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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

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

Up to £1 where sold

ISSN 2753-2771

Back Epsom's Horton Cemetery history heroes in national vote

4 August 2026



Epsom and Ewell (and beyond) residents are being urged to get behind the local Friends of Horton Cemetery after the charity was shortlisted for a national award celebrating the volunteers who rescue the stories of ordinary people from obscurity.

The Friends are among 24 organisations selected from across England for Findmypast and Heritage Open Days' first "Everyday History Heroes" awards, with its place in the regional South-East final short-list of three.

Historian and broadcaster David Olusoga is supporting the campaign, which recognises historic and cultural organisations that preserve the stories of people frequently overlooked by conventional history.

A national winner and seven regional winners will be chosen by public vote. Regional winners will receive £1,000 to support their work.

Olusoga is quoted in a BBC news article as saying: "Horton Cemetery was a remarkable example of everyday history." Adding "More than 9,000 people who died as patients in Epsom's psychiatric hospitals were buried there, many in unmarked graves, and for decades their stories were largely forgotten."

He said: "The Friends of Horton Cemetery have been restoring dignity and remembrance to thousands of people who were too often overlooked in their own lifetimes".

The Epsom & Ewell Times makes no pretence of neutrality in this contest: our vote belongs to the Friends of Horton Cemetery—**and we hope our readers will add theirs.**

Between 1899 and 1955, about 9,000 people were buried at Horton Cemetery. Each had been a patient at one of the five mental health hospitals forming the Epsom Cluster.

Their graves are now unmarked. The privately owned cemetery has been neglected for decades and remains inaccessible to the public.

Against that unpromising background, the Friends' volunteer researchers have painstakingly rebuilt the lives of those buried there from hospital, census, military, family and other historical records. More than 500 individual life stories have already been researched, written and published.

The result is much more than a list of names and dates. The research restores identities to people whose lives were often obscured by the stigma once attached to mental illness and institutional care.

Those remembered include war veterans, mothers, labourers, domestic servants and children. Many experienced poverty, bereavement, illness or family separation before entering one of Epsom's hospitals. Their stories collectively illuminate a neglected chapter of the borough's history—and of Britain's changing treatment of mental ill-health.

Explaining its nomination, charity trustee Theresa Keneflick said: "We're proud that this nomination recognises the work of our researchers and volunteers for all that they do to ensure the lives of the 9,000 are remembered."

The award was created by family-history website Findmypast in partnership with Heritage Open Days. Its purpose is to honour grassroots organisations telling the histories of the ordinary people and communities who worked, struggled, campaigned and helped to build modern Britain.

David Olusoga said history was not confined to the famous figures taught about in schools, but included the millions of ordinary people whose actions shaped today's world. He encouraged the public to explore the shortlisted organisations and vote for a local "hidden gem".

Few candidates can fit that description more literally than Horton Cemetery: an important part of Epsom's heritage hidden behind locked boundaries, its thousands of occupants deprived of individual grave markers but no longer without voices.

Voting remains open until 31 August, with the winners due to be announced on 10 September.

Vote for the Friends of Horton Cemetery on the Findmypast South East voting page.

The Friends' research and the stories already recovered can be explored at the Horton Cemetery website.

The Friends of Horton Cemetery host an Heritage Open Day alongside the Cemetery on Saturday 12th September.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Lionel Blackman

Hon. Sec. of The Friends of Horton Cemetery and a director Epsom and Ewell Times

Image – photo of the Cemetery from 1971

Note: The FindMyPast voting page suggests the charity has “transformed the cemetery”. This is an error we are seeking to correct. The Cemetery remains neglected in private hands with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council declining to purchase it for its restoration as a community asset.

Related reports:

500 patients buried in Epsom’s asylum cemetery no longer forgotten

Friends of Horton Cemetery influence law reform

Epsom and Ewell’s MP champions Friends of Horton Cemetery mission on “Time to Talk Day”

Epsom’s Horton Cemetery gets attention of two kinds

Epsom Council dead set against the dead?

Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator

Local community gathered at Horton Cemetery

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY