EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Stable Visit Opens Doors on Epsom Downs

8 April 2026



Residents were given a rare glimpse behind the scenes of one of Epsom’s most picturesque racing yards as a community visit brought locals face-to-face with the daily life of a professional training stable.

Around 30 racing enthusiasts gathered on Epsom Downs for an exclusive morning at the yard of trainer George Baker, with the early mist still hanging over the gallops as the visit began. The event was organised by Councillor Steven McCormick, Chair of the Epsom Downs Conservators, with support from fellow Conservator Councillor Kim Spickett.

Guests were welcomed inside the stable gates for a guided tour led by Candida Baker, who offered an engaging insight into the routines, challenges and traditions of the yard. The visit revealed not only the meticulous care given to each horse but also the individual personalities that make up a working stable.

The highlight of the morning came as the group moved out to the fibre sand gallop, where they watched horses thunder past at full speed. Standing trackside, visitors experienced first-hand the power and elegance that define training on the Downs.

The visit also served as a reminder of the deep historical roots of horse racing in Epsom. Councillor Kim Spickett said the morning demonstrated how local traditions continue to be preserved in active use, describing the stables as “living museums” connecting the present to centuries of heritage.

Councillor McCormick added that events like this are about bringing the community closer to what makes Epsom unique, highlighting the importance of maintaining a connection between residents and the Downs.

Further visits are already planned, with the next taking place at Michael Attwater’s yard on April 11th. Spaces are limited and expected to fill quickly, with booking available via Eventbrite. A subsequent visit to Craig Benton’s yard is scheduled for April 18th

Attwater Racing

.

● Date: April 11th

● Location: Attwater Racing, Epsom

● Host: Organised by Cllr Steven McCormick & Cllr Kim Spickett

How to Book:

Spaces are strictly limited and fill up fast. To secure your place for the April 11th visit

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1986793626219?aff=oddtdtcreator

Craig Benton – April 18th

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1986793958212?aff=oddtdtcreator

Contact: Councillor Steven McCormick stevenjmccormick@yahoo.co.uk

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Epsom man runs marathons in memory of sister who died from epilepsy

8 April 2026



Barry Ahearn, 45, is running one of the world's most famous marathons in memory of his younger sister, Abbie, who passed away just three months before her 30th birthday in 2023. Barry is a long-term supporter of Epilepsy Action and has raised almost £23,000 for the charity so far.

Abbie passed away following an epileptic seizure that was so severe, it sent her into cardiac arrest. Last year, Barry completed a total of 27 half-marathons in memory of his sister. "The reason I chose to do 27 half-marathons is because this represents the amount of time Abbie's brain was without oxygen, whilst paramedics tried to revive her.

"According to Epilepsy Action, around 1000 people die from epilepsy-related causes, which is about three people every day. I want to make sure Abbie is not just 'one of the three'."

Since his first big challenge, Barry has completed an ultra-marathon, been a finalist at the BBC Make a Difference awards, and has planned many future challenges, including the London Marathon. His efforts have been recognised by local MP Helen Maguire and the pair completed a Parkrun together last November. Helen has since been working with the charity.

Helen said: "I'm so inspired to see Barry taking on the London marathon to honour his sister Abbie and support Epilepsy Action. Having joined Barry for a recent park tun in support of Epilepsy Action, I know how powerful these efforts can be in bringing people together and raising awareness. I wish him the very best of luck and commend his incredible commitment to this cause."

Barry is determined to continue spreading awareness of epilepsy, and highlighting how serious the condition can be. "Losing my sister has been the worst experience of my life. Abbie was kind compassionate, attentive and loyal. She was so much fun to be around, always making jokes and playing pranks. She brightened any room she walked into with her smile and is sorely missed by everyone who knew and loved her.

"Many people think epilepsy is just about 'seizures', when in reality there's so much more that goes along with the condition. Epilepsy takes away people's independence, stops them driving, can be very socially isolating and some of the medications have really bad side effects, including extreme fatigue and mood swings. Abbie had only been diagnosed with epilepsy six weeks before passing away, but this is the reality she could've been living with if she was still here, and I know she'd want me to do something about that.

"I want her passing to mean something, to help make a difference, not only by raising money to go towards research, but also to raise awareness of how serious this condition is."

"After the London Marathon, I'm already planning my next big challenge. I'm not quite set on what I want to do, but I think it might involve something like doubling the 27 halves…."

Philippa Cartwright, director of fundraising at Epilepsy Action, said: "We're honoured to have Barry as one of our 2026 London Marathon runners. The challenges he has taken on over these past couple of years have been incredible, and we're so grateful for his ongoing support.

"Barry has shown extraordinary resilience and determination since losing his sister, choosing to turn the hardest experience of his life, into something that will help so many others. The money he has raised will go directly towards helping Epilepsy Action to continually campaign for better care for people with epilepsy across the country, and funding the frontline services the charity provides including its helpline, support groups and one-to-to one support.

"Epilepsy Action would like to say a big thank you to Barry and we are wishing him and all of our runners the best of luck – we are sure his sister Abbie would be so proud."

Epilepsy affects around one in every 100 people in the UK and around 80 are diagnosed every day. Epilepsy Action is committed to improving the lives of people with epilepsy, by campaigning for better services and raising awareness of the condition. The charity provides a national network of support groups, with expert advice available on its freephone helpline 0808 800 5050 and online at www.epilepsy.org.uk.

Epilepsy Action

Related reports

Epsom author shares personal epilepsy journey amid town's historic link to the condition

Epsom Runner's Tribute to Sister Raises Over £22,000 for Epilepsy Charity

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2nd April 2026

8 April 2026

Community Education

Local girl made good. The rise of NESCOT’s Julie Kapsalis



31 March 2026

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Business Council Planning

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30 March 2026

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30 March 2026

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Penalty Drama Caps Epsom Salts’ Triumph



30 March 2026

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Council Policing Transport

Box Hill’s Zig Zag Road Leads to Straight Ban on Antisocial Riding



29 March 2026

Motorcyclists near Box Hill are being targeted despite the “vast majority” who visit the Surrey beauty spot being “considerate people who behave respectfully”. A Public Spaces Protection Order is being … Read More

Community Health Letters

Local Councillors react to hospital merger idea



29 March 2026

From Councillors Eber Kington (RA) and Steven McCormick (RA) Dear Editor, Your article of 26th March exposing the plans by Epsom and St Helier University Hospital Trust to merge with St … Read More

Community Council Sports

Epsom’s Rainbow Centre former operators drive up Leatherhead Leisure Centre visitor numbers



29 March 2026

BBC reports: Visitor numbers are booming at Leatherhead Leisure Centre on the back of major investment to rebuild the site’s reputation, staffing, and facilities. GLL Leisure (former Rainbow Centre contractors) … Read More

Business Education Transport

Surrey University designs new long-life battery



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A new battery design that could significantly extend the range of electric vehicles and the lifespan of portable electronics has been developed by researchers at the University of Surrey’s Advanced Technology Institute … Read More

Arts Culture

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Epsom Chamber Choir spring bridge across the centuries



28 March 2026

What a glorious evening of music there was to be enjoyed last Saturday night (21st March) in St Martin’s Church, Epsom, with the Epsom Chamber Choir accompanied by Affinity Chamber … Read More

Council Education

£200 sports bursary launched for Epsom & Ewell teenagers



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Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has launched a new bursary scheme aimed at helping young people overcome financial barriers to taking part in sport. The “Access to Activity” bursary offers … Read More

Council Social care

Carers “left with nowhere to turn” after Surrey cuts support services?



27 March 2026

Charity warns of risks to 1,500 carers as safety net withdrawn A Surrey charity has warned that unpaid carers across the county are being pushed “beyond breaking point” following the … Read More

Community Foodbank

Energy debt fears rise as Epsom’s Good Company’s support steps up



27 March 2026

Rising energy costs could push more households into debt this year, with local support services warning of growing pressure on low-income families. Good Company (Surrey), which runs the Epsom & … Read More

Council Elections

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Epsom & Ewell voters urged to prepare for historic Surrey elections



26 March 2026

Residents in Epsom & Ewell are being urged to “get ready to vote” ahead of major local government elections on Thursday 7 May 2026, which will shape how the borough … Read More



Health News

Epsom Hospital to “merge” with St Georges in Tooting?

26 March 2026

A major NHS reorganisation affecting Epsom residents appears to have been approved behind closed doors, with no public announcement or consultation to date. Information shared with the Epsom and Ewell … Read More

Business News

Mayor opens Primark in Epsom



26 March 2026

Primark has opened a major new store in Epsom’s Ashley Centre, drawing large crowds on its first day and appearing to confirm earlier predictions by the Epsom and Ewell Times … Read More



Business Education News

Fennies Epsom Continues To Support Local Families As Demand For Quality Childcare Grows

23 March 2026

Established Fennies nursery on 1a Hook Road, Epsom, KT19 8TH, strengthens its role in the community while a new Fennies setting opens nearby in Cheam. For families across Epsom, access … Read More

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Local Councillors react to hospital merger idea

8 April 2026



From Councillors Eber Kington (RA) and Steven McCormick (RA)

Dear Editor,

Your article of 26th March exposing the plans by Epsom and St Helier University Hospital Trust to merge with St George's Hospital Trust is most welcome. However, the fact that the decision was taken behind closed doors three weeks ago, without public comment, with no reference on the ESHUHT website, and clearly no intention to engage with residents, is quite alarming.

The stated position, that the Trusts "have not agreed to merge" but will "submit a strategic case for merger to NHS England, asking them to approve developing a full business case" is hard to believe. Of course there is nothing fully worked up, but even a strategic case will have been developed by reviewing and testing options for cost savings such as merging services in single sites or in just two rather than three.

And the fact that patients and residents generally were the last to know of these plans, and only through the press, does not augur well if NHS England does agree that the Trusts can develop a full business case. But if that is what is to happen, the ESHUHT Board must be open from the start about what is within scope of any plan and what is not.

We also note that our own MP was aware of the developing proposal yet also decided not let residents know. She suggests that her priority is to ensure that residents in the Trust area "continue to receive the high-quality healthcare they deserve." However, we believe that most residents in Epsom and Ewell will also want reassurance that those key services are not stripped out of Epsom Hospital and located at St Helier and far away St George's Hospital.

Clearly, the state of the Hospitals' finances is behind this decision, as Epsom, St Helier and St George's Hospitals have all been set targets to clear debts, and Government support is due to be withdrawn over the next three years. However, the need to find ways to deliver current and new services in a more efficient way does not have to be done in secret. It can, and must, be an open process that encourages patients, members of staff, and residents to be part of the work that shapes their hospital services for years to come. And our residents need to know right now, that greater openness will be the case.

Yours

County Councillor Eber Kington and County Councillor Steven McCormick

Related report:
Epsom Hospital to "merge" with St Georges in Tooting?

Epsom Chamber Choir spring bridge across the centuries

8 April 2026



What a glorious evening of music there was to be enjoyed last Saturday night (21st March) in St Martin's Church, Epsom, with the Epsom Chamber Choir accompanied by Affinity Chamber Orchestra. There were two apparently diverse works for the concert, one in each half, having no obvious connection to each other and yet surprisingly intertwined. The conductor was the fine musician Jack Apperley.

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A Time to Dance by Alec Roth, performed after the interval, was composed with the idea of being heard alongside the work which opened the concert, Bach's Magnificat. Alec Roth had thought to use very similar instrumental sections as Bach intended when composing the Magnificat, Mary's song of praise to God on learning that she will bear the Messiah. Affinity Chamber Orchestra were therefore the perfect accompaniment to the Chamber Choir for both works, although A Time to Dance added some unusual percussion instead of the timpani for Bach's Magnificat.

The programme notes were very thorough and helpful, reminding the listener of the rich history of Bach's Magnificat and providing background to the composition of the modern work, A Time to Dance. The Choir and Orchestra gave an incredibly uplifting rendering of Bach's Magnificat, a joy to hear with its choral drama and fine arias.

Throughout the concert, the sound was consistently glorious, with impressively clear enunciation from the Choir and very sensitive accompaniment by the Orchestra. The acoustics of St Martin's Church were ideally suited to the extensive dynamic range of both singers and instrumentalists, as well as to the style of both the Magnificat and the modern Roth composition.

The whole concert showcased the exceptional talents of the Chamber Choir singers, as members took all the solos throughout. This followed Bach's original intention when composing the Magnificat and was mirrored beautifully in the storytelling of A Time to Dance. This modern composition proved a tuneful delight, taking the listener through movements depicting Time, the Seasons, times of day, Love and Dance. These themes were inspired by biblical text from Ecclesiastes, chapter 3, alongside both modern and historic poetry used as settings for the various movements.

The audience was treated to an ever-changing variety of words and music for Sunrise, a Spring Morning, Summer Noon, Autumn Evening and Winter Night. After the delights of Spring, with soloists and Choir beginning a journey of joyful reawakening and the encouragement to dance, Summer Noon conveyed a sense of drowsy heat and gently swaying countryside, including text from William Blake's *The Fly*. The Choir and soloists vividly captured the atmosphere of high summer.

In "Humdrum" during Part III, Autumn Evening, the Choir revelled in the fun of song and dance, escaping the daily routine of life. This movement was brought to life by percussive elements including washboard, dinner gong and desk bell. Moving into Winter Night, more delicate musical textures emerged before "A Glee for Winter" burst forth, bringing merriment and evoking love and laughter, with dance once again at its heart.

The final movement, Afterdance: Proper Exercise, saw the Choir put down their scores to sing and clap with visible joy and enthusiasm. The whole work was magnificently performed by both Orchestra and Choir, expressing a vivid sense of dance throughout.

This was an exceptional concert of the highest quality and clearly much appreciated by the audience.

Future concert dates for Epsom Chamber Choir are 27 June, 7 November and 12 December at St Martin's Church, Epsom.

Elizabeth Hargrave

Photo credit: Paul McCan

26th March 2026 weekly

8 April 2026

Council Housing Planning

Oxshott Uproar as 800 Object to Green Belt Housing Plan



23 March 2026

More than 800 objections later, a controversial plan for 250 new homes on green belt land in Oxshott is set to be decided by a planning committee, and the recommendation … Read More

Football Sports

Epsom Stung by Late Blow as Salts Denied by Handball Drama

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23 March 2026

Epsom & Ewell FC 2 – Fleet Town FC 3. Combined Counties Premier League. Saturday 21st March. Easy as HGV Stadium. The Salts were back in action for the fourth … Read More

Arts Education News

Epsom’s UCA hosts delegation from Nigeria



23 March 2026

A new Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between University for the Creative Arts (UCA), Nigeria’s Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy and the National Council … Read More

Arts Culture

Epsom & Ewell Silver Band Delivers Strong Performance at 2026 Regional Championships



23 March 2026

STEVENAGE, March 21, 2026 — The Epsom & Ewell Silver Band took to the stage today at the Gordon Craig Theatre for the London & Southern Counties Regional Brass Band … Read More

Community Nature Volunteers

Epsom and Ewell countryside volunteers face uncertain times



23 March 2026

Epsom and Ewell’s army of countryside volunteers faces uncertain times as responsibility for protecting the borough’s wildlife habitats shifts next year to a new East Surrey council. The fear is … Read More

Community Council News

Epsom on road to twin with world-famous Ukraine town of Bucha

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21 March 2026

BBC reports: Epsom and Ewell has taken the first step towards twinning with a Ukrainian town. Epsom & Ewell councillors have backed plans to explore a twinning link with the … Read More

Council Finances

Woking bankruptcy sell off



21 March 2026

Woking Borough Council is selling off its flagship regeneration projects – including the town’s new Hilton Hotel and shopping centres to private investors to claw back public money – branded … Read More

Council Council constitution

Guildford goes a different way to Epsom with Parish Council on a narrow margin



21 March 2026

Guildford Borough Council has approved plans for a new town council despite warnings from its own leader that the move could hit the borough’s most financially disadvantaged residents hardest. Council … Read More

Council Environment Nature

Rare moth rediscovery secures conservation status for Epsom’s Manor Open Space



21 March 2026

Manor Open Space in Epsom has been designated a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), recognising its ecological value and role in supporting wildlife across the borough. The designation, made … Read More

Arts Culture

An evening song preludes a Mass and a Requiem by Epsom

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Choral Society



20 March 2026

This concert at St Martin’s Church, Epsom, was another milestone in the life of one of the town’s cultural jewels, its Choral Society. The German Requiem by Johannes Brahms was … Read More

Sports

Junior golf booming at Epsom’s Horton Golf Park as membership tops 300



20 March 2026

Junior golf is thriving in Epsom, with Horton Golf Park announcing that its junior membership has now surpassed 300 young players. The milestone reflects a steady rise in participation among … Read More

Council Education Transport

Ewell school goes safe streets ahead



20 March 2026

Danetree Primary School in Ewell is set to benefit from a School Street from May 2026, aimed at reducing air pollution and improving road safety during the busiest times of … Read More

Council Local History News

Epsom’s Cllr McCormick gives Middlesex revival the irregular iambic treatment



20 March 2026

Historic nostalgia could be upheld in naming a new Surrey council next year. Surrey County Council has backed a symbolic call to recognise Middlesex in the name of a future … Read More

Community Health

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Epsom Hospital to share new surgery robot



20 March 2026

A patient has spoken of his gratitude to the NHS after he received life-saving robotic surgery – as hundreds more patients across London and Surrey are set to access the … Read More

Council Council constitution

Surrey leaders promise smooth transition to unitaries

19 March 2026

On Friday 13 March, the East and West Surrey Joint Committees met to continue preparations for the transition to new unitary councils ahead of “vesting day” on 1 April 2027. … Read More

Council Westminster

Surrey County Council death throes debate



19 March 2026

Tensions boiled over in the council chamber as outgoing Surrey County Council leader Conservative Cllr Tim Oliver defended his administration and staff against accusations from local MPs and opposition councillors. … Read More

Council News Westminster

Local LibDem leader slams Helen Maguire MP in shock resignation



19 March 2026

In a shock development in the politics of Epsom and Ewell Liberal Democrat Council Group Leader Cllr James Lawrence (College Ward) has resigned from his Party and joined the growing … Read More

Council Transport

New moped bays introduced to tackle pavement parking in

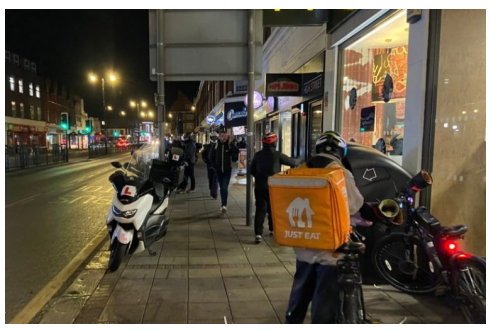
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Epsom High Street



19 March 2026

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have established new moped-only parking spaces outside the Town Hall in a bid to combat pavement parking on Epsom High Street. The issue of delivery … Read More

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Fennies Epsom Continues To Support Local Families As Demand For Quality Childcare Grows

8 April 2026



Established Fennies nursery on 1a Hook Road, Epsom, KT19 8TH, strengthens its role in the community while a new Fennies setting opens nearby in Cheam.

For families across Epsom, access to reliable, high-quality Early Years education remains one of the most important decisions in the early stages of parenthood. At Fennies Epsom, Hook Road, that responsibility is one the team takes seriously. Over recent years, the nursery has become a familiar and trusted presence within the local community, supporting working parents while providing a nurturing environment where children can build confidence and a strong foundation for learning.



Situated on Hook Road, the nursery is designed to nurture every stage of a child’s development. Children aged three months to five years can explore carefully curated rooms, including:

· Two Explorers rooms, with dedicated milk kitchen and nappy change areas
· One Discoverers Room designed to encourage independence
· One Creators room with dedicated reading areas

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· One Inventors room with free-flow garden access
· A dedicated studio space for young chefs and budding artists to explore
· A vibrant outdoor space that encourages curiosity and creativity

Fennies Epsom follows a child-led approach, giving children the freedom to explore their interests while building independence and essential life skills. Families are invited to make the most of communal spaces such as the Parent Room, while practical touches like on-site buggy parking make everyday routines easier.

At the heart of the nursery's approach is a carefully considered curriculum designed to reflect both the needs of modern families and the curiosity of young children. Practitioners at Fennies Epsom, Hook Road focus on creating meaningful learning experiences that feel engaging and relevant, balancing structured opportunities with space for children to explore their own interests. The emphasis is on nurturing adaptable, confident individuals who feel secure in their environment and excited about learning.

"Blending child-led exploration with purposeful guidance, the curriculum celebrates imagination, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and STEM-inspired discovery," said Eleanor Richfield, Head of Education at Fennies. "It empowers children to communicate confidently and adapt to change, supporting children to enjoy the now whilst developing the lifelong skills they need to thrive."

Fennies Nurseries is also proud to announce the opening of its newest setting just 15 minutes down the road in Cheam. Fennies Cheam marks the group's 25th nursery, continuing more than three decades of delivering outstanding early learning experiences across London, Surrey, Kent, Middlesex and Berkshire.

With its passionate team, inspiring spaces and a focus on each child's individual journey, Fennies Cheam is ready to help families in the area feel supported and inspired every day. Located at 91 Worcester Road, Sutton, SM2 6QL, the nursery is accessible for busy, commuting parents.

"The garden at Fennies Cheam is amazing, and so much natural light fills the building," said Emma Carrington, Nursery Manager at Fennies Cheam. "We have lots of new resources, and the dedicated studio space will be a fantastic learning environment for the children."

To learn more about Fennies Cheam, book a tour, or register your interest by contacting enquiries@fennies.com.

Sponsored article Fennies Nurseries

Photo: Fennies Nursery in Hook Road Epsom

Epsom & Ewell Silver Band Delivers Strong Performance at 2026 Regional Championships

8 April 2026



STEVENAGE, March 21, 2026 — The Epsom & Ewell Silver Band took to the stage today at the Gordon Craig Theatre for the London & Southern Counties Regional Brass Band Championships, competing in the highly competitive First Section.

Under the expert baton of Musical Director Tariq Ahmed, the band delivered a polished performance of this year's set work, Variations on Was Lebet by Andrew Wainwright.

2026 First Section Results

The adjudicators, David Hirst and Steven Mead, faced a difficult task in a field of 14 high-quality bands. While Fulham Brass and the East of England Co-op Band secured the top two spots to qualify for the National Finals, Epsom & Ewell earned a respectable placing, further cementing their status in the section.

Looking Ahead

The result marks another year of solid progress for the band. Speaking after the results, members expressed pride in the performance, noting the significant step up in technical demands this year.

Fans won't have to wait long to hear the band again; they are already preparing for their popular Summer Concert in the Walled Garden, scheduled for July 12th at the Old Moat Garden Centre.

Epsom & Ewell Silver Band website – www.eesb.org.uk

Steven McCormick

Photo credit – the author

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Epsom and Ewell countryside volunteers face uncertain times

8 April 2026



Epsom and Ewell's army of countryside volunteers faces uncertain times as responsibility for protecting the borough's wildlife habitats shifts next year to a new East Surrey council. The fear is that nature conservation will slide down the priority list during the upheaval of local government reform.

Dozens of local people turn out in all weathers to help nature thrive in places such as Epsom Common, Horton Country Park and on the Hogsmill, an internationally rare chalk stream where water voles were reintroduced last year. More than 40 percent of the borough is open space for the public and visitors to enjoy, or other green belt land. Their work varies widely from opening up woodland glades and removing invasive plants to tending orchards and laying woodchip footpaths. Caring for juniper bushes, which are critically declining in Britain, is an important task on the Epsom Downs.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council leads much of this conservation work, supervising the volunteers and organising contractors to carry out bigger jobs. However, it is due for abolition under a major shakeup of local government when East Surrey takes over in April 2027. Little is known about how the countryside, which provided residents with uncrowded space to exercise and enjoy nature during the Covid pandemic, will be managed in future. Work on the transfer of powers has only just begun, and where the new council will be based has yet to be decided.

Local people caring for local nature

Amid the uncertainty, volunteers are anxious to ensure that local people keep caring for local nature, and that residents retain ready access to their woods, wildflower meadows and riverbanks. "To preserve what we've got takes a lot of work, and in Epsom and Ewell it's largely done by volunteers. My concern is it continues to get done," said David Dixon, a volunteer for the past 10 years. "Volunteers are not going to travel 20 miles to do it, they want to do it locally. The worry is that it'll be subsumed into some sort of central authority who won't know the local areas, who won't really know the tasks that are needed," said Dixon, one of a roughly 10-strong group led by the Council's Countryside Team that meets every Thursday.

Volunteers in various countryside groups collectively work about 8,800 hours a year in the borough. Their task is to maintain and improve the biodiversity of local sites which are home to the likes of kingfishers, endangered great crested newts and a rare population of all five UK species of hairstreak butterfly. Native roe deer also roam, peregrine falcons visit from a nearby nest and cuckoos are once again heard, all within a stone's throw of the town centre.

Risks and opportunities

The aggregate hours figure has been collated by Dave King, who chairs the Epsom Common Association (ECA), and Geoff Delamere, a countryside volunteer since 2018. In a briefing paper they detail the risks and opportunities raised by the reform which will replace Surrey's two levels of local government with a single tier. https://bit.ly/4bvgZnR

At a time when council budgets are under heavy strain those 8,800 hours equate notionally to almost £112,000 worth of voluntary labour a year, based on the National Living Wage rate. Volunteer work keeps down the cost of managing the borough's two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), five Local Nature Reserves and six ancient woodlands. "We're pretty good value for money," said King. The ECA's EcoVols group works on the Common two days a month for much of the year, with 10–15 volunteers typically turning out.

Epsom and Ewell's professional countryside officers are paid from the Council budget but they amount to just three full time equivalent staff. Most of the work they lead is funded externally, largely from UK government countryside stewardship schemes. When they aren't working outdoors, Council officers may be at a computer applying for such funding or environmental grants from other sources.

A vision for nature

The modest cost of countryside management means it risks being overshadowed by much bigger budget items that East Surrey will take over. "I fear that wildlife and nature reserves may be well down the priority list," said King. "We need people who understand the site, have a vision for the site." ECA volunteers also make charcoal for sale and check the welfare of cattle that graze the Common in the summer.

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A new body, East Surrey Joint Committee, is overseeing the transition and aims to ensure all services move smoothly into the new arrangement. It met for the first time only in January and will work until voters elect East Surrey councillors on May 7. East Surrey will then act as a shadow authority until April 1 next year when it takes over, with the borough continuing to run services in the meantime. Ultimately, decisions about how countryside management, including volunteering, are funded and run will be made by the East Surrey Council.

Countryside management is not the only thing surrounded by uncertainty. Arrangements have to be made for the wide range of services currently provided by Surrey's 11 borough and district councils, all of which will be subsumed into either West or East Surrey.

Knowledge and expertise

Epsom and Ewell has a large body of other volunteers working in everything from litterpicking to helping run Bourne Hall Museum. Council leader Hannah Dalton, who sits on the East Surrey Joint Committee, did not respond to a request for comment. However, Residents' Association councillor Liz Frost, chair of the borough's Environment Committee, expressed gratitude for countryside volunteers. "Their essential work, local knowledge and expertise help ensure that our residents and visitors can enjoy easy access to nature and open spaces across the borough," she said in a statement.

Such work relies on council leadership and support. The Thursday group attended by Dixon and Delamere is run directly by the Epsom and Ewell Countryside Team, which draws up a work programme, provides equipment and supervises the volunteers. The group typically cuts back undergrowth to allow veteran trees – some more than 300 years old – space to flourish. In the spring they erect electric fencing so that cattle, including the gentle "Belties" – Belted Galloways marked by broad white stripes around their bellies – can graze and help maintain habitats.

Feargal Sharkey support

At other times volunteers uproot Himalayan balsam, a colourful but highly invasive Victorian import which chokes native vegetation along many of Britain's rivers, including the Hogsmill. Volunteers also control ragwort in Nonsuch Park, allowing grassland to be mown for hay, which must be free of the plant as it is harmful to horses. The park has its own volunteer team, the Nonsuch Voles.

Such work is hard but rewarding. "It's the most enjoyable 'job' I've had," said Delamere. "It's outdoors and good exercise, as well as being useful for the environment and biodiversity." He added that companionship and learning new skills are key benefits, along with positive comments from passers-by. "Long may this mix of professionals and volunteers continue."

On Epsom Common, the Council Countryside Team agrees a conservation programme for the independently-run EcoVols to carry out. "They do a lot for us," said King, noting work such as scrub clearance and chainsaw operations. "We cost about a pound per volunteer hour," he added.

Skylarks and kestrels

Other groups operate across wider areas including Epsom and Ewell. The Lower Mole Partnership works throughout northeast Surrey and neighbouring Kingston, while the Surrey Wildlife Trust manages Priest Hill where skylarks and kestrels are commonly seen. The Woodland Trust owns Langley Vale Wood, and the South East Rivers Trust is active on the Hogsmill. Local volunteer groups also include the Epsom and Ewell Tree Advisory Board and the Friends of Horton Country Park.

Much of this work is not discretionary. Environmental legislation requires biodiversity to be enhanced, so these efforts must continue into the future. "Volunteers are going to have to work locally," said Dixon. "And the people who decide what has to be done are going to have to have a good local knowledge."

David Stamp is a member of the Epsom and Ewell Borough Council countryside volunteers group.

Photo: A volunteer clears undergrowth in Horton Country Park

Related reports:

Epsom Common 19th Green Flag Award

Epsom Common Association: A History of Conservation and Biodiversity

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An evening song preludes a Mass and a Requiem by Epsom Choral Society

8 April 2026

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EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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This concert at St Martin's Church, Epsom, was another milestone in the life of one of the town's cultural jewels, its Choral Society. The German Requiem by Johannes Brahms was coupled with two pieces by his contemporary and friend Josef Rheinberger – *Abendlied* and the *Mass in E Flat* – providing an effective and well-matched prelude to the main work.

Rheinberger's *Abendlied*, composed when he was just fifteen (and later revised), brought a warm six-part choral texture well suited to the spacious acoustic of St Martin's. The performance was well controlled, with clear communication between choir and conductor. His *Mass for Double Choir* (1878), rooted in Renaissance tradition but shaped by Romantic language, offered greater contrasts of dynamics and texture. These were generally well realised, though from some positions the antiphonal effect of the two choirs was less distinct. The *Gloria* made a strong impact with tight ensemble in the louder passages, while the restrained drama of the *et sepultus est* in the *Credo* was sensitively handled. The confident entries of the *Sanctus* contrasted effectively with the quieter close of the *Benedictus*, and the atmospheric *Agnus Dei* provided a fitting conclusion to a thoughtful performance of this substantial work.

Brahms's *German Requiem* is not a liturgical setting but a deeply personal reflection on remembrance. Taking years to complete, it stands as a work of remarkable craftsmanship and cohesion. Here it was performed using Iain Farrington's seven-part accompaniment for three strings, three wind and piano. This arrangement proved effective, avoiding the balance challenges of a full orchestra, though at times the upper strings felt slightly underpowered.

The choir was central to the performance and rose impressively to the challenge. From the opening movement, there was a strong sense of confidence, contrast and atmosphere. The ensemble supported the second movement effectively, with particularly dramatic forte and fortissimo passages, although the fugal writing was not always fully clear.

Baritone soloist Dominic Sedgewick delivered a confident and commanding account in the third movement, matched by accurate and responsive choral singing in demanding passages. While some contrapuntal textures lacked clarity, the movement concluded strongly. The well-known fourth movement was rendered with tenderness, its fugal sections particularly successful, alongside Brahms's shifting rhythmic patterns.

Soprano Elizabeth Findon was equally impressive in the fifth movement, her clarity and projection standing out. Balance across the ensemble was generally good, though harder to assess from nearer seating positions. The sixth movement maintained a strong tempo and opened effectively, building to a final section of conviction and a powerful conclusion.

The final movement began with excellent balance, including a particularly effective passage pairing soprano/alto with tenor/bass lines. The closing pages sustained the expressive intensity that characterised the performance throughout. This was a demanding work, requiring stamina and commitment, both of which were clearly evident. Epsom Choral Society can be proud of a performance that amounted to a genuine triumph, with the enthusiasm of its members and an influx of new singers pointing to a strong future.

Peter Lutton

*Evening song

Epsom Hospital to share new surgery robot

8 April 2026



A patient has spoken of his gratitude to the NHS after he received life-saving robotic surgery – as hundreds more patients across London and Surrey are set to access the cutting-edge technology.

Paul Wickens, who lives in St Mary's Bay in Kent, was one of the first heart disease patients at St George's Hospital in Tooting to receive robotic-assisted surgery – an innovative procedure minimising recovery time for heart operation patients. Care worker Paul had lived with the condition for 24 years and his symptoms had deteriorated in recent years, leaving him "tearful" over what this could mean for his health.

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The 66-year-old support worker was given new hope when he had a robotic coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) surgery in December 2025 – one of the first of its kind at the hospital group, one of only three units in London who can perform the innovative procedure. His surgery was assisted by one of two da Vinci surgical robots – one of the most advanced systems of its kind – at St George's, which have resulted in fewer complications for patients, lower readmission rates and shorter length of stays across other specialities.

Now, more patients like Paul across Surrey and London are set to benefit from a brand new da Vinci Xi surgical system now at Epsom Hospital, enabling surgeons to carry out more life-saving procedures on hundreds of patients every year.

Paul said: "I didn't really understand what robotic surgery involved, but I felt very trusting of the surgical team and was immediately put at ease. I was in a little pain afterwards, although it was managed well with medication, and I was able to talk to my family that afternoon."

Traditional surgery for coronary artery bypasses typically involves an incision in the middle of the chest (sternum) with multiple bypass grafts. Robotic-assisted surgery is less invasive, using small incisions and a high-definition 3D camera to allow greater precision. This results in less damage to surrounding tissue, reduced blood loss and lower levels of post-operative pain.

Paul returned home within four days rather than the week in hospital that is typically expected. He is planning on returning to his role in the care sector next month, where he has worked for the past thirty years. He added: "I am so grateful and lucky to be born in a time when such technology has come to the fore and I can't thank the team enough – my symptoms have gone and I can move on with my life."

Dr Richard Jennings, Group Chief Medical Officer for St George's, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group, said: "We are embracing the latest technologies including robotic-assisted surgery, to improve care for thousands of patients – cutting waiting times, speeding up recovery and getting patients home sooner. Paul is one of many patients we expect to treat with robotic-assisted surgery in the coming years, in a major step forward for our hospitals. I'm very pleased that Paul is doing so well and I am proud of the way our teams are working together every day to provide innovative, safe and up-to-date care to our patients."

The debut cardiac procedure is leading the way in the hospital group's commitment to using innovation to improve patient outcomes and recovery times. The new robotic da Vinci system, part funded by Epsom and St Helier Hospitals Charity, will be shared by surgical teams from Epsom and St Helier and St George's hospitals – with the first patients being treated this week.

It will be used for a range of procedures including general surgery, colorectal cancer surgery, and gynaecological surgery as well as urology and ENT (ear, nose and throat) procedures. It is expected to treat around 300 patients in the first year, rising to over 550 annually as more surgeons complete specialist training.

Molly Simpson, Head of Charity and Fundraising for Epsom and St Helier Hospitals Charity said: "We're incredibly proud to help more local people access cutting-edge surgery by part-funding the new surgical robot at Epsom Hospital. Thanks to our generous donors and fundraisers, we're able to make every penny count and deliver real benefits for patients."

St George's, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group

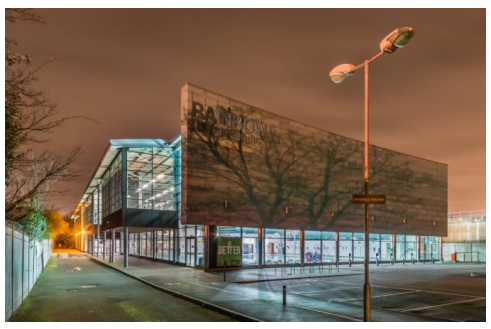
Paul Wickens – robot op patient

19th March 2026

8 April 2026

Council Council constitution Finances

Epsom and Ewell Council transparency row erupts as council backs publication of urgent decisions



17 March 2026

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has agreed to improve transparency over so-called "urgent decisions" following a heated debate that revisited the controversy surrounding the Rainbow Centre and allegations of secrecy … Read More

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Epsom and Ewell Council put in proportion

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17 March 2026

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has approved changes to the political balance of its committees following further shifts in councillor allegiances, amid continuing tensions within the ruling Residents' Association group. … Read More

Council Finances

Epsom's empty and second homes face local tax increases



17 March 2026

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has approved a 2.98% increase in its share of Council Tax for 2026/27, alongside new measures to penalise empty properties and second homes, but not … Read More

Business Council

Surrey-wide plan aims to get thousands back into work



17 March 2026

A cross-county plan to bring thousands of people back into employment in Surrey has received backing from Surrey County Council and government ministers. The Get Surrey Working Plan brings together … Read More

Environment News

Ash dieback keeps Thames island closed



17 March 2026

The Environment Agency has warned against any planned protests over the closure of a Surrey riverside island and announced a public engagement event to update residents on safety work there. … Read More

Business Council

Support programme launched to help Surrey's high streets

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Football Sports

Epsom and Ewell FC’s first home game of 2026 drawn



16 March 2026

Epsom & Ewell FC 0 v Camberley Town FC 0 14th March, Chalky Lane, Chessington Combined Counties Premier League We finally saw our first home game of 2026 at Chalky … Read More

Community Education Health

The big child smartphone use debate starts in Surrey



16 March 2026

Parents are facing “no bigger issue” than the impact of smartphones and social media on their children, says Godalming and Ash MP Jeremy Hunt. The former chancellor told a public … Read More

Community Council

Karl Nicholas honoured with Active Citizen Award at Borough Civic Reception



14 March 2026

A long-serving community volunteer whose work spans youth organisations, music, policing and education has been honoured with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council’s Active Citizen Award at the Mayor’s Annual Civic … Read More

Council Council constitution News

Sun sets on Residents’ Associations’ cherished Parishes for Epsom and Ewell

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13 March 2026

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Arts Culture

Epsom resident launches UK Choir of the Year



13 March 2026

A Worcester Park resident and former Epsom College music scholar is behind a new national competition celebrating Britain’s thriving amateur choral scene. Lucy Mitchell, founder of UK Choir of the … Read More

Council Education

Hope courted in new Surrey school for extra needs



13 March 2026

The official opening of Hopescourt School in Walton-on-Thames marks a new chapter for children with additional needs in Surrey. The Lord Lieutenant of Surrey joined pupils, staff, Bourne Education Trust, … Read More

Arts Business Planning

Three beers for Dorking



13 March 2026

Beer fans will be pumped to know that Dorking Halls will be able to offer customers a greater variety of booze after planning permission was secured to convert storage units … Read More

Community Council Health

Some Surrey care services at a crossroads?

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Community Council Health

Green light for MRI scanner at Leatherhead Leisure Centre



12 March 2026

Surrey will get a new MRI machine at Leatherhead Leisure Centre after councillors were “all in favour” of building the musculoskeletal scanner. The new machine will be housed in a … Read More

Council Planning

Epsom and Ewell Local Plan tensions surface as committee debate curtailed by chair



12 March 2026

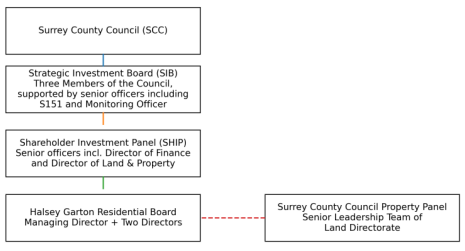
A meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) on 10th March exposed growing tensions over the borough’s Local Plan after councillors attempted to debate … Read More

12th March 2026

8 April 2026

Council Finances

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10 March 2026

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Council Housing

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Council Housing Planning

Council response to Epsom and Ewell Green Belt concerns



10 March 2026

In response to the report in the Epsom and Ewell Times, Fresh Local Plan row as councillor questions Green Belt revisions and governance at Epsom and Ewell, Epsom and Ewell … Read More

Council Housing Planning

Affordable housing scheme approved on Leatherhead green belt



9 March 2026

Greenbelt land in north Leatherhead will be built on after a 100 per cent affordable housing estate was granted planning permission. Mole Valley District Council’s development committee approved the proposals … Read More

Council Elections

Guide to the upcoming East Surrey Council elections



9 March 2026

When voters head to the polls on Thursday, May 7, the local election in Surrey will look very different from previous years. This local election will mark the first step … Read More

Rugby Sports

Horsham hold a win against Sutton & Epsom RFC

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9 March 2026

Horsham 26 Sutton and Epsom 20. 7th March. In November Horsham travelled to Rugby Lane and were victorious. The Black & Whites scored a late Kyren Ghumra try to add … Read More

Arts Local History

Remarkable Ukrainian who lived his final decades in Epsom



8 March 2026

MICHAEL BIALOGUSKI (1917-84) Ukrainian born Doctor, musician, conductor and spy who spent the last 20 years of his life in Epsom Mykolo Bialoguski was born in Kiev (then in Russia, … Read More

News

Dorking gnome fails in bid to win property rights



7 March 2026

A Surrey couple have won a legal battle over a tiny strip of lawn outside their home after a neighbour tried to reclaim it by placing a garden gnome on … Read More

Community Council News

Could you put Surrey Council’s empty buildings or land to good use?



7 March 2026

Surrey residents could soon have the chance to take over unused council buildings and land under a new policy designed to put more local assets into community hands. Surrey County … Read More

Arts Health Local History

Epsom author shares personal epilepsy journey amid town’s historic link to the condition

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7 March 2026

An Epsom author has published a deeply personal account of living with epilepsy, adding a modern voice to a local story that stretches back more than a century. Madeline Bolton-Smith, … Read More

Community Council Finances

Last round of developers' funds in Epsom and Ewell to be spent



6 March 2026

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is inviting local community groups and organisations to apply for funds, raised by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), to deliver projects that benefit residents and … Read More

Community Crime Policing

Epsom and Ewell February crime and safety round-up



5 March 2026

Epsom and Ewell Times does not normally report individual crime incidents. However, as part of a trial we are publishing a monthly round-up of crime and community safety developments affecting … Read More

Council Council constitution News

Epsom and Ewell to ditch Parish Councils plan



5 March 2026

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has all but confirmed it will not proceed with plans to create community councils in the borough after consultation responses indicated a lack of public … Read More

Council Housing Planning

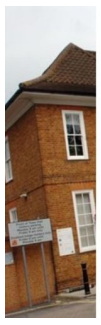
Fresh Local Plan row as councillor questions Green Belt revisions and governance at Epsom and Ewell

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5 March 2026

Concerns are growing over Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Local Plan after campaigners and a borough councillor raised questions about revised evidence submitted to the Government Planning Inspector — including … Read More

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Remarkable Ukrainian who lived his final decades in Epsom

8 April 2026



MICHAEL BIALOGUSKI (1917-84) Ukrainian born Doctor, musician, conductor and spy who spent the last 20 years of his life in Epsom

Mykolo Bialoguski was born in Kiev (then in Russia, now in Ukraine) on 19 March 1917. His parents, Gregorii and Paulina, were Polish professionals, being a veterinary surgeon and dentist respectively. Gregorii was a non-practising Jew and Paulina a Christian.

Apparently, the family fled Kiev in about 1920, having nearly been shot by Bolsheviks, and from 1927 to 1935 Mykolo attended a secondary school in Wilno, Poland – which is now Vilnius, Lithuania, a graphic illustration of the ever-shifting political sands of Eastern Europe. He studied the viola and began to study medicine.

The Nazis invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, thus triggering World War 2. The political goings-on in relation to Poland at that time were hideously complicated and we shan’t dwell on them here, but we do need to know where Mykolo was at the time and why he probably decided to leave. The following map will assist matters – Wilno is in the top right-hand portion and occupied by the Soviets.

In present-day terms Wilno/Vilnius is quite close to the Belarusian border, just over 200 km as the crow flies, and during WW2 Belarus (then the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) was initially under the control of the Soviets: however, in 1941 the Germans invaded and if, like Mykolo, you were both anti-communist and had a Jewish parent, then Wilno was not a place to be under either regime. (If you want to know more about Wilno during WW2 there is ample material on Wikipedia in the articles on Vilna Ghetto and Ponary Massacre.)

Mykolo had married an Irena Vandos in Poland at some point, but they were divorced in 1941. He had already been jailed briefly for protesting against some actions of the occupying Red Army and so, spinning a yarn about going to Cura?ao, he travelled across Russia to Japan, the latter not yet having joined in WW2, although it did so in December 1941. Fortunately, Mykolo had arrived in Sydney, Australia by then and became Michael.

So, we are now in Sydney and in 1942 Michael enlisted in the Australian Army Medical Corps as an orderly; he was then discharged with Government approval and assistance to study medicine at the University of Sydney, which he did successfully. In 1943 he married divorcee Agnes Patricia Humphry (known as Patricia – they were ultimately divorced in 1954). After a year in general practice at Thirroul, a seaside suburb south of Sydney, he set up on Macquarie Street, in central Sydney itself.

Spying

One would think perhaps that building up a practice as a doctor in a thriving city district would be more than enough for any young man, but there were other facets to Michael. He was certainly anti-communism but that in itself doesn’t turn you into a spy, especially if you’re safely ensconced in Australia. It looks more as if he wanted to ‘play spies’ because he was fascinated with it all. He offered his services to the Commonwealth Investigation Service (CIS) in 1945 and was engaged as an agent: the CIS was apparently as secure as a chocolate padlock in terms of leaks and had been infiltrated by Soviet spies, which led to the creation of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). In 1949 Michael was engaged as an ASIO agent.

As is usually the case with that era of peculiar ‘peace’, spies, agents and double agents were everywhere and it was hard for them to know which side anyone was on, let alone any amateur researcher trying to make some sense of it 70 years or

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so later. Still, it must be done, as it was the man's main claim to 'fame'.

The Petrov Affair

Petrov had started out as Afanasy Shorokhov, born in 1907 to peasant parents in a Central Siberian village. In 1923 he joined an organisation for young communists and then the Soviet Navy, by which time his name had become Vladimir Proletarsky and later Vladimir Petrov. Having worked his way up, slowly, from cipher clerk in the Navy to the MGB (a predecessor of the KGB which dealt with myriad security and intelligence issues) he became third secretary at the Soviet Embassy in Canberra – or, to put it another way, a senior KGB officer and spy control in Australia. It was quite surprising that Petrov had survived Stalin's vicious purges and executions of officials over the years, but he had mainly worked under a very nasty piece of work named Lavrentiy Beria and nobody had managed to get rid of this vile man to date. Beria will become significant in a moment, but, returning to Australia, Petrov met Bialoguski and, against a background of mutual friendship, copious alcohol and prostitutes, Petrov thought he had recruited Bialoguski as a Soviet spy, whereas the latter continued to work for ASIO and was spying on Petrov.

Matters came to a head in 1953 when Stalin died and a power struggle ensued. Beria was confident of working his way to the very top, but certain people, Nikita Khrushchev in particular, had other ideas, and Beria was executed. Bialoguski and his colleague, Ron Richards, used this as part of the argument that Petrov should defect, saying that when he was recalled to the Soviet Union under the new regime, he would be in mortal danger. Another part of the persuasion was a large sum of money.

Petrov did defect in 1954, but had neglected to forewarn his wife, Evdokia (also a spy), who, when recalled by the Soviets, was torn between her sister back home and her husband.

Evdokia decided to cooperate with the Australian authorities. Next came a ghastly episode: she was kidnapped by Soviet agents and dragged kicking and screaming to an aircraft.

A high-ranking Australian official witnessed this and fired off an urgent telegram requesting Prime Ministerial intervention, as it was certain that Evdokia would come to a horrible end if she was taken to Moscow. When the plane landed for refuelling at Darwin, Australian police boarded, extricated her from the kidnappers and asked whether she wanted to go to Moscow or stay in Australia. You can guess what her answer was.

There was subsequently a Royal Commission investigating Soviet espionage in Australia, but there is no need to go into that here, save to say that it generated enormous press coverage and political wrangling. The Petrovs remained in Australia as Australian citizens.

As mentioned earlier, Michael and Patricia were divorced in 1954 and it wasn't an amicable parting. He wrote a book about the Petrov Affair, which was serialised in various newspapers and Patricia went to the papers with her own story. She said that he had a strange, almost weird, personality and that he was a clever, self-absorbed, manipulative and ambitious man who could also be charming and entertaining. This seemed to accord with others' views of him.

Michael was apparently a minor press celebrity for the rest of the 1950s but didn't seem to make significant headway with either his career or finances. In 1957 he applied for a reduction in Patricia's alimony, claiming that he hadn't made much money from the book and that his medical practice had suffered as a result of all the publicity. He got the reduction in alimony and in 1961 he won a libel case over Patricia's published allegations and was awarded £1,000 in damages.

Meanwhile, in 1957 he had married Nonnie Frieda Peifer, then a secretary; she had had a brief career as a film actress in minor roles under the name of Nonnie Piper in the late 1940s/early 1950s. He was still determined to pursue a musical career of some kind, preferably as a conductor, and had actually played the violin in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, but he wasn't getting anywhere on that front.

In about 1964 the family moved to England, where Michael continued to work in medicine but pursued his musical ambitions too. They lived at 24 Shawley Way, Epsom, which by a boundary quirk came under Tattenhams Ward, Banstead for election purposes and is now designated as 'Reigate and Banstead'.

Finally, Michael was able to study conducting and conducted the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1969 he conducted at the Royal Albert Hall, then he formed the Commonwealth Philharmonic Orchestra and also wielded the baton in Westminster Abbey. Perhaps at last he had found his true vocation.

Michael died of cancer on 29 July 1984 at Kingswood, Surrey. Nonnie remained in England and lived until 14 February 2020, aged 89. She was survived by three of her children and several grandchildren.

Linda Jackson 2023

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Have your say on the future of Epsom and Ewell

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government

8 April 2026

The Epsom & Ewell Times is launching an independent reader survey to invite views not only on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's proposals, but also on an alternative approach to local consultation and civic participation which is not included in Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's formal consultation. Namely, Neighbour Area Committees.

The Council's consultation

The Borough Council consultation follows its Full Council decision in December to continue exploring the creation of two new parish-style councils. According to the council's press release, the proposed bodies would:

• initially be responsible for allotments
• act as statutory consultees on planning matters
• be funded by a parish precept of around £43–£46 for a Band D property
• hold elections in May 2027 if created

The consultation also asks for views on warding arrangements and councillor numbers for the proposed new bodies.

The Epsom & Ewell Times encouraged residents to read the council's consultation material in full and respond to it, whether in favour or opposed, so that the decision ultimately reflects as broad a range of resident opinion as possible.

The EEBC CGR Consultation officially closed on 31st January.

Why EET is running an additional poll

During the December council debate and in the public correspondence that followed, a number of councillors and residents raised questions about whether the consultation should also invite views on alternative forms of local representation, such as Surrey County Council's pilot Neighbourhood Area Committees, under the new unitary structure. See the Epsom and Ewell Times guide to Neighbour Area Committees HERE

See letters to the Epsom and Ewell Times from a number of Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillors HERE.

The council's consultation asks residents only whether they wish to establish parish-style community councils and, if so, how they should be constituted. It does not ask whether residents would prefer any alternative approach or different mechanisms for an additional local voice to the 10 Epsom and Ewell elected Councillors to the East Surrey Unitary Authority

The Epsom & Ewell Times believes that the wider discussion about local democracy after 2027 may benefit from hearing resident views on more than one potential model. Our independent survey therefore allows participants to express:

• support for or opposition to the creation of community councils
• support, if any, for the alternative form of additional local consultation of Neighbour Area Committees
• views on cost, value for money and accountability
• opinions on how civic traditions, such as the mayoralty, might continue

The results will not form part of the official consultation process, but may provide an additional picture of community sentiment to inform public debate and future reporting.

Click HERE to access the Epsom and Ewell Times reader survey

Two platforms, one community conversation

Residents are invited to complete both the council consultation and the Epsom & Ewell Times survey. The two exercises serve different purposes:

• the council consultation forms part of the statutory Community Governance Review
• the EET poll provides a space for residents to express views on a wider range of possibilities and priorities

Both, however, share a common aim — helping to ensure that local voices are heard at a time of significant change in how Epsom and Ewell will be governed in future.

The Epsom & Ewell Times will continue to report on developments in the Community Governance Review, the consultation outcomes and the wider debate about the future of local representation as the borough approaches the transition to the East Surrey Unitary Authority in 2027.

Sam Jones – Reporter

Related reports and articles:

Parish power, democratic ideals — and the Residents' Association dilemma

Epsom and Ewell's Local Democracy Debate: What's at Stake as Consultation Enters Phase Two

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Letters from local Councillors on Epsom and Ewell parishes

Epsom and Ewell Council leader message for 2026

Long serving Epsom Councillor blasts LGR and NACs

Neighbour Area Committees HERE

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