

## Epsom's first Oaks race winner for sale

20 June 2022



Epsom based sculptor Kendra Haste has created a painted galvanised wire sculptor of Lord Derby's 1779 inaugural Oaks winner, Bridget. Epsom's own "The Oaks" became the second oldest "classic" horse race after Doncaster's 1776 St Leger. The Oaks race is for three year old fillies and is run over 1 mile, 4 furlongs and 6 yards of Epsom's Downs racecourse. So called as the first race started from Edward Smith Stanley, 12th Earl of Derby's estate, in the area now known as Oaks Park in Carshalton.



Kendra Haste at her workshop. *Image Iona Nicol*

Bridget, a thoroughbred, was kept in a stable block on the estate and has a very special link to Kendra. 243 years later, the building is home to the sculptor's studio.

The piece depicted above is the first in a series of small unique maquette sculptures depicting Bridget. For further information about these works, you can enquire [here](#).

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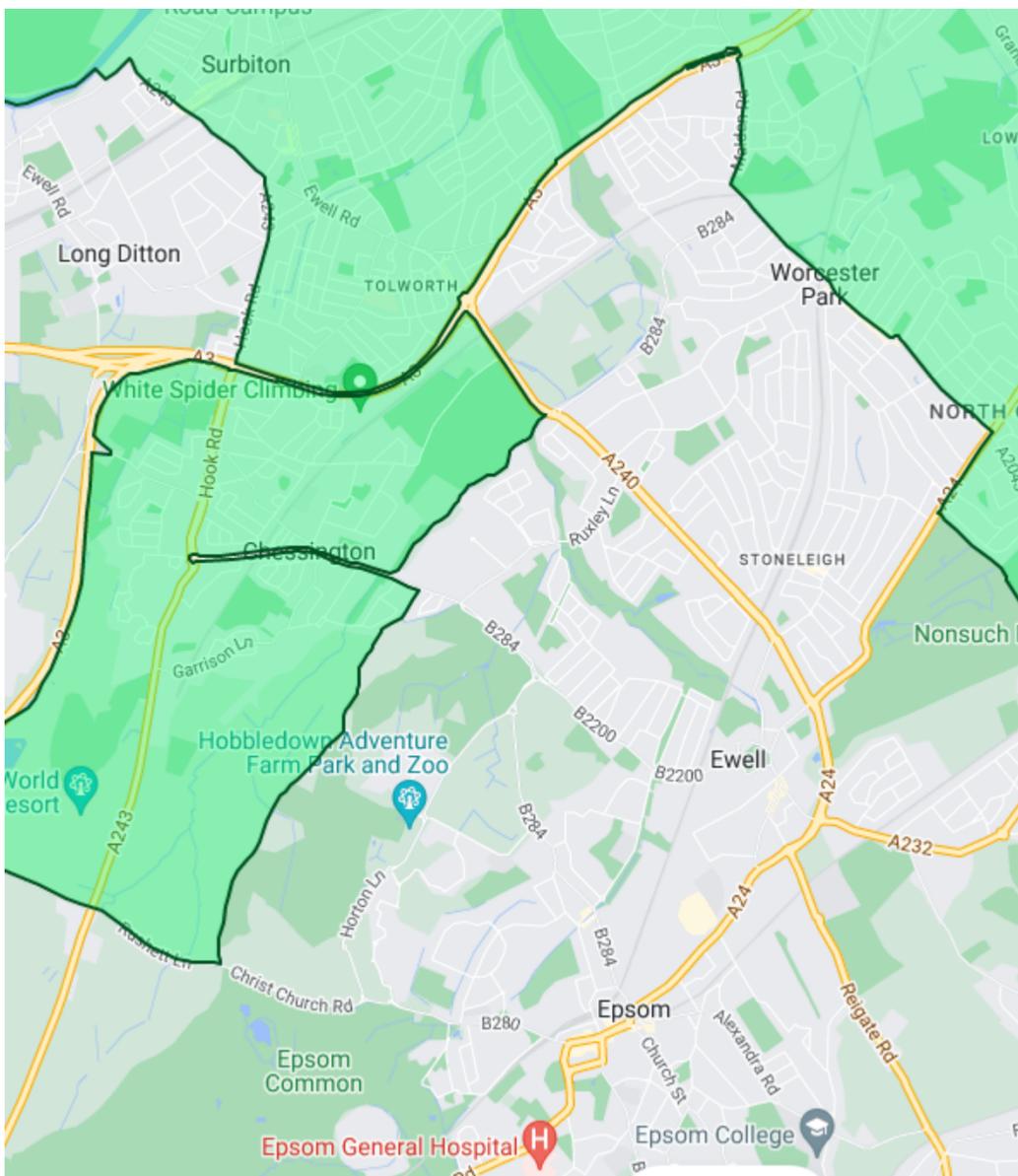
## Driving to Sutton or Kingston in an old car could cost you £12.50 next year!

20 June 2022



The Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) that charges old diesel and some old petrol cars £12.50 a day 24/7 for travel in inner London might be expanded to Epsom and Ewell's borders from August 2023.

You can examine exactly where the proposed ULEZ will be located near the Borough's borders via this detailed online map [CLICK HERE](#)



The Mayor of London's case for the expansion of ULEZ is summarised in the consultation document: Health crisis, climate crisis and road congestion.

**“London’s air quality is a public health crisis.** In 2019, it’s estimated that more than 4,000 Londoners died prematurely because of filthy air, with the greatest number of deaths attributable to air pollution in outer London boroughs. The London boroughs with the highest number of air pollution related deaths in 2019 were Bromley, Barnet, Croydon and Havering, proving that poor air quality is not just an inner London problem. More than 500,000 Londoners suffer from asthma, making them vulnerable to toxic air pollution. If we do not act now, it is estimated that more than 500,000 Londoners will develop diseases attributable to toxic air pollution in the next 30 years.

**We face a climate crisis.** Last year the COP 26 conference concluded that without urgent action, there will be catastrophic temperature increases and extreme weather events. London is already suffering these, such as flash flooding of some stations, schools and hospitals in 2021.

**Road congestion is still a big problem.** Congestion cost the capital £5.1bn last year alone. This heavily impacts businesses, bus customers and other essential services. Longer journey times affect us all. Traffic can negatively impact our health and wellbeing, and increases road danger. This makes our city a less pleasant place to live, work, visit and do business.”

**Epsom and Ewell Times** asked all the Councillors representing Wards in the Borough with London area borders:

The irrepensible **Jan Mason** (Residents Association) for Ruxley Ward was first off. “My Ward is on the Boundary of Chessington and would be greatly affected by these proposals. Plus of course the thousand of vehicles which use the

Chessington Road to go to work or to go to the Merritt Doctors' Surgery and the shops and schools and to join the M25 etc. In other words the proposal is ridiculous. Yet again an ill thought out proposal".

E&ET: [Note that in fact by using Ruxley Lane, the Ewell-By-Pass and A3 you will be able to get to the M25 without crossing into the proposed expanded ULEZ.]

Next we have a response from **John Beckett** (RA) Auriol Ward: "I oppose the plans as they stand but, if they do go ahead, there need to be more ULEZ free travel corridors that enable Epsom and Ewell (E&E) residents to access locations such as Worcester Park shopping area, Tolworth shopping area, Malden Rushett access to the A3 along the A243 Hook Road, Chessington without having to be penalised for supporting London businesses by paying the charge.

Many residents in West Ewell, Ruxley, Auriol, Stoneleigh, Ewell Court and Nonsuch have their doctors' surgeries, medical facilities, local shops, leisure facilities, open spaces (Nonsuch Park), friends and family and schools etc just across the border. Many hundreds of residents in Nonsuch Ward live so close to the border that their postal addresses fall under Sutton and not Epsom and Ewell. The new hospital for Epsom & St. Helier Trust will be located next to the Royal Marsden Hospital in the London Borough Of Sutton. This would mean that Surrey residents would have to pay to go to their local hospital. Epsom's Maternity Unit will be transferring to this new hospital site which means that our expectant mothers will have to pay to have scans, check-ups and to give birth!"

**Epsom and Ewell Times notes** from the map of the proposed ULEZ that Malden Road, where the Worcester Park shops are, is not in the zone.

**Chris Grayling MP** states:

"Those who live at the north end of Epsom and Ewell and in Nork are probably particularly aware of the Mayor of London's plans to extend the Ultra Low Emission zone to the London boundary. This would mean that older vehicles would have to pay a daily charge to drive across the boundary.

Clearly this has major implications for many people living locally, and while I understand the intent behind the policy, it is in my view damaging and unworkable for the areas immediately adjoining the boundary. Transport for London has yet to give clear details about how it would work on the border - for example what do they plan to do with cases like that of Sparrow Farm Road in Stoneleigh? This road is in Surrey on one side and in London on the other. But it would mean a charge for many Surrey residents doing local journeys or driving from one place in Surrey to another if the route crossed the boundary.

I have lodged an objection to the scheme because of this, and would encourage residents here to make their views known to TfL."

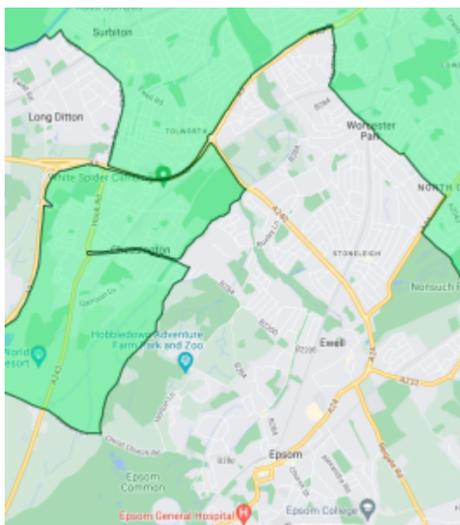
The consultation ends on 29th July 2022. You can have your say via this link

<https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/cleanair>

Read our editorial.

## Where to draw the line?

20 June 2022

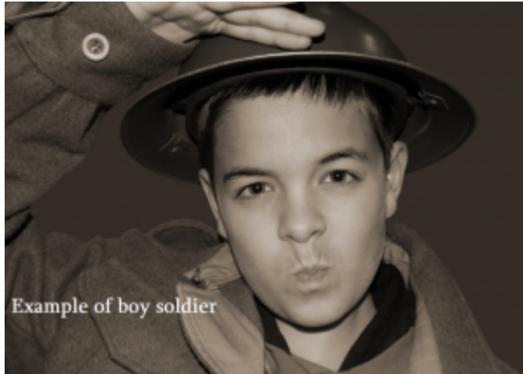


Mayor of London's proposal to expand the charging area for old and polluting vehicles to the borders of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell inevitably brings out the "not-in-my-backyard" responses from local residents. Let's be clear. It is only residents with old polluting cars that will be effected. And, yes, that is likely to impact greatest on those on lower incomes, who cannot afford newer cars, let alone the very expensive electric ones. What should come first? The health of residents in neighbouring London Boroughs or the freedom to continue to use the more polluting cars kept in Epsom and Ewell? If the expanded ULEZ discourages the use of old polluting cars locally then there is also a health and environmental benefit for our residents too.

The health and climate benefits of the ULEZ are well established. So as a nation is it not equally inevitable that the ULEZs will continue to expand, together with legislation banning the old cars anyway? Should we yield willingly to the inevitable and spend the next year, before the expanded ULEZ is likely to be implemented (August 2023) helping residents to change their vehicles?

## Boy Soldier buried in Epsom

20 June 2022



### Leslie Charles ATTWOOD, b.1899 - d.1917

Enlisted in the army in 1914 aged 15. Awarded the Silver War Badge. Buried in a pauper's and now unmarked grave in Epsom's abandoned 5 acre cemetery of 9000 souls.

**Leslie Attwood was born in the June quarter of 1899, the third child and second son of Charles Attwood and Alice Amelia née Appleby.**

Charles, born in 1858, a plasterer and Alice, born in 1867, had married on 14th September 1895 at St James's Church, Lambeth. Their respective fathers, Charles Attwood, a bootmaker and Samuel Appleby, a silk merchant were both deceased. The marriage was witnessed by Mark Arthur Attwood and Kate Attwood. Mark was Leslie's Uncle,

In the 1901 Census Leslie is living with his parents, his brothers Arthur, Harold and sister Leonora at 32, St Mark's Road in Lambeth.

### Births and deaths in the family

By the time of the 1911 census we are privy to further information. Leslie is still at school along with Leonora but now there are three extra siblings, Dorothy May, Leonard Vivian and Amy. Charles and Alice have been married for sixteen years, have had nine children but only six are still living. The family is now living at 8, Gordon Grove in Brixton.

A search on the GRO site reveals that Harold Trevor recorded on the 1901 census died later that year in the December quarter. At the time of little Harold's death, his Mother was expecting twins which she gave birth to during the March quarter of 1902; sadly both died, Walter during the same March quarter and Ernest during the June quarter.

### Leslie enlists in the army

Leslie enlisted with the Territorials on 4th August 1914 as a driver, number 1344 in the 2/6 London Brigade RFA (Royal Field Artillery). The record is very tattered and parts illegible but we are able to build a picture of Leslie's appearance. He was quite tall - 5' 7" - and slim with a 35" chest. He had a fair complexion and fair hair with grey eyes. His occupation at that time was as a greengrocer and his religion is given as C of E. He gave his age as 17 years 5 months when in fact he was only just 15 years old!

He was awarded the Silver War Badge which was awarded to soldiers who were discharged on injury or health grounds whether or not they had served overseas.

### A mental breakdown

In 1915 he was admitted to 60th London Casualty Clearing Station with what was described as melancholia.

He was transferred to Napsbury Military Hospital on 8th September 1915. He was described as being childish and feebleminded but quiet and well behaved. He had already 'broken down' mentally at least once.

The reader will have the impression that the Army was not really a suitable choice of career for Leslie as on January 28th 1916 he was declared no longer fit for war service and his military character is described as 'Indifferent' The reason given for this is imbecility which originated 'probably from birth'.

His age was given as 16 years 11 months but the 16 is scored through and 18 substituted. However, we know that Leslie was not yet even 17 years of age as he was born the second quarter of 1899. This suggests that the enlistment officers were keen to recruit without asking too many questions.

### Death in Long Grove

So far I have not been able to find out where Leslie went to between leaving the army on 28th January 1916 and his death on 29th December 1917 at Long Grove from Pulmonary TB. It is probable that he stayed with his parents as on his entry in 'Soldiers effects', we are told that money was paid to his father. Leslie is buried in plot 926b in Horton Cemetery.

Author: Jenni Llewellyn of the Friends of Horton Cemetery

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## Cost of Living Crisis Scams - Epsom and Ewell's Citizen Advice Bureau can help:

20 June 2022



Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell (CAEE) is joining Scams Awareness Fortnight 2022, a national campaign to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of economic fraud. CAEE advisers are helping an increasing number of people who have been targeted by a scammer just as the cost-of-living crisis takes hold. Types of scam include ID theft, unpaid tax claim, online sale and delivery and stolen tenancy deposit.

For information on the genuine types of help available and how you'll receive it, see this [Citizens Advice page if you're struggling with living costs](#) and [this page for Grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills](#).

Lisa Davis, Chief Officer of Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell, said: "We know scammers prey on our worries and fears, sadly the cost-of-living crisis is no exception. We're asking everyone to help spread the message that scams are crimes that can happen to anyone. Fraudsters always find ways of exploiting difficult times and the cost of living crisis is making many more people vulnerable. Anyone can be targeted by a scam, and as the purse strings are tightened and financial pressures pile on, it's important we work together to protect ourselves and each other."

To stop more people from falling victim to these types of scams, Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell is sharing five top tips to help you guard against a potential scam:

- It seems too good to be true - for example, scammers pretending to be energy companies to lure people into "too good to be true" deals
- You suspect you're not dealing with a real company or a genuine person - take a moment to step back and double-check
- You've been pressured to transfer money quickly
- You've been asked to pay in an unusual way - like by an iTunes vouchers or a transfer service
- You've been asked to give away personal information such as passwords, PINs or other verification codes.

If you've been scammed, Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell advises:

- Talk to your bank or card company immediately if you've handed over any financial and sensitive information or made a payment
- Report the scam to Citizens Advice. Offline scams, like those using the telephone, post and coming to your door, can be reported to the Citizens Advice website or by calling 0808 223 1133. Report online scams to the dedicated Scams Action service either online or on 0808 250 5050
- Text scams can be reported to your mobile phone provider by forwarding it to 7726
- Also report the scam to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.



Last year, Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell helped more than 2,800 people with over 7,600 issues relating to benefits, debt, housing, employment, relationships, neighbour disputes, discrimination, probate, care costs, winter fuel payments, student loans and consumer issues. We have a team of 50 volunteers whose skills, experience and commitment deliver our services, including mental health, money advice and tribunal teams.

Their work has become all the more important recently after the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis and would not be possible without the unfailing support of the local community. CAEE sits at the heart of this community - here for everyone with a listening ear and a friendly face ready to help with whatever the problem, confidential, impartial and all for free.

Citizens Advice Epsom and Ewell (CAEE) is a small, local charity offering free advice and information for all who live, work and study in the borough of Epsom and Ewell. All advice is free, confidential, impartial and independent.

However, this service comes at a cost - on average £60 for each person they help and although they have funding from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and other local partners, they must raise a significant sum in order to operate. They ask for support for their work. Just £5 per month could enable one client in need this year.

[www.cae.org.uk/donate/](http://www.cae.org.uk/donate/) or connect with us on Twitter @CAEpsomEwell.

To get in touch call the Adviceline on Freephone number 0808 278 7963 or visit the website

[www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)



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## Witness appeal: sex assault Epsom 13th June

20 June 2022



Surrey Police are appealing for witnesses following reports of a serious sexual assault in Epsom in the early hours of the morning of Monday 13th June.

The victim was walking through the grass area in the middle of Parkview Way at around 4am when she was pushed to the floor and sexually assaulted.

Police believe there may have been three men nearby at the time of the assault who may have information.

Officers are carrying out house to house enquiries in the area as part of the investigation and are keen to speak to anyone

who may have seen someone, or a group of people, acting suspiciously in the area at the time.

If you have any information which could help the police investigation, including any smart doorbell footage, or if you were in the area at the time, please contact Surrey Police quoting PR/45220062125 via:

- Live chat on the website <https://www.surrey.police.uk/>
- Police online reporting tool: <https://www.surrey.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about/cor/tell-us-about-existing-case-report/>
- Calling 101

If you do not wish to leave your name, please call independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

## £225,000 to plan the unplanned

20 June 2022



Council to spend £225,000 on consultants for Epsom Town Centre “Masterplan”.

**Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) has secured a total of £225,000 from The Department for Levelling Up and the regional Local Enterprise Partnership. The money is earmarked to pay consultants to develop an “Epsom Town Centre Master Plan”, including digital community engagement plans. A public consultation about it later this year is indicated.**

26<sup>th</sup> May 2022 Council officers reported to Councillors: “The Council is faced with some difficult decisions about how it can plan to accommodate growth to meet central government policy. There are several potential development opportunities within Epsom Town Centre *that could come forward* (emphasis supplied) promoted by each respective landowner.”

“..... presently, there is not an up-to-date document to guide development in the Town Centre. The Town Centre Masterplan provides the opportunity to plan comprehensively for development to ensure that there is a coordinated approach to address the following:

- The parameters for development of the sites that have been submitted through the Local Plan Call for Sites for development (Utilities, Ashley Centre, University for the Creative Arts (UCA))
- The facilities and infrastructure that would be needed to support the development of key sites (parking, retail, social, community, transport).
- Environmental Improvements to the town centre that could be facilitated through development proposals. Whether through development itself, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (chargeable on substantial developments) and section 106 Town and Country Planning Act funds (money transferred to the Council by developers, usually on the larger scale developments that require structural support).
- Key principles for retention, enhancement or development of areas that would not be subject to major development proposals.

EEBC’s Licensing and Planning Policy Committee agreed to delegate the spending of this £225,000 to the Council Officer entitled Head of Place Development.

The digital engagement element of the £225,000 is £125,000 and was sought by EEBC to support the following Governmental objects and within the development of the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan.

- “Incentivise communities to positively engage in planning conversations.”
- “Engage a more representative range of citizens in decision-making.”
- “Inform the community on trade-offs and outcomes through development.”
- “Establish meaningful baseline data and, where possible, integrate digital and traditional engagement best practice.”

Lessons learned from this Town Centre Masterplan “digital engagement” might be applied to planning matters generally in the future.

Only time will tell whether landowners and land developers will ever submit plans that need to be judged by the policies of the “Epsom Town Centre Masterplan” that is to be developed at a cost of £225,000.

## Borough celebrates being a Twin for 25 years

20 June 2022



Over the Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend, Epsom and Ewell entertained a large group of visitors from its French twin town, Chantilly. Guests included Chantilly's Deputy Mayor and members of the Chantilly Comité de Jumelage (Twinning Committee). The occasion celebrated 25 years of the official signing of a Twinning Charter in 1995, the visit having been postponed for two years due to the pandemic.

Chantilly is a commune in Northern France. Surrounded by Chantilly Forest, the town of 10,863 inhabitants (2017) lies about 24 miles northeast of Paris and with six neighbouring communes forms an urban area of 37,209 inhabitants (2017 census).

The Château de Chantilly was home to the Princes of Condé, cousins of the Kings of France, from the 17th to the 19th centuries. It now houses the Musée Condé. Chantilly is also known for its horse racing track, Chantilly Racecourse, where prestigious races are held for the Prix du Jockey Club and Prix de Diane. Chantilly and the surrounding communities are home to the largest racehorse-training community in France. Chantilly is also home to the Living Museum of the Horse, with stables built by the Princes of Condé.

Over the years, many such visits have taken place, links between schools, clubs, choirs and individuals have been established, and friendships made. This weekend some of the original contacts from the Chantilly and the Epsom Model Railway Clubs were reunited. There were also new introductions, with two members of Chantilly's Karate Shotokan club joining the Chief Coach and members of Mo-Ichido Martial Arts Club for an impressive training session, and high school teachers meeting to discuss involvement in an international project in Chantilly. Meanwhile, the rest of the party were taken on a guided tour to Ermyn Lodge breeder and trainer's yard, and the historic stables at the Durdans. There were some more official, commemorative moments, when The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Councillor Clive Woodbridge, and the Mayoress, Mrs Mary Woodbridge, joined for the planting of a European Oak tree in Rosebery Park, and a visit to Epsom marketplace to show off the recently placed Derby Hall of Fame roundels which feature notable Derby winners, including 1965 winner Sea Bird from Chantilly. Time out was allowed, of course, for lunch at a local pub and essential shopping in the Ashley Centre.



No celebration would be complete without speeches, delivered in English and French by both parties, and the exchange of gifts, with Epsom and Ewell presenting Chantilly with a display case of limited edition Jubilee coins, and an individual commemorative £5 coin for each visitor. The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell was delighted to receive a very handsome model of a horse's head, mounted and engraved on interlinked horseshoes. This will be on display in the Town Hall in due course.

## The Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association

The Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association is always delighted to hear from organisations looking for their equivalent in Chantilly, as well as individuals offering language skills or seeking a way to improve their French. The Association has a regular programme of local events in the Borough, both social and educational, allowing the chance to practise speaking French. There is a very popular annual French Public Speaking Competition for Schools, run jointly with Epsom Rotary, and regular Soirées Françaises for members. Of course there are also fundraisers like quizzes and the appreciation of French food and wine from time to time. Advice on visiting Chantilly, where to stay and what to see, is available too.

Established in 1994, Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association is a non-profit association, funded by members' subscriptions and fundraising, and run by a group of volunteers to fulfil the obligations of the formal twinning agreement signed by the Mayors of Chantilly and Epsom and Ewell the following year. It is not supported financially by the Borough.

## For more information on The Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association:

Or to register interest in joining, please see our website [www.epsomtwinning.com](http://www.epsomtwinning.com) or

email [contact@epsomtwinning.com](mailto:contact@epsomtwinning.com) .

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## Wells Centre's Appeal

20 June 2022



Epsom and Ewell Times reported 25th April 2022 on the new lease of life promised for the Wells Estate, Epsom community centre. The charity Epsom Wells Community Association hope to fund repairs from grants but to cover legal and other initial costs they need to raise money from the public.

EWCA and are working hard to re-open the centre after being awarded a 125-year lease by the Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to operate it. The centre, and its wooden predecessor, have welcomed all ages - from toddlers and pre-school children to pensioners - for over 70 years.

There is a shortage of social centres in Epsom. The Longmead Sefton Road centre is frequently over-subscribed so, the Wells centre has been sorely missed.



The Wells Centre and top Wells Estate c. Alan Becken

Vanessa Marchant of EWCA said to our reporter: "Leaflets are being delivered to homes asking for donations - no matter how big or small. After fighting doggedly for five years EWCA wrote an extensive business plan to convince the Council to back us. Just like buying a house, there are legal hoops we have to jump through before we get the keys. We need financial help to deal with the legal, accounting and insurance costs for the purchase."

In addition, volunteers who have specific skills to donate, or who want to be part of the "big plans" to re-open, should contact: [contactewca@gmail.com](mailto:contactewca@gmail.com)

For more details and to join the mailing list visit [epsomwellscommunityassociation.org](http://epsomwellscommunityassociation.org)

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## Epsom aid hero returns from Ukraine

20 June 2022



In an exclusive for Epsom and Ewell Times, we report on Paul Matthews' (of Lewins Road Epsom) recent experience taking aid provided by Epsom based Surrey Stands With Ukraine [SSWU] to the bombed and neglected Ukrainian Black Sea city of Odessa.

What is it really like to be take humanitarian aid to Ukraine?

Many people have responded to the terrible situation of the war following the invasion by Russia, but what really happens to all that money and donations that are made in the UK?

Paul Matthews returned last week after travelling in a borrowed van packed with generators and medical supplies destined for Odessa on the Black Sea coast.



Paul in blue shirt with Ukrainian volunteers

Most aid is handed over at the western border between Poland and Ukraine, but for the 21<sup>st</sup> supported vehicle to travel for SSWU the plan was to try to take the aid to where it was most needed.

Paul left with with co-driver Alan Avis of The Greenway Epsom and volunteer coordinator of Surrey Stands With Ukraine, for the two days to Krakow and stopping off at a major hub for refugees from Ukraine. This was aid on an industrial scale with a large number of women and children quietly waiting their turn to collect a carrier bag of food and an opportunity to find a pair of shoes for a child or jacket. A phone call with the hosts in Odessa leads to urgent additional supplies filling the van and then the roof rack. The site is open each day, and each family can visit only once a week. Another completely different group will be here tomorrow. What we also learn is that what are the needs in Poland are different to those in the south and east of the country close to the war, and that transport is a key problem, but only one of many.

Poland was the last place to get fuel. Russia destroyed the only refinery in Ukraine, and then targeted the storage facilities, so if you go into Ukraine you need to take all your fuel needs. That meant next stop was finding fuel cans to buy and fill, so with a mixture of 10, 7 and 5 litres cans the day ends with a full tank of 90 litres, and another 192 litres in the back. Time to say goodbye to Alan who flies back from Krakow, and on to the border for Paul.

The plan was for a Ukrainian national to meet and co-drive at the border, and immediately that plan went wrong as he couldn't get to the border control. With helpful Polish and Ukrainian officials, and a Red Cross sign stuck on the windscreen to enable Paul to drive past miles of waiting traffic he was through in a couple of hours. Then eight hours of driving to Uman before the nighttime curfew started. Uman was the base for two nights with a daytime 3-hour dash to Odessa to drop the aid and leave, but that was just another plan that was not to happen.

On arrival the Odessa lawyers Bar Association gave a warm greeting mixed with a need to get down to the business of offloading and learning about the situation, along with the background wail of an air raid siren...something Paul would soon get used to. And that is when everything changed again. Fuel in Ukraine is difficult to find, and the further away from Poland the situation worsens. Now the group of volunteers who before the war spend their days in court were now feeding and caring for IDPs (Internally Displaced People), who had been forced from their homes or were damaged and now uninhabitable.

Without a working vehicle or fuel to put in it the aid would not be very helpful. So plans changed and Paul was to spend the next week in Odessa and towns to the east. His accommodation was a hotel, but not the one he was booked into on the seaside since missiles had recently destroyed one nearby. So with a change of accommodation, and the trying on of a bullet proof vest and a, "sorry, you can't keep that it's needed for someone else", it was off to find out more of the situation in Odessa.

Over the next week Paul spent time either making aid drops to towns and villages or meeting with other humanitarian aid groups and local volunteers. But there was a troubling question. Where is the international and European aid? Well, not much really. Once past Lviv in the west the presence of organisations from outside Ukraine seem to disappear. In Paul's time since going south and east he never found another UK or even west European number plate. Only one organisation he met had any external funding, from a charity in Germany.

Local NGO's (Non-Government Organisations) have sprung up in response to the war in Ukraine. Paul met only Ukrainians who in their previous life were teachers, builders, shop workers or IT engineers, who now were splitting litre bottles of vegetable oil between three families who had arrived from the east. I did eventually bump into an Australian who had arrived last week and was busy helping, and one German TV crew filming a well known shopping centre that had recently been destroyed (and no sign of any military there). For 500 metres all the blocks of flats had shattered windows and frames and were now also deserted and uninhabitable. Two missiles destroyed a shopping centre and made a couple of hundred people homeless. The destruction was in the centre of Odessa, but also in the east and west. Some looked targeted with cruise missiles, and others random. Paul visited a block of flats near the sea hit by a shell from the Russian navy. Just one shell, but as the husband went out to buy food his wife, her mother, and their 3 year old child stayed in, and three generations of a family killed together. Now the block stands empty as the shock wave also badly damaged the block, and even killed a man who was sitting in his van 50 metres in front of the block. Random, and deadly. The situation was best described when asking "if it's safe?" by the answer "No where is 100% safe."



Everywhere Paul went he was met with gratitude and appreciation and often someone wanting to offer a coffee or share whatever little they had. He found himself realising that everyone he met was deeply affected by the war. Either people were also receiving aid, or volunteering to help give aid, and often both. People who helped were scrupulous beyond his expectations at managing the aid received, and this usually was given by other Ukrainians. Whilst some dealt with IDPs others prepared and cooked food and gave it free from soup kitchens sometimes on the street or gave it to volunteers working all hours to help others. Nothing was wasted, and every piece of aid was recorded, listed, and only given after registration and proof that you were a refugee in your own country. No one got angry. No one took more than

they could be given. Everything was in short supply and people also had to be turned away. Some NGO's will only help families with three or more children such is the scale of problem. Others try to help pensioners who can no longer get their medication and try to find donors and pharmacies locally who will donate the drugs.

People have lost jobs. Businesses have closed. Odessa is a vibrant lively summer beach resort. Odessans love their Black Sea and promenade and still go to the beach (especially as it costs nothing). Taking the kids to play in the sand is one of the few possibilities to help the kids forget the war for a few hours, but even that has issues. The main beaches where a sea borne invasion is possible are off limits now with minefields. Even where there are no mines (if the beach is too small), then no one is allowed in the water as it's heavily mined by both Ukraine and Russia. Mines just under the water regularly end up on the beach. In the meantime a few beach bars open behind the red and white tape to mark the minefield, and children play in the sand in the few feet left before the tape. That is life in Odessa, and then there is the air raid sirens, and occasionally the missiles.

If it is difficult in Odessa it's worse outside in the smaller towns and villages.

Arriving in Mykoliv, to more air raid sirens, but this time with the almost mechanical sound of thunder. It's incoming artillery. Landing far enough away that no one runs for the shelters. Those that can wear their body armour. There is an App for everything, and now one that tells you where is being hit, it's called Liveuamap. A must have for every smart phone here. However, phone and internet signal is not everywhere and in the area you need it most such as the "Grey" zone. Appropriately coloured on the Apps map is not clearly under Russian or Ukranian control. The next stop for the van was to mothers with babies and the elderly in villages that had not seen any aid and with all the men under 60 having left to fight as we were close to the front line. On arrival the village mayor had organised the waiting mothers and elderly, or it required a visit to take the aid to them.

Another place to get too was through a Grey zone corridor to Bashtanka where an Odessa NGO was supporting a church turned into a forward IDP hub. All known as "hubs", this one was known as the bunker. Paul was shown why. The basement had a large room with bare walls, and here, for three weeks, 120 women, children, babies, and elderly lived. Water was usually carried in buckets. Sanitary situation was bad, and there was not enough room for most people to lie down.

Above them the Russians arrived, and fighting did take place with locals with rifles and burning tyres to try to stop their "liberation". The area stretching from Donbas and the border with Russia to Odessa is all Russian speaking. Many who can now try to remember to speak only Ukrainian in this dual language country.

The people remained in the bunker of the church praying not to be discovered as the Russians used a tank to hit the village's main shops in a tiny central area. Where its not burnt out machine gun holes and shrapnel pepper the buildings around and again, glass is everywhere from broken windows and shattered homes, houses, and businesses. Paul was told most people left before the Russians arrived, and then Basktanka had many come from other attacked villages further east. The charity and church run high risk trips in minibuses to collect those wanting to leave from behind Russian lines passing through Ukranian and Russian checkpoints (though the latter usually require a "present"). The church building is quiet now as vehicles had just taken the last group to Odessa and now the kitchen starts preparing food again. Mattresses on floors are packed close together, are tidied and clean sheets put on ready for the next group. In a side room there is a pop-up pharmacy, the only one in the area after the Russians looted and destroyed the local hospital as they retreated a few weeks ago.

Paul and his Ukrainian guide/minder/bodyguard are offered some vegetable soup and coffee before leaving to return to Odessa with an empty van and leave these many locals to their fate. Not long after Paul sees on the App that Basktenka was shelled. The journey back passes lovely countryside, and they stop briefly in Mykolaiv as Andre (name changed) wants to show the city centre and where he used to enjoy summer days and evenings on the Parisian styled boulevards with cobbled streets and boarded up businesses. Around the corner they are stopped from entering and put away phones...this is where a Russian missile hit the high-rise municipal town hall killing 34 office workers and punching a huge hole through the centre of the building. Paul recognises it from the TV pictures back home. At checkpoints they are usually met with a friendly chat, mainly due to being the only UK registered number plate vehicle they have seen.

Paul started his return to Epsom after a week in Odessa and areas east. A near empty van is added to with donations given by his hosts keen for me to bring gifts for SSWU and a jar of Arcasia honey. It is a long way from home now and Paul is alone. The checkpoints thin out between Odessa and Kiev, but you need to be alert. One time Paul saw a small rise in the road and slowed, and found it was the edge of a crater caused by an airstrike on a fortified structure...a bus stop.

Paul's most memorable meeting was not planned. It happened in a tiny village outside Odessa on one of the aid drops. A young woman wanted to talk and she spoke English. Aged 20 and studying culture at university in Kherson was under attack. She left with student friends and fled to Odessa terrified before it fell to the Russians. Her parents were further east and caught behind the Russian lines and unable to leave. Why was she in this tiny village? Odessa was then attacked from the sea and an invasion expected and her friend asked her to come to stay with her family. Her life is disrupted and twice she has become homeless in two months. It is quiet, cut off, but it feels safe. Throughout she struggles to talk between tears, but wants her story told. She fears for her parents most of all. Every few days a phone call or internet works long enough to talk to them. They ask if she remembers a neighbour who is an elderly man with a small field next the family home. Yes, of course she answers. He was shot tending his vegetables by a Russian sniper. And another woman was walking on the street they live on with her shopping. Shot as well. Others are mentioned. She can not talk anymore.

On the way back from Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kiev, Urpin and everywhere else Paul is thanked for coming and for the aid brought from Surrey. Somehow it doesn't seem enough.

The aid to Odessa was made possible by donations to [Surrey Stands With Ukraine](#)

Donations of money are needed most, to be directed to give immediate humanitarian aid to the oblast (region) of Odessa and it's villages. Support for this can be made to [Surrey Stands With Ukraine](#)

Long term support, in partnership with the UN and others using helicopters is planned, and this can be supported with donations to [humanitaid.com](https://humanitaid.com)

Paul is taking an ambulance to deliver further aid to be used in the Odessa Oblast. Donations for this can be made to Just Giving, Medical Life Lines Ukraine with the reference "Odesa".