

EWELL 'GREAT WAR' MEMORIALS

By Clive Gilbert

War Memorials are part of our heritage and ought to be preserved, respected and brought to the attention of each new generation. A group called 'The War Memorials Trust' is dedicated to preserving this extremely emotive National asset; their web site is <http://www.warmemorials.org/index.htm>. Wars are still being fought and service people dying, but the sheer scale of the carnage of the two world wars, especially the Great War of 1914-1918 is really quite staggering.

When we hear of the death of a soldier in Iraq or Afghanistan we quite rightly feel saddened and our hearts go out to the families. It is a sobering thought to realise that throughout the Great War, on average, 480 men from the UK were killed every day. On the worst day, Saturday July 1st 1916 some 20,000 were killed. What devastation must have been felt back home by the mothers, fathers, wives, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, as well as friends and other family members.



Bourne Hall memorial

Our own local war memorial is just outside the Bourne Hall Dog Gate, known locally by some as the 'Dipping Place'. It was originally on the Watch House in Church Street and was moved on a date and for a reason I am unaware of. It bears the names of 80 men with some local connection who were killed by the First World War. Two of them died on the 1st day of the Somme. The oldest being Edwin Thomas Neville, who in 1901 was a 15-year-old domestic servant, living at home with his parents at Heatherside Road. He left a widow, having married Isabella Mary Barrett in 1915. As far as I can tell there were no children.

The younger man (in those days still a minor until aged 21) George Walter Whiskerd was 20 when he died. He had lived with his parents at Cottage Road, Ewell, very near to Heatherside Road. Both are commemorated on the Thiepval memorial to the missing.

Most of the men were ordinary soldiers or sailors but 7 were officers, the highest rank being Major. Major Ernest Willis and Lieutenant Raymond Willis were brothers and lived at Garbrand Hall, Ewell, demolished to make way for

Bourne Hall. Other brothers killed were William and Frank Benger of North View Villas, Henry and Kenrick Cook of The Outfall Works, Roxley, and John and Walter Hampton whose father was a ship-owner.

The majority, 63, died in France & Flanders, although 7 died at home probably of wounds. Three died during the Salonika campaign. Two were seamen killed at the battle of Jutland in 1916. Two died in Mesopotamia (Iraq). One died in Gallipoli, one in Malta, one in South Africa, and one in submarine D3 as a result of 'friendly fire' from a French airship. The local lads got around a bit! Incidentally, Malcolm Higgins was officially an Australian having emigrated in 1914.

There are two other memorials in Ewell to the dead of the Great War that I know of, one is in St Mary's churchyard which duplicates the 80 names on the dog gate memorial, plus an additional 2 men.

The other is in All Saints Churchyard in Fulford Road, which has the names of 24 men from the Great War and 21 from the Second World War. All the names on All Saints from 14-18 appear on both the Bourne Hall memorial and St Mary's, plus it has one other. In total the three memorials hold the names of 83 men with Ewell connections. Surely a huge number when considering how small Ewell must have been in 1914.



St Mary's memorial



St. Mary's memorial

The CD 'Soldiers died in the Great War 1914-1919' names 10 men as living in Ewell who are not on any Ewell memorials, but 3 of them are on the Ashley Road memorial. It also names 15 men as born in Ewell who are not on any Ewell memorial, one is on the Ashley Road memorial. The desire to commemorate the fallen was extremely intense during the years following the war, especially as repatriation of bodies was not allowed, and I often wonder how it was decided which names should appear on which memorials. No magic formula I suspect, each local community doing the best that it could with whatever resources it could muster.

If anyone has any information on any of the men on the memorials or on the memorials themselves such as, how the names were selected, how the site was chosen, when they were erected, how they were paid for etc I would love to hear from them. Please contact Clive Gilbert through the Epsom & Ewell Local & Family History Centre at Ewell Library, Bourne Hall.

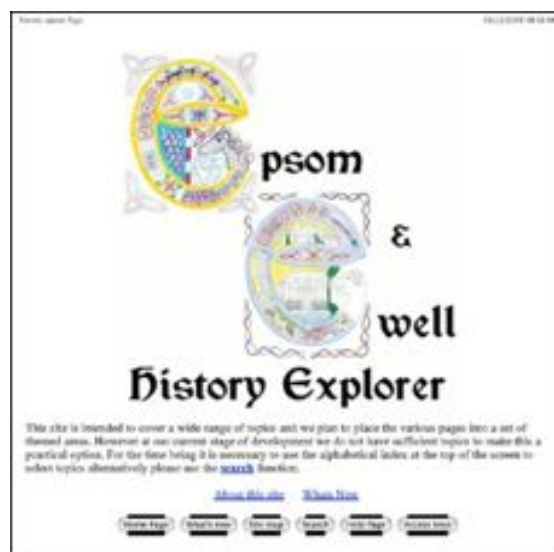
You can help develop our new 'Epsom & Ewell History Explorer' website

By Peter Reed

We are looking for a wide range of articles for a new website. The website is to be called Epsom & Ewell History Explorer (EEHE) and the first few pages are available at <http://www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk>.

The website is aimed at the general public and while not aimed at school children it is hoped that older children will be able to make good use of it.

Some readers will know that the History Centre already has some web pages at <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/Epsomandewelllocalhistory> and will be wondering why there was a need to have a separate website. Well the existing pages were of necessity formal and had to fit within the rigid Surrey County Council house style and rules. After some debate the decision was taken that a separate local history website should be encouraged that would be able to use a more relaxed style and have a bit more freedom to experiment. A group of EELFHC volunteers was formed and have been working on EEHE. For legal reasons EEHE will be independent of EELFHC but of course the two groups will work in very close collaboration and it is expected that over time the EEHE website will reflect many of the gems held by EELFHC.



<http://epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk>

Peter Reed is acting as the first EEHE Webmaster and is trying to make the new website as accessible as possible. There is a search facility to let users quickly find the page they want. As an experiment Peter has also added a guest book to let people leave a comment or ask a question. To reassure users the guest book has several anti spam measures and all email addresses are hidden. Peter tells me that he had to sit up one night trying to compile a list of rude or objectionable words to filter out – apparently his vocabulary has increased by more than a few words!

EEHE want articles on almost any local history topic from how a road got it's name to a short piece on a local person of note, from an article on a historic local building to the transcript of a talk on some local subject. The EEHE group are sure that many EELFHC volunteers have researched something that other local people would love to hear about. You don't have to know anything about computers or the internet as Peter will turn your prose into web pages and put them on the website.

As a general rule articles should be short, say from a paragraph to a side or two of A4 and have some local connection. A picture says a thousand words so you if you have any pictures or images that can be used to illustrate your article so much the better. For copyright reasons please include your name and address and indicate if you have just copied a piece out of an existing work or if it's all your own work.

While it is quicker for Peter to have articles emailed to him at webmaster@epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk, he is also happy to accept a handwritten or typed article or one on a computer disk - mail for Peter can be left at the Epsom & Ewell Local & Family History Centre at Ewell Library, Bourne Hall.

So don't be shy, dig out that old piece you did and send it in. You will be given full credit for your article and while EEHE must retain editorial control of the website any changes will be agreed with you.

Over 100 people attend talk on the Lochnagar Mine, which launched the Battle of The Somme.

On Monday, 24th July, Richard Dunning gave an illustrated talk on The Lochnagar Mine which was blown at 07.28 am on 1st July 1916, 2 minutes before the first attack in the Battle of the Somme. Richard, who lives in Seale, has been the owner of the mine crater since 1978 and has preserved it as a memorial for future generations.



Richard Dunning with a sample of the leather sacks that held the Ammonal explosive used in the Lochnagar mine.

Over 100 people listened to Richard's informative and erudite talk about the largest man-made mine ever used against an enemy. His talk was filled with anecdotes, many amusing but more often touching and thought provoking, of the many people he has met who were involved with digging the mine and who 'went over the top' shortly after the mine exploded. Today the crater, which is now a tranquil and unspoilt 'Garden of Remembrance' is visited by thousands of people a year, including over 4,000 school children, to contemplate the horrors of war and to remember and quietly contemplate the gallant deeds of those who fell to ensure a future for the rest of us.

Richard's talk was so well received that the Epsom & Ewell Local & Family History Centre has invited Richard to come back on November 20th and give a follow up talk to commemorate the ending of the

Battle of the Somme.

More information on the Lochnagar Mine Crater, which is located near La Boisselle in France, can be found at <http://www.friendsoflochnagar.co.uk>

Nonsuch Palace Virtual Reality Model Opened by the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell

Fifty people attended the opening of the Nonsuch Palace Virtual Reality model on the evening of Monday, 19th June 2006.

Hugh Edgar, Senior Consultant Architect at Atkins, gave an interesting and witty talk on the 'People of Nonsuch Palace' from Henry VIII, who built the palace, to Barbara Villiers, who destroyed it in 1682. Anthony Spreadbrough, Senior IT Consultant at Atkins, informed us about the creation of the virtual reality model and Ian Milford, Research Innovation Director explained why Atkins wanted to re-create Nonsuch Palace?



Anthony Spreadbrough, Senior IT Consultant at Atkins shows Cllr. David Wood, Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, how to operate the Nonsuch Palace VR model

The specially invited audience who listened to these fascinating presentations included Cllr. David Davis, Chairman of Surrey County Council, Cllr. David Wood Mayor of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, who officially opened the exhibit and Councillors Jean Smith, Brian Angus, Pam Bradley and Nigel Pavey together with staff from Surrey libraries and Surrey History Centre, the Nonsuch Society and Volunteers from Epsom & Ewell Local & Family History Centre.



A section of the audience, including C. Cllr. David Davis, Chair of Surrey County Council (2nd left, front row) and Cllr. David Wood, Mayor of Epsom and Ewell (3rd from right, front row).

Our thanks go to Atkins for producing this magnificent 'virtual' palace, the first time it has been seen since Barbara Villiers destroyed it. It is now on display outside the History centre at Ewell Library, Bourne Hall.

Visit to RAF Uxbridge

By Bert Barnhurst

On the 26th April a few of our volunteers visited the Control Centre at RAF Uxbridge used during the Second World War for the purpose of the defence of the Country during the Battle of Britain.

After a liquid lunch in a local pub our group met up with other visitors and went through a rather strict security check at the Guard Room before making their way into the camp proper. After a drive of about a mile we came to the entrance of the bunker complex.



No. 11 Group Ops Room at RAF Uxbridge, as it would have been in WWII

1940, what came to be known as Battle of Britain Day. This happened to be the day that Winston Churchill visited and looking at a very busy table with many German air raids coming in he asked "what reserves do we have" only to be told that there were no reserves left!

During WWII, RAF Uxbridge was No. 11 Group Ops Room and had always been an administrative base. Being without an airfield it was not very impressive, apart for those with an interest in architecture. Some of the older building had been used as a hospital in WW1. The Control Room itself was some 50ft down below a lot of reinforced concrete, so there were lots of steps and long corridors

If you have ever seen films similar to the "Battle of Britain" or "Reach for the Sky" you would know just what the Control Room looked like. The display boards and the plotting table were set up just as they had been on 15th September

After a very interesting talk by the lady curator, Hazel Crozier, and being shown a film of the period we spent time going around the museum, the windows of which allowed one to look down on the Control Room.

After we had been fascinated by all the various artefacts we then had to make our way back up all those stairs, the only 'downside' to the day. Having reached fresh air again we adjourned to the Battle of Britain Club for a welcome cup of tea. All in all a very enjoyable afternoon and well worth a visit for those interested in WWII.

Surrey Mayors and District Council Chairs visit the History Centre

By Bert Barnhurst

Wednesday 13th September was the Mayor's Civic Day and this was the first occasion on which the History Centre was involved. Some ten Mayors of Surrey Boroughs and Chairs of District Councils were the guests of Cllr. David Wood, Mayor of Epsom & Ewell to be shown various interesting aspects of the Borough.

I am delighted to say that our efforts were up to their usual high standards before a most appreciative audience. Although the Mayors came to see the Nonsuch Virtual Reality Display, hosted by Ian Milford, Research Innovation



Some of the Mayor's guests checking out our displays.



Cllr. David Wood, Mayor of Epsom & Ewell (2nd left, front) with his fellow Surrey Mayors who visited the History Centre.

Director of W. S. Atkins, there was also much interest in the other displays we had pulled out from our 'bottom drawer' – including the Surrey VCs, The Battle of Trafalgar, The Battle of the Somme, Stoneleigh History and Waste Recycling. Many favourable comments were made during the course of the morning and further questions asked during lunch.

Clive Gilbert had one consort discussing her Uncle's WWI diary, which Clive is hoping to see, while others said they

were coming back for our 'Who Do You Think You Are?' day on October 21st. Also there was much comment on our new website, www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk created by Peter Reed with the home page logos for Epsom and Ewell created by Gill Alford.

The Mayor asked me to express his sincere thanks for all the time and effort put in by the volunteers, to which of course I add my own thanks to all of you for your support.

Epsom Cemetery Project needs more Volunteers

By Maureen Dibsdall

We have all probably been frustrated by inaccurate records whilst pursuing our family history research. You also know how important cemeteries and churchyards can be in filling out the basic research. Unfortunately, many of the older tombstones are weathering away and becoming unreadable. So it is urgent that these important historical references are recorded for posterity.



A group of volunteers recording the tombstone inscriptions in Epsom Cemetery.

The Epsom Cemetery Project has begun and volunteers are recording the information on the graves in Section A1 of the cemetery. This is a vitally important project as over time the engraving on the gravestones wears away and will be lost forever.

A list has been posted on the notice board for volunteers to fill in the date and time they are available to help us on this project. We also have available a confidential list of telephone numbers and email addresses of interested volunteers to enable them to make contact with one another and make arrangements to make up a group and visit the cemetery together – it's more fun that way.

We also have packs of forms and information for the volunteers to use for each sub-section of A1. Some of these have now been completed and one of our volunteers is now transcribing this information into an Excel spreadsheet.

Those of you who know Epsom Cemetery will appreciate the enormity of this project, which will be on-going for quite some time to come and will rely heavily on the availability and goodwill of our volunteers. So, if you fancy recording tombstones, with pleasant company please come and join us in this vital work for all family historians.

Forthcoming Events and Activities

W H O

DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Family History Day at Ewell Library - 21st October 2006

Following our hugely successful Family History Day we held in February this year, we are repeating the exercise this October 21st, once again tying in with the return of the BBC's very popular 'Who Do You Think You Are?' eight-part television series, which began with Barbara Windsor at the beginning of September. This provides an ideal background for us to organise this event and naturally heightens interest in family history, so once again we envisage being very busy.

The Family History Day will be on Saturday, 21st October 2006 from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm at Ewell Library, Bourne Hall, Spring Street, Ewell. Entry is free.

The aim is to help people find out how to:

- Search the various Censuses, which are available at ten year intervals from 1841 to 1901
- Find birth, marriage and death certificates
- Understand military records
- Seek parish and probate records
- Use the Internet for searches
- Research local newspapers
- Learn what local resources and records about Epsom & Ewell are held at the Local History Centre

In addition to the expert volunteers from the EELFHC there will be an archivist from The Surrey History Centre to give advice and assistance as well as members of the East Surrey Family History Society.

Volunteers, please stand by. Based on past experience we are going to need all your help on this event. We'll let you have more information about the day after the Committee meeting on the 27th September. But please put the date in your diary anyway.

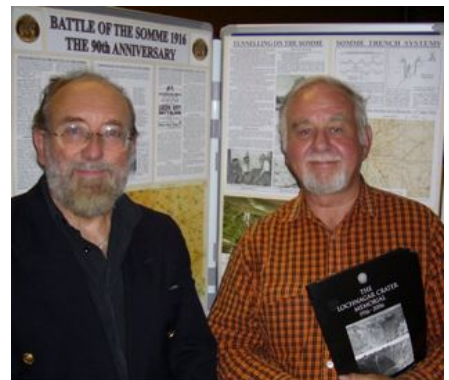
And if you have any old books on genealogy or family history you no longer want, we would be most grateful if you bring them along to our book sale – all proceeds to go to the History Centre's funds.

Honour the 90th Anniversary of the ending of THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME 20th November 2006, commencing 7.00 pm

On the 1st July 1916 the explosion of the Lochnagar Mine launched the battle of the Somme, one of the bloodiest and most traumatic battles of the Great War. On the 19th November 1916, after 5 months of heavy fighting, the battle was finally over.

To honour the 90th anniversary of the end of the battle, Richard Dunning, owner of the Lochnagar Mine Crater at La Boisselle, returns, by popular demand, with further insights into the activities and experiences of the soldiers and miners fighting on the Western Front.

Richards illustrated talk will take place on Monday, 20th November 2006, commencing at 7.00pm at Bourne Hall, Spring Street, Ewell.



Richard Dunning (left), owner of the Lochnagar mine crater, with Clive Gilbert, volunteer, in front of The Battle of the Somme display, created by Mr. Gilbert.

Entry will be by ticket, available in advance from Ewell Library Local History Centre, Bourne Hall during opening hours - Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays: 2.00pm-4.00pm Tuesdays: 6.00pm-7.30pm. Advanced tickets cost £2 otherwise the charge at the door will be £3, with no guarantee of entry if the hall is full – and based on the attendance for Richard's talk in July we advise you get your advance tickets early or you might miss out.

World War I Re-enactment

28th October 2006, Bourne Hall, Ewell

10.00am – 4.00pm

Local historian and re-enactor Tim Richardson will be organising a World War I event in the Lower Gallery of the museum at Bourne Hall, Ewell on Saturday, 28th October. This could trigger a number of people to want to find out more about their relatives who served in The Great War.

Although this is not a Local History Centre event and the Centre is normally closed on Saturday, it would be appreciated if Volunteers could make themselves available to man the Centre to advise visitors about researching their relatives, especially from the CD *'Soldiers died in the Great War 1914-1919'*.

Please leave your name on the notice-board at the Centre if you can help out. Many thanks.

Autumn Training Courses for Volunteers

Dates to be confirmed

We are very gratified to have had a good influx of new volunteers in recent months. You may also be aware that we have produced a new operating manual for the History Centre. Consequently, we believe it is an opportune moment to introduce both training and refresher courses this Autumn for all volunteers. We aim to cover operating procedures, what information we hold and where it is, how to assist people – think of it as what we do and how we do it.

Once we have more details, we will put them on the notice-board out back.

Coming soon... The Co-ordinated Database Project

As a result of the fascinating talk by Peter Tilley at the AGM in April, and his generous offer to let us have a free copy of his database programme, we will be setting up a project to produce our own co-ordinated database – linking census records, births, marriages and deaths, parish records and other data. This will require volunteers to input the data. Again, we will need to create a sub-committee to decide how best to proceed with this project and, again, we will keep you informed of progress. Hopefully there will be more news after the committee meeting on September 27th.

New telephone number for the Centre – 08456 009 009

Surrey County Council and Surrey Libraries have re-organised their information services and have created a single phone number for all information enquiries. From 25th September, people who call the new number will be answered by a 'call centre' who will re-direct them to the correct facility/department.

Would all volunteers who receive a phone call in the History Centre to please ask the caller how easy it was for them to get through and to note their answer. Our aim is to monitor the new system to see what wrinkles there might be.

Have You got News for Us?

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. If you have any

- reports on visits to various sites or centres
- intriguing Information Requests
- forthcoming projects or events
- interesting facts about local history or genealogy
- new research documents the LFHC has received
- or just strange tales to tell

please let Ian 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 January 2007, so you have stacks of time to think of something.

IRP
September 2006