably be in May 2010, so you have plenty of time to think of something.

IRP 1st January 2010