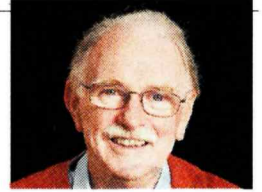


Horsham Society

with Oliver Farley



The sad saga of a derelict cottage

The Groundsman's Cottage is the small group of buildings standing forlornly just over the footbridge across the Arun below St Mary's Parish Church in Horsham.

The larger building was vacated in 2004 and the bungalow behind it was abandoned a few years later. The appalling condition of the structures with rising damp and lack of maintenance prompted Horsham District Council to condemn both. They have stood unused for 14 years, the windows covered in steel plates, leaving the rest to rats, pigeons and moisture penetration.

The location is probably the most attractive in all of Horsham. Descend the Causeway, skirt around the church - pause to view the recently renovated Garden of Remembrance - before crossing the wooden bridge and turning right to the cricket field which is the essence of an English county ground.

A railway borders it, the church steeple rises attentively at one end and a green, wooded hill rises beyond at the other. Yet, here, right in front of you stand these derelict buildings in utter decay, their dilapidation a tangible reproach to



An historic view of Horsham cricket field.

everyone responsible for them. Criticism of their state and suggestions for their amelioration have come and gone over the years to no avail.

In May 2017, for example, the WSCT carried an article with the heading, 'New call for action over 'eyesore cottage blighting town beauty''. Further back in February 2014 a plan was drawn up by Horsham District Council for three houses on the site.

The Horsham Society tried in 2017 to find out exactly who are the interested parties in these buildings and investigations took us back to a long and involved story; the kernel

of it is that the responsible persons are the Cricket Club and Horsham District Council itself. We stop to wonder if the Council would tolerate such neglect by a private landlord for any similar building at a time of such shortfall in housing supply?

Back in the 1980s, HDC bought the whole site and leased it back to the Cricket Club under a 250 year lease, with terms including that any development is to be by joint agreement and any profit is to be shared.

The current decay necessitates the buildings' demolition and the cleared site could support the development of two or

three new cottages. The Cricket Club has few funds of their own so the development requires the assistance of HDC, positively to approve the replacement construction and perhaps passively to secure financial resources. The Horsham Society raised these issues both with the Cricket Club and HDC in 2017 and 2018.

Why has nothing happened? Why does HDC allow itself an indulgent disregard of the norms of property maintenance while demanding better from the public? In whose interest is action delayed? Why will HDC not even give an indication of its ideas for this important site? Might the weary public know even approximately when this ignored asset in a desirable location is at long last going to be transformed for all our benefit? An answer please. Just a simple answer. Please.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone who shares these concerns. For more information, visit the website www.horshamsociety.org or phone 01403 259038.