

EPSOM IN 1911

Another year has rolled by, and once again we have to chronicle the events that have occurred in the town during the twelve months that have so quickly passed. With one or two exceptions nothing very exciting has occurred to disturb the serenity of our beautiful little district, the usual every day occurrences appearing with that regularity that we are accustomed to look forward to in our daily run through life. As in former years in commencing our retrospect we take the work of our local Urban Council first. The year 1911 has not seen any very great alterations made in the town, but several highly important developments which must take place in the near future have been discussed and will be ripe for decision early in 1912.

ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

In connection with the new fire station the Council in the early months of the year effected a notable improvement in Church Street. Several feet were added to the roadway from the Congregational Church to a point opposite the Baptist Church. The fences of the property abutting on this portion of the highway were set back, and in front of the Council offices some trees were preserved in the form of an island surrounded by a rockery wall. The road itself was levelled throughout its entire width by Messrs. Constable, Hart & Co., and promises to make safer one of the most important entrances into the town, which had long been noted for its narrowness. At the point where the parish boundary touches that of Ewell on the College Road, widening was also carried out and an extremely dangerous corner, which had been responsible for many accidents, including one terminating fatally, has been rounded off. Here again the trees which formerly stood inside the college grounds have been preserved. Attempts were made during the year to effect a widening in Pike's Hill, but the price asked by the

frontagers for the strips of land necessary for the work was prohibitive, and the Council reluctantly had to abandon their proposal. Negotiations are still in progress with regard to land on the west side of Church Street, but up to the present, no satisfactory arrangements have been found possible. The much discussed question of roads on the Common has now been made a part of the larger question of securing the regulation of the Common, under the Metropolitan Commons Regulations Act, 1866. The Board of Agriculture have given it as their opinion that it will be possible to incorporate in the Act giving the Council the regulation of the Common, a clause giving them power to construct roads where necessary, and to divert or close existing cart tracks where they may deem such a course advisable. In East Street with the joint assistance of the Road Board and the Surrey County Council, the work of relaying the carriage way has been performed by Messrs. Bristowe & Co., from the commencement of High Street to the Co-operative Stores, and early in the New Year the work will be carried to the Half Mill Bush. At the last meeting of the Council, it was decided in conjunction with the London County Council, who are the frontagers, to carry out a scheme of widening and improvement in Hook Road from the Isolation Hospital to the entrance to the Epileptic Colony.

DRAINAGE

The serious storm which was witnessed on the evening of Derby Day drew attention to the inadequate need of the provision made for dealing with such an occurrence. A petition from some inhabitants who suffered from flooding, backed up by a strongly worded resolution from the Epsom Traders' Association, was considered by the Council with the result that a committee was appointed to draw up more satisfactory means of dealing with the problem. Upon this committee reporting, their views proved so divergent that it was decided to refer the whole matter to Mr.

Lovelock, Civil Engineer, who is still considering it. About the same time it was decided to relay a very old sewer in East Street and to extend it in order to take the drainage from certain property shortly to be erected near the parish boundary. This work is now well in hand and is being carried out by Messrs. J. May & Sons, of Ashted. The inspection of various houses under the Housing and Town Planning Act, 1909, by Mr. W.H. Martin, Sanitary Inspector, has revealed many unsatisfactory systems of combined drainage which in the eye of the law are sewers. These also have been dealt with by the Council. The annual charge upon the rates due to this cause is heavy and not likely to diminish. The Council are therefore contemplating seeking parliamentary powers to divest themselves of this expenditure, which they contend, rightly, should fall upon the owners, and not upon the public.

RECREATION GROUND AND STEW POND

The past year has seen a notable advance in the Alexandra Road recreation ground. Bowling greens have been laid out for the first time and proved a profitable source of attraction. A band also rendered musical selections on several occasions during the season and large attendances were recorded upon each of these visits. A caretaker's lodge and pavilion are now being erected and when completed will afford comfort to the many visitors to this popular pleasure resort. At the Stew Pond towards the close of the year, an amicable arrangement was come to with the Lord of the Manor, whereby the north pond will be properly reconstructed and will be available for use next summer.

ELECTRIC LIGHT

The council's electricity department showed for the year ended March 31st last a profit of £510 as compared with £186 for the previous year. During the year the department undertook the illumination of

the town during the Coronation festivities, and secured very high commendation for the effective and artistic display made. In July the committee urged on the necessity of installing additional plant at the works, and on the recommendation of Mr. A.C. Gilling, the Engineer, asking that an expert should be appointed, to consider the Engineer's recommendation that a 200 k.w. Diesel oil engine should be erected. Mr. J.F. Snell was appointed after considerable delay and discussion. This report has recently come to hand, but has not yet been made public. During the year also application was made to the Board of Trade for the license enabling the Urban District Council to supply with electricity certain specified premises in the parish of Ewell, but at the time of writing consent has not been granted. Late in the year the system of supervising public lighting was reorganised and the effect of this action has been a very considerable increase in the efficiency of the system. This winter, also, for the first time, morning lighting – that is from five a.m. to dawn – has been carried out on the Common as well as in all parts of the district previously served in this way.

WATERWORKS

The most startling developments of the year have taken place at the waterworks. Notwithstanding the fact that a few months ago those chiefly responsible for this department of the Council's activity were promising a free water supply, at the present time proposals are adumbrated which, if carried through, will involve an extremely heavy capital expenditure. During the year out of revenue the Council have erected a new bituminous gas producer for working the new pumps. The heavy drought of the past summer involved a very heavy drain upon the works. The maximum demand was 1-1/4 million gallons per day recorded in August. On July 21st the new pumps broke down, and the greater part of this period of stress had to be coped with by the old Worthington

engine, which, for 59-1/2 consecutive days did the whole of the work. For the first time since 1904, Sunday pumping had to be resorted to, and even then, on several days, the town consumed more water than the engine could pump. In view of this, late in the year the Water Committee reported the result of negotiations with Mrs. Colman for the acquisition of a reservoir site near Tattenham Corner railway station. The price demanded was £1,000 per acre, and as this sum was considered excessive, the proposal was very drastically criticised, and after carrying the resolution in favour of purchase at one meeting the Council rescinded it at the next meeting. At this later meeting instructions were given to the Consulting Engineer to report fully and in detail upon the works necessary for the reasonable development of the waterworks. It is anticipated that this will involve a very considerable outlay on the part of the Council.

GENERAL WORK

A notable improvement in the working of the Council was the publication for the first time in book form of the accounts of the various departments of the Council, under the supervision of Mr. C.J. Batchelor, the Accountant. This forms a valuable book of reference, and will, when subsequent years are added, be a useful and interesting guide to the development of the town in all its branches when viewed from a financial aspect. The other departments of the Council have not been called upon for any work bringing them prominently before the public. Mention might, however, be made of the consideration of a proposal to divide the district into wards, which after prolonged discussion was defeated. Another suggestion that the town should elect the Council triennially was carried and forwarded to the Surrey County Council for confirmation. A committee also sat upon the question of workmen's wages, as a result of which scavengers

secured an increase of 3s. per week and farm labourers 1s. per week increase.

THE CORONATION

June 22nd was a "red letter" day for Epsom, it being the Coronation day of our King George V., and it can safely be said that we were not one bit behind any other town in the country in the festivities which were carried out, and in showing the affection we hold for our beloved monarch. A large committee was appointed to make arrangements, including several of the Councillors, with Mr. G.J. Beams as Chairman, Mr. Braithwaite, J.P., as hon. Treasurer., Mr. E.G. Wilson (Clerk to the Council) acted as secretary, with Mr. J.J. Brown, the acting secretary. It is now old news how successful those arrangements were, and how everybody, both old and young alike, enjoyed themselves thoroughly. Each child was presented with a Coronation mug as a souvenir, and everything was done to make the occasion a memorable one. After paying all expenses there was a small balance left over with which the committee decided to erect a clock on the new pavilion in the recreation ground and also to fix a repousse copper tablet on this town Clock Tower. This latter item has already been carried out, the tablet being unveiled by Mr. Braithwaite on December 2nd.

AMONG THE CHURCHES

Much activity has been displayed in the religious world in the year now drawing to a close, and a few changes have to be noted. At the Parish church the existing debt on the building fund was cleared off, the parishioners giving the Vicar a cheque for the balance as a wedding present early in November. The Vic (Rev. W. Bainbridge Bell) was married to Mrs. Edward Campbell at St. Peter's Church, in October, and the presentation was made at a social held in the public hall about a week later. In June, the Rev. Canon Hunter resigned the vicariate of Christ Church after having held the living for over

35 years, and in September, he was presented with his portrait in oils, subscribed for by the parishioners. For some time the living remained vacant, but towards the close of the year, the Rev. H.A. Bowles, priest-in-charge of St. Barnabas Church, Hook Road, was offered and accepted the charge and commences his new duties early in January. The Wesleyans, too, saw the departure of their pastor – Rev. J. Wesley Howells – for Birmingham, he being succeeded by the Rev. Leonard S. Shutter. Good work has also been done at St. Barnabas Church, the Congregational Church and the Baptist Church, whilst bazaars have been held during the year on behalf of the two latter places of worship with successful results. In December Mr. A.J. King, licensed lay reader at Christ Church, accepted an appointment at the mission church of Homer Green, Bucks., and leaves Epsom at the end of the year. The Rev. T. Lister, pastor at the Congregational Church, was warmly welcomed at a recognition meeting held in February. In connection with this church the brotherhood has done a good work during the year, a special feature of the services being the selections rendered by the Brotherhood Orchestra, conducted by Mr. C. Riddick.

GUARDIANS AND RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

The institution in Dorking Road has been busily occupied dealing with those persons who have reached a state when they are no longer able to keep themselves, and suffice it to say that under the able direction of Mr. & Mrs. J.T. White (Master and Matron), and their able staff, all the inmates, both temporary and permanent, have received most careful attention and kindness. In connection with the work at the House, several much needed improvements have taken place. In January the Guardians decided to provide an ambulance for the removal of non-infectious cases from their homes to the Infirmary, whilst later in the year the new nurses' home, which has been

erected, was opened by Sir William Chance, High Sheriff of Surrey. In the same month (June), the Surrey Poor Law Officers' Association held their general meeting at the Workhouse and a very successful gathering it was. Another important work was the provision of a new verandah for consumptive patients at the Infirmary. The Rural Council has also been steadily employed in looking after the roads of the district and superintending the sanitation of the various premises coming within their purview. In July the annual cricket match between the Guardians and Rural District Council and the Urban Council, was played at Woodcote and ended in an easy win for the members who sit at Dorking Road.

LOCAL SOCIETIES

Epsom is noted for its various societies, foremost among which may be mentioned the Literary Society. Possessing a membership of nearly 300, some excellent features are presented during the winter months for the delectation of residents. Sir E.F. Coates, M.P., is again the President of the society and he attended the opening meeting on October 26th, when Mr. Edgar Bellingham delivered a lecture on "The People of the Desert, Morocco." Mr. J.T. White, who has been secretary of the society for over ten years, resigned at the beginning of the year and in March, was presented with a cheque for £70 odd in recognition of valuable services. The new secretary is Mr. C.J.M. Shaw, who has for his assistant Mr. Norman S. Pugh. The St. Barnabas Debating Society has also had some good meetings during the year, whilst other similar societies can all point to successful sessions. The St. Barnabas Musical Society has held some very enjoyable evenings, the members keeping very well together, under the conductorship of Mr. J.A. Bradley. Early in June, the members presented Mr. Bradley with a purse of gold for work rendered to the society, smaller gifts being given to Miss Hicks and Mr. Hames for their help in that

direction. The Epsom Angling Society still keep up their reputation as a company of good fellows, their periodical concerts being looked forward to with interest by the residents. The newly-formed Epsom Oratorio Society has now become soundly established in the town and with Mr. Ernest C. Birch as its head, bids fair to make its presence felt in the near future. The Epsom Gymnastic Society has been in a bad way for the past few years and it came as no surprise when at a meeting held not long ago, it was decided to disband it. The R.S.P.C.A. has done a good work during the past in the direction of caring for dumb animals, as the number of cases at our weekly police courts can testify and all the local clubs and institutions have kept up their social tendencies in a manner that deserves nothing but praise. Last, but not least, we come to the Epsom Horticultural Society, which has had a very successful year under the joint secretaryship of Mr. J.W. Potter and Mr. A Fenwick Smith. Both the Rose Show and Flower Show were very enjoyable functions and next year an attempt is being made by extending the prize list, to make them even more enjoyable and successful than formerly.

SPORT

Before anything else, Epsom is a sporting town, as our annual races fully bear out. Twice during the year at the Spring and Summer meetings, the residents give themselves up to the noble sport of "kings." The "Derby" last year was won by Mr. J.B. Joel's Sunstar, thousands of people assembling on the Downs to witness the classic race. Derby Day of last year will ever be remembered by the fearful storm which broke over the district early in the evening and which wrought so much destruction accompanied by loss of life. It is not to racing alone, however, that Epsomians turn to for sport. We have several good cricket clubs in the place, whilst the premier club at Woodcote can hold its own against all comers. Football, too, is largely participated in during the

winter, and it is to be noted that a short time ago a new Rugby club was formed in the town. At shooting, the residents can hold their own with any other town of similar size, the Epsom and District Rifle Club - the pioneer of Rifle Clubs in England - having a goodly number of members on its books, with Sir Thomas Bucknill as President. The Epsom Harriers have kept up their record, and on Whit Monday they held a very enjoyable meeting on the cricket ground. The members too, gained several prizes at neighbouring sports during the summer. The Epsom Bowling Club has also had a very successful season and the same may be said of the Hockey and Tennis clubs.

OBITUARY

The icy hand of death has been busily at work among the inhabitants in the year just ending, many notable residents being called away to the life beyond. Early in January, John Channell, an Epsom labourer, committed suicide in an outhouse, whilst the same month, Dorothy Stanford, the little daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Charles Stanford of Hook Road, died after an operation at the Cottage Hospital. In March, the death took place of Col. Sir E. Bainbridge, late Superintendent of Ordnance Factories, and son of the late Mr. T. Bainbridge, of Down Hall. Later in the year William Westcott, 39, a patient at Long Grove Asylum died from the effects of taking X.L fumigator. On Derby Day, the lightning caused the death of Wilfred Noah Wetherall, 17, a greengrocer's assistant, at Buckle's Gap, and the same month, a sensation was caused by the finding of the body of Mrs. Lambert Lyon Bennett at Buckle's Gap under strange circumstances. Other deaths included those of Mrs. Butcher, of High Street, Epsom, at the age of 91; James William Whymark, 60, an Army pensioner, who cut his throat; Mr. James Martin, the ex-trainer; Miss H. Barnes, which took place at Bournemouth; Mr. Greengrass, one of Epsom's oldest inhabitants; Mrs. J. Elsey,

Mr. Frank Northey, Mr. C.B. Russell, 45 years a revising barrister; Mrs. Skelton, of South Street; the Rev. C.N. Kelly, Rector of St. Nicholas, Cole Abbey, E.C., and the Epsom College student, who committed suicide by taking cyanide of potassium.

GENERAL TOPICS

Apart from those items placed under the various headings, several other incidents took place in the town. To commence with the local Oddfellows celebrated their centenary with a thanksgiving service at the Parish Church and on January 1st, the Old Age Pensions came into force. The same month, Dr. S.C. Elgee left Horton Asylum for Colney Hatch, and was presented with a silver rose bowl and tea tray. At the annual Licensing Sessions in February, the application for the Tattenham Park Hotel licence was again refused. Early in March, William Paris, a dispenser at Long Grove Asylum, attempted to poison himself and was brought up before the local magistrates, the case being dismissed. The following month, a pageant entitled "Epsomia" was held at the Public Hall and was much appreciated. The Epsom Council Schools held their May Day festival as usual, and Mr. W. Keswick, M.P., obtained £1,000 damages from "The Looking Glass" for libel. In June, the North Looe Small Holdings were opened, and 17 of Dr. Barnardo's boys were given a farewell concert on leaving for Canada. The police and tradesmen cricket match took place during the summer and in August, the Epsom College prize distribution and speech day was held. A betting raid was made on an Epsom boot shop, and at the subsequent police court proceedings heavy fines were imposed. In October, six lunatics escaped from Long Grove Asylum, but were soon re-captured, and cases were brought against Mr. J.M. Bell, the Epsom trainer, by two of his apprentices, but they were all dismissed. Among the marriages of 1911 were those of Miss F.M.E. Gower, Mr. John Leslie

Tull and Miss Sybil Hatchand Smith and Dr. Collins.