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Operating and Developing the Corporation's Services

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Bourne Hall Ewell – Improvement at the Long Spring

The operative work of the corporation covers a wide field. Among the important services rendered are the maintenance, repair and improvement of highways, the sewerage system, public lighting, public buildings, the design and erection of municipal housing schemes, refuse collection and disposal, the maintenance and improvement of parks, recreation grounds and allotments and the control and administration of Byelaws and town planning in connection with building and other development within the Borough, acting as agent to the county planning Department with regard to the latter.

During the past 21 years there has been considerable advancement in these municipal undertakings, in spite of the curtailment of activity during the war years. Hardly had the new Borough got into its stride, when the war brought all engineering and building work to an abrupt halt and, during the years which followed, the limited engineering resources left available to the corporation were fully occupied on the varied and onerous duties of Civil Defence, including the erection of air raid shelters, and the organisation and operation of rescue and first aid repair parties.

At the termination of hostilities, the immediate need was for the erection as speedily as possible of additional housing accommodation. In spite of the shortage of land available to the council due to the implementation of the "Green Belt" requirements of post-war planning, 1,124 permanent dwellings and 204 temporary bungalows have been erected since 1945. Recently, 150 houses and old people's dwellings have been erected on the first portion of the Longmead Estate and are now fully occupied. Plans for the layout and erection of approximately 150 dwellings at Ruxley Farm, Ewell, are now in course of preparation and will include a considerable number of flats or maisonettes for old people and childless couples.

Undoubtedly, the largest single project of development since the war has been the construction of an up-to-date sewage disposal works at Malden for the Hogsmill Valley Joint Sewerage Board, of which the Borough is the largest constituent member, and which has superseded two obsolete sewage works at Epsom and Ruxley. In order to drain the sewage of the Borough into these new works it has been necessary for the council to construct a new trunk sewer, varying in diameter from 33 inches to 48 inches, at a cost of £211,670, to link up the existing outfalls with the new joint sewer which it enters at a point near the Borough boundary adjacent to the River Hogsmill at Tolworth. In addition, the development which has taken place within the Borough has necessitated the extension and improvement of the corporation's sewerage system and I have recently been instructed by the council to prepare a comprehensive scheme for the prevention of flooding in the Church Street, Upper High Street, Alexandra Road and College Road areas of the Borough, which it is estimated will cost approximately £55,000.



London Road, Ewell – A recent road improvement

One of the most important duties of the corporation is the maintenance and improvement of highways, and there are approximately 90 miles of main and subsidiary roads within the Borough which are the corporation's responsibility either directly or as agents of the county council. Immediately prior to the war a short length of the Kingston Road (A.240) from Tolworth Court Bridge to a point a little to the south-east of its junction with Ruxley Lane had been constructed with dual carriageways but the length from the termination of this work to the point where it links up with the Ewell By-Pass near the Rembrandt cinema and which is very narrow and totally inadequate for modern traffic, has been a source of much anxiety to the corporation, who have continually pressed the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation to allow an improvement to be carried out. It has not been possible to obtain a grant for this improvement until quite recently but work is now proceeding on the construction of dual carriageways 24 feet in width. The scheme which will cost something in the neighbourhood of £200,000, will provide asphalt surfaced carriageways capable of carrying the heaviest traffic and will be illuminated with an up-to-date system of street lighting.

Of great importance both to the motorist and pedestrian alike, is the provision of an adequate system of street lighting and, in this respect, the Corporation have been one of the most progressive local authorities in Surrey. Since 1953 some 565 Group "A" street lighting columns have been erected in the principal main roads within the Borough at a cost of approximately £40,000. The majority of these are of pre-stressed concrete, by which method of construction it is possible to obtain the same strength as with ordinary concrete while using a column of much more slender proportions. Epsom and Ewell was one of the first local authorities to adopt this form of construction. Recently, in certain parts of the town where the roadways are comparatively narrow, tapered steel columns have been used. In the shopping areas of both Epsom and Ewell fluorescent lighting has been adopted, while other areas are provided with sodium lighting. The intensity of illumination is such that motorists can drive safely without the use of headlights. This improvement of street lighting is still proceeding and included among the roads on which this modern lighting has recently been installed is the Ewell By-Pass.



21 Years of Progress – A refuse collection vehicle of 1937 alongside its modern counterpart.

The Corporation collects and disposes of approximately 18,000 tons of refuse annually and, compared with other local authorities in England and Wales, the cost of this service is one of the cheapest in the country. Recently, a start has been made on replacing the old type of refuse collection vehicles which are loaded at the side, by a modern type of rear-loading self-compacting machine, which considerably reduces the dust nuisance and, by compacting the refuse automatically, enables a far larger load to be carried, thus reducing the number of journeys to the point of disposal. In addition, the majority of roads in the Borough are swept and cleansed by the latest type of mechanical street sweeper.

Some 1,639 acres of parks, recreation grounds and other public open spaces, including allotments, exist in the Borough. The Corporation takes great pride in the floral displays both in the parks and on island and other sites adjacent to the highway in many areas of the Borough. Wherever possible, flowers and shrubs are used to improve the amenities of the town and flower baskets which were introduced as a decorative feature on the lamp columns in Epsom High Street during the Coronation Year have been maintained as a permanent feature. Constant improvements are carried out from time to time, including the provision of pavilions, dressing accommodation, laying out of bowling greens, playing fields, children's playgrounds, etc., all of which help to provide enjoyment for those members of the public who wish to use them.



High Street Ewell - Floral Display for the Anniversary Year

In a town so pleasantly situated and possessing the character of Epsom and Ewell, it is essential, in order: that its heritage should be preserved, to impose a strict control on any proposals for development and the Corporation have a strong sense of duty in exercising the powers that have been delegated to them by the Surrey County Council for the administration of town planning matters. The Town Planning and Plans Committee scrutinises with care all applications received for new development or the reconstruction or rebuilding of existing premises. In addition, staff inspectors visit all buildings under construction or alteration to ensure that the regulations with regard to the construction of buildings in the Borough are properly observed.

I could write almost indefinitely concerning the multifarious and important operative duties performed by the Corporation but it is hoped that the foregoing remarks will give readers some idea of the principal engineering problems of "Your own Town."