

Epsom and Ewell Caledonian and Other Associations



Postcard view of birch trees on Epsom Common and Christ Church c1948

I was 27 when we moved to Epsom in August 1954 – me, my husband, and two little boys aged 3 and nearly 2. Our first home, in Streatham, which cost £1800 in 1950, was rather small, and I wanted to live in a more rural area. My husband, an architect, needed to be able to get to London daily, so we searched for a house that satisfied us both. We received details of a house in the Wells estate and I went to look at it. Driving to the end of Wheelers Lane I thought I could drive on over the common to the Estate, but the road became a footpath and I had to get out and walk across the common. It was so beautiful and I was so entranced that I knew we were going to buy that house in the Greenway before I even saw it. It was a large semi-detached house built in the 1930's. The estate was circular, surrounded by the common, completely self contained with a range of shops and a post office and a half hourly bus service to Epsom. Christchurch was across a path through the common and a little primary school across another path leading to White Horse Drive. In the middle of the Estate was The Hut – were we had Cubs, Brownies, Sunday School, Women's Institute and Health Centre for mothers and Babies. It was a perfect place to live and bring up a family. Four years later, when we wanted a bigger house, we could not bear the thought of leaving the area, and searched for a year before finding our present house, a lovely big Edwardian house facing the Common. Much has changed since then – there is only one shop, no post office, and the bus is only one per hour, but The Hut has blossomed into a wonderful community centre.



*The Hut also known as the Wells Social Centre in 1969
Photographed by L R James*

Two days after moving into the Greenway we met our next-but-one neighbours Dr Arthur Balfour a scientist, his wife Marie and two children. Arthur was then President of the Epsom Caledonian Association. It was a flourishing group with weekly Scottish dancing classes, monthly informal dances, big dinner-dances several times a year, slide-show evenings, drama groups, and of course a big “do” on Burns Night. Sadly now the only remaining function is the weekly dancing classes, but I remember it as the main joy of our social life in the Fifties in Epsom.



Epsom High Street on a busy Saturday in September 1958

There were not so many cars then. You could stop in the High Street outside Woolworths, do your shopping, move a little way and stop again – it was all so easy. There was a car park, behind Weatherspoon’s then a departmental store – but it was not much used because it was so easy to park anywhere else. The market took place in the car park because, then, traffic in the High Street was two-way, avoiding the ghastly blockage we have now, with the A24 passing through the town and half the High Street empty except on market days. This traffic re-arrangement was not an improvement. We really enjoyed Epsom in the Fifties though it is still a very pleasant place to live.

Christina Kitchen © 2011

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