



Epsom & Ewell in the Great War

By a Volunteer

The people of Epsom and Ewell, like the people of every other area of the UK, played their parts in the Great War. In addition to sending men to fight and women to nurse, the people of Epsom billeted the University and Public Schools (UPS) Brigade, until their camp at the RAC Club in Woodcote Park was ready. Epsom Downs at Tattenham Corner was used for training by the Royal Fusiliers, and Epsom also provided immense war hospital facilities. Woodcote Park was later used as a convalescent camp, particularly by the Canadians.

War Hospitals

The first war hospital to open in the borough was the 'Epsom and Ewell War Hospital'. The newly built 1914 racecourse grandstand was temporarily converted to a military hospital, receiving its first patients on 12th October 1914. In its seven-month existence the grandstand hospital lost three of its patients, all in October 1914. They were William Andrewartha, died 16th, Thomas Simms, died 17th, both in the Manchester Regiment, and Edmond Buchanan, died 23rd in the North Irish Horse. They are buried together in Epsom Cemetery. The 1914 grandstand was demolished in 2007.

In 1915 Horton Asylum was converted to military use, its 2,000 patients being dispersed to other asylums. The first military patients arrived at Horton on 20 May 1915, and fairly soon afterwards the grandstand hospital was closed. Later in the war the Manor Asylum and St Ebbas Epileptic Colony were also converted for military use. Some 45,593 troops were treated at the 'Horton (County of London) War Hospital', and of the 351 who did not survive, 103 are buried in the CWGC plot in Epsom Cemetery.



The grave of the three soldiers in Epsom Cemetery.

War Memorials

Just outside Epsom Cemetery is Epsom's war memorial bearing the names of 264 men and one woman, the 31-year-old nursing Sister Dorothy Chandler from Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service. Not too far away is Ewell with its memorial in St Mary's churchyard, commemorating another 82 men who died in the service of their King and Country. About 300 yards away is another Ewell memorial outside Bourne Hall (which houses the Borough's only museum and local History Centre). This memorial stone first appeared in early 1917 as a shrine, inscribed with the names of the first 29 men to die. The final total commemorates 80 men. Interestingly all of them also appear on the aforementioned St Mary's memorial.

There are other memorials in the borough, in the churches, Epsom College, Horton Chapel (threatened by neglect) and the Royal Mail sorting office. When they lost their original buildings, Ewell Boy's School memorial and the Epsom Brotherhood memorials were rescued by the local museum. Sadly at least 2 others have been lost - Long Grove asylum and St John's church. There are probably others that have been quietly lost over the years or lie somewhere forgotten.

There are 697 individuals named in one or other of the memorials in Epsom and Ewell. Between them they served in all the major branches of the services and in all the theatres of war. Their ranks were from private to brigadier, and the highest award was the Victoria Cross. The average age of the 461 so far researched was 27. Seven were only 17, and two were 49. Some died in the big battles of Ypres, Gallipoli, Arras and the Somme; others from trench raids and the attrition of shelling and sniping. At least nine succumbed to the influenza pandemic and, sadly, at least two committed suicide. One submariner died from the effects of French 'friendly fire' brought about by a misunderstanding, and two were drowned before seeing any action when their troopship was torpedoed. Many were married with children. 66 were in the Canadian forces, eleven from Australia, two were Gurkhas and one was from India. Just a few of the details discovered whilst researching.



Interest in researching family members seems to be increasing. On Armistice Day 2009 a framed photograph of Sergeant William John Maynard, killed in action, aged 35, sometime between 20 and 26 October 1914, was placed at Epsom's Ashley Road war memorial by a family member (*pictured left*). William was the only boy out of nine children. He married Annie Hartridge on 6 May 1909, and they produced three children, William Francis Cecil, Frederick Ernest George and Evelyn Cecily. Evelyn died in infancy only 3 months old, but William survived until 1967 and Frederick until 1995.

Useful information was provided by a great nephew of Joseph Edward Toms. He was a single 'happy go lucky' 19 year old killed in action on 3rd May 1917. Joe was terribly missed, and his death plaque was displayed prominently in the family home. Joe's mother polished it regularly until her death, and then Joe's sister continued to polish it until her death. All this polishing has resulted in the plaque being virtually illegible, but it is an indication of the great love the family had for Joe, and how much he was missed. I often think of the many, many thousands of other homes that had to bear the unbearable, and marvel at how that generation coped.

Can you help?

As research on the war dead of Epsom and Ewell is carried out, it is being uploaded to the web and can be accessed via www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/ and then navigating to the '[War Memorials - World War One](#)' page. Our research has been enriched by the support we have had from families of the lost, who have provided information and photographs to add to the narrative. If anyone has an ancestor on any of these memorials and can add information, please make contact via the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer Webmaster.

A Big Thank You.

Even more so than in the past, we need to raise funds to continue providing the services of the History Centre; for example, purchasing special sleeves to protect the archive of some 2,000 photographs, upgrading our computer equipment and purchasing other materials.

Thanks to the efforts of a volunteer, a mailing was sent to a number of local Epsom companies outlining our services and seeking help to maintain our services. We are delighted to say that to date we have received £1,110.23 as a result of this mailing.

A Surrey County Councillor representing Epsom and Ewell South East, has arranged for us to receive a grant of £958.00.



**national
counties**
building society

National Counties Building Society, which is headquartered in Epsom, has generously donated £102.23 towards the purchase of the special sleeves we need to protect our photographic archive.

And Longhurst Funeral Directors in Pound Lane, Epsom, have supported us with a donation of £50.

The picture shows a volunteer, left, receiving the cheque from Longhurst Funeral Directors.

We are very grateful for these donations and give a big 'thank you' to them all.



As we all know, some members of the public, who appreciate the help we have given them in their research, have generously given donations to the Centre. This is very welcome and to date has raised about £100.

As for the future, we discussed at the AGM the possibility of formalizing this generosity of the public by suggesting donations would be gratefully received. This would not be a direct verbal request, to save embarrassment, but by putting up a poster in the History Centre and a note on the website. We have checked other similar websites that request donations for providing their services to see how they deal with this matter. This subject will be discussed in more detail at the Committee meeting in June and we will keep you posted on the outcome.

So, if it wasn't Uncle Bob, who was it?

By a Volunteer

In the last Newsletter we told you about the lady who brought in a photograph she had purchased from a 'junk shop' because she thought the central figure in the photo was her Uncle Bob. He 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; she was unaware of the type of aircraft in the photo she showed me and perhaps she thought it was a Wellington.



Having studied the picture I had to inform the lady that this could not be her uncle. As a result, she lost interest, but was kind enough to allow me to keep the photo so that it could be sent to the RAF Museum at Hendon to see if they can identify the group in the picture, which I have since done. We'll report back when we see what they come up with.

For a bit of fun I asked if you could determine why I informed lady that it was not her Uncle Bob.

So, as promised, here's the answer:

- The plane is American, a B25 Mitchell, named after Billy Mitchell, a WWI US flyer. He was known for the kerfuffle he caused in the 1920s when he bombed an old US battleship to prove to the authorities that air power would win a future war.



- It is not a picture of the crew of the plane, which would only have been five people.
- The two standing and two sitting figures on the far right are Flying Officers. A closer look shows there is only one large stripe on their shoulder insignia.
- The front three, sitting cross-legged, are probably RAF ground crew; they are wearing forage caps and no insignia.
- All the others, except for the central figure, are Flight Lieutenants. Note the two stripes on their insignia (left).

Now for some suppositions:

- The photograph is possibly taken in North Africa or the Far East as many of them are wearing shorts. We favour North Africa because of the word 'Corps' on the cushion that the chap on the far right is sitting on.
- The crews could be from Australia, New Zealand or Canada or even the UK – I hope that Hendon will give more information on this.



As for the central character, he's a Squadron Leader, not a rear gunner, signified by the three bars on his shoulder, two thick and one thin and he



is wearing Pilot's Wings and not the insignia of an Air Gunner. Also, he is the only person seen to be wearing a Dominion shoulder flash, but it is very indistinct as to which one

One final thought. The Squadron Leader is in formal uniform. The squadron are all smiling and it seems to be a formally posed and happy picture - not just a snapshot.

Perhaps the Squadron Leader has just won a medal, as he is wearing the ribbon of a DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross), and the rest of the group have got together to congratulate him and pose for a photograph to record the moment.

We now wait to see what Hendon has to say. I could be wrong but I am certain he not that lady's uncle, and he is not a rear gunner in a Wellington Squadron.

There was one response to the quiz set in the January newsletter. It was from a volunteer and seemed to be getting close to an answer, as follows:

19 Feb 2010

Dear

I wouldn't know if the aircraft in the photo is a Wellington or not. If it is, it seems a strange group; one wearing what appears to be 'warm climate' gear. Strange too, with all those officers around, for a rear gunner to sit centre stage, especially as he has his wings – waste of a pilot – and what is possibly a 'foreign' uniform

Best I can do without lots of research – and, anyway, you know the answer.

Cheers

Our volunteer has said that if he were going to do more research on this individual then he would go to Kew and check how many B25 squadrons there were involved in the war, especially those in warm climate areas such as North Africa or the Far East. He would also seek Squadron Leaders who had received a DFC. From this, he might get a clear idea of who this gentleman is. Hopefully, RAF Hendon will save him the effort. We'll let you know in the next newsletter.

Do You Really Think Anybody Listens To You?

They did at the AGM!

The Epsom & Ewell Local and Family History Centre's 8th Annual General Meeting was held in Bourne Hall Library on Monday 12th April, 2010. Some 30 people attended and once the formal affairs of the AGM had been conducted, we were delighted to welcome the Principal Planning Officer - Design and Conservation, for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, who gave an informative and illuminating talk with the intriguing title "Do you really think anybody listens to you?"

In his talk he used several different examples of development in the Borough to demonstrate these challenges and to show whether commercial developers or individuals developing their own property were really listening to his advice and were following agreed plans and guidelines. The range of examples given highlighted the myriad challenges encountered and the consistent workload needed to sustain the heritage of our fine town and keep it a pleasant and attractive place to live.

He trained as an architect and subsequent employment in two very different Boroughs and a period of mixed employment have obviously stood him in good stead to deal with matters of design and conservation in Epsom and Ewell. Bearing in mind he is now a team of one dealing with a significant number of developments, all of which require meetings, reports and discussions, we think he is doing a remarkable job. Following his talk, our guest speaker answered several questions from the floor, which further demonstrated the depth of knowledge required in his position.

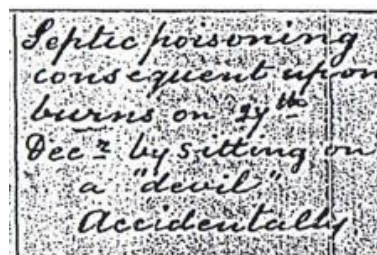
We would like to thank him for giving so freely of his time to talk to us.

A Death Certificate Puzzle . . .

By a Volunteer

I have been researching the death of a 72-year-old sack repairer. His death certificate states he died on the 4th January 1900 in Victoria Hospital, Kingston from

*'Septic poisoning consequent upon burns on 27th December 1899
by sitting on a "devil" accidentally'.*



Can anyone hazard a guess on what the poor old sack repairer sat on?

It's nice to know our efforts are appreciated

With 2 Volunteers

Here's some more nice responses from people who have made enquiries to the History Centre. It's so nice to know our efforts are appreciated.

In March, a volunteer provided detailed birth, marriage and death information on four families to an enquirer, Our enquirer, immediately responded, as follows:

Dear

Many thanks for your help, I am SO impressed by the service that you offer in Ewell, it has been a tremendous help and has certainly fired me with renewed enthusiasm to go further back in the family history.

I may have some queries about the information you have given me, are you usually in the centre on a Thursday afternoon, or could any of your colleagues help me?

Best wishes

Enquirer

. . . And there's more

A volunteer received an enquiry from Enquiries Direct, which she was unfortunately unable to answer. However . . . well, read on:

Dear Enquirer

Thank you for your email, which was passed to us from Enquiries Direct Libraries, concerning your late father in law. Although we have looked, as you have, through Ancestry's records on line, we too cannot find any record that directly links to him.

May we suggest however, as we are based in the borough of Epsom and Ewell, that you contact the London Borough of Sutton as they may be able to help you more as the address you gave us is in their borough. Their email address is local.studies@sutton.gov.uk

As to him perhaps being in an army orphanage, it maybe also be an idea to contact the Duke of York School, as they have records of every pupil that attended there. The link is <http://www.doyrms.com/>

Within 24 hours the enquirer responded as follows:

Dear

Thank you very much for your help - I'll e-mail the Sutton local studies service this morning and have already sent off an e-mail to the Duke of York School. I'd just like to say what an excellent service you provide.

Thanks again

Enquirer

Makes it all worthwhile, don't you think.

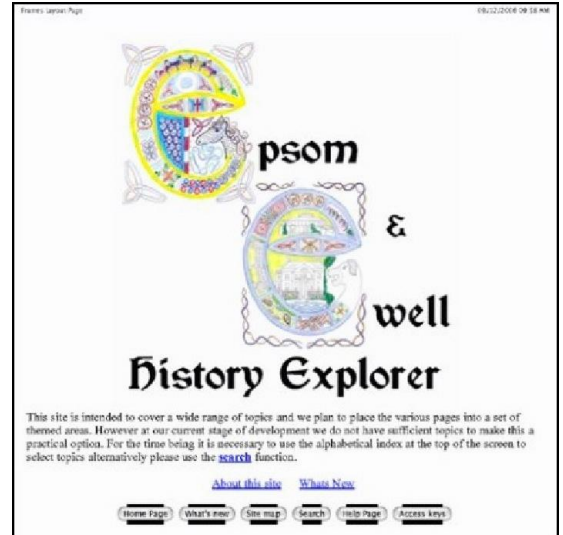
New Additions to the Website

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

The Webmaster, has added a wealth of new information and pages to the website. Here's a taster of some of the items for you.

New pages:

- A brief history of the National Counties Building Society, now headquartered in Epsom and founded in 1896 as the Fourth Post Office Mutual Building Society.
- Ewell Boys National School Admissions Register June 1892 to September 1929
- New set of 27 pages of local history based on the excellent work of the late Derek Phillips, councilor for Ruxley Ward.
- Barry Alderson's Memories of the Horton Area, including background details to a derailment on the Horton Light Railway back in the 1940's
- The Artful Touch, by Charles Dickens. A brief story from Household Words, 1850, featuring the Epsom Derby.
- There is a war on you know! How, thanks to an ironmonger in Epsom six bombers were put back into service.
- Kingswood Baptisms 1836-1876, Marriages 1841-1902 and Burials 1853-1930
- George Torr, one time owner of Garbrand Hall.
- John Samuel Underhill, first elected mayor of Epsom & Ewell.
- William Gardiner, Lay Rector of Ewell 1594 to 1597
- Batailles Manor and the Saunder Family of Ewell.
- A brief account of the notorious Lady Henrietta Berkeley.
- Richard Rooth's House, 'The Elms', one of Epsom's 'lost' buildings.
- Singeing the Spanish King's beard, featuring Captain Alexander Clifford of Ewell and the sacking of Cadiz, 1596.
- The Chamiers of Epsom, owners of Fitznells & Batailles Manors, Ewell.
- Interactive map page. You really must try this out: www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/Map.html



It's remarkable how much work has gone into building a first class website and a substantial new resource about Epsom and Ewell for local and family historians from anywhere in the world. Just to show you what's involved, here's one example: for the new pages on the Ewell Boys National School Admissions Register, a volunteer went to the Surrey History to photograph the register, another volunteer keyed in the data into a 38 page spreadsheet, and then yet another volunteer proof read it and webmaster made it into webpages. A hard copy of the register is also in the History Centre in an A3 folder because it needed A3 size paper. Many thanks to all the volunteers involved in supplying and checking information.

A full list of the additions to the website, with links to the specific pages, can be found at www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/WhatsNew.html

A little plug is good for us all.

With over 300 pages the website is a serious resource so we have recently sent a press release about it to the five leading specialist family history magazines - Family Tree Magazine, Who Do You Think You Are?, Your Family Tree, Ancestors, Family History Monthly and Practical Family History - and I'm pleased to say that 'Who Do You Think You Are?' and 'Family Tree Magazine' have acknowledged the release and said they would mention it in their publications. This doesn't mean to say the others won't mention it too. You might also like to know that Family Tree magazine were very impressed with the site and its contents.

Upcoming Events

Epsom & Ewell's Lost Pubs display – August 2010

3 volunteers together with the Museum are preparing a joint display for August 2010 on the pubs of Epsom and Ewell, particularly the lost pubs such as the old Railway Inn that was located in the High Street, Epsom, roughly where McDonald's is now located. Some seventeen other pubs have been lost and the team are keen to receive any old photographs and stories about current and 'lost' pubs of the borough.

Battle of Britain display – September 2010

A volunteer is preparing a display for September 2010 to honour the 70th anniversary of the 'Battle of Britain'.

Who Do You Think You Are? Day – October 2010

Our annual 'Who Do You Think You Are?' day will be on **Saturday, 23rd October 2010** from 10.00am to 4.00pm. More news about this will follow later but make a note in your diary now, especially as we need to rota volunteers to help deal with enquiries from the public.

Welcome to Three New Volunteers

I am delighted to announce we have three new members. We hope they will enjoy working with our group. Please give them a warm welcome when you meet them. We now have 36 volunteers working with the History Centre.

Some Interesting Websites from our Volunteers

<http://newspapers.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/home>

A volunteer has just come across this web site for Historic Australian Newspapers, 1803 to 1954. It might be useful for tracking Aussie relatives.

<http://www.royalblood.co.uk/>

This website has been found by a volunteer containing over one million names connected through blood relations to European Royalty. For every individual, the number of relationship steps required to link to Charlemagne is shown in square brackets. If you find one of your own ancestors on this site you can follow the links to find their shortest connection to royalty. Go on, see if you have any links to Charlemagne.

<http://www.youoldbooksandmaps.co.uk>

Another volunteer has bought some useful items from this site featuring facsimile historical books and maps.

If anyone finds any interesting websites that can facilitate our genealogical and historical research, please let me know and we will feature them in future issues.

The National Archives – Car Parking

Those of you who visit The National Archives might like to know about some changes to car parking arrangements at TNA.

Short delay in launch of car park pre-pay and booking system

The launch of The National Archives' car park pre-pay and booking system, originally planned for 27 April 2010, will be delayed by a short period of time. They hope to announce the revised launch date shortly and will give at least four weeks' notice before the new car parking system is introduced. In the past, the car park has been free for visitors. However, it was decided to introduce charges because of the need to recover the maintenance and operational costs of providing a car park and to better manage demand. They are introducing a system which will require visitors who would like to park in the car park to pre-pay and book a parking space, via a dedicated telephone line or website. On site parking at The National Archives is limited and the car park is frequently full, and this system will ensure that no one will drive to the site only to find that the car park is full.

There will be a flat-rate charge of £5 per day. Annual pre-pay tickets, offering a substantial discount, will also be available. Visitors who drive to The National Archives without having booked and paid for a space will not be able to access the car park

Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society (EEHAS)

Following a request from some of our volunteers, who also belong to the Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society (EEHAS), for a closer relationship between the Epsom & Ewell Local & Family History Centre (EELFHS) and EEHAS, we thought it would be sensible to provide volunteers with a clearer understanding of the objectives and activities of EEHAS. This summary has been provided by a former EEHAS secretary, from 1996 to 2007. We understand that our two organisations have already agreed to feature reciprocal pages on their websites. You can find out more about EEHAS at <http://www.epsomewellhistory.org.uk/>

EEHAS enters its 50th Year



Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society was founded in 1960 by a group of people who had taken part in the excavation of Nonsuch Palace in 1959, an excavation claimed to be the biggest ever carried out in this country in one season. A wealth of material was unearthed and some of the finds are still being studied and written up by a young Ministry of Works archaeological consultant, was in charge of the project.

An early name for the society was The Nonsuch and Ewell Antiquarian Society (NEAS), soon changed to Nonsuch Antiquarian Society (NAS) and more recently, in 2004, there was a further change to the current title – Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society; this was found desirable in order to make clear the area covered and because of perceived changes in the meaning of ‘antiquarian’ which had led to the Society receiving advertisements for Zimmer frames!

In spite of the name changes, the objects of the Society have always been the same: to encourage interest in the archaeology and history of the Epsom and Ewell area and to ensure that buildings and objects of historical significance are preserved.

The archaeology has been looked after by organising excavations and there have been dozens of these. The Society’s archaeologists were particularly active during the first twenty years or so, and there has been a revival in the number of projects following the appointments at Museum of London, Archaeology Officer. Also, our Secretary, is a practising archaeologist as is one of our committee members.

As might be expected, since Ewell was a settlement on the Roman Road, Stane Street, much of the archaeology has been concerned with Romano-British remains. Some of the recent digs have been in collaboration with Birkbeck College, Surrey County Archaeological Society and Surrey Archaeological Society. An impressive body of knowledge on Roman Ewell has been built up.

Since the beginning, the Society has done its best to protect historic buildings from demolition or unwarranted change by appropriate protests, and has succeeded in getting a number of buildings listed.

Local history is catered for by talks on the first Wednesday of each month at St. Mary’s Church Hall, London Road, Ewell by a variety of speakers and the publication of papers, particularly a series of Occasional Papers, A5 booklets written by members of the Society following documentary research. No. 50 is soon to be published in this, the 50th anniversary year of the foundation of the Society. Also, visits are arranged to places of historic interest.

Strong links are also maintained with Bourne Hall Museum and a number of members do voluntary work there as well as being volunteers with EELFHS. There is a strong social element in the monthly meetings and visits and members are kept informed of what is going on by means of a bi-monthly newsletter.

The Society has entered its 50th year well equipped to continue its objectives.

. . . A Death Certificate Puzzle - Answered

By a Volunteer

Here's the answer to the 'Devil' puzzle. I happened to mention it to my Mother and she said she thought it was the old name given to a brazier, so I googled that and sure enough she was right.

A "Devil": A portable furnace or brazier, especially one used in road-making, or one used by plumbers, or a portable stove used to heat or dry buildings under construction.

Poor bloke, he must have tripped backwards or something - what a horrid, painful way to die.



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 us 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 September 2010, so you have plenty of time to think of something.

IRP May 2010