

EPSOM, A PROSPEROUS TOWN

I was born in Epsom in 1933 and lived there till 1965. I've seen a great deal of change over the years. During the winter months Epsom Baths was boarded over and good boxing events took place midweek. Saturdays were given to dancing and we had many top bands visiting - Ted Heath, Oscar Rabin, Ken Mackintosh and many others. There were two cinemas, the Granada and the Odeon. After we came out of the Odeon we rushed next door to Marshall's Fish & Chip shop.



*The Odeon Cinema (Date not known)
Image courtesy of Bourne Hall Museum*

The Clock Tower was a good place to arrange to meet someone and also if you wanted to spend a penny there was the Ladies' and Gents' underneath. There were a great many pubs in the town. The Charter Inn, Spread Eagle, White Hart, The George and many others. There were a lot of high class shops - Ely's, Coppens, Lester Bowdens. Smaller shops included Lovelocks in South Street which sold gramophone records, Burls Bookshop which sold antique books.

Derby Day was a wonderful day out. You just walked onto the course to see the racing. There was no fencing in those days. People would line the approach roads at the end of the day's racing and watch the Royal Party in their Rolls, and all the other well-to-do people in their big cars go by.

Apart from Epsom Baths, there was an outdoor pool in West Hill, named Nelsons. There was a marquee which housed a juke box which was very popular. At the far end of the property, they kept pigs, which would not be allowed today. A mile out of town there were five mental hospitals - Horton, Long Grove, the Manor, St. Ebba's, West Park. Horton Farm had a nice herd of cows at one time. Unfortunately they contracted foot and mouth and were destroyed. They burnt the carcasses. The fires were burning for days and the smell was awful.



*Arthur Wheeler's Shop, Waterloo Rd, Epsom. Date Not Known
Image courtesy of Bourne Hall Museum*

There was a motor cycle dealer in Waterloo Road named A. Wheeler. It is now a carpet sales shop. Arthur Wheeler used to race in the TT races in the Isle of Man with good success. Woodcote Motors was in Church Road and Page Motors in the High Street (where Wilkinson's is now). The unusual feature of Pages was the petrol pumps which were on the pavement (before the one-way system).



*Page Motors, High Street, Epsom.
This photograph was taken in 1930s and in addition to the
pavement petrol pump it shows the swing-out arms
to other petrol pumps which were in the doorways.*

Men's outfitters shops, of which there were plenty, included forgotten names - Meakers, Brown Brothers, Fifty Shilling Tailors, and shoe shops included Lilley & Skinner, Dolcis, Freeman Hardy Willis.

On Saturday mornings a group of us young people would meet in Nell Gwynne's Tea Rooms, go upstairs where there was a large oval table and we would sit and put the world to rights.

The nice thing about Epsom in the fifties was the number of small independent shops: Humphreys Electrical, Pullingers Books, Harsant & Lee Chemists, Furness & Sons Coal Merchants, Clarks Builders' Merchants. One could have dancing lessons at the Court School of Dancing which was above Burton's the tailors.



127 High Street. Harsant & Lee c1952

I have so many memories of Epsom in the old days, from school days at Pound Lane and later at Lintons Lane which is now boarded up, through teenage years and National Service. Epsom was a prosperous town where everyone knew each other and the phone book was full of old-fashioned English names - I'm afraid that is not now the case.

John Michael Sheene © 2011