

# EPSOM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

Volume IV Number IV

July 2000

### *Ice Cream Social Time*



The annual Epsom Historical Association summer ice cream social will be held on Sunday, July 16 beginning at 2:30 p.m. The location this year is the Old Yeaton Tavern on North Road, Epsom, home of Nancy Claris.

The program for the afternoon will be a history of the tavern presented by Charlie and Philip Yeaton. This activity has long been a tradition of the Association and we hope to see you there for a relaxing afternoon !



**NOTE:** FREE ICE CREAM, ASSORTED TOPPINGS AND BEVERAGE WILL BE PROVIDED. THOSE ATTENDING ARE REQUESTED TO BRING A LAWN CHAIR.

### A STRANGE BUT TRUE TALE

'Frank and I had just retired and were seeing New England for the first time. Both our mothers had left us geneology materials and we had been reading through their papers half heartedly (the "bug" had not yet bitten), resolved in their memories to put it some kind of order (AFTER our drive around the U..S..)

At the moment we were driving leisurely through New England, and the Fall foliage, no purpose in mind when I spotted a sign that said, "Epsom". I told Frank that my great grandfather had been born here. Frank asked if I remembered his parents names. Surprisingly I did. So he suggested we might find the local cemetery interesting. I agreed and we stopped at the first store we saw . The gentleman said if I didn't know which cemetery, I could waste a week there. So we drove on, but we had not driven a half mile when the motorhome began to make a strange sound. My shop teacher husband pulled off to check under the hood. I welcome the chance to get out and stretch. I walked a few steps and leaned on the fence. I was facing an aged tombstone, James Clark and Hannah Robinson. Frank came up behind me, saying, "There isn't a thing wrong with the car. I don't know what made that noise". Then his eyes followed mine. Later as we drove away, he said, "This is one we will never be able to explain." ....weird is the word for it. We saw a tombstone that doesn't exist.

The date we were there was Sept. 22, 1987. The stone was in bad shape, so incrustated that the picture I took was unreadable but fearing just that, I copied it carefully. "James ..Feb. 6, 1770-March 10, 1841 age 71 Hannah, his wife, Nov. 1, 1782-Feb. 25, 1890 age 77". One stone.'

*From a recent email to the Epsom Early Settlers Website. The stone is still among the missing-TJ*

# Our Sister Town

## Epsom, England

The name of Epsom derives from Ebbe's ham, Ebbe being a Saxon lady about whom nothing is known. There were a string of settlements, many ending in -ham, along the northern slopes of the Downs, including Effingham, Bookham, and Cheam. The only relic from this period is a 7th century brooch found in Epsom and now in the British Museum.

The early history of the area is bound up with the Abbey of Chertsey, whose ownership of Ebbisham was confirmed by King Athelstan in 933. The town at the time of Doomsday Book had 38 peasant households grouped near St. Martin's Church. Later, other small settlements grew up at the town pond (now the Market in the High Street), and at Epsom Court, Horton, Woodcote, and Langley Vale. Some country houses were built in the 1500's. In the early 1600's, the therapeutic powers of the well on the common became known (some say because the cows refused to drink it!). Visitors flocked to take the waters, and, since they needed entertainment, a number of fine mansions and the Assembly Rooms were built, hotels and lodging houses were opened, all kinds of shops were opened, and bowling greens and other leisure pursuits were provided.

Bath, building boom ended, shops were closed, and Epsom reverted to a more sedate way of life. However, the presence of the mansions ensured some trade, and the increasing coach traffic to Brighton brought more trade.

There had always been some racing on the Downs, but the foundation of the Derby in 1780 gave a formal structure, and provided the shorter more exciting race demanded by the public. Derby Day became increasingly popular, and led to enormous traffic jams for several miles around. This encouraged the development of railways from Croydon (1847) and Wimbledon (1859). Further lines were completed, mainly for race-goers, to Epsom Downs (1865) and Tattenham Corner (1901).

The increasing pulse of life in the town encouraged the local authority (then known as the Vestry) to rebuild the Watch House, which stood beside the pond and housed a fire engine. They replaced it with the Clock Tower which still stands today.

For more information <http://>

[www.epsom.townpage.co.uk/index2.htm](http://www.epsom.townpage.co.uk/index2.htm)



Epsom now had 600 houses, including about 200 of the traditional "clapboard" houses, a few of which still survive. Health became an increasing problem, and a local board of health was elected in 1850. They made sewers and filled in the town pond. Great building schemes were mooted, initially for the area of Epsom Common, but these were abandoned. Instead, the common fields to the south and east were enclosed in 1869 and gradually divided up into building plots. In 1895, another great expansion started when Epsom Court Farm was divided up for building.

The Board of Health was superseded in 1895 by an Urban District Council. Another major development at this time was the building by the London County Council of three large mental hospitals on the western outskirts of the town: Manor (1899), Horton and St. Ebba's (1901) and Long Grove (1907). Most of these magnificent buildings have now been abandoned as hospitals, in favour of "care in the community". The buildings remain as a monument to the Victorian drive and energy for schemes of public welfare.

The foundations of Epsom's excellent parks system was laid when the Earl of Rosebery gave the land for Rosebery Park in 1913.

In 1934, the Urban District of Epsom expanded to include its sister community of Ewell, and in 1937 the Council received its charter creating the Borough of Epsom and Ewell.

Among the past inhabitants of Epsom are James Chuter Ede (who shaped the Education Act of 1944 and was also Charter Mayor of Epsom in 1937), Isabella Mayson (who achieved fame as Mrs. Beeton), the 5th Earl of Rosebery (who was Prime Minister in 1894, and did much to develop Epsom as a racing centre), Aubrey Beardsley and John Piper (noted artists) and Jimmy Page (of Led Zeppelin).