

Issue 33

ETON

March 2024

MATTERS



To The Manor Born

Naturewatch:
The Wren

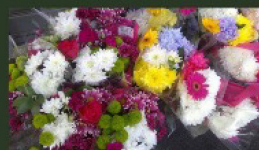
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CHAIRS CHAT

ROS RIVAZ - ECA CHAIR



The light evenings are here, snowdrops have made way for daffodils and tulips and the early Easter means that we will soon be seeing the Eton flags adorning the High Street. We've been busy! The ever-popular Christmas lights switch on was excellent as always, thanks to Karen, Stephen, Ben and Paul Roach and we thanked Karen for 10 years of leading the Christmas event! Eton College, Baldwins Bridge Trust and Eton Town Council are major contributors: thank you. And special guests from Kevin Cruise to Father Christmas to our local schools, music ensembles and dance group make it such a special team event. Christmas Dinner at The Christopher was fun and we've held ECA meetings at the Hop House of The George, where around 30 of you join us!

We've continued to organise regular litter picks working with Eton College, and the exhibition they hosted for the Richard Amis collection was awesome. Sincere thanks to all our committee who have led events and to The George for use of the Hop House for meetings. Our supporters for the events we organise include: Eaten Café and Budgens, who provide treats for our litter picks, the Christopher who ensured the Christmas dinner was affordable and Giovanni at Tastes, for donating the voucher for the winning Christmas window competition. What a genuine team effort. We receive great feedback about the (now fortnightly) ECA weekly Newsletter (or Shout Out, as we call it) and Eton Matters, so thank you to Russell and Rosie particularly. Sign up at www.etoncommunity.co.uk.

A special mention is deserved for the Eton Information Centre ball (organised by our sister Eton & Eton Wick Information Centre), which will be taking place on 9th March. Email info@visiteton.info if you would like to join us. It is not too late!

I would like to thank the regular and guest contributors and the sponsors of this issue of Eton Matters, without whose generosity we would be unable to produce this mini-mag. The sponsors are: Kavanagh's Budgens, New & Lingwood, Warren Property, Academy Insurance, Vario Press, Eton Environmental Group, My Handyman, Eaten Cafe, Lawsons Residential, Eton Vet, Susan Handy Dance, Eton College, Tastes Delicatessen, Eton Antique Bookshop and Beaubelle.
Rosie Maggs, Editor

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NATURE WATCH - THE WREN

KEVIN MCNALLY

In a recent golf club quiz (which I am immodest enough to say we eventually won) one of the questions posed was the title of this piece - what is Britain's most common bird? Well - we did debate heatedly, as a team, the merits of sparrows, gulls and pigeons. I was keen on sparrows but was voted down in favour of pigeons. We were all wrong - as was every other team - as the answer is the Wren.

The Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes hiemalis* is Britain's most common breeding bird. This tiny brown passerine (perching birds, 'sparrow shaped' - the most common bird group globally) has an enormous range across all of Europe and the palearctic as far as Japan. Britain has approximately 8.5 million breeding pairs and unlike further north in Europe our wrens do not migrate south for the winter but stay with us. Breeding pairs by the way is a bit misleading as wrens are polygamous (males will mate with several females) perhaps accounting for their large population. The males are strongly territorial, particularly during the breeding season

The wren is a tiny brown bird with a characteristic short upright tail. One of Britain's smallest birds they weigh no more than a £1 coin. They eat insects and spiders primarily and have a loud complex call - more trilling than singing but hard to ignore!

The wren is also of course the King of Birds. This fable or legend has been in existence for centuries and if you remember, centres on the tiny wren hiding in the feathers of an eagle destined to prove it was King by flying higher than all other birds (the test). The eagle flew as high as it could and the smart (too smart?) wren jumped out and flew a bit higher to take the crown. This leads to its name in many languages (German, Dutch) incorporating 'King' in it. (Zaunkönig in German). This also leads to the well known (at least in Ireland and Scotland) song beginning:

"The wren, the wren the king of all birds
St Stephen's day was caught in the furze....."

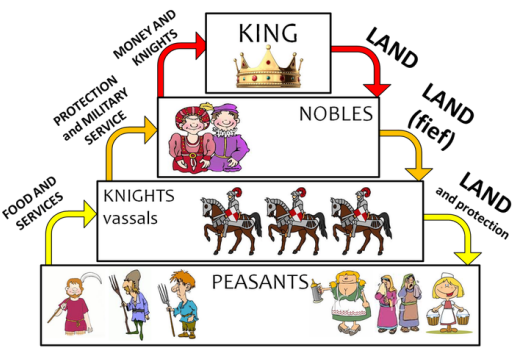
So the Jenny Wren - I will leave you to try and discover where the 'Jenny' came from..



TO THE MANOR BORN

PETER EATON

It may not surprise many of you who are aware of the history of Eton that remnants of the Saxon and the medieval feudal system brought in after the Norman Conquest in 1066 still exist, one of those being Lord of the Manor. It may not surprise you either, considering the amount of land they own in and around Eton and Eton Wick, that the current Lord of the Manor is the Provost and Fellows of Eton College. The feudal system was about control, service and discipline with the Manor being intrinsically the local part of that.



Feudal Pyramid of Power

Eton (including Eton Wick) can trace its roots back to Anglo-Saxon times, maybe beyond, and then all land belonged to the Crown. King Edward (the Confessor) passed Eton over to his wife, Queen Edith. After her death in 1075 ownership returned to the Crown, King William (the Conqueror). Shortly after King William passed Eton (and Burnham) over to 'Walter, son of other', who was Warden of the Forest and Governor of the new Castle Keep.

Generally, the heir of a Manor would be the eldest son. However if no male existed the Manor would be divided between all daughters. This happened in 1204 when Eton Manor was divided, passing to two de Windsor (as Walter's descendants became known) daughters, Gunnora Hodeng (considered to be the main Manor) and Christina de Lascelles. Although it passed to the daughters, their husband would have managed the estates.

Passing through the generations, Gunnora's half came, through marriage, into the Huntercombe family whose home Manor was in south-west Burnham. However, in 1391, there being no heirs, it passed back 2 generations to 3 aunts of Sir John Huntercombe, splitting this Manor into three. Around 1419, Richard Lovell, representing his mother Margaret (one of the aunt co-heirs) appears to have acquired the other 2 shares and in 1440 granted land, probably through the King, to build Eton College. By 1547 the Manor is found in the hands of William Lord Windsor after passing through marriage to Rotherhams and Crispes and in 1668 his descendent Richard Windsor sold the Manor to John Crawford. Crawford's daughter and heir married Leonard Wessell. In 1793 the Wessell family sold the Eton Manor to John Penn of Stoke Poges, grandson of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania. Dying unmarried in 1834 it passed to brother Granville then to sons Granville and Thomas, who died in 1869 with no heirs so the Manor passed to his cousin William Stuart, a descendent of the first Stewart kings of Scotland. Eton College acquired the Manor from the Stuart's descendants in the early 1940s.

The Manor of Colenorton first appears in 1526 when Eton Manor came into the Crispe family through marriage possibly being land John Crispe previously owned. Stockdale Manor first appears in 1610 along with Eton and Colenorton in a settlement by Andrew Windsor.

Christina's half, probably the more rural land of Eton Wick, was initially held by her husband Duncan de Lascelles. Their son granted some of this manor along with Cippenham to Prince Richard, younger son of King John. It was then acquired by the de Moleyns family of Stoke Poges who already owned land in Eton, possibly known as Moleyn's Fee (some of which was transferred to Burnham Abbey with the remainder being transferred to the King in 1447 and granted to Eton College). By 1319, Prince Richard's part was in the King's hands. Thomas de Lascelles granted the main part of Christine's half to William Blundell in 1255, who granted the rights to Roger de Mowbray of Scotland, who in 1310 granted the Manor to the King, who granted it to his yeoman, Oliver de Bureux. In 1358 Sir William Trussell, a descendant, granted the Manor again to the King reuniting the parts of Christina's half as the Royal Manor of Eton.

Grants and acquisition of land from the King of Christina's half to Eton College happened over the years. It was not until the 1940s with the acquisition by College of Gunnora's half that Eton Manor was reunited, less any property withheld or sold freehold prior, as the Manor of Eton cum Stockdale and Colenorton.

Acknowledgements:

British History Online – Eton: where a full history can be found; Eton Wick History website; A Town Called Eton by Selina Ballance





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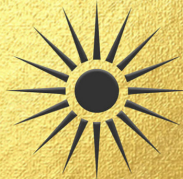
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ETON WITHIN THE BOROUGH

COUNCILLOR WILSON

The last few months have seen us engage with the Eton community in many ways; I had the privilege of attending the Remembrance Service in the Eton Church in November, and was honoured to lay a wreath on behalf of RBWM and us three councillors. The Christmas lights switch on is always a fabulous event, and while I was not able to attend in person, it was great to see the reports and to hear that it went so well. The last business before Christmas was to judge the Christmas Window competition – with Devon already on his way to a family Christmas, Julian and I were delighted to tour the high street with Ros Rivaz, and the efforts made by so many shops to decorate their windows was amazing! We felt that many deserved recognition so awarded four prizes in the end, congratulations to all who participated and their contribution to the festive feel of the High Street. Returning to work in the new year brought us back to the process of completing the annual budget exercise in RBWM. Many of you will know that this is an extremely challenging period for the Council as we look to create a stable foundation for the future and a robust budget based on stretching but achievable assumptions. Officers and lead members have reviewed all the activities of the Council and we have had

to take some hard and unpleasant decisions in order to arrive at a position that the senior members and officers can stand behind and work with for the next year. With many new people in senior positions, there is a high level of drive and determination to succeed, to fix the mess and to build a better borough, of which Eton can be proud to be part of.

We are also actively supporting business growth in the area, and recently, Devon and I attended the Windsor & Eton Business Partnership (formerly the W&E Town Partnership) where discussions are progressing to improve the business environment across Windsor and Eton. From a tourist perspective, broadening the local offering to encourage visitors to remain in the area longer is a key objective, alongside improving the two towns from a resident's perspective. We three councillors are keen to facilitate investment in the local area and are determined to redress the imbalance of investment that we see across the Borough in the long term.





THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SNOW BUSINESS

JOHN KEATING

Who saw Queen Charlotte in the follow up Netflix Bridgerton series? And who would have guessed that our very own John, here in Eton did the special effects for the show!

Queen Charlotte's carriage was made of fibreglass. My goodness what incredible craftsmanship; you would think it was the real thing!

John's ability to ensure that the snowy opening scene was clearly shot in the winter....is another surprise! It was taken during Easter. With John's skills using a snow machine and cotton wool in the cracks, to look as if the wind had blown the snow against the stone steps leading up to the Palace, looked exactly like a scene on a snowy winter's day! By the way, Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace where this was all being shot.

And why is there a hawk in the photo with John? The Sound Man doesn't like the squawk of seagulls or any other bird's chirps for that matter. The hawk is hired to ensure there are no seagulls and bird noises anywhere near the recordings!



KIDS PLAY - FROM SINGAPORE TO WINDSOR

We moved from Windsor to Singapore last summer. At Christmas, we came back to visit our friends and family. We stayed with family in Eton. Singapore has a tropical climate: it's hot and sunny all the time and there are thunderstorms almost every day. So when we finally arrived at Heathrow, after a 14 hour flight, the cold, dark, rainy weather was quite a shock!



Exploring Eton

We spent a week in Windsor and Eton over Christmas. We loved seeing our friends and family, who were very curious about our life in Singapore. We also enjoyed walking along the river, visiting the town centre and eating our favourite food. We had missed the green fields and the historic town centre, which are very different from the skyscrapers and the gardens of Singapore.

Comparing Cultures

We are learning a lot from living in two different countries. We enjoy the diversity and the vibrancy of Singapore, where we meet people from all over Asia and the world. We also like discovering new food and having new experiences in Singapore and in other countries in South East Asia. But it's also nice to be able to come back to Windsor and Eton from time to time, where we have our roots and our traditions. We are lucky to have the best of both worlds.

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WET AND WINDY

PETER EATON

We seem to have had our fair share of wind and rain this winter. Here we are, as I am writing this, in mid-February and Barnes Pool garden is flooded for the second time this year, with water coming up the outbound culvert from the River Thames below Romney Weir, covering it with about a foot of water.

Although currently not as bad as in the first week of January when the Pool filled and the water crossed the road connecting directly across the field with the river. At that time the river was about 5ft above its normal range below Romney Weir but about 8" below the level reached in 2014, however it still meant that many of the fields around Eton were flooded.

The Barnes Pool garden has not been the only casualty this winter, many trees have fallen or been damaged in the gales. One such casualty was the mature Ash tree on the Atherton Court boundary of the Crown and Cushion Public House. Partially severed from its roots it took to the garage next door to hold it up until it was felled.



ETON PORNY SCHOOL

EMMA STANFORD-SMITH
HEAD TEACHER



At Eton Porny we want our school community to be happy, safe and to enjoy their learning. Our wellbeing champions, supported by the staff team, do a fantastic job of ensuring that wellbeing and mental health are a high priority all year round.

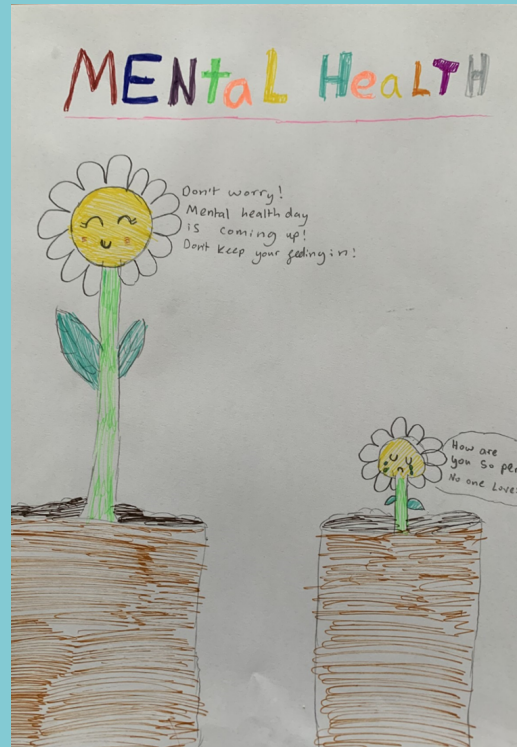
The wellbeing champions told me that they are always there for others if they need to talk to someone and they are a friendly face who will help to cheer up anyone who isn't feeling their best. It is a really important job because it helps people to open up and share their feelings.

It's important that all the adults in a child's life are able to promote a child's mental health and wellbeing. To help achieve this, routines can help to provide stability in a child's life, which can give children a sense of security and help reduce stress.

You could try to:

- Plan regular weekly activities, such as seeing friends and relatives or taking part in a club or hobby
- Find time to get outside and to be physically active
- Have regular mealtimes and make time to talk with each other
- Set and stick to bed times, particularly for younger children, as sleep is important for children's mental and physical wellbeing
- Work with older children to create a routine that supports them – including homework, seeing friends, extra-curricular activities and time offline!

If parents or other adults in a child's life would like help with promoting children's mental health and wellbeing then this link might be helpful place2be.org.uk/our-services/parents-and-carers/supporting-your-child-s-mental-health/



IN HIS PRESENCE

CAROLE THE CURATE (TRAINEE VICAR)

The Christmas period was wonderfully busy for me, going into schools for assemblies, carol services, Christingles, and spending time with the family, to name but a few things. I hope you all have fond memories of Christmas and the joy of celebrating the birth of Jesus, who came to the world as a helpless babe because God loves us and wants a relationship with us. In February we begin the season of Lent.

On Shrove Tuesday February 13th the custom is to finish up all the food that you would not eat during Lent. We traditionally celebrate this day with pancakes; I love mine with lemon juice and sugar, what's your favourite way of eating pancakes? The period of Lent starts the following day on Ash Wednesday. Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence; from the Middle Ages it became the custom to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross. Traditionally Lent is a penitential time of 40 days before Easter imitating Jesus's fast in the wilderness before he started his ministry. During this time Christians prepare themselves for Easter and focus on fasting, prayer and almsgiving (giving money to the needy).

I have often heard people say, "I'm giving up chocolate or social media for Lent", bringing in the theme of fasting. Some people like to 'do' extra things like help a neighbour, or volunteering at a food bank during Lent. It is a test of self-discipline! Traditionally Sundays are 'relaxed fast days' so if you are finding it too hard, you can eat a sneaky square of chocolate on a Sunday! The important thing about this time is, whatever you choose to do or not do, make sure it draws you closer to God and helps you realise the most amazing act of love that Jesus brought us when he died on the cross. This is the message of Easter; I pray that you will all be aware of this immeasurable love this Easter!

God bless, Carole.





Community Hub

Are you local to Eton or Eton Wick?

Whenever we are open, do pop in for a chat with our friendly staff!

You can also find out more about all things going on in the area. And we'd love to hear your memories of living in Eton / Eton Wick.

Visit 
ETON

Diary

16th November - 24th March - An Etonian Collector: The Richard Amis Bequest
A new exhibition of fine art drawn from the Eton Collections.

March

9th March - Eton Information Centre Annual Dinner Dance

10th March - Mothering Sunday Church service

9.30am St James the Less, Dorney

11am St John the Baptist, Eton Wick

28th March - Maundy Thursday

7pm Foot Washing Tenebrae, St James the Less, Dorney

29th March - Good Friday Walk of Hope

(with short time of praise at each church in between the walk)

9.30am St John the Evangelist, Eton, 10.30am St John the Baptist, Eton Wick

11.15am RCCG Praise Embassy, Eton Wick, 12.30pm St James the Less, Dorney

31st March - Easter Day

5.45am Boveney sunrise service, St Mary Magdelene, 9.30am St James the Less, Dorney

11am St John the Baptist

April

3rd April - ECA Meeting

Regular and Social (Eton & Eton Wick)

Council Office – Eton: Tues – Fri – 08.00-13.00 (in office Tuesday & Friday)

Eton Town Council Meeting – 19.00 - Second Thursday of Month - Eton Council Offices

Eton College Museums – Every Sunday – 14.30-17.00 – Free entry

Eton Information Centre - Call in for a chat with friendly staff, find out more about all things local and tell us your memories of living in Eton - Thursday-Sunday 11am-3pm.

Churches (regular services)

St. John the Evangelist, Eton (C of E) Services

1st & 3rd Wednesdays - 10.00 - Communion (said)

Tuesdays 19.00-20.00 – Bible Study

(Sundays – 11.00 & 16.30 Services - St. John the Baptist, Eton Wick)

Our Lady of Sorrows (Catholic) - Service – Sundays – 09.30

Useful Numbers

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Community Warden	01628 685636
Council Offices, Eton Bob Austen, Town Clerk	01753 860377
Emergency Fire/Ambulance/Police	999
Eton College	01753 370100
Eton Community Association Chair	07734 073117
Eton Porny School	01753 861995
Eton Pre-School	01753 850842
Fast Medical Help, Non-Emergency (NHS)	111
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Eton Pharmacy	01753 860441
King Edward VII Outpatients, Windsor	01753 636359
Prince Charles Eye Unit, KE VII Casualty	01753 633000
Wexham Park Hospital	01753 634017
Wexham Park A& E	01753 821441
Upton Hospital, nr Slough – Walk-in unit	01753 877805
Heatherwood & St. Marks Minor Injuries units	01344 623333
Heatherwood Hospital	01628 632012
St. Marks Outpatients	07766 366719
Library - Mobile	0303 123 0035
Library -Renewal Hotline	01753 370602
Natural History Museum Eton (curator)	999
Police Crime in Progress	101
Non-Emergency	03708 506 506
River Authority Environment Agency (gen. enquiries)	0345 988 1188
Floodline	01628 683800
Royal Borough Of Windsor And Maidenhead (customer care)	01753 853517
24 hour line for key services – report illicit actions etc.	07968 868172
Swan Support	



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Whilst the situation in the world is so uncertain, with wars, earthquakes and floods dominating the headlines, it is pleasing to report that the situation in Eton is far more secure. The town escaped any serious flooding although rising water levels caused several basements and basement garages in the town to be flooded, and at the time of writing there is still much surface water on the various recreational areas. The Jubilee River has been a real saviour! Eton Town Council has been progressing several issues over the past months, as follows:

- The 2024/25 precept has been agreed and this is available to view on the Council website. Eton Town Council remains one of the lowest precepts for its size in the Borough and this is the direct result of careful financial management to ensure that residents receive full value for money.
- The Eton Christmas lights display was another resounding success and great credit is due to The Eton Community Association for their management of this annual event. Following the removal of RBWM funding, Eton Town Council – which owns the Christmas lights – will be responsive to additional funding requirements in future years.

- South Meadow Lane play area is being spruced up and parts of the flooring have been relaid to ensure the area is completely safe for children to enjoy. Repairs to some of the equipment are also progressed.
- Plans are being made to redecorate and refurbish the Council Chamber to make the space more fit for purpose and a more attractive venue for meetings, be they Council or charity/commercial lettings. It is believed that this will be the first such attention in 50 years.
- The Council has been vigorously supporting efforts to activate the Cockpit development and it is pleasing to report that work on this magnificent old building has at last been given the go-ahead by RBWM, following endless delays. We look forward to seeing work begin in the near future.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any problems and I shall do my best to help, either directly or by signposting to the correct authority.



RECAP OF THE LAST TERM AT ETON COLLEGE

ANDY SAUNDERS -
DIRECTOR OF LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS AT ETON COLLEGE

This academic year over 7,000 people have engaged in Eton College's partnerships programme so far. Many of these participants are students and staff from over 100 state schools, as well as local people and their families. To bring these moments of partnership to life, hundreds of Eton pupils and staff volunteered in a variety of ways. Highlights include Eton Action Fair for 3,000 local visitors, mock Oxbridge Interviews for 109 local students, plus Eton pupils collectively giving over 1,000 hours of service to the local community and raising over £14,000 for 10 charities. Eton's partnerships with Holyport College, LAE Stratford and the Thames Valley Learning Partnership continued to develop this half with over 100 pupils and staff from Eton taking part in a variety of events.

Eton Action saw in the academic year with a bright and busy Eton Action Fair on Saturday 16 September.

Over 3,000 visitors attended, including local families from Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead. The event raised over £30,000 for the five Eton Action charities for this year. Pupils have also been busy volunteering in the community this half. More than 150 lower sixth students took part in the Community Engagement programme. The programme contains 27 different placements, at which pupils volunteered weekly, giving approximately 90 minutes of service. The placements include volunteering with five different charity shops, twelve schools, two care homes, Slough Mencap and a range of activities based on the school site (such as Collections and rowing outreach) and externally (such as Windsor Library). Outside of these placements, pupils also started a pen pal exchange with Bali Children Foundation, organised a Christmas food drive for Windsor

Foodshare and hand-delivered harvest and Christmas gift boxes to elderly residents of Eton and Eton-Wick.

In Sports, at the Athens pool 198 pupils from six local primary schools progressed through the Primary Swimming Programme last term and at Dorney Lake three schools attended 18 weekly rowing sessions with 263 students. The Dorney Boat Club continued with three sessions per week for 60 local students as well as extra opportunities such as attending the Henley Rowing Club capsized drills and CPR training from St John's Ambulance which Eton pupils also attended. With all EtonX online courses free for UK state schools, the EtonX team have been raising awareness by attending education conferences and sending e-newsletters to schools. Last term, 54 schools enrolled their students, 3209 of whom activated their accounts and 1516 completed an EtonX course. Physical certificates were sent to these students and the most popular courses this half were Verbal Communication, Critical Thinking and Resilience. In Collections last term, the Primary Programme delivered 22 sessions to 679 state school students, including the first delivery of the new Macbeth Shakespeare session. In November, the Partnerships team published the [Eton Connect Annual Report](#) for 2022/2023 along with a short film. Together these highlight the breadth and depth of the cross-sector activity the College coordinates both locally and nationally.

The partnership office is based on Eton High Street (it's the one with the Lego) and we are always looking for more ways to engage with the local community.





ETON'S PROSPECTIVE SAINT:

THE VENERABLE IGNATIUS SPENCER

BRIAN HOARE - RETIRED BUILDINGS BURSAR, ETON COLLEGE

Four days before Christmas in the last year of the 18th century, George Spencer was born at Admiralty House, London, the second son of the Earl Spencer (and 4x Great Uncle of Princes William and Harry and a forebear to Winston Spencer Churchill).

221 years later, on 21 February 2021, Pope Francis issued a papal edict announcing that Fr Ignatius (George) Spencer was declared Venerable “ of heroic virtue”, a further step toward canonisation and future prospective Sainthood.

Education

George entered Eton College on 18th May 1808 along with elder brother Frederick. The boys lived with their tutor, Rev Richard Godley, an evangelical clergyman. This led to George developing a fascination for long prayers and ascetical practices. He was confirmed in 1816 by Dr Howley the Archbishop of Canterbury elect and in 1817 went up to Trinity College, Cambridge reading Divinity. He obtained a first class degree and MA and was rewarded by his father with a year long Grand Tour of the Continent.

Religious Life

On 22nd December 1822 George was ordained Deacon by the Bishop of Peterborough. His duties preparing him to become a Parish Priest, to which he was appointed by the Rector of Brighton at the beginning of 1825. His commitment to pastoral duties was profoundly evident immediately and day

after day he visited the sick and poor, distributing alms in all the villages and hamlets. Gradually he questioned the tenets of his Anglican faith and his Catholic contacts led him eventually in January 1830 to convert to the Catholic faith. Spencer finally found his ultimate spiritual home by joining the Passionists, taking the name of Ignatius of St Paul. In the final sixteen years of his life he dedicated himself to the great work of giving missions in hours of meditation and vigils of prayer. He developed a system of giving “Little Missios” throughout England, Ireland, Wales and each Scotland each visit by parish of three days. Inevitably his health deteriorated and on 1 October 1864 his body was found in a ditch at the edge of a village in Scotland, presumed heart failure. He was buried in Sutton Merseyside. All revered Spencer as a saint.

In 1973 as the first step in the process of beatification his mortal remains were exhumed and re-interred in a new tomb. It was noted that he had suffered from horrific arthritis while his tongue has not decayed.

The diocesan process for canonisation was set in motion in July 1992 by Archbishop Warlock of Liverpool.

References; The Tablet; Fr Ben Lodge



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A HISTORY OF 103 HIGH STREET - WINDSOR AND ETON SADDLERS

DAVID WADDLETON

My trade neighbour in Peascod Street suggested Eton to me. The Saddler wanted to retire, and his son did not want to take on the responsibility for the property. I had become disenchanted with the constant upward lease renewals of my Windsor shop, and sought a freehold that would free me from that anxiety. Purchasing the freehold of the Saddlery in 1988, it soon became apparent why the son did not want it. Much capital was required for restoration. Stepping down from the road, the floorboards rested directly onto the soil underneath. The rebuilding process was an eye opener, rather like opening a dream door into the past. I met an elderly chap who lived on the Eton Wick side of the railway viaduct, who told me the property had a long history of service to horseback riders arriving through Eton on their way to the Royal Court at Windsor Castle, or to carry out trade. He said it consisted of a basic one storey square building. A passageway on one side led to the rear garden. The front of the property had two wooden gates, which were pulled closed at the end of each day, and opened up each morning. It predated Eton College as did a number of nearby surrounding properties including Don Beni, the private house next to it with its kitchen below the High Street, to the Cockpit on one side of the road, and Turks Head down to the corner on the Saddlery side.

Sadly the corner property was allowed to fall into disuse and was demolished to be replaced by the functional brick and concrete building housing Warren Properties today. Horses would be led into the interior, and Saddlers would set to work repairing saddles and bridles etc, whilst a Farrier using the furnace at the rear, worked on replacement horseshoes. The property was conveniently situated opposite the open air market that stood in the space now occupied by Anna Maria's fruit and veg shop, the bakery, now the Eaten Cafe, and the Golden Curry. Wednesdays were decreed by Royal order to be market day, The construction of Eton College led to the raising of the High Street, and a large influx of various building trades who required hostelries and re-victualling services, and the High Street prospered. Rather like today, Eton College had constant building trades working over many years as is well chronicled in the Berkshire History Archives. Another floor was added to the Saddlery. The passageway was covered, with stairs up to the new upper floor. Following a fire at Eton College when no method was available to fight it, Eton College later paid for the establishment of a fire station, next door to the Saddlery, now Eton Town Council.

The Saddlery probably benefited from a contract to keep the Fire brigade's horse tackle in top shape. The upper floor was let out to the Fire brigade crew as a changing or storage area. A family called Nelson was the Saddler at this time, when David Clarke's grandfather became the apprentice Saddler. The Victorian period saw a proper shopfront installed. He acquired the building and the family lived above. His son, George Clarke became the Head Saddler and sold all the required Equestrian and pet goods and handbags etc. George's son, David was sent to learn Saddlery and acquired the Master Saddlery qualification, whilst George acquired the Royal Warrant. The arrival of the motor car caused a decline of demand for the Saddlery, leaving less room for property repair.

My arrival was timely in restoring the fabric of the timbered part of the shop. 18 piles were sunk into a solid foundation in the rear, with 18" thick concrete platform from front to rear supporting the front with a cantilever construction. Despite some initial objection, I removed the farrier's furnace and chimney, having proved the chimney was only visible from the junction of Eton Square with High Street, and I donated the ancient bricks to the National Trust. In January 2023 David Clarke passed away, ending the many centuries of one of Britain's oldest craft skills, with the closure of the leathergoods repairs workshop.

Importation of cheap products from China, killed off the supply businesses of this British industry. Products today are rarely of real leather. Modern technology enables electronic tablets replacing heavy work cases, with Eton boys carrying only a tablet. Those engaged in sporting activities carry large holdalls of man made fibres, which, with luck last the five years of use before being discarded. Many trades came and left the High Street. The Saddlers managed to endure for more centuries than Eton College, possibly assisted by an energy line, also known as a ley line, which runs from Frogmore to Taplow, via the southern section of the High Street, and through the front of 103.





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JOHN COBB - RECORD SETTER

ROSIE MAGGS

When looking through a list of former Eton College students, my eyes were drawn to John Cobb, a racing driver who once raced at Brooklands race track in Surrey and set many land speed records. Having worked at Brooklands Museum for a few years, I was surprised to find this link between one of our most famous figures and Eton.

It should be no surprise that a racing driver at Brooklands would have attended a school such as Eton College - Motor Racing, much like it is now, was an expensive sport. It was far more common to self finance back in the early 20th century - John Cobb had his cars custom made, without the backing of a team or brand. John Cobb came from a family of wealthy fur brokers, and after education at Eton College and Trinity Hall in Cambridge, he began to work with his father. A way to finance his passion of Motor Racing. John Cobb is most famous for driving the Napier-Railton - a car that has a 24-litre aeroplane engine.

The Napier-Railton was created specially for the reason of breaking records. In this car John Cobb broke the ultimate track record of 143.44 mph at Brooklands- which was never to be broken. John Cobb likened lapping the jarring Brooklands Outer Circuit to 'leaning as far out of a high window as one possibly could without falling'.

After the second world war, and the closure of the Brooklands track, John Cobb took to the Bonneville Salt Flats to set a new land speed record of 394.19 miles per hour - which remained unbeaten until 1963. Next John Cobb set his sights on the Water Speed Record. Unfortunately on the 29th September 1952 he was killed whilst attempting to break the world Water Speed Record at Loch Ness at a speed in excess of 200 mph. Strangely he wasn't the first Motor Racing driver to perish attempting this record and he wasn't the last either, Donald Campbell famously also died attempting a water speed record.



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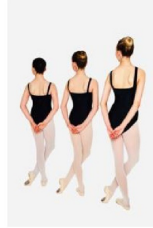
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