

Rates demand puts temporary brake on Ukraine charity

7 April 2022



UPDATE - Monday 11th April - EEBC: “Having reviewed the documentation and made the necessary checks, [the charity] qualif[ies] for the additional rate relief.” Good news for Ukraine.

Monday 4th April Ashley Centre based Surrey Stands With Ukraine received from Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, a demand for business rates of £1229 per month. Immediately the charity applied for discretionary relief as they have had to halt purchases of medical supplies. Local MP Chris Grayling has supported the waiver applied for. Thursday 7th a Council spokesman answered the Times: “There is a formal process we have to follow for charitable rate relief, I can confirm this process is underway. There will be no request for payment while we process this. I cannot give a specific date for completion but I can confirm this is being treated as a priority.” Nataliya Irvine of SSWU responded: “We understand a computer probably generated the demand but it needs an urgent human intervention to reach a decision. We appreciate and thank the Council for processing an application we made for a street collection licence very quickly, so we know they can.”

Want more from us? Read more Council News here.

Menuhin Hall Concert raises money for Ukraine

7 April 2022



Pictured above: celebrated violinist Boris Kucharsky

Wednesday 30th March 2022 15 year old Ukrainian violin virtuoso Vadym Perig led the concert, accompanied by Ukrainian pianist Svitlana Kosenko, in renditions of Ukrainian composer Myroslav Skoryk’s “Melody” – (that stirs the heart of every Ukrainian) and his Spanish Dance.

They were followed by Ukrainian pianist Dinara Klinton playing Rachmaninov’s Elegie.

Sublime performances all the more remarkable to be accomplished considering the emotional turmoil being felt by the players from the violence being inflicted on their homeland.

The programme continued to a near capacity audience in the superb Menuhin Hall in Stoke D’Abernon with a Mozart duet for violin and viola and a student and school alumni ensemble, including the School’s Director of Music Ashley Wass at the piano and soprano Mary Bevan, in Faure’s magical La Bonne Chanson.



Yehudi Menuhin, the hall's namesake, widely celebrated violinist and conductor

After an interval during which some of the Ukrainian ticket holders had the comfort of meeting Dinara Klinton, celebrated violinist Boris Kucharsky and student ensemble stretched their arm muscles to the limits in a performance of Brahms's very energetic String Sextet No 2 in G major.

Programme sales and collections raised money for the Disaster Emergency Committee's funds for humanitarian relief for Ukraine.

The Menuhin Hall is a somewhat hidden gem only 20 minutes drive from Epsom and Ewell. You can see its programme of concerts at <https://themenuhinhall.co.uk/>

Epsom Choral Society opens its centenary celebration 2022

7 April 2022



From **Epsom Choral Society**

This year Epsom Choral Society celebrates its Centenary and is doing so in style!

Our first concert was on **Saturday 19th March 2022** at St Martin's Church, Epsom attended by The Mayor, Peter Donovan and his wife. For this concert, the audience was treated to Vivaldi's *Gloria*, one of the most popular pieces from the Italian Baroque era, as well as three works which were all written for Epsom Choral Society - Cecilia McDowall's *I Know That My Redeemer Liveth*, Jonathan Willcocks' *O Joyful Soul* and Adrian Payne's *I Hid My Love*.

The soloists were Lisa Swayne, soprano, Helen Semple, soprano and Carolyn Holt, alto, all top-class young professionals and the concert was conducted by Epsom Choral Society's Musical Director Julian Collings.



Epsom Choral Society with Mayor Peter Donovan and his wife

Our other concerts in this Centenary year include **Songs from the Shows** in St Andrews Church, Cheam on 25th June 2022, **Messiah** at the Epsom Playhouse on Saturday 3rd December 2022 and our ever-popular Christmas Concert on Saturday 17th December.

Epsom Choral Society is Epsom's longest established choir and has continued to sing throughout the pandemic. At first

via Zoom, then rehearsing outside in a garden and even, thanks to the kindness of the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, live-streaming a concert in a car park which was heard by over 5,000 local residents thanks to What's On In My Town.

Continued ...

Briefing notes:

1. Epsom Choral Society has been singing for 100 years and has around 90 singers. It usually puts on at least four concerts each year which attract a loyal following. Epsom Choral Society is a friendly choir – they do not require auditions but do aim for high performance standards. Rehearsals are on Wednesday evenings under the baton of their Musical Director, Julian Collings. www.epsomchoral.org.uk
2. Cecilia McDowall composed *I Know That My Redeemer Liveth* in 2009 for Epsom Choral Society as a tribute to Handel on the 250th anniversary of his death, with words taken from *Messiah*. It was first performed by Epsom Choral Society on 21st March 2009 at St Martin's Church, Epsom.
3. Jonathan Willcocks' *O Joyful Soul* was premiered by Epsom Choral Society on 30th June 2018. It was commissioned in memory of Cecil Wiltshire who had sung with the choir for 67 years, funded from the generous legacy that he left the choir. The piece's five movements were selected from religious and secular texts that encapsulated both his interests and his gentle and generous nature.
4. Adrian Payne's *I Hid My Love* received its world premiere by Epsom Choral Society on 15th June 2013 at St Martin's Church, Epsom. It was performed again the following year at the European Choral Festival in Überlingen in Germany and the choir has sung it on tour in France and The Netherlands. Adrian has sung with the choir for 25 years.

Contact: Nina Kaye: publicity@epsomchoral.org.uk, 07778 406834



Epsom Choral Society rehearsing in the 60s



Epsom Choral Society rehearsing in 2022

Epsom and Ewell gears up for Ukrainian refugees

7 April 2022



Tuesday 29th March over 160 local citizens converged on St Joseph's Church Hall for an information evening about hosting Ukrainian refugees. Half the hands in the room went up when asked who is willing to host refugees fleeing the war. There was overwhelming enthusiasm for the aid the community can bring to the urgent need for hosting Ukrainian refugees.

Joanna Sherring of the Epsom Refugee Network chaired the event and introduced local refugee supporters with experience of hosting and teaching English. Nina Kaye spoke about her experiences of opening her home to no less than 30 Syrian refugees since 2015. It is a big but rewarding commitment and friends for life are made. The important point was made that most refugees want to return home. Making them welcome here is a small way to meet the trauma of forced displacement.

The Government rules about hosting were explained including a requirement that hosts undergo a "Disclosure and Barring Check" (DBS). Basically this means a check about any criminal record. Apparently these rules are welcomed by Ukrainians especially as men are required to remain in Ukraine and the majority of guests will be women and children.

You can find out more information and guidance on the Epsom Refugee Network website [here](#).

“Local Pride”: an evening with Epsom Chess Club

7 April 2022



The Epsom Chess Club was launched in 2018 by Marcus Gosling and Ravi Sharma, the successor to the original Epsom Chess Club, founded in 1929. Meeting in MccAfferty’s Irish pub’s function room on Monday evenings, a large group of players sit in quiet concentration in a warm room adorned with 1940s-era metal whiskey adverts, flags and old newspaper front pages, juxtaposing the battlegrounds of white and black spread through the room.

Marcus, President of Epsom Chess Club, tells me that restarting the club was, “*a Matter of local pride, really*”, having lived in Epsom all his life (apart from 2 years in Russia) Marcus wanted a community based and, more importantly, community ran Chess Club the town could be proud of, “*I wanted to build something from nothing.*”, and he certainly has. With nearly 50 members available for games, the club is large and bursting with talent, having won their division in 2020 just before lockdown came into effect, like all of us, the club was hit just hard by COVID.

Chess is for everyone, big, small, young, not so young, plebeian or patrician, and in the Epsom Chess Club, these groups are represented well. I spoke with one member, who at 15 was the youngest present. He was in a position most kids his age dreamt of, let into a pub with no ID and no parental supervision, but instead of drinking as many pints as he could get away with, he was beating people twice his age at the world’s most sophisticated game. Matches can last minutes, hours and even seconds. In one match I counted 30 minutes before the first capture, between the cautious shifting of pawns and knights, you could almost hear the gears turning in the heads of the players. Chess can be tense, relaxed, fun and frustrating all in the space of 5 minutes, denoting how it can be so widely enjoyed by so many different people across the world.

What makes Epsom Chess Club special? Why do people keep coming back? “*It’s for the love of the game*”, Club Secretary David Flewellen tells me while they’re setting up their session, “*It’s satisfying to come here every week and end up playing a better game*”. What makes the club special is that it’s a place where you can relax with a drink and let chess consume you for a few hours, an escape from the problems of everyday life. When you’re in there, all that matters is the board, the pieces and the person sitting opposite you, with their hand placed thoughtfully under their chin, plotting your metaphorical demise. Ego’s are muted, friendly advice is given over drinks post-game and players observe each other’s games stoically, before respectfully congratulating/commiserating the winner/loser. There’s no gloating, no under or over estimation, just pure chess. In a place meant for drinking, revelry and out-of-tune sing-a-longs; a company of like minded men and women meet week-in week-out on a monochrome 8x8 square battlefield, if that isn’t enough to show that Epsom Chess Club is special, then I don’t know what is.

The atmosphere of the club is fun, friendly and familiar, with the same faces (and a couple of new ones) showing up week in week out at MccAfferty’s pub. Whether they’re playing a Blitz (speed chess) tournament or playing ranked games against each other, the love of the game is clear, as is the fact that we should all be very proud of our local chess club.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Epsom Chess Club are no longer able to hold their sessions in MccAfferty’s pub, and are looking for a new permanent home. The Epsom Chess Club is a fun, talented and welcoming community based club, if you or anyone you know is aware of a new venue that can host the ECC, please contact Marcus Gosling via email at marcus94gosling@gmail.com or David Flewellen at davidflewellen@gmail.com.

Poets Corner, Vol.1: Audrey Arden-Jones

7 April 2022



By local poets, for local poets and everyone

In collaboration with Epsom Hospital Radio we present poets’ corner.

We are indebted to celebrated Epsom poet Audrey Arden-Jones who has agreed to moderate this feature of our service.

You are invited to submit your poems for Audrey to read and publish those she selects. Every year we will have a readers’ poems competition. The website will also carry audio files of the poems read by Audrey or the poet. If you wish to submit a poem please see our “Pitch an article” form under the “contact” tab.

Tattenham Corner
(For Emily Wilding Davison)

We may cross over a well turned track
turn back more than a hundred years
on Derby Day

spot a young woman in her prime
who was imprisoned, force fed
who spoke out, broke out
shouted out

who on that day, slipped under the railings
into an incoming storm
of horses
galloping round the curve
into the long final straightness

a moment of history
she braved it
stood like a beacon – there for you
there for me

with her iconic message
Votes for Women
her last
to a King who should have listened
then she stumbled
under his horse

she never spoke again
never smiled again
never again smelt the freshness of rain
nor heard the June birdsong
outside her window at the Cottage Hospital

a much maligned heroine of her time
a heroine of our time
a voice that lives on

a voice not just for women

by Audrey Ardern-Jones

About Audrey

Audrey Ardern-Jones is a lifelong promoter and lover of poetry. She's lived in Epsom for fifty years and in 1984 founded The Poetry & Music Ensemble – a group of international musicians and herself a performer of poetry.

Audrey's poetry is widely published in anthologies and journals. Last year in June Audrey read her poem 'Tattenham Corner' at the special event unveiling the statue of Emily Wilding Davison in the Epsom Market Square. In October 2021 she read poetry and ran an art/poetry workshop for Epsom's 'Love me, Love my Mind' week. Audrey runs a regular 'Poets Corner' for the Hub – an online organisation linked with Epsom Hospital's radio – here she reads her favourite poets by famous poets.

Borough History: Elizabeth Whitrod

7 April 2022



Courtesy of the Friends of Horton Cemetery we republish researched stories of the 9000 patients of the cluster of psychiatric hospitals formerly located in the Borough who were buried in the neglected Horton Cemetery off Hook Road. The charity seeks to persuade Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to reclaim the five acre site from a property speculator to whom it was miss-sold by the NHS in 1983. This is the story of Elizabeth Whitrod.

Elizabeth was born in the March quarter of 1857 to William and Mary Vaughan (née Bratton/Brattan, in Wrotham, Kent. (Malling registration district).

William and Mary had married on 24th February 1846, at the Parish Church of St Marylebone. William's father was John, a Gardener and Mary's Father was George a labourer. On their marriage certificate, William was recorded as a servant.

By the 1861 Census, the family was living in Wrotham. William was a groom. Mary, his wife, was entered as a groom's wife. They had seven children, Elizabeth being the fifth child of the seven and is listed as a scholar. Her eldest brother Edgar is 14 years old and working as a gardener.

By the time of the 1871 Census, Mary Ann, Elizabeth's mother had died (in February 1870). A search on the GRO reveals the following sad story; Elizabeth's brother Edward had died on the 31st of January from a malignant sore throat of 6 days duration. Next, her mother Mary died on the 5th of February from typhus fever. Then, the youngest brother to Elizabeth, Ernest, died on the 20th March, aged 14 months from thrush and diarrhoea. Mary Ann, Elizabeth's older sister died on 29th March in the Union Workhouse at West Malling from typhoid. Finally, her younger brother, Albert aged 5, died on 7th April from diphtheria. It is hard to contemplate the family coping with such losses within the space of three months and one wonders what effect those deaths had on the remaining family.

The census of 1871, shows Elizabeth is acting as housekeeper for her father and her younger siblings Bertha, Clara and Frank, who were still at school. William, her father died in 1872 and on the 1881 census, Elizabeth is 27 years old, working as a housemaid to Hancilia E. Ionides, an Annuitant. On the 1891 Census, there is an Elizabeth Vaughan with a given age of 30, living as a housemaid / domestic servant. The head of the household is absent. The address is 2, High Street, West Malling. With her, is a Kate Vaughan some five years her junior and born in Malling, whilst Elizabeth is recorded as being born in Stratford upon Avon. I wonder if that was the birthplace of the absent head of the house. Perhaps Kate is what Clara, born in 1860, was known as.

In 1893, Elizabeth marries William John Whitrod, a 32-year-old labourer. His father, Roper, was a bootmaker but was deceased by the time of the marriage. William John Whitrod was born in 1861, in the Guiltcross registration district of Norfolk, the fourth of nine children. His parents, according to a family tree on Ancestry, were said to be married in 1852, but I can find no proof of this. The children were all born between 1855 and 1873. On the 1901 Census, William and Elizabeth are living at 7 Lansdowne Crescent, Kensington. William's occupation is that of a scavenger and Elizabeth is a caretaker. A scavenger would be what today we call a dustman, a refuse collector or street cleaner. There is no indication of Elizabeth's epilepsy.

Elizabeth was first admitted to Horton on 10th July 1906 and she stayed there for five years. On October 23rd 1911, she moved to the Epsom Colony. She was there for a further seven years or more and died on 12th January 1918. Elizabeth's death certificate shows that she suffered from epilepsy for many years. She is not described as a widow. I cannot locate her husband, William. A search in the GRO index shows the death of William John Whitrod, aged 45, in the March quarter of the Chelsea registration district. Could this be him? It is hoped that Elizabeth's medical notes will have survived and more information will become available.

Epsom and Ewell stands with Ukraine

7 April 2022



Epsom accountant Nataliya Irvine is among 350 volunteers working tirelessly to collect essential items at the Ashley Centre in the town to send to Ukraine where her family are currently living in the war zone.

They operate under the name Surrey Stands With Ukraine

“It’s good to be doing something”, Nataliya tells me as we sit down in a coffee shop to speak with each other about the incredible work that she and others are doing on behalf of Ukraine. Nataliya, since Sunday, has been organising local people in Epsom to collect donations of essential items, for those suffering from the current conflict. The vital and impassioned work she’s doing is supported by a network of amazing volunteers, whose numbers have swollen from 4 to 350, in one month.

Nataliya, who is Ukrainian, approaches the task with an almost sombre necessity. Her mother, sisters, brother and step-father, are all in Ukraine as we speak to each other, she worries about them day and night. I ask whether they’re collecting as much as they expected and she tells me that it’s more than they ever imagined. Nataliya emphasises just how supportive the local community has been, just how many locals have been willing to give up their possessions, and even their time, to help the people of Ukraine.

“It started independently”, she says, when I ask about the genesis of the idea. Nataliya tells me that it was just her, speaking with her family on the phone and sending them money for vital medical supplies, that were then being given to hospitals in Lviv. Nataliya began to reach out to friends and organise couriers to deliver supplies directly to the Polish-Ukrainian border with assistance from her local gym, FitnessTheory, who provided a vital place to store the items before they were sent off. What started as 4 people looking to make a small difference to the humanitarian effort, has expanded to a 350-strong group, with a committee and community hub, generously given by the Ashley Centre in Epsom, organising donation efforts on a much larger scale. Locally based registered charity Harrop HR Missions Ltd was able to step up and provide the legal entity to facilitate the operation. To have achieved all this, while worrying about her family in Ukraine, all a person can do is admire the strength and bravery of Nataliya and the many other Ukrainians working with her.

The charity has raised over £80,000 and sent over £450,000 worth of supplies to Ukraine in 11 van runs.

At the Drop-Off point in the centre, boxes upon boxes of supplies are piled high, but the spirits of the volunteers are higher. I was lucky enough to be able to spend a little bit of time observing the operation during one of its few quiet moments, and I was blown away by the compassion, focus and drive that pushes these selfless volunteers to go above and beyond for a country that most of them have never been to. They’re laughing together; they’re supporting each other mentally, physically and spiritually, drawn together and emboldened by a shared sense of duty, to deliver the help that Ukrainians dearly need right now. The whole time I was there, one word kept going through my head: Community, and that’s what I saw; a united community, together for a common purpose, selflessly working together to achieve it.

Many individuals have made what Nataliya and her fellow volunteers are doing possible. David Barnes, the lead volunteer, sits at the front desk all day greeting all those who wish to help with a smile. The volunteers I spoke with all told me that David’s work is above and beyond, and his contributions are truly vital. David Meadows, the general manager of the Ashley Centre, has also enormously supported them, allowing the group to use an unused unit of the centre, as their operations hub and donation point. Other individuals that gave both resources and time to help this cause are numerous: Councillor Neil Dallen facilitated contacts, Steve Moore’s guidance on marketing allowed them to tap into social media, James Brook, an architect also working out of the Ashley Centre, provided vital organisational support.

The team members I spoke to were full of appreciation for one another, people like Roy and Kim Deadman, Jess and Pinch Tarrant, Zoe, Ross and Luda, among many others. On top of each and every local Ukrainian who set aside time to help their country get the vital supplies it needs. This appreciation should also be applied to every single person who has donated food, money or any other item to this cause, their help is invaluable and is making a positive difference in the lives of people in need. Epsom should be truly proud of how it’s come together in a time of great melancholy for Europe and the world, to provide hope and more crucially material aid, for the citizens of Ukraine who are unable, or unwilling, to leave their homes.

Storm Eunice - Can the Epsom Common Ducks handle it?

7 April 2022



Storm Eunice is battering the nation, delaying flights, cancelling trains and causing general tutting and annoyance from all prospective travellers, but there are unsung victims of these gale-force winds, the poor ducks who reside in the ponds of Epsom Common, will they be able to cope with the 90mph winds? If gazebos and golden apple trees alike can't handle the winds, will our little winged friends manage?

Catalytic Converter Theft - What can we do?

7 April 2022



Theft of catalytic converters in Epsom is a serious and longstanding issue for our area, despite repeated reassurances from the police that they are tackling this issues – can we truly feel safe leaving our cars unattended in Epsom?

Budget Report: More council tax for Epsom and Ewell

7 April 2022



Epsom and Ewell households will pay more council tax from April after the Borough Council agreed on its budget for 2022-23 at a meeting of the full Council on Tuesday evening (February 15).

The budget-setting meeting sets out the Borough Council's expected revenue and expenditure for the forthcoming year and, as a consequence, the additional amount the Council needs to raise in council tax.

The budget proposals were put forward by the governing party, in Epsom and Ewell's case the Residents' Association group, stating how they are managing the council's finances. This was followed by speeches from the opposition council groups:

Councillor Colin Keane (RA, Nonsuch), chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee proposed a Borough council tax increase of £4.95 a year for a B and D property, or 2.38%, as a result of what he called "a robust and sustainable budget" and despite "another challenging year". "Our strong financial position" he said, "has been the result of many years of sound advice and excellent financial management by our finance team."

Councillor Keane criticised the Labour opposition for arguing that council tax should not be raised. He argued that such a course would create a £165,000 shortfall and accused Labour of failing "to propose what policies and strategies could be adopted to fill the reduced income".

Cllr Kate Chinn (Lab, Court Ward) argued that "residents of Epsom and Ewell, along with everyone else in this country, are facing a huge rise in the cost of living" and put forward ways of increasing revenue and cutting costs. "Review of

venues such as the Playhouse and Bourne Hall can increase revenue and tackling homelessness can reduce costs,” she argued and went on to propose other measures, even questioning whether the Town Hall itself is needed now that many staff continue to work from home.

But, later in the debate, veteran Councillor Jan Mason (RA, Ruxley Ward) responded angrily to Labour, saying that, for the £4.95 rise, “we get weekly bin collections, we get our parks and open spaces that are second to none, and we have the wonderful centre in Sefton Road. These are things we are choosing to do for our residents. We have one of the best boroughs in this country. If the Labour party are worried about nine and a half pence a week, the price of 2 cups of coffee a year, then all I can say to them is – get a grip of yourselves.”

Speaking for the Liberal Democrat group, David Gulland (College Ward) concentrated on the Climate Emergency, arguing that, 3 years on from the Council’s own Climate Action Plan, “we still have no funds allocated for specific actions to reduce our own emissions...Let’s get on and do some of these projects.” He also suggested that the Council should take a lead by shifting its own investments. “It would be relatively easy to ensure some of our portfolio is redeployed into equivalent funds with Green credentials,” he said “Let’s join up and live our values.”

Another veteran Councillor, Eber Kington (RA, Ewell Court) quoted independent auditors as saying that “the Council has a track record of delivering robust financial plans”. He attacked the Labour party’s zero tax rise policy and went on to criticise the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, whose one Borough Councillor was unable to respond as she was in the hospital.

Leading committee member, Cllr Hannah Dalton (RA, Stoneleigh), was the last to speak in the debate. Also responding to Labour’s comments, she said that “review of the venues and venue strategy, the Town Hall strategy, and homelessness, they’re all in here [the annual plan being discussed]’. And responding to a Liberal Democrat comment about sharing services with other Councils, she said that “we are working closely with East Surrey to look at opportunities [for] synergy – we’ve got to be doing that”.

26 Residents’ Association Councillors, voted for the budget, the Labour group voted against, and Liberal Democrats, arguing they were broadly in favour but there were some aspects they couldn’t support, abstained.

The £4.95 increase in the Borough Council’s precept is not the only extra amount of council tax to pay in the forthcoming year. The Borough Council accounts for only 10% of the overall amount of council tax collected. Conservative-controlled Surrey County Council receives 76% of the council tax and the remaining 14% is taken by Surrey Police. SCC’s portion is increasing by £77.31 this year (4.99%) for a Band D property and Surrey Police’s precept by exactly £10 or 3.4%. This means that the overall council tax increase for a band D property in the forthcoming year will be £92.26 or 4.52%.

Council Meeting: Does Epsom need more trees?

7 April 2022



Thursday 30 September 2021 the first in-person full Council meeting since Co-Vid was held in the Council Chamber Town Hall The Parade Epsom.

The Council considered the Annual Plan 2021-2022 in the context of the Council’s Four Year Plan 2020 – 2024. Agreement was sought to update key objectives and performance indicators for 2021 – 2022.

One point of contention was raised by Cllr Julie Morris (College Ward Liberal Democrat) concerning the small number of trees the Council aims to have planted in the year. 10 being too few in her opinion.

Where on Council land do you think Epsom and Ewell Borough Council could plant a new tree? Could you or your neighbourhood buy a sapling and ask the Council to plant it? Let us know your thoughts