# A blast celebrates 40 years past of Epsom Playhouse

On Friday 19th January, the Band of the **Coldstream Guards** joined residents of Epsom to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the **Epsom Playhouse**.

Led by Director of music Lieutenant Colonel **Stewart Halliday**, the band performed an eclectic mix of music ranging from classic marches to hits from the West End.

As expected the band played with military precision, and there were some virtuous solos from all sections including a stunning performance of 'Victors Tale' from the film 'The Terminal' by principal clarinettist Lance Sergeant **Natalie White**.

The audience was delighted to see the concert organiser and former Senior Director of Music, Household Division, Cllr Dr **Graham Jones** MBE (RA Cuddington) pick up his baton once again to conduct the band, and encouraged the audience to participate in the encore in the 'Radetzky March' by Johann Strauss.

This concert has raised awareness and funds for the Epsom & Ewell Royal British Legion and the Epsom & Ewell Mayor's Charities. With all programme sales being match funded by Barclays Bank.

We hope this will be the start of more world class bands coming to perform at Epsom Playhouse.

The Epsom and Ewell Times is proud to have supported the concert.

Claudia Jones - Reporter

Image courtesy Steven McCormick Photography

Lionel Blackman, who was in the original staff team of the Playhouse when it opened 40 years ago, writes:

40 years have passed since the Epsom Playhouse first opened its doors to professional and amateur performers alike. The Council head-hunted **Graham Stansfield**, a great professional, to kick-start the programme and establish the venue. The first management was in the hands of a then young and dynamic **Robin Hodgkinson**. The theatre came with the development of the **Ashley Centre** by the **Bechtel Corporation**. Originally the main hall's retractable seating allowed the venue to host balls and exhibitions. Today it has fixed and comfortable seating for 406 and a smaller flexible hall space, The Myers, with a seating capacity of 80.

From those early years onward Epsom Playhouse attracted many high-class acts: The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the bands of Humphrey Lyttleton, Kenny Ball and James Last. The Pasadena Roof Orchestra and the Instant Sunshine entertainers came regularly. The world famous Stepan Grappelli once cast his magic violin over a sell-out audience and many many more through to today. Many of the UK's top comedians will spend an evening in Epsom when on tour: Jack Dee, Count Arthur Strong, Harry Hill and many others. It remains the venue for the annual and very popular Christmas Pantomime.

The venue is the permanent home of local amateur talent the Epsom Symphony Orchestra and The Epsom Players among others.

The **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** and all local residents who support the venue can be proud of The Epsom Playhouse and its 40 year roll-call of talent, opportunity and entertainment.

Why not give up an evening of Netflix or YouTube and see some live entertainment at your local venue? Visit www.epsomplayhouse.co.uk

# **18th January 2024**



COUNCIL FINANCES

### Relative relief about Epsom and Ewell's debt?

18 January 2024

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's debt is about average with all 381 United Kingdom local authorities. UK councils owe a combined £97.8bn to lenders, equivalent to £1,455 per resident, as ... READ MORE



NEWS WESTMINSTER

#### Conservatives adopt new contender for Parliament

17 January 2024

Epsom & Ewell Conservative Association has announced that Mhairi Fraser has been selected as the Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Epsom & Ewell to fight the upcoming General Election, with current ... READ MORE



COUNCIL EDUCATION

### Surrey's £1/4 m fines for failing children

17 January 2024

The failings of Surrey County Council's children services has meant the under-fire authority paid more than £250,000 in fines, compensation, and redress payments to families it let down last year. ... READ MORE



COUNCIL HEALTH

#### Surrey team addicted to changing futures

17 January 2024

A former aircraft engineer has spoken out about how his alcohol addiction threatened to wreck his life. Steve Saunders, 66, from Pyrford, Woking says that what started as social drinking ... READ MORE



LOCAL HISTORY NATURE

#### Grate find in Epsom's Millennium Green

15 January 2024

The Woodcote Millennium Green is unique in Surrey. It comprises of an area of 7 acres, bounded by Woodcote Green Road to the north and the Woodcote Estate to the ... READ MORE



COUNCIL HOUSING PLANNING

#### **Councillors belted-up on Green Belt?**

15 January 2024

In a recent closed-door meeting held at the Town Hall, local councillors in the Borough of Epsom and Ewell, convened to apparently deliberate on potential areas for housing development, with a particular ... READ MORE



COMMUNITY EDUCATION

## In the footsteps of the great man?

14 January 2024

The great orator Sir Winston Churchill was born in Blenheim Palace in 1874. 150 years later Epsom's own Blenheim High School became a nursery for the next generation of orators. ... READ MORE



**RUGBY SPORTS** 

# Local rugby team not blinded by Old Alley

14 January 2024

Sutton & Epsom RFC 15 - Old Alleynians 19. Saturday 13th January. On Dulwich Common at the start of the league campaign the Old Alleynians won anexhilarating encounter 29-25 with ... READ MORE



COUNCIL NATURE

## Improving Surrey's rights of way

14 January 2024

Surrey County Council is seeking the views of residents on the county's Rights of Way to help drive improvements. The county council is responsible for around 2,164 miles (3,482 km) ... READ MORE



**COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS** 

## **Dancing for the Wells**

14 January 2024

A sponsored "dancathon" took place on Saturday 6 January to help raise the funds needed to re-openthe community centre. Cllr Bernie Muir (Conservative – Horton Ward) danced for 5 hours, ... READ MORE

# Conservatives adopt new contender for Parliament

Epsom & Ewell Conservative Association has announced that **Mhairi Fraser** has been selected as the Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Epsom & Ewell to fight the upcoming General Election, with current MP, **Chris Grayling** standing down.

Mhairi is an anti-corruption lawyer at an international law firm in the City, specialising in bribery, fraud, money laundering and sanctions, and also undertakes a range of pro-bono work, including representing a Nobel Peace Prize winner facing persecution from a foreign government. Prior to starting her legal career, she spent several years working in Parliament for the Conservatives, and stood as the Conservative candidate in Epsom West in the Surrey County Council elections in 2013. She has previously lived and worked in various other countries, including Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, and Sweden.



Local Conservatives celebrate adoption of Mhairi Fraser as their Epsom and Ewell Parliamentary candidate

Mhairi has been local to Epsom and Ewell since 2007, with her three siblings attending Glyn and Epsom College. While at university, she worked part-time at Leatherhead Food Research and the Marquis of Granby, and has also volunteered for the radio station at Epsom Hospital.

Mhairi is passionate about tackling the mental health crisis and has undertaken various physical challenges – including an 80km non-stop walk across the North and South Downs – to raise money for mental health charities.

On the selection of Mhairi, Chris Grayling MP added "I'm really pleased that my successor has got such local connections and is committed to the area that I have proudly represented for the last 23 years. Mhairi is a very impressive and determined woman and I think if elected, will make an excellent constituency MP".

# In the footsteps of the great man?

The great orator **Sir Winston Churchill** was born in **Blenheim Palace** in 1874. 150 years later **Epsom**'s own **Blenheim High School** became a nursery for the next generation of orators. Twenty-one students from four local schools took part in **Youth Speaks**: A Debate Competition on Thursday 11th January 2024 evening at the Longmead Road school. Many adults run shy of public speaking, so to see and hear students speaking with such confidence and assurance was wonderful.

This local heat of the national competition was once again organised jointly by the Rotary Clubs of Banstead, Epsom and Sutton Nonsuch. Teams from The Beacon School, St Philomena's and Wilsons School took part in the Intermediate section (11 - 13 years old) with teams from Blenheim High School and Wilsons in the Senior (14 to 17) section. Each team consists of a Chairperson, a Proposer and an Opposer.

#### 20th November 2025 Weekly

ISSN 2753-2771

The team from The Beacon School got the Intermediate competition underway debating that 'footballers' income should be taxed at a higher rate'. St Philomena's discussed whether 'social media makes us less social', an important topic that affects many of us today. The team from Wilsons gave us a lively discussion on 'climate change being the most pressing issue facing us'. In her summary, chair of judges Ros Rokison said that the team were outstanding and they were adjudged the winners of the Intermediate competition.

In the senior section both teams provided the large audience, which included Epsom and Ewell Mayor Cllr **Robert Geleit** (Labour Court Ward), with lively debates. The proposal that 'the extra-curriculum is more important than the standard curriculum' was debated by an excellent team from Blenheim High School. The proposer of this motion was particularly persuasive.

Then the proposal 'this house believes extremism is inevitable' was debated by a team from Wilsons. Although they exceeded the time limit of fifteen minutes, all three students were outstanding for content and delivery and they won the senior competition.

The three Rotary clubs thanked the excellent judges Ros Rokison and Ken Rokison. Ros gave each of the twenty-one students useful constructive feedback.

Public speaking is a hard skill to master, but such a useful skill to acquire and Rotary is proud to have given these young people this opportunity.

John Chamberlain.

# **Dancing for the Wells**

A sponsored "dancathon" took place on Saturday 6 January to help raise the funds needed to re-open the community centre.

Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative – Horton Ward) danced for 5 hours, and **Neva Novaky** and **James Baird** danced for 10 hours on Saturday 6 January to help raise funds for the centre. It is still possible to make donations online – CLICK HERE

Speaking at the event, **Chris Grayling** MP said "I would like to congratulate the team who organised this successful event and on the valuable contribution they are making to this community hub. This community centre was rightly saved from being knocked down and it is great to see events like this that raise its profile."

Cllr Bernie Muir said "Community centres play a crucial role as hubs for opportunities to socialise, learn and access key services. They nurture the community spirit, help tackle loneliness and give the youth a positive outlet. Let's get The Wells community centre up and running again!"

Initially closed down by the Borough Council, the community centre was saved after local residents and Cllr Bernie Muir fought to save it. The **Epsom Wells Community Association** now have a long-term lease and are trying to raise the funds needed to help re-furnish it and have it fully functioning again.

A day of dance classes followed by a dance party in the evening, Dancing for the Wells saw classes of ballroom Latin, morris dancing, Jive and salsa. James who was previously a competitive ballroom and Latin dancer and danced with celebrities such as Jennifer Lopez, taught ballroom and Latin with Neva.

Morris dancing was taught by Thames Valley Morris, Jive by Surrey Jive and salsa was taught by Somos Caribe Academy.

"When I saw the two-floor community centre building with its own parking, I could understand why the community had fought so hard to save it and wanted to help re-open it. I would like to thank all those who have generously sponsored us and all those who supported the event on the day." said Neva.

The fundraiser was led by **Neva Novaky** and Cllr Bernie Muir and the team organising it included James Baird, Stuart Carroll, Ben White, Tanya Solomon and Richard Robinson in collaboration with the Epsom Wells Community Association led by Vanessa Merchant. Sponsor's included Lucy Demery, Tina Mountain, Ask Italia and Pari's Beauty Salon.

Related reports:

Epsom's Wells Plan has a hole in it

Wells Centre's Appeal

All's well that ends well for the Wells Centre

# 11th January 2024



BUSINESS TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

#### **Drills in the Hills lawful**

10 January 2024

Oil drilling near the Surrey Hills can proceed after the Court of Appeal dismissed a legal challenge to stop fossil fuel extraction from Dunsfold. Climate emergency campaigners are still hopeful that  $\dots$  READ MORE



COUNCIL HOUSING PLANNING

#### **East Street Development gets Green Light**

9 January 2024

At the Epsom and Ewell Planning Committee meeting of 14th December the proposed demolition of 79-81 East Street and the construction of a part 5, part 6 storey building containing ... READ MORE



COUNCIL HOUSING PLANNING

#### Ruxley Lane development on casting vote

9 January 2024

Properties on Ruxley Lane in Ewell with sizeable gardens will be demolished and replaced by 14 dwellings in two blocks. A tied vote of Councillors, at the Epsom and Ewell ... READ MORE



COUNCIL PLANNING

## Ewell derelict site gets development go-ahead

9 January 2024

14th December 2023 Epsom and Ewell planning committee granted planning permission for a proposed development on the Ewell-By-Pass / London Road site. The application has come before the committee several times before and ... READ MORE



**NEWS** 

### **Neutrality Council for Epsom and Ewell Times**

9 January 2024

In a groundbreaking move towards transparency and community involvement, The Epsom and Ewell Times is proud to announce the establishment of a Neutrality Council. This council, comprising representatives from the major political parties ... READ MORE





**RUGBY SPORTS** 

#### Battersea power ahead of local rugby team

8 January 2024

Battersea Ironsides 38 Sutton & Epsom RFC 29. Saturday 6th January. In September at Rugby Lane Sutton & Epsom belatedly gained their first success of their campaignwith a last gasp ... READ MORE



FOOTBALL SPORTS

# A goal conceded for every year not played

7 January 2024

Epsom & Ewell FC 0-5 Camberley Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 6th January. Our first meeting with Camberley Town for five years ended in a dispiriting home ... READ MORE



ARTS COUNCIL

### **Dorking Halls to get refit**

6 January 2024

The "jewel in Mole Valley's crown" is set to shut over the summer as it undergoes a £3.24million safety refit. Dorking Halls has been recommended for the "minimal" amount of  $\dots$  READ MORE



**COUNCIL HOUSING** 

## Homeless child will have his day in court

6 January 2024

The High Court has granted a judicial review into Surrey County Council's decision not to house a "child in need". In 2019, a 17-year-old who was known to Surrey's social ... READ MORE



**NEWS SPORTS** 

### Something special for Surrey athletes

4 January 2024

Special Olympics Surrey Athletes Gear Up for Inaugural National Winter Games. In an exciting development for Special Olympics Great Britain, the country's leading sports training and competition provider for individuals ... READ MORE



HOUSING NEWS

### Surrey social landlord downgraded by regulator

4 January 2024

Problems with repairs, service charges, complaints, damp and mould, contributed to one of Surrey's largest social housing landlords being downgraded by regulators for failing its tenants. The Regulator of Social ... READ MORE



**COUNCIL NEWS** 

### Surrey chief moves on after 6 years

4 January 2024

Surrey County Council Chief Executive Joanna Killian is to leave the council in March to take up the role of Chief Executive of the Local Government Association (LGA). Joanna has ... READ MORE

# **Neutrality Council for Epsom and Ewell Times**

In a groundbreaking move towards transparency and community involvement, **The Epsom and Ewell Times** is proud to announce the establishment of a Neutrality Council. This council, comprising representatives from the major political parties and the Residents Associations, will play a pivotal role in completing an annual appraisal of the neutrality and quality of the Epsom and Ewell Times.

#### Annual Appraisals for Transparency

The purpose of the Neutrality Council is clear: to provide a representative from each major political party and the RA for the annual appraisal of our newspaper's neutrality and quality. These comprehensive appraisals will be published to ensure transparency and community engagement.

#### Flexible Representation

Each political party has the flexibility to change its representative, allowing for dynamic assessments that capture a range of perspectives. The form of the appraisal, including a section for free-form comments, will be provided to facilitate a thorough and unbiased evaluation.

#### The inaugural representatives are:

Cllr Robert Leach (RA Nonsuch)

Emma Ware (Conservative)

Cllr Alison Kelly (LibDem Stamford)

#### Mark Todd (Labour)

Clockwise top left: Leach, Ware, Kelly, Todd

#### An Independent Process

The Neutrality Council operates independently of The Epsom and Ewell Times, highlighting our commitment to objective reporting. Council members will be approached individually for the first annual appraisal in or about November 2024. If they wish to members may collaborate in joint submissions.

#### Community Trust and Confidence

This innovative institution aims to be a significant contributor to maintaining high standards and bolstering community confidence. By involving representatives from various political backgrounds, we ensure a diversity of perspectives that align with our commitment to being "for the community, by the community."

#### A Step Towards Transparency and Involvement

In an era where local news services are evolving, we strive to maintain a high standard of informative and readable content for our local residents. By submitting to this annual appraisal process, we not only enhance transparency but also actively involve the community in shaping the future of The Epsom and Ewell Times. Your feedback matters, and we believe this initiative will strengthen our bond with the community we proudly serve. Stay tuned for the first annual appraisals from our esteemed Neutrality Council members!

# 4th January 2024



**HEALTH NEWS** 

## Surrey braces for doctors' strike

3 January 2024

Hospitals and health services across Surrey are bracing themselves for the longest "and most difficult" strike in NHS history. Junior doctors, who make up about half of the medical workforce, ... READ MORE



**EDUCATION NEWS** 

#### **Epsom and Ewell schools get new CEO**

3 January 2024

The new chief executive of one of the country's biggest multi academy trusts has a busy schedule in place as he prepares to visit all 42 schools under his watch ... READ MORE



COUNCIL POLICING

#### **Peeling away Police Report**

2 January 2024

Cllr Alex Coley (RA Ruxley) is Chair of the borough's Crime & Disorder committee and Epsom & Ewell'srepresentative on the Surrey Police & Crime Panel, which holds the Police and ... READ MORE



**CRIME NEWS** 

#### Miracle escape in Ewell for octogenarian

30 December 2023

Motorist John Woods, who is lucky to be alive after a pre-Christmas accident, has appealed for public help in tracking down the hit-and-run driver responsible. John, aged 84, of Tolworth, ... READ MORE



ARTS COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

# Conquering disability through art

30 December 2023

Conquest Art CIO was founded in Cheam in 1978 by artist Ursula Hulme MBE and now has 15 groups throughout England The members have a wide range of health problems ... READ MORE



COUNCIL FINANCES HOUSING

#### Underinvestment hits most vulnerable

30 December 2023

The "most vulnerable" people in Woking will be made to find new homes after their extra care facility failed vital fire safety checks and was "all but condemned". Brockhill Extra ... READ MORE



FOOTBALL SPORTS

#### Horley make mincemeat of Epsom and Ewell

30 December 2023

Horley Town 4-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 23rd December 2023. Exactly six years to the day since we last visited Horley Town, we ... READ MORE



COUNCIL FINANCES

## Surrey Borough running up big debts

Runnymede Borough Council has been served formal notice over its "significant debt" and an over reliance on commercial income to support its services. The Department for Levelling up, Housing and ... READ MORE



**COUNCIL FINANCES** 

#### Tory leader pleads with Tory Government

30 December 2023

Taxpayers in Surrey are likely to be hit with a 5 per cent rate rise because the one-year Government funding package won't cover the county council's £13.5 million budget gap, its ... READ MORE



COUNCIL TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

## **Surrey getting greener?**

30 December 2023

Following its declaration of a climate emergency in 2019, Surrey County Council has been on a mission to combat climate change and significantly slash carbon emissions. The council aims to ... READ MORE



COUNCIL HEALTH

## Catalogue of errors - death inquest

30 December 2023

A Woking family has spoken of their "incredibly difficult time" after losing their son saying "there is nothing that can take away the pain". Their comments came after an inquest ... READ MORE



COUNCIL HOUSING PLANNING

#### Green Belt off or relaxed a notch?

21 December 2023

Excitement has been stirred by Michael Gove's announcement 19th December that housing targets are advisory not mandatory. This change may mean a shift in Epsom and Ewell's Draft Local Plan ... READ MORE

# Miracle escape in Ewell for octogenarian

Motorist John Woods, who is lucky to be alive after a pre-Christmas accident, has appealed for public help in tracking down the hit-and-run driver responsible.

John, aged 84, of Tolworth, was driving along the A240 Kingston Road, Ewell, at 10,15am on Wednesday, December 20th, heading to a hospital appointment, when his Ford Focus estate car was side-swiped by a silver-grey vehicle, travelling at speed in the opposite direction, which failed to stop.

It must have come across the central reservation of the road, which is a dual carriageway at this location. John's car rolled several times, ending on its side, and he had to be pulled out by passers-by, thankfully suffering only from shock and minor cuts and bruises, which just required a check-up at Kingston Hospital.

The accident happened near the Aldi store in Kingston Road and now he is hoping that it might have been captured on a CCTV camera or someone might have noted the number of the culprit's car.

John, whose vehicle has had to be written off, is asking anyone who has any information to contact the local Epsom police and quote incident number: SYP20231220-0206.

He said: "I could have been seriously injured or even killed, so it would be good for the driver to be identified before a further accident happens with even more tragic results".

# Conquering disability through art

**Conquest Art CIO** was founded in Cheam in 1978 by artist **Ursula Hulme** MBE and now has 15 groups throughout England The members have a wide range of health problems and disabilities and they are encouraged to work using their imaginations creatively at their own pace. This helps build self- confidence and enables people to relax and make friends with similar interests within the group. No previous artistic experience is needed to join.



'Coronation Celebration' - a picture made as a joint project by the members of the the Stoneleigh Conquest Art Group

In the past an annual exhibition of members' work has been held at Bourne Hall in Ewell. This year the exhibition was held online and in 2024 there are plans to hold it at the Horton Chapel in Epsom.

Each year an annual meeting (accompanied by an exhibition) is held at St. Paul's Church, Northey Avenue, Cheam, and the Charity Coordinator is in the process of setting up a series of meetings on Zoom where the leaders of the various groups can discuss common issues together and share ideas.

Three of the groups are in Epsom and Ewell as follows:-

**Epsom Methodist Church**, Ashley Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5HU 'phone number 01372 723966. The leader is Christine Loizou. Held on Tuesdays from 2pm - 4pm.

**Stoneleigh Methodist Church**, Stoneleigh Crescent, Epsom, Surrey, KT19 ORT. 'phone number 020 8393 4116. The leader is Lesley Lee. Held on Mondays 2pm - 4pm.

**Christ Church** Ewell, Cheam Road, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 1AD 'phone number 07500 339 168 The leader is Steve Deal. Held on Mondays from 1pm - 4pm. Currently this group has no vacancies.

Conquest Art is run by volunteers with the exception of the co-ordinator. Anyone who would like to find out about volunteering or who feels inspired to learn more about Conquest is very welcome to come along to one of the groups to see what happens there.

For further information please see the charity website at www.conguestart.org

 $Top\ image: Caterpillar\ draft\ excluder\ made\ by\ partially\ sighted\ and\ blind\ members\ at\ Epsom\ from\ coloured\ wool\ pom-poms.$