

Epsom Christmas carols of two colleges and a council

18 December 2025



In the first and a unique festive venture for the Borough of Epsom Ewell a special carol service was held in the Chapel of St Luke, Epsom College this evening. Organised on the joint initiatives of Julie Kapsalis (CEO NESCOL), Jackie King (CEO Epsom and Ewell Borough Council) and Mark Lascelles (Head of Epsom College).

The event brought local choirs together including NESCOL's own choir, singers from Epsom College and the local Ukrainian choir Renaissance.

Solos were sung by Evie Kingsley, Sienna-Leigh Campbell, Benedict Raper and Caleb Mangatal-Francis.

Julie Kapsalis read from the Gospel of St Matthew 2: 1-12 and Jackie King recited her own reading "The Heart of Christmas", reprinted below.

The service was officiated with humour and aplomb by The Reverend Canon Andrew Haviland.

Epsom Racecourse supported the service.

And no less a figure than the Worshipful Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Cllr Robert Leach (RA Nonsuch) accompanied the congregation on the magnificent Chapel organ and played the processional at the end J.S. Bach's Prelude and Fugue in F from his book of 8 preludes and fugues.

The carol service was an uplifting beginning for many to the festive season and promises have been made to make it a regular feature in the Borough in future years.

Lionel Blackman



The Heart of Christmas

There are so many ways to tell the story of Christmas.
Some begin with angels, some with gifts, some with the hush of falling snow.
But however the story starts, it always finds its way to one place-
the warmth we share when we come together.

Christmas is found in the quiet moments:
in the smell of something baking,
the sound of wrapping paper being carefully - or not so carefully - torn,
in the giggles of children who can't quite sleep,
and in the gentle nod of someone who's seen many Christmases before.

It's in the messages sent to far-off friends,
the unexpected kindness from a neighbour,
the extra chair pulled up to the table,
and the thought that maybe - just maybe -
there is more that connects us than divides us.

And in this season of gathering and giving.
we also pause for a moment to hold in our hearts
those who are not with us tonight-
loved ones we remember with tenderness,
and friends or family who are far away.

We think of Christmases past -
of laughter spilling across the table,
carols sung a little off-key,
hands held during snowy walks,

stories told beside the glow of the tree.
Those moments, though now memories,
are treasures we carry with us -
poignant reminders of love shared,
and joyful times that shaped who we are.
Their voices may have quietened,
but their light has not dimmed.
It lives in our hearts,
woven into every song, every smile, every candle we light.

Distance and time may keep us apart,
and for some, separation comes through hardship or conflict.
Tonight, we think of them too -
those far from home,
those seeking safety,
those waiting for peace.
May they feel the warmth of the world's compassion
and know that they are not forgotten.

For love is wonderfully stubborn;
it travels in our thoughts, in our stories,
and in the quiet spaces where we still feel their presence.
Each memory, each name whispered with a smile,
becomes part of the light that surrounds us now.

For some, Christmas means faith.
For others, it means family, friendship, or the turning of the year.
But for all of us, it can mean light-
the light we share when we care,
when we welcome,
when we choose to hope.

So tonight, as the music rises and the candles glow,
may we remember what truly makes this season shine:
not the decorations or the presents,
but the people-
those beside us,
those we miss,
and those we have yet to meet.

Because the heart of Christmas is not found under a tree -
it's found in us,
in every act of kindness,
every hand extended,
every loving thought that crosses the miles or the years.

For when we give, include, and love-
we keep the heart of Christmas alive.

Jackie King



23rd October 2025

18 December 2025

Council News

Surrey County Council under pressure over safeguarding review

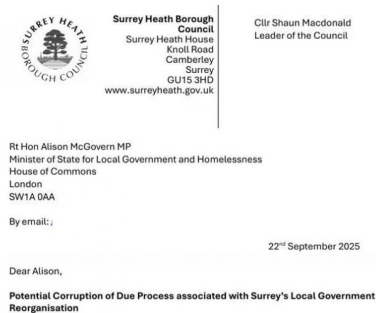


21 October 2025

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Council Council constitution News

Surrey County Council LGR leaflet misleading claim

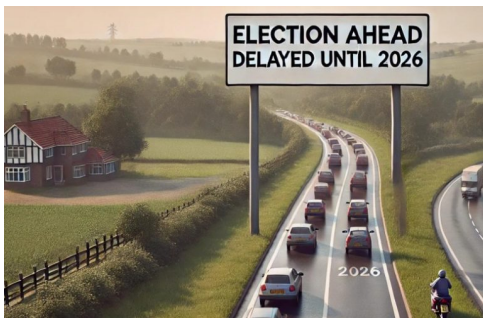


20 October 2025

Claims of potential corruptions of due process have been levelled at key figures linked to Surrey County Council's local government reorganisation (LGR) plans. The charges were put in a letter ... [Read More](#)

Council Elections

Surrey elections: Democracy delayed, democracy denied?



20 October 2025

Surrey's politicians have clashed over rumours that Conservative council leaders have tried to stop local elections taking place next year. An article in The Times this week, by Max Kendix, ... [Read More](#)

Council Planning Westminster

Surrey home extension charges aired in Parliament



20 October 2025

"Complex and inflexible" rules that unintentionally and "unfairly penalise" homeowners with six-figure fines "for the apparent crime of building a home extension" will be reexamined, the housing minister has said. ... [Read More](#)

Rugby Sports

Epsom's Rugby Team Make Light Of Missing Men To Go Top



20 October 2025

Gravesend 12 Sutton and Epsom RFC 29. Saturday 18th October. Sutton and Epsom arrived at the Rectory Field seeking a return to winning ways following their first loss of the ... [Read More](#)

Council Elections

LibDems continue to rise in Surrey



19 October 2025

The blue wall has crumbled a bit further with the Liberal Democrats having completed a clean sweep in Surrey, winning all six by-elections in a county once seen as the ... [Read More](#)

Editorial

Local government reform or just more layers?



17 October 2025

EDITORIAL When Whitehall speaks of “streamlining” local government, most people imagine fewer tiers of decision-making, simpler accountability, and a shorter distance between citizen and power. Yet, as the picture for ... [Read More](#)

Council Council constitution

Where do we stand on local government reorganisation in Epsom and Ewell and the County?



17 October 2025

The future shape of local government in Surrey is moving into its final stage, with national and local plans converging on the abolition of all borough, district and county councils ... [Read More](#)

Health Volunteers

Epsom Hospital’s support for bereaved mum of baby



17 October 2025

A Tadworth mother whose baby died tragically from a rare infection aged only eight days has praised the nurses and

midwives who supported her family during “the darkest time in ... [Read More](#)

Environment News

Epsom Downs leftovers



15 October 2025

Heaps of leftover racing dirt and old equipment have been abandoned on Epsom Downs, prompting criticism of the “weed-infested eyesores”. Epsom Civic Society has raised the alarm over soil heaps ... [Read More](#)

Council Environment

Ewell High Street gets a cleaner bill of health



15 October 2025

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Environment Committee has agreed to revoke the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for Ewell High Street, marking a major milestone in local environmental improvement. The ... [Read More](#)

Local government reform or just more layers?

18 December 2025



EDITORIAL

When Whitehall speaks of “streamlining” local government, most people imagine fewer tiers of decision-making, simpler accountability, and a shorter distance between citizen and power. Yet, as the picture for Surrey emerges, the so-called “reorganisation” seems to be producing the opposite effect.

Instead of the two existing levels – borough and county – the new design threatens to spawn three or even four. We are told that the twelve boroughs and districts, together with Surrey County Council, will be swept away and replaced by one or more “unitary” councils. But at the same time, ministers promise a directly elected county-wide Mayor and a new Strategic Authority above the unitaries. Meanwhile, below them, parish and neighbourhood councils are to be invented to replace the voice that boroughs once provided. It all begins to look suspiciously like multiplication rather than simplification.

The slogans speak of bringing local government closer to the people. Yet residents may soon find themselves further away from anyone who can actually make a decision. The proposed Mayoral Authority will sit at a distance, occupied with big-ticket issues such as transport, growth and infrastructure. The new unitaries will cover territories so large that many of Surrey’s smaller communities will struggle to be noticed. Below them, the new parish or “community” councils will have limited powers, modest budgets, and uncertain influence.

Epsom and Ewell’s own decision to consult on forming parish councils is both understandable and ironic. For ninety years the borough has prided itself on a direct, residents-led form of local democracy. Now, in the name of devolution, that independence is being dismantled. The new parish layer would exist solely to replace what is being abolished. It may well

be the right precaution, but it is a strange kind of progress.

Surrey County Council’s pilot “Neighbourhood Area Committees” add a further tier of consultation. These panels may be useful experiments in local engagement, but they are not elected and carry no statutory power. However well-intentioned, they underline the growing sense that accountability is being replaced by advisory talk-shops.

If the reform was meant to cut complexity, it has already failed that test. Residents will have to learn a new vocabulary of “unitaries”, “mayoral authorities”, “combined areas” and “neighbourhood committees” – each with its own meetings, officers, and costs. The idea of saving money and clarifying responsibility fades the more layers are drawn on the map.

There is still time for ministers to stop and listen. Surrey is not ungovernable; it is merely suffering from the same pressures faced by councils everywhere – tight budgets and rising demand. Reorganisation may change the furniture, but it will not conjure new funds or restore trust.

Before dismantling the one part of local democracy that still feels local, government should ask a simple question: is this truly reform, or is it bureaucracy reborn?

Epsom Hospital’s support for bereaved mum of baby

18 December 2025



A Tadworth mother whose baby died tragically from a rare infection aged only eight days has praised the nurses and midwives who supported her family during “the darkest time in our lives”.

Jodie Picknett gave birth to baby George at Epsom Hospital in April 2023. Shortly afterwards, he returned to hospital to be treated for jaundice but became suddenly very unwell and lethargic. At just seven days old, he was admitted to the Special Care Baby Unit.

That night George deteriorated, and despite the determined efforts of the neonatal nurses, he sadly passed away. A post-mortem later revealed that he had contracted a severe enterovirus — a condition usually mild for most people but which can prove deadly for newborns.

For Jodie and her family, the care and guidance of Specialist Bereavement Midwife Lydia Baker and the Maternity Bereavement Team at Epsom Hospital were a vital source of strength. The team liaised with the coroner and post-mortem services and connected the family with funeral directors experienced in compassionate bereavement care.

Jodie, 37, said: “Lydia supported us through every step – from looking after George and making practical arrangements to simply being there when we needed her. Her compassion and understanding made the hardest moments that little bit more bearable.”

Thanks to funding from Epsom and St Helier Hospitals Charity, Lydia and her team can provide detailed 3D ‘memory castings’ for bereaved families. The casts capture each tiny feature of a baby’s hands and feet, offering parents a lasting, tangible connection. Previously, families received only basic prints, but the charity’s support now enables the team to create intricate castings from the twenty-sixth week of pregnancy onwards.

Lydia said: “When a baby dies, families don’t have a lifetime of memories, so creating something tangible in that moment is vital.”

Jodie is now fundraising for the hospital charity so this work can continue. She is inviting people to donate ribbons that will form a memorial display at their local church, with proceeds supporting more bereaved families.

“After George died, the bereavement team helped guide us through the darkest time in our lives with empathy and respect,” Jodie said. “By fundraising, we hope to help Lydia and her team continue their vital work, ensuring more families receive the same compassionate, specialist care. Our ribbon display is a small gesture, but it offers a space for others to remember their babies too. It’s a way to say: your baby mattered, and they are not forgotten.”

For Jodie and her husband Ben, 41, Epsom Hospital holds special meaning. Their daughter Alice was born there in August 2021 and their third child, Lucy, in May 2025.

Jodie added: “We think about our son every day – he is part of everything we do. We will never get to see George take his

first steps, say his first words, or start school. That loss is felt every day. So being able to say his name and honour his memory publicly is incredibly important to us.”

Molly Simpson, Head of Charity and Fundraising at Epsom and St Helier Hospitals Charity, said: “Losing a baby is devastating for any family and we are very proud to support the teams who help them through their grief. We’re grateful to Jodie and her husband Ben for sharing such a personal story and know it will inspire others to give what they can – your generosity will mean our exceptional teams can continue to support bereaved parents when they need it most.”

Jodie is sharing her story during Baby Loss Awareness Week, which offers a space for anyone affected by pregnancy and baby loss to share their experiences.

Donations can be made via Jodie and Ben’s JustGiving page.

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

Photo: George with mum Jodie and sister Alice

16th October 2025

18 December 2025

Rugby Sports

Sidcup Burst The Sutton & Epsom Bubble



13 October 2025

Sidcup 22 Sutton & Epsom RFC 12. Saturday 11th October. Sutton & Epsom first visited Crescent Farm in 1914 for a 25-0 win and it is a delight that, despite ... [Read More](#)

Community Volunteers Westminster

Epsom MP leads cross-party delegation to Ukraine to examine impact of explosive weapons



12 October 2025

A cross-party delegation of UK Parliamentarians has travelled to Ukraine to assess the humanitarian and environmental impact of explosive weapons and to strengthen cooperation between the two countries on mine ... [Read More](#)



Community Foodbank Volunteers

Handmade in Epsom and Ewell: local makers unite to support Epsom Foodbank

10 October 2025

Handmade in Epsom and Ewell (HiEE) will hold its first community event, The Festive Makers Fair, on Saturday 29th November 2025 from 10am to 3pm in the Youth Hall at ... [Read More](#)

Council News

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Annual Report

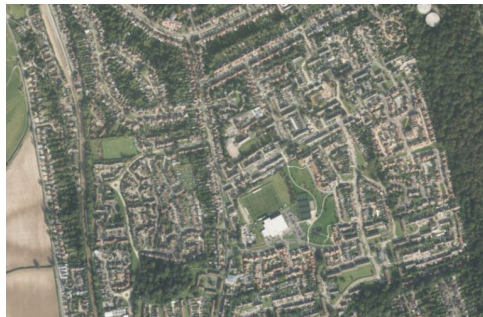


10 October 2025

EEBC publishes an Annual Report amid some questions over priorities and spending. Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has released its 2024/25 Annual Report, showcasing a range of achievements over the ... [Read More](#)

Community Education Health

Surrey inequality report challenges 'leafy county' myth



10 October 2025

The idea that Surrey is all leafy lanes, golf courses and big houses is a myth, according to a new report. Despite being a prosperous area of the country, the ... [Read More](#)

Education Health News

Defibrillators delivered by drone?



10 October 2025

A groundbreaking project testing how drones could be integrated into the UK's 999 emergency response system to deliver defibrillators to out-of-hospital cardiac arrest patients has been launched by the University ... [Read More](#)

Business Education

Epsom and Ewell College Principal wins Silver at National Business Women's Awards



10 October 2025

Julie Kapsalis recognised for bridging the gap between boardroom and classroom. Nescot's Principal and CEO, Julie Kapsalis, won silver in the 'Community Champion' category at the National Business Women's Awards ... [Read More](#)

Arts Community Environment

Ewell East underpass transformed by new community mural



10 October 2025

A once grim and intimidating underpass in Ewell East has been given a striking new look thanks to a community mural designed to tackle anti-social behaviour and instil pride in ... [Read More](#)

Council Environment

Inquest into Banstead tree fall death of 12 year old



10 October 2025

A full inquest into the death of 12-year-old Brooke Wiggins, who was crushed to death by a falling tree branch on the Surrey and South London border last year, is ... [Read More](#)

Community Health

Reducing food waste nationally and in Epsom and Ewell



10 October 2025

A growing number of major UK supermarket chains are removing 'best before' dates from many fresh fruit and vegetable products in an effort to reduce food waste. Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury's, ... [Read More](#)

Council Environment

Three new schemes to help Surrey residents save energy and cut costs



10 October 2025

Surrey County Council is launching three new schemes to help residents make their homes warmer, greener, and more affordable to run. With over 300,000 homes in Surrey energy rated D ... [Read More](#)

Business Community

“Outstanding” rating for Worcester Park based carers



10 October 2025

Trinity Homecare Group is delighted to announce that its Worcester Park-based visiting care service has been awarded an ‘Outstanding’ rating by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) following a recent inspection. ... [Read More](#)

Business Education News

Surrey Uni to open in India after UK PM’s visit



10 October 2025

Surrey joins new UK Universities in India Alliance while on UK trade mission to India The UK’s universities can be a “skills and research accelerator” for the potential of the ... [Read More](#)

Council Housing Planning

Historic Surrey Hills mansion saved from falling into “rack and ruin”

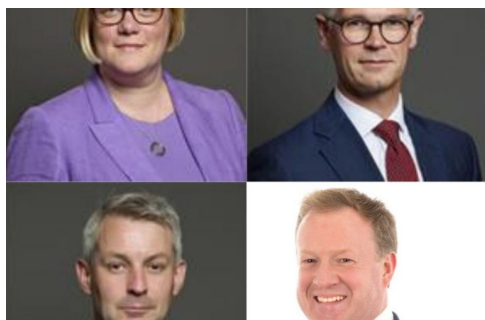


10 October 2025

An additional 27 homes will be built at an abandoned Surrey Hills mansion and stables to stop the heritage buildings falling into “rack and ruin”. In February 2023, Mole Valley ... [Read More](#)

News Westminster

Not MPs’ expenses again!?



8 October 2025

Some Surrey MPs have racked up thousands of pounds in hotel stays or London rent, despite their constituencies being within commuting distance of Westminster. The rules allow MPs who live ... [Read More](#)

Ewell High Street gets a cleaner bill of health

18 December 2025



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Environment Committee has agreed to revoke the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for Ewell High Street, marking a major milestone in local environmental improvement.

The decision, made at the committee’s meeting on 14 October 2025, follows nearly two decades of monitoring and action to reduce nitrogen dioxide levels that once exceeded national safety limits. The designation, first imposed in 2007, will now be formally lifted after a sustained and verified improvement in air quality, confirmed by data approved by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Councillor **Liz Frost**, (RA Woodcote and Langley) Chair of the Environment Committee, described the development as “fantastic news” and said the result reflected years of cooperation between the borough council, Surrey County Council as the highways authority, and national agencies. She added that the improvement “is a testament to the work of both Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and our partners in the area, as well as interventions that have taken place both regionally and nationally to tackle nitrogen dioxide emissions.”

The Ewell High Street AQMA had been declared when air quality readings showed nitrogen dioxide levels breaching the annual mean limit of 40 micrograms per cubic metre. The pollutant, primarily generated by vehicle exhausts, is known to aggravate respiratory conditions and contribute to ground-level ozone formation.

Over the years, the council and the highways authority introduced several targeted measures to tackle traffic congestion and emissions. These included disapplying certain parking bays during rush hours, widening the road outside 76 to 62 High Street, and re-engineering the busy junction with Cheam Road (B2200). Together with broader improvements in vehicle efficiency, cleaner fuels, and regional policies, these steps brought pollution levels below the national threshold.

A cleaner trend across UK high streets

The revocation in Ewell reflects a wider national trend. Across the UK, councils have been removing long-standing AQMAs after years of falling nitrogen dioxide concentrations. DEFRA’s latest data show that the number of AQMAs in England has dropped by more than a third since 2019, largely due to the tightening of vehicle emissions standards, expansion of low emission and clean air zones in cities such as London, Birmingham, and Bristol, and increased adoption of electric vehicles.

Nitrogen dioxide levels nationally have declined by around 45% since 2010, although urban areas with dense traffic still exceed targets. According to Public Health England, poor air quality contributes to between 28,000 and 36,000 premature deaths each year.

Local authorities continue to play a key role through the Local Air Quality Management framework introduced by the Environment Act 1995. Where air quality standards are achieved and are expected to be maintained, Section 83(2)(b) of the Act requires AQMAs to be revoked, as in the case of Ewell.

Looking ahead

The committee noted that the borough’s 2025 Air Quality Annual Status Report has been approved by DEFRA and published on the council’s website. Monitoring of nitrogen dioxide and particulate levels will continue across Epsom and Ewell, in line with national guidance.

The revocation also contributes to the council’s Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2029, specifically its goal to improve local air quality and maintain a “green and vibrant” borough.

While Ewell’s achievement highlights positive progress, environmental experts caution that rising traffic volumes and population growth could reverse gains unless clean transport initiatives continue. Measures such as promoting active travel, installing more electric vehicle charging points, and supporting public transport remain central to long-term sustainability.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Inquest into Banstead tree fall death of 12 year old

18 December 2025



A full inquest into the death of 12-year-old Brooke Wiggins, who was crushed to death by a falling tree branch on the Surrey and South London border last year, is set to take place next spring, as urgent questions remain over the tree's maintenance and safety.

The date was set following a pre-inquest review held on October 7 at South London Coroners Court, inside Croydon Council Chambers, and overseen by Coroner Ivor Collett. The inquest will determine whether Sutton Council, Surrey County Council, or both, bear any responsibility for the conditions that led to her death.

Brooke died on November 9 last year after a branch snapped from a tree she had been swinging on using a rope swing, while playing with friends at Grove Place, near the junction with Carshalton Road. The scene was described as deeply distressing, with her friends screaming for help as they waited for emergency services to arrive.

Emergency services spent over an hour trying to free her from the fallen branch, but despite efforts from residents and rescue teams, she was pronounced dead at the scene.

The inquest will hear evidence from the police, the Health and Safety Executive, and representatives of Surrey County Council. The council is responsible for managing the tree from which the rope swing was attached.

Arboriculture managers from Surrey will be called to give evidence on the inspection regime for the tree and whether it met required safety standards. The hearing will aim to establish if the branch failure was preventable and whether council maintenance processes were sufficient.

Coroner Collett noted the broader significance of the case, describing it as "an important issue for Surrey", given that it has the highest number of trees of any county in England, with a tree cover of 22.4%. He has also granted Surrey County Council permission to begin 'monolithing' - the removal of remaining branches on the tree involved in the incident.

The coroner is considering whether the London Borough of Sutton should be named as an "interested party" in the inquest. Interested parties are individuals, organisations or representatives with a legal interest in the death, giving them the right to be more actively involved in the inquest than other witnesses.

Although the tree was under Surrey's control, the branch extended over land owned by Sutton, and Brooke and her friends are believed to have accessed the area by crossing rights of way also owned by Sutton.

The inquest will examine the cause of Brooke's death and determine how and why the branch gave way.

Brooke's family attended the hearing and are expected to provide a pen portrait during the inquest to honour her memory. Coroner Collett confirmed that distressing body-worn footage from the day will not be used during the hearing, but that audio from the 999 calls will be played as part of the evidence.

Collett acknowledged that while the potential spring date for the three-day hearing was regrettable, it was a realistic outcome given the current backlog facing the court. Confirmation of the exact date is expected within the month.

Harrison Galliven - LDRS

Image: Brooke was killed after she was crushed by a branch in Banstead last year Credit: Google Maps

"Outstanding" rating for Worcester Park based carers

18 December 2025



Trinity Homecare Group is delighted to announce that its Worcester Park-based visiting care service has been awarded an ‘Outstanding’ rating by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) following a recent inspection.

The CQC awarded the service **Outstanding in four of the five key areas** – Well-led, Caring, Effective and Responsive – placing it among a *tiny handful* of homecare providers nationally to achieve this level of recognition.

A service at the heart of the community

Inspectors praised the service for being “exceptionally personalised and kind,” with carers and managers going above and beyond to support local people in their daily lives. The Worcester Park branch provides visiting care to individuals and families across Surrey, including communities in Cobham, Walton, Weybridge, Byfleet, Addlestone, Epsom, Banstead, Kingston, Tadworth, Ashted, Leatherhead, New Malden, Surbiton, Thames Ditton, Molesey and Chessington.

Highlights from the inspection report included:

- Helping clients maintain independence, with flexible support tailored around their daily routines.
- Supporting people to enjoy life’s small but meaningful moments – from feeding ducks and gardening, to celebrating birthdays.
- Spotting health needs early and working with families and local professionals to ensure the right support is in place.
- Embracing new technology and creative initiatives such as *Stories for Life*, enabling people to capture their personal history and strengthen family connections.

Celebrating local carers

“Families in our local communities trust us not just to provide safe care, but to make every day more meaningful,” said **Carla Gama, Director of Operations at Trinity Homecare Group**.

“That is thanks to the incredible work of our carers here in Worcester Park and across Surrey. They bring compassion, kindness and professionalism into people’s homes every single day, and this Outstanding rating is truly theirs to celebrate.”

Summer Smith, Registered Branch Manager at Worcester Park, added:

“I am so proud of our team here. Every carer and support staff member goes above and beyond to make sure people feel safe, valued and cared for in the way they want. This rating reflects their dedication and the strong relationships they build with clients and families in our local communities.”

About Trinity Homecare Group

Trinity Homecare Group is one of the UK’s leading providers of live-in and visiting homecare, supporting people to live independently and safely in the comfort of their own homes. With over 25 years of experience and a growing national footprint, Trinity continues to set the standard for high-quality, person-centred care.

The Group includes a family of trusted brands: Trinity Homecare, Country Cousins and Patricia White’s – together spanning fully managed, regulated live-in and visiting care, as well as introductory agency live-in and visiting care services across the UK.

Learn more or view the full CQC report: www.trinityhomecare.co.uk

[Copy prepared by Trinity Home Care.]

From Epsom to the Big Screen

18 December 2025



Dean Puckett Returns Home with His Debut Feature *The Severed Sun* for a Special Screening and Q&A next week Wednesday 8th October!

A special homecoming event is set to light up the screen at Epsom Picturehouse as local filmmaker Dean Puckett returns to share his debut feature film, *The Severed Sun*. Dean, a former student of Glyn High School and UCA Farnham, moved from London to Surrey as a teenager before embarking on a filmmaking career that has taken him to major international festivals. Now, he returns to Epsom for a screening and Q&A celebrating the launch of his haunting British folk horror debut.

Set in an isolated church community gripped by paranoia and superstition after a brutal murder, *The Severed Sun* is a chilling tale of faith, fear, and folklore. The feature marks the first full-length film from Puckett — produced by Rebecca Wolff (Grasp the Nettle Films) and Jude Goldrei (Lunar Lander Films) — and had its world premiere at Fantastic Fest 2024.

Following screenings at Picturehouse cinemas across the UK, this special Epsom event will feature a post-screening Q&A with Dean, who will share insights into the creative process, behind-the-scenes stories, and what it takes to bring a first feature from script to screen.

“I discovered my love for filmmaking in a small cupboard at Glyn High School in Epsom. This was entirely thanks to one exceptional teacher, Mr Ramasami, who believed in me. Despite struggling academically, he saw that I had a flair for visual storytelling. I lived in Worcester Park from the age of 12 and took countless trips to the cinema in Epsom during my youth, so it’s incredibly gratifying and moving for me to return now with my own feature film. “

— Dean Puckett, Director of *The Severed Sun*

“It’s a real privilege to work with homegrown talent like Dean and to share his debut feature with the community that helped shape his creative journey. Events like this are not only exciting cinematic moments, they’re also a chance to show aspiring filmmakers that it is possible to follow your passion and make something special. Community is at the heart of what we do at Picturehouse, and hosting screenings like this — which bring people together and celebrate local success — is exactly what our cinema is all about.”

The screening is a chance not only to experience one of the most distinctive new British films of the year but also to celebrate a hometown success story — and discover what it’s really like to turn a dream into a debut.

Event Details:

 Epsom Picturehouse, Epsom Square, Epsom, KT19 8AG

The Severed Sun: followed by a Q&A with Dean Puckett and filmmakers

 **17**
Tuesday 8 October, 6:30pm

 Tickets: www.picturehouses.com/epsom

Image of Dean Puckett

2nd October 2025

18 December 2025

Council Finances

Epsom reserves vs investment



29 September 2025

A bid to raid a Epsom and Ewell council's multi-million pound property reserves to pay for crumbling public buildings has been thrown out by councillors. Epsom and Ewell Borough councillors ... [Read More](#)

Community Health

Rehabilitation Hub in Leatherhead rehabilitated



29 September 2025

Epsom residents are set to benefit from a new integrated musculoskeletal (MSK) facility following a significant investment at Leatherhead Hospital. The Leach Rehabilitation Hub has undergone a comprehensive transformation, creating ... [Read More](#)

Council Housing Planning

Stage 2 Examination of Epsom & Ewell's Local Plan opens Tuesday



28 September 2025

The Inspector appointed to examine Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's draft Local Plan, C Masters MA (Hons) FRTPI, will open Stage 2 hearings at Epsom Town Hall, The Parade, KT18 ... [Read More](#)

Council Council constitution

Caterham's parochial battle.... a sign of things to come?



27 September 2025

Caterham could soon be governed by a single town council after a majority of residents backed the idea - but the proposal has split opinion among councillors and locals. At ... [Read More](#)

Horse racing Sports

Epsom Racecourse: Preview and Tips for Sunday's Seven-Race Card



27 September 2025

It's Epsom Racecourse's season finale Sunday, and the seven-race card features the Apprentices' Derby Handicap, alongside four other handicaps, a conditions stakes and a novice. Read on for a ... [Read More](#)

Council Transport

Half price Surrey bus journeys for under 20s soar to one million



27 September 2025

19,000 young people aged 20 and under are now benefitting from 50% off bus journeys across Surrey. The Surrey LINK card was developed by Surrey County Council in 2023 to ... [Read More](#)

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Epsom commemorates VJ day

18 December 2025



St Martin's Church, Epsom, was filled on Friday 15th August as the borough came together to mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day - the end of the Second World War in the Far East. The service, organised by the Royal British Legion's Epsom and Ewell branch, brought together civic leaders, veterans, families, choirs and the wider community to commemorate those who served and those who never came home.

The service was led by Revd Nick Parish, who in his opening prayer set the tone:

"God, our Father, in the dying and rising of your Son, Jesus Christ, you have brought life and salvation out of cruelty and death. We mark VJ Day in gratitude for the courage of the allied forces who suffered for freedom in the Far East campaign, and in sorrow for all that hinders the coming of your kingdom of peace. Give us wisdom to learn from the bitter memories of war and hearts that long for the unity of all nations."

A personal touch from local families

Among the most moving contributions came from Mrs Sheila Carlson-Berry, who read extracts from her late father Douglas Fletcher's letters home from Burma. Fletcher, who had volunteered for the RAF at 19, wrote more than 250 letters to his sweetheart Sylvie during his service.

From October 1944 he wrote with cautious optimism:

"I suppose by the time you receive this European war will be just about finished. What a wonderful thought. It must make the people at home very happy... loved ones at home free from all danger. That, of course, is the main reason for our joy. The other is that now we can have the men and materials out here to put an end to this."

In another letter, he reflected on the "forgotten" nature of the Burma campaign:

"Most people don't realise there's a war on out here. It's only the people who have someone here that understand what is happening. The children have suffered most. It will take years to erase horrible memories from their minds. Man's inhumanity to man - a terrible war, isn't it?"

By August 1945, as the atomic bombs fell on Japan, Fletcher wrote with relief:

"So it's all over. Hard to believe, isn't it? It came so suddenly, but there it is. It will make things so much easier... Yes, the atomic bomb is a terrible weapon, but I think we have it to thank for the Jap surrender... I sincerely hope it will be the last war on this earth. War is too terrible a business. So many innocent people have to suffer."

Sheila told the congregation: "As you probably guessed, Douglas is my dad. Sylvie, my mum. He never forgot his comrades. Each Remembrance Day, I went with him to Westminster, and he cried as he planted a cross in the garden for his friend and pilot, Godwin Scudamore, who didn't make it home."

The stories of Epsom's fallen

Cllr Dr Graham Jones MBE and the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Michael Molyneux, read researched accounts of four Epsom men who lost their lives in the Far East campaign.

- **Sergeant Jack Cannon**, Royal Artillery, died 28 February 1944 aged 30 at Imphal, India: “Jack married Nora Rush in 1940, and a year later their son Anthony was born. After just a year with his family, Jack was sent to India... He was killed in action during a Japanese attack and later interred at the Commonwealth War Graves cemetery in Imphal. His widow Nora requested the inscription: *‘To a beautiful life came a sudden end, and he died as he lived, everyone’s friend.’*”
- **Corporal Lionel William Murray**, Dorset Regiment, killed at the Battle of Kohima, 4 May 1944, aged 28: “Before the war he lived with his mother in Langley Vale. He was evacuated from Dunkirk, then sent to India to train in jungle warfare. At Kohima he fought in bitter hand-to-hand combat and was killed in action. His gravestone reads: *‘In loving memory of a beloved son and brother. Rest in peace.’*”
- **Lance Bombardier Alfred William Cates**, Royal Artillery, died of cholera 26 July 1943 aged 42: “Stationed in Singapore, he was taken prisoner in February 1942 and sent to work on the notorious Thailand-Burma Death Railway. His widow Emma chose the words: *‘So young, so calm, so bright, I bid you, my dearest one, goodnight.’*”
- **Noel Seymour**, RAF wireless operator, died 14 October 1943 aged 21: “Taken prisoner in Singapore, he too was forced to work on the Burma Railway, where some 30 prisoners died every day. Noel was one of them. He lies in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery in Thailand, and his name is remembered on the war memorial in this very church.”

Tributes from today’s leaders

Helen Maguire MP for Epsom and Ewell, whose grandfather had served in Burma, spoke of both the past and her own military service: “Those who served in the Burma campaign were referred to as the Forgotten Army, and today we remember them and we honour them... My grandfather fought in the Battle of Kohima, a brutal and decisive turning point in the war. Like many who served there, he never spoke of his experiences, but it was clear the war stayed with him for the rest of his life. I remember him today with pride, gratitude and honour.”

Maguire linked her own military service in Bosnia and Iraq to the experiences of those remembered:

“War is cruel and it affects innocent people. It’s something civilians should never have to live through. Today, I remember my grandfather and those he served with. I remember those who didn’t come home, and I remember too the lasting impact of service on families, on lives and on future generations. We give thanks for peace and pray for an end to wars.”

Community effort

Barb Warwick, principal organiser with the Epsom RBL, later thanked the many contributors, from choirs and standard bearers to the volunteers who served over 100 cups of tea and cake in St Martin’s Hall. She acknowledged the “wonderful trumpeter Mr Dennis Sexton” for sounding the Last Post, and Tom Davey representing 135 Squadron.

Warwick reflected that this was “almost certainly the last service of its kind” and praised those who helped plan the event, especially John Rogers and Revd Nick Parish: “You did them proud.”

Remembering the Forgotten Army

The commemoration at St Martin’s – once known as the “Burma Star church” – brought together personal memory, civic duty, and community remembrance. The letters of Douglas Fletcher, the stories of Cannon, Murray, Cates and Seymour, and the testimonies of descendants and leaders ensured that those from Epsom who served in the Far East will not be forgotten.

As the exhortation reminded the packed congregation: *“We will remember them.”*

You can watch the full service on this video link: [Epsom and Ewell VJ Day Commemoration](#)

Image: Barb Warwick of Royal British Legion Epsom and Ewell the principal organiser of the event.

Silver musical lines under a cloudless Epsom sky

18 December 2025



On Sunday 10 August, under a radiant summer sky, the Epsom & Ewell Silver Band gave a free open-air concert in Rosebery Park. Families and friends gathered, bringing their own chairs or settling under marquees, enjoying ice creams,

picnics, and the gentle warmth of the day. The relaxed, communal atmosphere felt quintessentially British—just the sort of setting the band seems to relish.

EESB competes in the First Section of the London & Southern Counties region, and is active within the Southern Counties Amateur Band Association (eesb.org.uk). Founded around 1910 as Banstead Silver Band, it has a rich heritage, including early rehearsal stories in barns and a legendary centenarian player, Tom Fiddimore, who helped sustain the band through decades. In July 2023, the experienced tenor-horn player and conductor Tariq Ahmed was appointed Musical Director. Originally from Lancashire, Tariq has an impressive background with championship bands and contest successes, including experience on BBC Radio 2, European tours, and national finals.

EESB's presentation was a masterclass in subtle harmonies and gorgeous arrangements. The ensemble gently wove together familiar melodies with rich brass textures.

The first half opened with *San Lorenzo*, a lyrical piece whose fluid lines invoked a serene Italian sunrise. *Swingtime Religion* brought a sprightly, jazz-tinged rhythm to the park. The *Wichita Lineman* was delivered with poignant phrasing, capturing the emotional core of Jimmy Webb's classic. In *Concerto de Aranjuez*, the *Adagio's* romantic guitar theme, eloquently rendered by brass, floated beautifully amid the greenery. The *Spirit Within*, a more modern piece imbued with introspection and warmth. *Bui Doi* carried a haunting quality, resonating with depth, while *St Louis Blues March* blended bluesy soul with marching energy. *Let's Face the Music and Dance*, the Irving Berlin standard, swung with effortless charm to close the half.

The second half began with *Florentiner March*, bright and ceremonial, restoring lively momentum. *Ae Fond Kiss*, Robert Burns' tender farewell, was exquisitely phrased. *Salute to Sinatra* offered a glitzy, nostalgic trip back to the Rat Pack era. With *One Look* from the musical *Sunset Boulevard* was dramatic and expressive, the brass almost singing the lyrics. *Pinball Wizard* brought energy and edge, while *Song of the Night Sky* was dreamy and atmospheric, ideal for a summer evening. *Pastime with Good Company* nodded to Elizabethan merriment, and the finale, *You Can't Stop the Beat*, soared energetically to bring the concert to a rousing close.

This concert showcased the band's mastery of nuance, from classical depth to modern zest, with arrangements that highlighted every section in balanced harmony. On a sunny August afternoon, amid picnics and cheerful chatter, the Epsom & Ewell Silver Band underlined its role not just as a brass ensemble, but as a focal point of community culture and joyful musical experience.

Thanks to Cllr Steven McCormick (RA Surrey and Woodcote and Langley) for arranging and the photo.

The Royal Marines Band Collingwood at Epsom Playhouse

18 December 2025



Organised by Cllr **Dr Graham Jones** MBE (Lieutenant Colonel (retired) (RA Cuddington) the renowned **Royal Marines Band Collingwood** made a triumphant performance at the Epsom Playhouse on Friday night, delivering a rousing programme brimming with technical excellence, military precision, and heartfelt artistry. Conducted by Captain Phil Trudgeon and Warrant Officer 2 Bandmaster Jamie Gunn, the band captivated a near-capacity audience with a thrilling showcase of traditional military repertoire and popular favourites.

The evening began, fittingly, with the National Anthem performed with stately dignity, reflecting the band's deep roots in national and royal service.

The opening item, **Overture to *Candide* by Leonard Bernstein**, displayed infectious energy and fizzing orchestration, setting a vibrant tone. Bernstein's much-loved operetta is famed for its satirical bite, and the Marines captured its brilliance and wit with panache.

Next came John Philip Sousa's **Who's Who in Navy Blue**, a 1920 march celebrating American naval traditions, crisply articulated by the brass and percussion with authentic verve.

In a change of mood, the band shifted to the familiar strains of the **Top Gun Theme**, arranged by Laughton. Its soaring harmonies and stirring sense of adventure delighted the audience, showcasing the band's ability to cross genres effortlessly.

The **Drum Static** interlude then brought the spotlight to the Corps of Drums. Their razor-sharp discipline, complex sticking patterns and synchronised movement brought rapturous applause.

Cape Helles by Young followed, a poignant musical tribute to the Gallipoli landings of 1915, performed with great sensitivity and power.

Alford's lively **The Mad Major** quick march injected a welcome spark of lightness, its playful melody and military swagger a reminder of Alford's enduring legacy as the "British March King."

A show-stopping highlight came with Corporal Savage's clarinet solo in **Artie Shaw's Clarinet Concerto**, arranged by Cray. This 1940 swing-inspired concerto, with its swooping glissandi and jazz idioms, was delivered with aplomb and won a spontaneous ovation.

The first half concluded with two contrasting works. **In Ireland** by Lance Corporal Brooks explored traditional folk-tinged melodies with a fresh, lyrical approach. Finally, Frank Ticheli's **Vesuvius** erupted with rhythmic fire and dramatic textures, a thrilling depiction of the famous volcano's destructive power.

The second half began with **Maiden Legacy**, an arrangement by Captain Trudgeon, demonstrating the band's ability to reinterpret newer repertoire with flair.

A stylish rendition of **Skyfall**, the James Bond theme popularised by Adele with band soloist Beth McGregor, delivered a rich, cinematic grandeur which clearly resonated with the audience.

For the finale, the band turned to a cornerstone of English wind music: Gustav Holst's **A Moorside Suite**, originally written for brass band.

- The **Scherzo** sparkled with rhythmic energy,
- The **Nocturne** brought a serene, pastoral calm,
- And the concluding **March** was robust and dignified, the perfect platform for the band's tonal power and ensemble unity.

Shenandoah, arranged by Frank Ticheli, offered a moving moment of reflection. This classic American folk tune, thought to date back to early 19th-century river boatmen, was performed with deep feeling and a sonorous blend. Played in memory of a young member of the band recently lost to motor neurone disease.

As dusk approached, the band performed the traditional **Sunset**, arranged by Green, a moment of quiet remembrance often associated with evening ceremonies in the Royal Navy.

The concert then closed with two of the Royal Marines' most cherished musical emblems: **Heart of Oak**, the official march of the Royal Navy since the 18th century, and **A Life on the Ocean Wave**, the Royal Marines' regimental march, based on Henry Russell's 19th-century song. These stirring finales underlined the band's powerful heritage and left the audience in no doubt of their world-class standing.

However, the audience would not let them go without an encore and with Eric Coates' great Dambusters March all left satisfied.

The Royal Marines Band Service has maintained its traditions since the 18th century, combining musical excellence with operational service. The Band Collingwood, based at HMS Collingwood, continues to support Royal Navy and national ceremonial events across the UK and internationally. Its members are trained both as musicians and as deployable service personnel, maintaining a dual role unmatched in the military music world.

The evening was also attended by members of the local branch of the Royal British Legion (RBL), who noted in the programme that concerts like these are an enduring link between the public and the Armed Forces, highlighting the shared remembrance and respect for those who have served.

This concert was a brilliant reminder of the pride, tradition, and sheer artistry of the Royal Marines Band Collingwood, whose excellence lifted the hearts of all who were privileged to hear them.

Well done to Dr Graham Jones for bringing such a memorable evening to Epsom.

Image courtesy Steven McCormick Photography

Epsom & Ewell athletics legend remembered

18 December 2025



Remembering Don Turner: A Legend in Local Athletics

Epsom and Ewell's athletics community is mourning the loss of **Don Turner**, who passed away on Sunday, 9 March. A dedicated member of **Epsom and Ewell Harriers** for an incredible 70 years, Don was not only an accomplished athlete but also a respected official and administrator who left an indelible mark on the sport, both locally and nationally.

Don's career in athletics was nothing short of remarkable. An international-standard distance runner, he completed 65 marathons, but his true talent shone in even longer races. He broke the world record for a six-hour track run in challenging conditions at Stompond Lane, won the grueling Isle of Man TT course race twice, and was part of a Surrey trio who dominated the 1962 Comrades Marathon in South Africa, finishing within the top four.

His dedication to the sport extended far beyond competing. Don was a pillar of athletics officiating, holding key roles within Epsom and Ewell Harriers, Surrey Athletics, the South of England AA, and South of the Thames Cross Country Association. His expertise in timekeeping was widely recognized, and he became a mentor to many officials in the region.

A true pioneer in race technology, Don played a crucial role in introducing photofinish techniques in an era when timing relied on manual stopwatches and wet film processing. He was a key figure in international athletics, including officiating at the prestigious Crystal Palace events and working with Seiko at the Barcelona Olympics test event in 1991.

Perhaps one of his most well-known contributions was his involvement in the founding of the London Marathon in 1981, working alongside Chris Brasher and John Disley to organize the race's finish and timekeeping. Yet, despite these high-profile roles, Don remained dedicated to grassroots athletics. Well into his 80s, he could be found officiating at local youth competitions, including the Ebbisham League at Ewell Track.

Helen Maguire, MP for Epsom and Ewell and an Epsom and Ewell Harriers runner, paid tribute to Don's immense contribution:

"Don officiated in many a race I've taken part in during my 14 years running for Epsom & Ewell Harriers. Don also helped start the London Marathon alongside Chris Brasher in 1981. He lived in Stoneleigh. His contribution to the sport of running has been enormous and he will not be forgotten. Thanks, Don, for everything you have done for the sport."

A Club with a Rich Heritage

Don Turner's legacy will live on through Epsom and Ewell Harriers, one of the oldest and most successful athletics clubs in Surrey. With a membership of approximately 250 athletes of all ages and abilities, the club competes in a range of track and field, cross country, and road running events at regional, national, and even international levels.

The club's facilities include a six-lane track and provisions for high jump, long jump, pole vault, hammer, discus, and javelin training. It is a strong competitor in the Surrey Cross Country leagues, Area Cross Country Championships, and road running events. Additionally, the club actively supports and encourages coaching and officiating qualifications among its members.

Epsom and Ewell Harriers also play a vital role in the local running community, including their well-established link with Nonsuch parkrun, where they frequently provide volunteer support. As a registered charity (number 1187959), the club continues to promote athletics and nurture future generations of athletes.

Don Turner's passing marks the end of an era for Epsom and Ewell athletics. He will be remembered not just for his achievements and contributions but for his unwavering passion and generosity in supporting the sport at every level. The athletics community will deeply miss him, but his legacy will continue to inspire for years to come.

Image courtesy England Athletics

Epsom Symphony Orchestra: A Cornerstone of Local Musical Excellence

18 December 2025



The Epsom Symphony Orchestra, a cherished fixture in the town's cultural landscape, has been delighting audiences since its founding in 1951. Over its decades-long history, the orchestra has shared the stage with numerous esteemed soloists, including pianists Phyllis Sellick, Eileen Joyce, and Semprini, clarinettist Gervase de Peyer, and, more recently, the internationally acclaimed pianist Benjamin Grosvenor.

Currently under the direction of its long-serving musical director **Darrell Davison**, the orchestra performs four concerts annually at the **Epsom Playhouse**. Mr. Davison, who has led the orchestra since 1981, brings an impressive musical pedigree to the role. A scholar of both Charterhouse and St Catherine's College, Cambridge, Davison began his career as the principal cellist of the Ulster Orchestra before transitioning to conducting. A winner of the Sir John Barbirolli Conducting Competition in 1979 and a prize winner at the inaugural Leeds Conducting Competition in 1984, Davison has conducted major ensembles across England, including all four London orchestras, and has appeared at venues such as the

Royal Festival Hall.

The Epsom Symphony Orchestra comprises a blend of professional musicians and dedicated amateurs, creating a vibrant and inclusive musical community. Among its members is leader **Julia Burkert**, a German-born violinist who studied on scholarship in Canada and Scotland before establishing a successful freelance career in London. The orchestra's ethos of collaboration and shared passion for music resonates strongly with its members, many of whom describe it as a "musical family."

The orchestra recently performed its annual Christmas concert to a packed audience at the Playhouse. The festive program featured interactive elements that encouraged audience participation, adding to the warm and lively atmosphere. This year's Christmas concert continued a tradition of welcoming celebrity narrators for musical pantomimes, with past guests including Johnny Morris, Wayne Sleep, and Lionel Blair.

Looking ahead, the orchestra's next concert on 23rd March promises a compelling program of classical masterworks. Highlights include Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Overture*, Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with Cypriot pianist Christos Fountos as the soloist, and Shostakovich's emotionally charged Fifth Symphony. Mr. Fountos, born in Nicosia in 1997, began his piano studies at the age of five and made his orchestral debut at 17 with the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra.

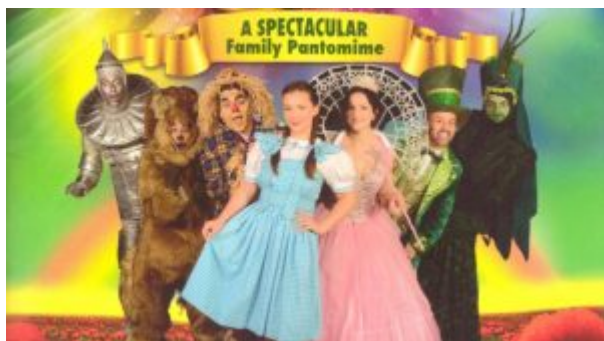
The orchestra's commitment to nurturing local talent and delivering high-quality performances continues to enrich Epsom's cultural life. It is also actively seeking new players of a good standard to join its ranks, ensuring its legacy endures for years to come. For more information, prospective musicians and concertgoers are encouraged to visit the orchestra's website. <http://www.epsomsymphony.co.uk/>

Related report:

Spanish fiesta came to Epsom

"The Wizard of Oz" works its magic in Epsom

18 December 2025



Friday 15th December was opening night for this seasons annual pantomime at the **Epsom Playhouse**. **Kate Spiller**, founder of the production company said "We are delighted to present the classic tale of 'THE WIZARD OF OZ' ... This well known story follows Dorothy in her adventures along the 'Yellow Brick Road: Her 3 great friends -The Lion, Tin Man and The Scarecrow join her in her search for the Wonderful Wizard. We have stuck very closely to the original story line with our production, although this talented cast have added much comedy and humour."

She added "Many thanks must be given to **Mrs Elaine Teague** and her team at the Playhouse, who work very hard throughout the year to bring you a whole array of theatrical productions. Special thanks are also due to the great number of 'mums and dads' that have driven their children to rehearsals and performances over the last few weeks allowing us to have over 200 Munchkins in the show and opening up a whole new world to these talented youngsters."

The players maintained a giddy momentum and energy throughout a packed programme of dance routines, pantomime banter and adult innuendoes.

The synchronization of vivid computer animated backdrops, a lively sound-track and the stage actions worked wonders in creating the dream-like qualities at the heart of the Wizard of Oz experience.

Sadly, copyright issues and cost mean the songs we are familiar with from the original "Judy Garland" film version will not be sung at the Playhouse.

Shining though were the performances of Emily Day as Dorothy, Rikki Stone's scarecrow and though unpopular in the traditional way, Jake Anthony Pearse's charismatic role as the Wicked Witch was appreciated at the final curtain.

The Lisa Jayn dancers didn't miss a beat in a variety of the main dance routines.

No less than six local young persons dance groups sourced the 200 little munchkins. None could have been taller than 4 feet. 20 were on stage at a time and performed with great professionalism. They included The Arnould School of Dancing, Gemini Dancers, The Italia Conti - Reigate, Joco Dance and Theatre Arts, Starstruck and Epsom's Terri-Jayne's School of Dance.

The success of the night is a tribute to the workings of an Epsom and Ewell Borough Council owned and managed arts venue, working in collaboration with artists in the private sector.

You can get tickets for performances through to 1st January 2024 via the Epsom Playhouse box office. Even at the full adult price of £25 the entertainment is good value for money and no commuting necessary.