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

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Landmark pub re-assembles Tuesday

1 September 2024



The **Assembly Rooms** pub, in Epsom, is reopening at 8am on Tuesday 3 September, following an extensive refurbishment project, costing £1.375 million. The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell Councillor **Steve Bridger** (RA Stamford) will officially open the pub on the day.

The Assembly Rooms is a Grade II listed building. It was built around 1692, during a period when Epsom was renowned for its spa and as a fashionable retreat for the wealthy and aristocratic. The original purpose of the Assembly Rooms was to provide a venue for social gatherings, balls, and entertainment for those visiting the town to enjoy its spa waters.

The building is noted for its classical architectural style, which reflects the aesthetics of its time. It features a symmetrical façade and large windows, typical of Georgian architecture, intended to create an elegant and welcoming space. Inside, the building originally boasted a grand ballroom, which would have been used for dances and social events.

The **Epsom Protection Society** was active in ensuring the survival of one of the Borough's premier historic buildings.

With the decline in the popularity of Epsom's spa by the mid-18th century, the Assembly Rooms underwent several changes in usage. It adapted to meet the evolving needs of the local community and continued to serve as a venue for various events, including public meetings, concerts, and theatrical performances. There followed a period of retailing uses and emptiness until 1966 when it served as the offices of the National Counties Building Society.

Now a pub, first opened as a **Wetherspoon** in April 2002, it has been completely refurbished over the Summer months. The customer area has also undergone a full refurbishment, as well as the relocation and upgrade to the bar area, including an upgrade to the drinks dispense equipment.



The pub has been fully redecorated throughout, including the installation of a bespoke new carpet and additional furniture. Customer area air conditioning has been upgraded, customer toilets repaired and redecorated, and new artwork added to the customer area. External signage and lighting have also been replaced and upgraded.

(New interior photographed)

Behind the scenes, the kitchen facilities and equipment has been upgraded, with an open gantry food hoist room, as well as new staff facilities created.

The Assembly Rooms pub will be open from 8am until 12 midnight Sunday to Thursday, and 8am until 1am Friday and Saturday. Food will be served throughout the day, from opening until 11pm every day.

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The pub will be open for family dining, with children, accompanied by an adult, welcome in the pub until 9pm, throughout the week.

Pub manager **Sel Devecioglu** said: “The £1.375 million investment highlights Wetherspoon’s commitment to the pub and its staff and customers, as well as to Epsom itself. We are delighted that we have also been able to create 15 new jobs for local people. The team are looking forward to welcoming customers back into The Assembly Rooms and we’re confident that they will be impressed by the new-look, upgraded pub.”

Epsom Playhouse gets a 40 year uplift

1 September 2024



Epsom Playhouse opened in 1984 as part of the development of The Ashley Centre and since opening has hosted a wide and varied programme of events featuring both professional and community productions. Highlights including The Royal Phihamonic Orchestra, Stephane Grappelli, Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen, the James Last Orchestra, Instant Sunshine, Jack Dee, Harry Hill and many many more.

At the beginning the Council head hunted **Graham Stansfield** (deceased 2018) for his contacts in the entertainment world which helped establish the Playhouse’s reputation early on. Then all the theatre seats could concertina into the back wall, opening the space for balls and exhibitions. Expensive to maintain and service these seats were replaced by the comfortable fixed seating that remains today.

The Playhouse is home to a variety of local amatuer ensembles including the Epsom Sympony Orchestra and the Epsom Players.

The former “members bar” or “upstairs area” has been defunct for many years and is getting a long overdue facelift and repurposing. It will become available for private hire for functions.

A spokesperson for EEBC said “We are currently working on improvements to Epsom Playhouse using an allocation of monies from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

One of the first areas for development is the bar on the ground floor. Soon, this will split into two – there will be one bar for bottled drinks and one area for draught – alleviating some of the queues that can happen at busy times. The ground floor bar will also benefit aesthetically from a new artistic mural, depicting singer and actress, Evelyn Dove. As well as this, there are also plans to add a new platform lift to aid accessibility to the upstairs area, which will itself be transformed with a mezzanine overlooking the foyer, improved seating, new flooring, another artistic mural and a refurbished bar area.”

Speaking of the upcoming plans to develop facilities, Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee said, “Epsom Playhouse is a wonderful entertainment venue for the borough, and I am delighted that it is now benefitting from a much-needed uplift, which will help it to reach its full potential as a place for creatives to gather, perform and spectate!”

Epsom Playhouse’s programme of events and successes are under the management of **Elaine Teague**.

UK SPF funds were allocated to help places around the country deliver enhanced outcomes, in recognition that even affluent areas contain pockets of deprivation and need assistance.

The main Auditorium seats 450 and plays host to major leading theatrical companies, including opera, dance, drama, comedy, light entertainment, variety, popular children’s shows and more.

The Myers Studio within the Playhouse seats up to 80 and is used as a regular venue for professional productions, and community events. Both the Auditorium and the Myers Studio are available for both corporate hire and private hire.

For more information visit www.epsomplayhouse.co.uk

‘Don’t put your national trust in Barclays’ climate

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protestors urge.

1 September 2024



On Saturday, 3rd August, visitors to Box Hill from Epsom, Ewell, and surrounding areas held a peaceful demonstration, urging The National Trust to cease banking with Barclays.

The group organised a picnic protest at the iconic Box Hill viewpoint, displaying banners and placards to appeal to the charity to drop Barclays, which is Europe's largest financier of fossil fuels.

Box Hill, renowned for its stunning views across Surrey, is one of the hundreds of sites owned by the National Trust. The organisation is a guardian of nature reserves, national parks, coastlines, historic buildings, and estates across the country.

The demonstrators carried banners and placards with messages such as 'Love National Trust, Not Barclays'. They engaged with families, distributing leaflets and collecting signatures for a petition that calls on the charity to switch to a bank that does not fund fossil fuels.

Kristine, an NHS doctor from Epsom and mother of four, expressed her concerns: "I have been visiting Box Hill and other National Trust sites with my four boys since they were babies. Exploring nature as a family is invaluable, and I am very disappointed that an organisation like the National Trust does not prioritise the natural world we are leaving for our children in its banking choices.

"Barclays is destroying nature with its horrific lending and investments in unethical industries. Knowing that I am indirectly supporting Barclays spoils my visits to National Trust sites. Since realising the impact our choice of bank can have on the climate, I switched to an ethical bank last year. I see no reason why the National Trust cannot do the same."

The demonstration was part of a week of vibrant actions by campaigners across the country, aimed at urging the National Trust to cut ties with Barclays, which has invested $235.2 billion in fossil fuels over the past seven years.

Despite publishing a new energy policy earlier this year, which it hailed as a step towards a "science-based" approach to "financing the transition", Barclays continues to finance notorious fossil fuel companies such as ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch Shell. In 2023 alone, Barclays provided $24.221 billion in financing to fossil fuel companies.

The bank's new energy policy has faced widespread criticism for loopholes that allow it to continue supporting carbon-intensive industries such as fracking. Meanwhile, investigative journalists have revealed that Barclays' "sustainable finance" is being used to fund pipelines and oil expansion projects.

Recently, other institutions have announced their intentions to sever ties with Barclays for ethical reasons. Christian Aid and Oxfam have already withdrawn their funds from Barclays.

Cambridge University is also in the process of withdrawing its support for Barclays and is leading a group of universities and colleges that are investigating more sustainable financial products. Despite its commitment to natural conservation, the National Trust is lagging behind other charities and thought leaders within its sector.

Alice, a mother of one from Sutton, who participated in the demonstration, said: "I have been donating to the National Trust for years and even used to work in the tea shop at another local property.

"But I never realised that all this time my money was going directly to Barclays Bank, a bank that funds fossil fuels and arms—both of which I am completely opposed to. I don't want my money to support such a horrific business, and I wish the National Trust would make much more of an effort to cut ties with Barclays.

"They have been aware of their members' ethical concerns for years now, yet they seem to be doing very little about it."

Euronews reported in February: "Addressing climate change is a critical and complex challenge," said Laura Barlow, group head of sustainability at Barclays. "We continue to work with our energy clients as they decarbonise and support their efforts to transition in a manner that is just, orderly and addresses energy security."

Barclays announced that it will no longer provide direct financing for new oil and gas projects, starting in 2024. This policy change is part of a broader strategy where the bank has committed to mobilizing $1 trillion in sustainable and transition finance by 2030 to help facilitate the energy transition. Additionally, Barclays has introduced a Transition Finance Framework and placed restrictions on financing for companies heavily involved in oil and gas expansion.

Barclays' representatives have defended their approach by stating that the bank's role is to support an energy sector in transition, focusing on companies that are actively investing in low-carbon technologies. They argue that their large-scale operations enable them to be instrumental in financing the global shift towards more sustainable energy sources. The bank has also set stringent expectations for its energy clients, requiring them to have decarbonization plans in place by 2025, along with specific emission reduction targets.

This approach has been described by Barclays as a balanced effort to meet the dual challenges of addressing climate

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change while ensuring energy security and affordability. However, this stance has received mixed reactions, with some campaigners arguing that the bank's policies do not go far enough in curbing support for the fossil fuel industry.

A question of Chalk Pit noise and dust

1 September 2024



Noise and dust pollution from the Chalk Pit waste recycling centre in Epsom continues to exacerbate the Council as residents' complaints continue unabated.

On 26th March 2024 Epsom and Ewell Council decided to allocate funds to address the issue. £40,000 was reserved for independent noise investigation, and £100,000 was allocated for potential enforcement and litigation work. The Environment Committee was directed to identify equivalent savings or income to replenish the reserve by the end of the financial year 2025-2026.

Questions were raised at the Full Council 30th July on progress.

Cllr **Steve McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) asked his fellow RA ward Councillor **Liz Frost** (Chair of the Environment Committee) "The Chalk Pit site is still causing many of our residents noise and dust nuisance with several complaints being logged daily to this council, Surrey County Council and the Environment Agency. There are planning applications in process with Surrey County Council but in the meantime, residents are experiencing regular disturbance to the unencumbered enjoyment of their homes and gardens. What actions are this council taking to address these statutory issues that this council is responsible for?"

Cllr Frost responded: "The Council has proceeded in line with its statutory duties to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to investigate complaints of nuisance. This has included an early morning visit to characterise and witness the noise at that time. Further, and as a consequence of a temporary diversion of resource away from a separate statutory service, the council intends to deploy a dedicated officer for Chalk Pit work alone for a limited number of hours per week over the summer period."

Cllr McCormick pressed the matter: "Can Councillor Frost confirm details for the dedicated officer mentioned, specifically how many hours per week, confirmation on the role of the officer resource, i.e., additional monitoring, for example? And why is the summer period only in scope? Why not a longer period until statutory nuisance is resolved?"

Cllr Frost replied: "The number of hours is not yet known. We are working with somebody who we are hoping to engage, who has a lot of experience in this type of work. So we will be having an expert who is used to investigating noise nuisance and knows what they're looking for. We're hoping that the work will start in August. I can't really tell you how long it will go on for or exactly how many hours; it depends on how much is needed, and the contract has yet to be signed, so it's difficult to answer that."

Cllr **James Lawrence** (LibDem College) pursued the matter further: "It's very useful to hear that we've got some form of plan for a dedicated officer time and resource to focus on the Chalk Pit. Would the Chair agree that it is unacceptable for residents to be woken up at 5:40 a.m. due to the repeated banging and experience repeated disruption throughout the day? Has this experience influenced your decision to give this dedicated officer resource?"

Councillor Frost responded: "I do agree this is not a good situation with people being woken up at this time. I think we would all agree with that. The difficulty comes with finding the actual evidence and identifying exactly who is responsible. That is something we are hoping to get more information on, but yes, it is not a good situation."

Meanwhile local residents complain they are suffering and the Council and other agencies are not doing enough quickly enough.

Related reports:

Chalk Pit action – a tale of two committees

"Heat and Dust" epic in Epsom

Chalk Pit debate deferred by late abatement

Will the dust ever settle on Chalk Pit conflict?

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Epsom and Ewell Mayor’s busy year

1 September 2024



The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell Cllr. **Steve Bridger** (RA Stamford) addressed the full council 30th July and told the meeting about his business.

“My Mayoral year has started well, with almost 40—well, over 40 now—duties attended so far and many more lined up. Almost first was the Founder’s Day at Epsom College. I’m probably the only mayor that has been fortunate enough to attend two of these fantastic days. I’m also probably the only mayor that was called for jury service in June, which unfortunately clashed with Armed Forces Day. Two firsts in the first month is not bad going, really, so let’s see what the rest of the year holds.

Derby Day was an unforgettable time, with grapefruit and sampling the Royal Melon, which was a gift from the Japanese Racing Association. I managed to hand over my £50 to Betfred, where all my horses went unplaced. One highlight that I felt humbled to be part of was the 80th-anniversary events of the D-Day Landings. The service at the Clock Tower in the morning and then the fantastic event organized by the officers on the Downs, ending with the lighting of the beacon in the evening, was a very moving experience. Despite a somber atmosphere, there was a feeling of celebration, with a traditional British fish and chip meal served at the Grandstand. It became a complete day honoring those who sacrificed their lives to make a better world for everyone.

I’ve also celebrated the 75 years that 135 Squadron has had the freedom of the borough, followed by the well-oiled and organized Village Day. I ended up judging the best or worst faces pulled with the Morris men and women. Other events that have been attended include the opening of two nurseries—and no, they’re not the flowering type. These are the starting posts to welcome the next generation into our borough. Everything has changed dramatically since my wife and I were parents to young children, and it’s amazing what facilities are available to the youngsters nowadays.

Handing out many trophies and prizes to students around the borough while celebrating their success stories emphasizes the great facilities we have to offer as they transition into the wider world. These people are our future, and they need to be recognized. Apart from the luxuries of being Mayor, it’s been humbling to see the other side of life, where an army of volunteers is beavering away in the background in all areas of our lives. Without much recognition, they do the important work of looking after the vital parts of our lives in the borough. These efforts we do not fully appreciate, so I thank them unreservedly for their work.

My charity committee has been working hard organizing events to raise money for my worthwhile charities. The first event earlier this month was a cream tea at the Horton with the Mayor and the Mayoress. This was very well attended, and unfortunately, we had to turn people away as it was overbooked. We had 84 attendees in all, which is fantastic. I would like to thank the Deputy Mayor for his great piano playing during the tea and the Horton for the superb venue.

We’ve got a beer festival planned for the four days of the August bank holiday in conjunction with the Jolly Coopers. They’re producing a specially brewed beer named “The Charitable Mayor” for the event, and the special beer mats being produced will become collector’s items in years to come. Proceeds from this event will be going to my charity fund. I expect to see a lot of inebriated councillors over the bank holiday staggering around Stamford and Goose Green—or I hope so.

Please put my Civic Service on the 8th of September in your diaries. It is being held at Christ Church by Stamford Green. Another big event in your diary will be the Charity Ball with a Twist. This will be held at Epsom College in their Big School on Saturday, the 5th of April next year. Many other events have been planned for the rest of my year. These will be publicized as the details are finalized.”

Council pay tribute to Epsom tree hero

1 September 2024

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Councillors of Epsom and Ewell stood in silence in memory of local tree hero **Mike Ford**. The full council meeting held in the Town Hall chamber on 30th July heard a tribute from Councillor **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley Vale).

“It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing of Mike Ford on June 27, 2024. Mike was a pivotal figure in the creation of the Epsom Tree Advisory Board nearly three decades ago. He moved to Epsom in February 1981 and worked as a skilled carpenter for over 50 years, retiring in 2009. He is survived by his loving wife, Leslie, and their son, Darren, and daughter, Emma.

For many years, Mike dedicated himself to planting, nurturing, and caring for countless trees within our community and beyond. His passion for trees is evident in every project he undertook. I first met Mike in Rosebery Park around 2010 when the Friends group was developing a tree trail for park visitors. Thanks to Mike’s vast knowledge, the tree trail was published and is available to this day on the Friends of Rosebery Park website.

Mike’s deep understanding of the park’s trees was astounding, reflecting his unwavering commitment to the natural world. Mike could recount the origins of many trees in Rosebery Park and across the borough, often mentioning if they’d come from his own garden. I vividly remember finishing a walk with him, standing by the pond in Rosebery Park, gazing at willow trees, and he remarked, “We don’t plant trees to enjoy in our lifetime; we plant for future generations to enjoy.” This profound statement underscores the enduring impact of his work.

As our friendship grew, I became more involved with the Tree Advisory Board. Mike’s tireless efforts helped secure the planting and preservation of trees across the borough. His enthusiasm inspired a dedicated group of volunteers, embodying his can-do, will-do spirit. Mike’s passing leaves a significant void, and I will miss our conversations dearly. However, I am comforted by the memory of the successful replanting of the Mike Ford Copse in the Alexander Recreation Ground by board members last December. Mike was there to witness it.

Mike Ford’s legacy will endure through the Epsom Tree Advisory Board and the many trees he planted, which will continue to offer hope, shade, and beauty to future generations. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him.”

Related report:

Dedicated Epsom tree-man

Image: Dedication event at Alexandra Recreation Ground honours local hero Mike Ford Epsom & Ewell, 3rd December 2023

Green Flag Awards Honour Epsom and Ashtead Commons

1 September 2024



Local communities are celebrating as both Epsom Common and Ashtead Common have been awarded the prestigious Green Flag Award, recognizing them as two of the best-managed green spaces in the UK. This esteemed award, administered by the environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, sets the benchmark for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the UK and internationally.

Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve (LNR) has achieved this accolade for the 18th consecutive year, underscoring its continued excellence in environmental stewardship. The site, managed by **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council**, is a haven for biodiversity, featuring oak woods, pasture woodlands, and wetlands that are home to rare species like cotton spotted orchids and purple emperor butterflies. It is also designated as a Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to its significance as a breeding bird habitat.

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Councillor **Liz Frost**, (RA Woodcote and Langley) Chair of the Environment Committee, expressed pride in the achievement, attributing the success to the hard work of volunteers and partners, including the Epsom Common Association, the Lower Mole Partnership, and Natural England. “This award is a testament to the dedication of our volunteers and staff who work tirelessly to maintain this beautiful and biodiverse space,” she said.

In Ashtead, the Ashtead Common has also been honored with the Green Flag Award, further enhanced by receiving Green Heritage Site Accreditation. This recognition highlights the site’s exceptional conservation efforts and its status as a National Nature Reserve since 1995. Managed by the **City of London Corporation**, Ashtead Common is renowned for its ancient oak pollards and diverse habitats, including those supporting rare invertebrates and breeding birds.

Ben Murphy, Chairman of the City Corporation’s Epping Forest and Commons Committee, noted the significance of the award, stating, “These awards demonstrate the effectiveness of our management plans in preserving open spaces like Ashtead Common for future generations. It also reflects the positive impact of the City of London Corporation’s investments in local communities.”

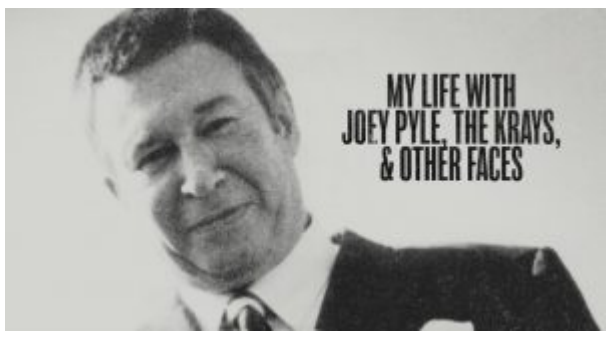
Both sites were evaluated on several criteria, including accessibility, safety, cleanliness, community engagement, and efforts to combat climate change. The awards celebrate the commitment of the staff and volunteers who ensure these spaces remain welcoming and well-maintained for the public. The Green Flag Award scheme highlights the importance of well-managed green spaces in fostering community well-being and promoting sustainable living.

The achievements of Epsom and Ashtead Commons underscore the value of preserving natural habitats and providing safe, accessible green spaces for all. As community members and nature enthusiasts enjoy these areas, the Green Flag Award serves as a reminder of the critical role that well-maintained parks and reserves play in our social and environmental health.

Image: Great Pasture at Epsom Common. EEBC

Crime story of an Epsom workhouse baby

1 September 2024



Born 1946 in the Epsom Union Workhouse **Ronnie Field** lived a life of crime. Together with local Epsom author **Martin Knight** he tells his story in **Nefarious – A Life in Crime**. Released in May this year it was Daily Mail Book of the Week and number one in the Amazon True Crime chart.

Ronnie Field was a prolific armed robber, close ally of crime boss Joey Pyle for forty years, friend and fellow prisoner of the Kray twins – he was the last man to stand trial with a Kray brother. Ronnie was also the inaugural prisoner in the notorious Belmarsh Unit – the “super” prison within a prison.

This is the first time Ronnie has told his incredible story. Nefarious is a raw, honest and sometimes humorous account of an abusive childhood, almost inevitable journey into criminality and life sharing the fast lane of armed robbery with the real-life Sweeney and on to the even more dangerous and murky waters of south London’s gangland.

Offering fresh Kray material, unseen photographs and untold stories regarding some of the world’s most infamous gangsters, Nefarious is an incredible first-hand account from one of the last voices of a generation.



Martin Knight was born in the borough of Epsom & Ewell. Martin has had a long career in newspapers, firstly with the Financial Times, and then with various media monitoring agencies he has launched. Martin is also an author of local histories and has co-written autobiographies. He is a shareholder in Early Morning Media Ltd and publisher London Books Ltd. He was a co-founder of and serves the editorial board of the Epsom and Ewell Times.

Nefarious – a Life in Crime can be purchased via Amazon HERE.

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Satisfy your eye at Epsom film festival

1 September 2024



Epsom based **Satisfied Eye International Film Festival** (SEIFF) is set to dazzle film enthusiasts with its “Best of Fest 2024,” running from July 26-28 at the brand new **Picture House** in Epsom Square. This special event will showcase the top-rated films from SEIFF’s history, highlighting exceptional storytelling from over 20 countries since its inception in 2018.

The festival kicks off on July 26 with the “People’s Choice” segment, featuring films like the Spanish short “Ainhoa” and the heartwarming “A Kiss” from the Netherlands. This selection promises a journey through a variety of emotions, setting the tone for the weekend.

On July 27, the morning begins with “Kids Animation,” where young audiences can enjoy charming shorts such as “The Kite” and “Ian, A Moving Story.” The afternoon continues with “Best of British,” spotlighting homegrown talent with films like “The Legend of Bob Leonard” and the poignant “An Irish Goodbye.”

Saturday’s programming also includes the thought-provoking “Underage Engineers,” an inspiring Polish documentary, and the “Rising Stars” segment, which showcases emerging filmmakers. The day wraps up with “The Human Condition,” exploring deep human emotions through shorts like “Bonobo” and “Hot Chocolate.”

Sunday, July 28, starts with “Adult Animation,” including the award-winning “Lost & Found” and the haunting “The Driver Is Red.” The festival then honors female filmmakers with the “Wonder Women” segment, featuring powerful films like “A Travers” and “The Letter Room.”

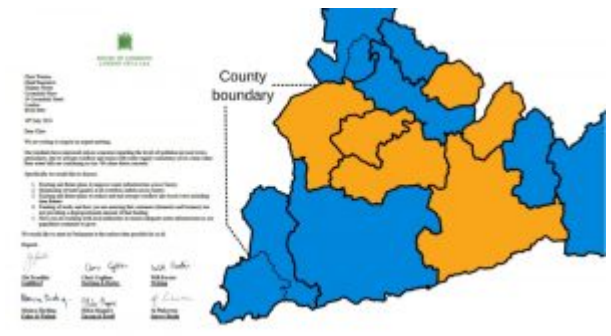
The weekend concludes with “All Blood Runs Red,” a collection of shorts addressing diversity and prejudice, and “A Night at the Oscars,” celebrating SEIFF’s past Oscar nominees and winners, such as “The Neighbor’s Window” and “Brotherhood.” Finally, “The Lighter Side” closes the festival on a humorous note with a series of comedies including “Career Day” and “Archibald’s Syndrome.”

This year’s SEIFF promises a cinematic feast, offering something for everyone and celebrating the best in independent filmmaking. Don’t miss the chance to experience these compelling stories on the big screen.

For full programme and tickets **click HERE**

Surrey’s LibDem MP majority take on Thames Water

1 September 2024



Buoyed by having the majority of Surrey County’s 11 Parliamentary Constituencies returning Liberal Democrat Party Members of Parliament, the six new law-makers, including **Epsom and Ewell**‘s **Helen Maguire** MP, have joined forces to tackle **Thames Water**‘s shortcomings. A spokesman said “This is all part of the campaign by the Liberal Democrat Party to get our streams, rivers and coastline, cleaned up and to stop the often illegal dumping of sewage into our water.”

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Chris Weston
Chief Executive
Thames Water
Cavendish Place
14 Cavendish Street
London
W1G 9NU

16th July 2024

Dear Chris

We are writing to request an urgent meeting.

Our residents have expressed serious concerns regarding the levels of pollution in local rivers, particularly, due to sewage overflow and issues with water supply consistency all at a time when their water bills are continuing to rise. We share these concerns.

Specifically we would like to discuss:

1. Existing and future plans to improve water infrastructure across Surrey.
2. Monitoring of water quality at all overflow outlets across Surrey.
3. Existing and future plans to reduce and end sewage overflow into local rivers including time frames.
4. Funding of works and how you are ensuring that customers (domestic and business) are not providing a disproportionate amount of that funding.
5. How you are working with local authorities to ensure adequate water infrastructure as our population continues to grow.

We would like to meet in Parliament at the earliest date possible for us all.

Regards

Zöe Franklin
Guildford

Chris Coghlan
Dorking & Horley

Will Forster
Woking

Monica Harding
Esher & Walton

Helen Maguire
Epsom & Ewell

Al Pinkerton
Surrey Heath

Surrey Political Map: Offa29 – Own work. CC BY 4.0

Epsom County Councillor win for childminders

1 September 2024



Surrey County Council (SCC) has announced a significant change in the payment system for childminders, following a

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successful campaign led by Residents' Association County Councillor **Eber Kington** (Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington). The new system, which will see childminders receiving monthly payments, comes as a response to overwhelming feedback from the childminding community.

Currently, childminders in Surrey receive 60% of their term's funding upfront at the start of each term, with the remaining 40% plus any necessary adjustments paid by mid-term. This staggered payment system has been identified as a barrier by nearly half of the respondents in the 2024 Early Years Provider Survey. Additionally, SCC's in-person consultation revealed that 95% of childminders favored a shift to monthly payments.

Councillor Kington highlighted the discrepancy in SCC's public messaging, which he argued favored larger group providers over individual childminders. He was approached by a childminder from his division, expressing the need for a spokesperson to advocate for a payment system that supports their financial stability and professional efficacy.

The childminder stated, "It would be good to finally have a spokesperson who can support us in calling for a change and enabling us to make a choice in how we are paid, so we are able to continue doing our jobs to the best of our ability, without worrying how or when we will be able to pay our mortgages."

Councillor Kington emphasized the importance of this change, especially in light of the upcoming expansion of early years entitlement, which will require more childcare places. He argued that ensuring a reliable payment system is crucial for recruiting and retaining childminders.

After lobbying the Council, Councillor Kington raised the issue at the July Council Meeting. In response, Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families, and Lifelong Learning, confirmed that SCC is transitioning to a new software system for early education payments. This system, set to be implemented in September 2024, will include the option for monthly payments.

Following the meeting, Councillor Kington expressed his satisfaction with the outcome. "This is excellent news, but it is a shame that childminders have had to work hard to get the change despite the clear evidence of need shown in SCC's own consultation results," he said.

The move to monthly payments aligns SCC with other local authorities, such as the London Borough of Sutton, which already offer this option to their childminders. This change is expected to provide greater financial stability and support for childminders, enabling them to focus on delivering high-quality care without the added stress of managing inconsistent payment schedules.

Image from www.childcare.co.uk

Surrey author tells story of Luftwaffe uncle

1 September 2024



Surrey-based author **Matt Graydon** brings a powerful new perspective on World War II with his latest novel, ***Leaving Fatherland***. Drawing from real-life family events, Graydon takes readers on a journey with protagonist Oskar, from his troubled childhood in Nazi Germany to his search for identity in New York City.

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Matt Graydon

The novel is inspired by the wartime experiences of his German uncle, whose crash in the North African desert during the war had become family legend. This personal connection infuses *Leaving Fatherland* with authenticity and emotional depth, making it a significant addition to historical fiction.

Published by Cranthorpe Millner on August 20th, 2024, *Leaving Fatherland* stands out for its detailed portrayal of life in the Luftwaffe and the harrowing aftermath of war. Graydon's protagonist, Oskar, endures an abusive childhood, a turbulent war, a failed marriage, and forty years of research, all in search of understanding his father's violence. This narrative, steeped in meticulous research and family history, offers readers a poignant exploration of how the past shapes our identity.

Graydon, who resides in Surrey with his family and a lively cockapoo, has a rich background in journalism and public relations, skills that have significantly contributed to his historical research and storytelling. He is an active member of the Phoenix Writing Group in **Dorking** and the UK's Society of Authors, continuously enriching Surrey's literary community.

Early reviews praise *Leaving Fatherland* for its thorough research and compelling storytelling. Kirkus highlights the novel's exploration of family loyalty and ethics, while renowned historian Iain MacGregor lauds it as a deeply honest family drama spanning continents and decades.

Fellow authors and historians, including Anna Stuart and Louise Fein, commend Graydon's compassionate and thought-provoking narrative. The book has been described as immersive and cinematic by award-winning filmmaker Andi Reiss, and as a moving family story by Jenny Towey of the Anglo-German Family History Society.

Leaving Fatherland (ISBN: 978-1-80378-209-6) is available in paperback (£12.99) and eBook formats from August 20th, 2024.

Computer's gift of a Trojan Horse?

1 September 2024



The computer won the Derby! On the eve of yesterday's famous Epsom flat race Epsom and Ewell Times published winner tips Los Angeles from Royal Ascot Odds and first to cross the finishing line **City of Troy** from a super-computer. What other gifts for humanity might be brought by AI?

An Epsom and Ewell Times reader put £50 on both tips and came away with a £100 profit thanks to the brain-power of a super-computer. He said "One swallow does not make a summer. So, I won't be inclined to follow computer tips every time but thanks for this one"

No Royal could be spotted on Epsom Downs this Derby Day but our own leading citizen Mayor **Steve Bridger** and Mayoress Carol Bridger took centre stage in the Royal Box of The Queen's Stand. Another Epsom and Ewell highlight was

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Helin Konyar a Ukraine scholar of the local **Laine Theatre Arts** leading the National Anthem just before the Derby stakes. The King and Queen attended Oaks Day on Friday.



Students of Epsom’s Laine Theatre Arts. Helin Konyar front row centre in yellow dress.

City Of Troy (3-1 Favourite) banished the memory of his disappointing run in the QIPCO 2000 Guineas with a breathtaking performance to clinch victory in the 245th Betfred Derby at Epsom Downs today.

The colt, sired by Justify, secured a record-extending 10th win in this prestigious Classic for his trainer Aidan O’Brien, while jockey Ryan Moore celebrated his fourth Derby triumph.

City Of Troy, racing on the inside, was settled towards the rear among the 16 runners as stablemates Euphoric and Los Angeles led the field.

Rounding Tattenham Corner, City Of Troy began to make an impressive move, surging to the front in the final quarter mile. He maintained his momentum, finishing strongly to fend off Ambiente Friendly by two and three-quarter lengths, with Los Angeles trailing three and a quarter lengths behind in third.



The Derby jockeys. Epsom Racecourse 1st June 2024 c. Epsom and Ewell Times

“It was hard to know what would happen today, but I was very sure we still had the best horse before the race,” Ryan Moore said to ITV Racing. “Newmarket… it didn’t happen. I can’t pretend that we knew it would happen [today], but we do know that he has a big engine, he showed himself to be a brilliant two-year-old. The Guineas… we got a few things wrong. But it’s great that he could come back today. He’s still a little bit immature, that’s the first time he’s run around a bend, hopefully there’s plenty more to work with.”

Moore reflected on the race’s turning point, stating, “We did a few things wrong at Newmarket, today we rectified it and put it right.”

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On the sensation of guiding City Of Troy through the final stages, Moore said, “He was going to win very easily. With the loose horse in front of him, he was still a bit unsure, and then he galloped out strong. He quickened well and then kind of waited, you have to be delighted with what he has done today.”

“I had to find a little bit of room. The race kind of opened up, loose horse in there, he travelled well into the straight, and he picked up and went to the front very easily and very quickly,” Moore recounted. “Then I felt he was still a little bit inexperienced, with the loose horse in front of him he wasn’t quite sure what to do – he was pricking his ears, then he changed his leads near the line and went on again. I’m just delighted that a horse who showed so much as a two-year-old – he was very good at two – and the Guineas, we got a few things wrong on the day and it’s great that Aidan’s got him back and brought him here today. He didn’t lose faith in the horse, stuck to the plan and it has paid off. We believed that if he turned up like we thought he would, he’d be too good for them, and he was.

“I was always happy where I was. It’s never going to be 100% smooth with a field that size, where we were, but I was able to pick a path. He took me there early and easily, and the race was over and he was in control of it a fair way out.

“He’s special – he won the Dewhurst, won a Group Two as early as July, won the Dewhurst, then to come here, and it’s the first time he’s been round a bend, and obviously it’s a big step up in trip. We thought he was the sort of horse, and once again Aidan’s brought him here, he’s turned up and it all worked out great,” Moore concluded to ITV Racing.

Epsom Downs witnessed a remarkable performance today, marking yet another chapter in the illustrious careers of City Of Troy, Aidan O’Brien, and Ryan Moore.

Bearing the balls of Derby week in Langley Vale

1 September 2024



Residents of **Langley Vale**, an estate adjacent to the renowned Epsom Racecourse, have expressed growing frustration and concern over repeated incidents of anti-social behavior and vandalism coinciding with the annual **Derby week**. The community’s grievances were vividly shared through a series of social media posts, highlighting a range of disturbances and a perceived lack of adequate police response.

One resident described a troubling encounter with three males, one of whom had a cast, yet lamented the police’s apparent indifference. “This is serious now, not just knock down ginger, but they don’t seem to be taking it seriously. They should be going on site and looking for these culprits. The police should be patrolling this whole area of the downs anyway. They know we get trouble every year; a burnt-out car last year on the downs and theft,” the post read.

Another resident voiced their anger over the disruption Derby week brings to the village, accusing the police of failing to ensure community safety. “The whole village gets held hostage this time of year, and the police don’t do enough at all to make the residents feel safe,” they stated.

The most alarming incident reported involved the shattering of bedroom windows by ball bearings, suspected to have been launched with a catapult, between 10-11 PM. Fortunately, the children’s rooms were spared. The attack occurred at the top of Grosvenor Road, near the bridle path. “Reported it to the police, obviously, but if anyone has had similar treatment or saw anything suspicious, can you let me know or report it to 101,” the resident urged.

Further reports of catapult and ball bearing damage surfaced within the village, including a patio door destroyed within a half-hour span. The resident noted the impressive accuracy of the attack, considering their home’s secluded position next to the woods. They identified a pattern, suggesting the culprits were targeting homes from the bridle path at the top of Rosebery, Grosvenor, and Beaconsfield Roads, areas supposedly under police dispersal orders. “Despite these boys being exactly in the same place three evenings and nights running, no police presence was seen at the top of the village,” the post concluded.

As Derby week continues, Langley Vale residents remain on edge, calling for more proactive measures from law enforcement to protect their community from further disturbances.

Inspector **Kelly Clifton-Sinclair**, Borough Commander for Epsom and Ewell, said: “We are aware of reports of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage in the Langley Vale area. We know that these crimes can have a serious effect on the local community, and I would like to reassure residents that we are investigating all possible lines of enquiry so that we can work to identify those responsible. Since the reports were made to us, we have had officers patrolling the local area, proactively speaking to the local community and those affected, to make sure residents feel safe.

“If you are a victim of crime, or have recently been a victim of crime, please report it to us so that we can investigate it thoroughly. Each report helps us to build our understanding of crime in the area so that we can respond, work to deter crime, and help keep our communities safe. If you have any information that might assist our investigation, please get in touch with us via Messenger quoting PR/ 45240061106.”

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Should the Epsom Derby go back to Wednesday?

1 September 2024



The first Wednesday of June used to be for many an unofficial bank holiday. Office, retail and factory staff parties filled **Epsom Downs** enjoying a day off and the annual **Epsom Derby** flat-race. The Epsom High Street shops used to close.

Of course, this year the Epsom Derby will take place on Saturday 1st June and the shops will remain very much open.

In a bold statement aimed at reviving the charm and prominence of the Epsom Derby, retired jockey **Dane O'Neill** has suggested returning the event to its traditional Wednesday slot. This proposal comes in light of apparent declining attendances and the Derby's diminishing distinctiveness against competitors like Royal Ascot.

O'Neill was speaking to Boyle Sports, who offer the latest odds for the Epsom Derby event, said "I think they have messed things up by moving it around a lot, and as a result has lost its identity for the wider public. We have seen it under several different guises. For the aficionado it is always going to be the Epsom Derby, one of the mainstays of English racing, but they have changed it so much that it has lost its spark."

For much of the 20th century, the Epsom Derby was synonymous with the first Wednesday in June. This midweek scheduling created a unique atmosphere, drawing massive crowds not only for the race but also for a festive day out. Historically, even Parliament would adjourn to allow members to attend, highlighting the event's national significance.

However, in 1995, the race was moved to Saturday in a bid to boost attendances and television ratings, a decision that has since been met with mixed reactions.

The switch to Saturday was intended to increase visibility and attendance, capitalizing on the weekend's leisure time. Yet, O'Neill and other critics argue that this move has diluted the Derby's unique character, making it just another event in a crowded sporting calendar. O'Neill believes that returning to a Wednesday would help restore the Derby's distinctiveness and might reignite public interest by creating a midweek spectacle that stands out on its own.

Epsom's course is renowned for its challenging nature, likened by O'Neill to a rollercoaster ride with its steep climbs and sharp turns, particularly at Tattenham Corner. This distinctive track demands exceptional skill from both horse and jockey, adding to the race's allure and prestige.

The Derby remains a cornerstone of English flat racing, celebrated for its history and the high calibre of competition it attracts.

Do you have a view? Write to our letters page.

Images credit: @EpsomRacecourse

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