# Epsom historian and the Frenchman who trained the British armies that defeated Napoleon

The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst has seen a lot of famous faces over the years. Several members of the Royal Family have attended the Academy. Sir Winston Churchill graduated in 1894, Field Marshal Montgomery in 1908. The Academy is so respected that many countries send their military personnel there for training, making it one of the top military schools in the world.

But, how much do we really know about the origins of Sandhurst?

Local author and historian **Paul Le Messurier** has been a resident of Epsom for several years now. His latest book, *Founder of Sandhurst, Maj-Gen John Le Marchant*, tells the remarkable story of the British cavalry officer who started what has now become one of this country's great institutions.

John Gaspard Le Marchant (1766-1812) was a French-born British cavalry officer who rose to prominence despite starting from humble beginnings. The son of a Guernsey father and a French mother, he joined the British Army at just 16. Through sheer skill and determination, he rose to become one of the most distinguished cavalry officers of his generation.

Le Marchant's first taste of active service came during the French Revolutionary Wars, where he served as a captain in a cavalry unit during the ill-fated Flanders campaign. A skilled swordsman, it was here that he noticed that the British Army's sword training was seriously lacking. Determined to make a difference, he designed a new cavalry sabre, wrote manuals on swordsmanship, and took it upon himself to train cavalrymen across the country.

Even then, he was still not satisfied and set his sights on an even grander and more ambitious attempt at reform: improving the overall standard and education of army officers.

Le Marchant's idea for a military academy to professionally train army officers met with some initial resistance, but he eventually won royal and political backing. In 1801, Parliament approved his plans and allocated a budget of £30,000. The Royal Military College was established by Royal Warrant, initially based in High Wycombe and Marlow, with Le Marchant serving as its first Lieutenant-Governor. The college would later move to its prestigious location at Sandhurst.

In 1811, Le Marchant joined the Duke of Wellington's army in the Peninsular War against Napoleon's forces, taking command of a Heavy Cavalry brigade. He distinguished himself at the Battle of Salamanca, where he led one of the most successful cavalry charges of the campaign. Sadly, Le Marchant was killed in action during the battle at the age of 46. A memorial was erected in his honour at St. Paul's Cathedral.

The Royal Military Academy's motto today is 'Serve to Lead,' and that is exactly what Le Marchant did – both with the ground-breaking reforms he introduced and his bold leadership on the battlefield. Despite his many achievements, Le Marchant remains relatively unknown today. Paul Le Messurier's engaging book seeks to change that, shedding light on the powerful and lasting impact Le Marchant had on the British Army.

Royal Military Academy photo: Antony McCallum - https://www.wyrdlight.com

# Attic find fills gap in Epsom local asylum history

Last Friday saw the return of a singular missing hospital record book. The book contains the medical case book of women admitted to The Manor Hospital between 19 May 1900 and 11 July 1901. This was one of five psychiatric hospitals established by the London County Council at Horton near Epsom at the start of the twentieth century. A treasure trove for family and social historians, the volume records the names, family details and medical notes of 250 London women living with a range of mental illness, with their photographic portraits fixed to its fragile pages. These poignant records allow a precious glimpse of the lives and experiences of women admitted to these vast Victorian pauper asylums. Julian Pooley of the Surrey History Centre rescued many of The Manor's records after its closure in 1995, case book number 4 was not among them. It's discovery in an attic in the London Borough of Kingston gives hope that other missing records from Surrey's former mental and learning disability hospitals may yet come to light.

The couple who found the book in their attic realised its significance when watching Gemma Collins discover her family's mental

health history in a recent episode of 'Who Do You Think You Are'. Having read the case histories and been fascinated by the patient photographs, they got in touch with **Epsom** based charity The Friends of Horton Cemetery.

Lead researcher for the charity, **Kevin McDonnell** said: ""This discovery of *Manor Asylum - Case Book No. 4* is of immense historical value, especially for our project. I'm grateful to you for preserving it. It will now find a home at the Surrey History Centre in Woking, where it will be accessible to our team of volunteer genealogical researchers. This document is critical to our mission to protect **Horton Cemetery in Epsom**, where nearly 9,000 unclaimed mental health patients were laid to rest between 1899 and 1955. These graves, left unmarked and forgotten, tell stories that we're working to bring back to life. The cemetery, sadly, has been neglected and mistreated since it was sold to a property speculator in 1983. It's a disgraceful situation for such a sacred resting place, now overgrown and scattered with rubble, and this important find helps highlight the significance of the lives laid to rest there."

Surrey History Centre was delighted to find that it filled such an important gap in the surviving records. Now preserved in the History Centre's strong rooms, it can be made publicly available for research and a range of community engagement projects.

# Portraits of pauper patients in Epsom's Horton Cemetery, inspires artist

Eric Fong is a multimedia artist whose work spans film, photography, sculpture, and installation, often exploring themes of the body, identity, and vulnerability. His unique approach is informed by his background as a former medical doctor, merging art with science and technology.

His latest project, Apparitions, is a series of cyanotype portraits derived from Victorian-era glass plate negatives of pauper patients from the Manor Hospital (part of the Epsom cluster). These haunting images were salvaged after being abandoned in the 1990s and now reside at Surrey History Centre. Fong's cyanotypes, toned with ivy leaves gathered from the burial site of Horton Cemetery, symbolise the connection between the patients' bodies and overgrown landscape. This project reclaims the dignity of these long-forgotten individuals and encourages a reflection on mental illness both in the past and today.

You can also view cyanotypes of found Victorian needlework, referencing those made/mended/worn by female patients in Victorian asylums through his Asylum Needlework project.

Keeping with the Asylum photograph theme, Us and Them led by Alana Harris (Department of History at Kings College London), creatively re-imagined 19th-century asylum photographs to highlight issues surrounding disability and challenge how people with disabilities have been portrayed over time.

In partnership with Surrey History Centre, the project unearthed archival photographs taken in local psychiatric institutions and paired them with newly commissioned portraits of the disabled artists. Guided by portrait photographer Emma Brown and oral historian Laura Mitchison, the artists used historical photographic techniques to create new images that provoke questions about ableism, mental health, and representation.

The project culminated in a public exhibition at The Horton Arts Centre in Epsom, where the new and historical photographs were displayed side by side. The exhibition opened to great public interest, sparking important discussions around disability and inclusion.

Surrey History Centre read more....

# American baseball started in Surrey

The latest **BBC Secret Surrey podcast** features Julian Pooley, Public Services and Engagement Manager, who tells the story of a previously unknown William Bray diary. Covering 1754-1755, the diary was found in a garden shed in 2007. It is a fascinating document for many reasons but it is particularly interesting as it is the earliest known manuscript reference to baseball, confirming baseball was played in Surrey more than 20 years before American independence.

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Listen here »

Read more from Surrey History Centre HERE.

Text and image courtesy Surrey History Centre

## Phil Bradley of Ewell was a fair man

World Fun Fair Month aims to unite Showmen from around the world to celebrate all aspects of fairgrounds, and the joy they bring to communities everywhere, find out more with the Future4Fairgrounds website. Don't forget to check out our social media as we'll have more posts running throughout September to celebrate World Fun Fair Month.

Fairs have been part of Surrey's history for centuries and the origins of many can be traced back to charters and privileges granted in medieval times. Surrey History Centre holds a wealth of sources for fairground history including photographs, illustrations, and published works. Without a doubt, our key fairground collection is that of Fairground enthusiast, **Philip Bradley of Ewell**, who spent his life compiling a written and photographic record of every fair he visited from 1936 until his death in 1999. He amassed 30,000 photographs of fairs across the country and was highly regarded by showmen and fairground people. His collection provides an invaluable history of twentieth century fairgrounds (Surrey History Centre reference 6790). You can find out more about Philip Bradley and his archive on our Exploring Surrey's Past website.

This Bradley photograph shows features the glamorous and daring 'Wall of Death' display riders Patsy Kelly, Bobbie Hall and Gene Dare, known as "The Bombshells", on their motorbike at Guildford Fair, 6th May 1939, just a couple of months before the start of the Second World War (Philip Bradley Collection, Surrey History Centre reference 6790/4/2).

### Fairs during Wartime

During wartime, fairs were affected by blackout restrictions and limited supplies of food, fuel and 'swag'. Coconut shies became rare as coconuts took up valuable shipping space and rifle ranges were deprived of ammunition. Music was also muted in case it drowned out the air raid alert. Many showmen's engines were used for demolition work clearing debris from blitzed cities and demolishing unstable buildings, especially in areas of severe bomb damage in Merseyside, Manchester and London. Find out more about fairs during wartime.

Surrey History Centre

Image: Philip Bradley seated in an Orton & Spooner 'Whale Car' at Butlins Ltd, Florence Park, Oxford, 28 Aug 1943 (Philip Bradley Collection, Surrey History Centre reference 6790/4/8).

### Heritage open days in Surrey

Heritage open days take place between 6 to 15 September, and there's over 200 events in Surrey to choose from. Why not visit The Grange Centre on 13 September, where Archaeologists from Surrey County Archaeological Unit will be opening a testpit in the grounds of the Centre.

### 09/10/2024 17:30 - 18:45 From Patient to Professor

#### **Online Zoom Talk**

Dan Jacobson was a teenage inpatient at **Long Grove** Psychiatric Hospital for four months in the years just before its closure in the 1990s. This talk will explore the geography and history of the **Epsom Cluster** of psychiatric hospitals, weaving together his personal and professional journey – from a patient to becoming a professor. What was it like on the wards of the hospital? Dan is going to discuss negotiation and treatment for mental illness. These experiences will be used to reflect on his ongoing research into the changes to the landscape within and surrounding the former hospital sites.

Dan Jacobson, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Geography at the University of Calgary, Canada.

Cost: £6

96 spaces available - book this event

### Landmark pub re-assembles Tuesday

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.

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."

# Surrey author tells story of Luftwaffe uncle

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.



Matt Graydon

The novel is inspired by the wartime experiences of his German uncle, whose crash in the North African desert during the war

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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.

### 10,000 mile pilgrimage to Epsom

John Bates, grandson of Beatrice Bates, travelled over 10,000 miles from Australia to Horton Cemetery in Epsom to pay his respects to Beatrice. His grandmother is one of 9000 buried in Europe's largest and now abandoned asylum cemetery. The **Friends of Horton Cemetery** continue to battle to retrieve this important graveyard from a property speculator. **A petition**, already signed by over 1200 supporters, calls on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to change its damaging opinion that the Cemetery is "amenity woodland".

Here is John Bates' personal account of his May 2024 pilgrimage from Adelaide to Epsom.

In loving memory of Beatrice Miriam Bates, a woman of enduring strength and grace, whose life and legacy continue to resonate deeply within our family. Beatrice's journey came to an end in 1933 at West Park Hospital in Epsom, Surrey, leaving behind a mystery that lingered for decades. It was a personal mission of mine to uncover the truth of her final resting place, a mission that revealed not only her burial site but also a profound connection to our family's history.

Beatrice Miriam Bates was laid to rest in Horton Cemetery, a place that, despite the passage of time, faced the threat of being erased by development. Discovering her burial site through ancestry records was a pivotal moment, one that brought closure to our family and deepened our understanding of Beatrice's life. Horton Cemetery, overgrown and largely forgotten by many, stands as a testament to the lives of those who came before us, including Beatrice.

In 2024, ninety-one years after Beatrice's passing, I made a personal pilgrimage from Australia to Horton Cemetery. Walking around the overgrown grounds, I felt the weight of history and the importance of preserving this sacred space. The memorial at the entrance stands as a solitary guardian of the memories held within, a symbol of resistance against the encroaching tide of development.

The 'Friends of Horton Cemetery' have been instrumental in championing the cause to protect this site. Their dedication ensures that the stories of those buried there, including Beatrice's, are remembered and honoured. It is a cause that resonates deeply with me, as I believe in the importance of preserving Horton Cemetery for all the souls who rest there and for the relatives who seek a connection to their past.

Beatrice's story, accessible to all through the efforts of the 'Friends of Horton Cemetery,' shines a

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light on her resilience and spirit. Her life, though marked by challenges, is a testament to the courage and strength that define our family. Her memory serves as a beacon, guiding us to cherish our heritage and to honour the lives of those who came before us.

As we reflect on Beatrice's life, we are reminded of the importance of family, history, and the relentless pursuit of truth. Her legacy is a testament to the enduring power of love and remembrance. Through the efforts to preserve Horton Cemetery, Beatrice and all those resting there are given the respect and recognition they deserve.

In honour of Beatrice Miriam Bates, let us continue to share her story and all the stories of those buried in Horton Cemetery and protect the places that hold our collective memories. Her spirit lives on in each of us, a symbol of resilience and hope for generations to come.

Rest in peace, dear Beatrice. Your story will never be forgotten.

With all our love,

Your Grandson.... John E. M. Bates.

Beatrice Bates full story can be read on The Friends of Horton Cemetery website HERE

# Campaign to save Ewell Village's Glyn Hall

Tucked away in the heart of **Ewell Village** is **Glyn Hall**, a not-for-profit community space providing a venue for local organisations, including those linked to the arts, music and education. Glyn Hall also caters for social gatherings, society meetings, birthday parties and exercise classes for all generations. Located at 3a Cheam Road in Ewell Village, Glyn Hall has served the local community for over a century.

The precise age of Glyn Hall is not known but it is thought to have been built between 1866 and 1894. Archived records show that during this time **Sir Arthur Glyn** had a small wooden building built for his daughter, **Margaret Henrietta Glyn** to practice playing her music in and it is thought that this building was the original to the little green hut that now stands at 3a Cheam Road.

Margaret Henrietta Glyn, the last member of Ewell's Glyn dynasty and a champion of conservation of the local area's heritage, bequeathed Glyn Hall, which had been used by the Adult Education movement since the 1920s to the people of Ewell Village just before she died in 1946.

Mike Ralph, a retired blacksmith from Ewell Village knows Glyn Hall well and has commented as follows:

'My parents and grandparents were very involved with The Adult School at Glyn Hall until the 1960s. They held social events such as beetle-drives and whist-drives. My father would give talks about blacksmithing and his great passion, astrology. The family also arranged for other speakers to present at The Adult School.'

Lovingly looked after by volunteers, Glyn Hall has played a key role in local life ever since it was generously gifted to the village, but despite the best endeavours of the volunteers, the building has now sadly reached the end of its long life.

Determined to stop the hall being sold to developers and the space irretrievably lost, a new group of volunteers has stepped in to save the much-loved community hub that is as original and independent as the area it serves.

Unlike other halls in the area, Glyn Hall is not a religious or a commercial enterprise, but a community hall available 365 days of the year for members of the community to use and enjoy for a minimal fee.



Despite the age-related problems with the current structure, Glyn Hall is now set for an exciting new chapter, as preparations are made to replace the original structure with a modern, sustainable and fit-for-purpose design that is built for the future, whilst respectfully honouring the past. Boasting a large hall, kitchen facilities and meeting space, the new not-for-profit venue will provide the backdrop for a range of local gatherings – from social clubs and society meetings to exercise classes and birthday parties.

Having worked tirelessly to secure planning permission and with £90k in funding already in the bank, the volunteer trustees must now raise a further £300k to construct the new hall and are appealing to the public for donations.

Every donation received by the volunteers overseeing the project takes them one step closer to realising their dream of creating a space where the community can meet and make memories for generations to come. The names of financial donors will be displayed inside the new building unless they wish to remain anonymous.

Margaret Glyn left a precious gift to the people of Ewell that the volunteers are working hard to replace in a way that she would have approved of. The volunteers believe that there is a duty to protect the space occupied by Glyn Hall, thereby retaining its place at the heart of the community and extending its legacy for the future.

To find out more about the history, project and fundraising, please visit www.glynhallewell.co.uk.

Ewell Village Hall Registered Charity No: 305031

## A beacon of hope in a troubled world?

6th June 2024 marked 80 years since D-Day. The massive allied military campaign that signaled the beginning of the end of Nazi tyranny in Western Europe.

The Borough of **Epsom and Ewell** came together on Epsom Downs to celebrate this momentous day. Events organised by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, the Epsom branch of the Royal British Legion and Epsom Bid Ltd honoured the ultimate sacrifices of a then young generation of servicemen.

About 1500 residents flocked to the Downs, enjoying fish and chips while entertained by a choir and the **Epsom and Ewell Silver Band**. The Grandstand exhibited a gallery of photographs of Epsom and Ewell in wartime. The exhibition will be transferred to Bourne Hall in Ewell in due course.

The Worshipful Mayor of Epsom and Ewell Cllr. **Steve Bridger** addressed the assembled, paying tribute to the fallen and survivors of the historic day. Just before 9.15pm the Mayor lit the great Beacon at the viewpoint car park on Grandstand Road.

Related reports:

D-Day celebration on Epsom Downs