

## **My volunteering experience as a Heritage Researcher – Roger Cayzer**

“I first became aware of the Horton Chapel project when I read an article about the Epsom based Horton Chapel Arts & Heritage Society determined to see this historic building saved from dereliction. My interest to find out more about volunteering was based on my previous career experience in the built heritage sector and involvement with adaptive reuse conservation projects. I am sympathetic of the conservation philosophy to the ‘management of change’ to redundant historic buildings for new uses.

My role as a volunteer researcher started with a very informative training day at the Surrey History Centre in Woking. No stone was left unturned by the archivist trainer in the detail and information about the Horton cluster, I left this very inspired. I found armed with this knowledge and the variety of experience of those attending broadened my interests into the research I might consider

I recognise the high quality of the asylum buildings and the architecture, so my initial interests were building conservation and purely saving this fine historic building. As part of the training we learnt that design and landscape played a vital part in the welfare and rehabilitation of patients. Many of them were from the very poor housing of industrialised Victorian London and classified as ‘pauper lunatics’, we were warned that many of the terms used might shock us.

I began exploring sources of information and learning more about the rapid development of the asylum movement in the 19th century. I found the sheer number of abandoned asylums throughout the UK highlights this growth. I am keen to find out more about the political driving force behind this movement and design criteria. Being a totally new subject and having worked solely in building conservation, I have found this new voluntary role refreshing and rewarding.”

As well as research training, Roger has taken on a much-valued coordinator role, arranging meetings and communications amongst our group of researchers.