

Grate find in Epsom's Millennium Green

15 January 2024



The Woodcote Millennium Green is unique in Surrey. It comprises of an area of 7 acres, bounded by Woodcote Green Road to the north and the Woodcote Estate to the south and is located at the rear of Epsom General Hospital.

The land forming The Woodcote Millennium Green has passed through the ownership of monks, lords and developers over the last thousand years and now flourishes under the stewardship of a Trust whose members are passionate to retain the character of this landscape gem.

The land was originally part of the estate of the Manor of Horton, owned by Chertsey Abbey until the dissolution of the lesser monasteries in 1536-7. After passing through several owners, the Manor passed to the sister-in-law of John Evelyn, the 17th Century diarist. Woodcote House was re-built at this period, on a site which is now just south of the Millennium Green.

Woodcote House was acquired by Sir Edward Northey (1652-1723) in the late 17th Century and became the family seat to the Northey family for 250 years. The present house dates mainly from the early 19th Century. Photographs of the area show an open wooded landscape with cattle grazing by the pond. The pond is shown on the earliest Ordnance Survey maps of Epsom and surroundings and must pre-date the mid 19th Century.

In the late 1930s, Woodcote House and the surrounding land was sold to Earnest Harwood, whose building company developed most of the land for housing, forming The Woodcote Estate. Woodcote House itself was subdivided into flats and has undergone a major refurbishment.

In 1999, the Harwood family donated a large portion of the remaining woodland including the pond to be held in perpetuity by the Trustees of The Woodcote Millennium Green Trust. The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell officially opened The Woodcote Millennium Green in July 2000.

Whilst The Millennium Green was once a 7-acre site of overgrown brambles, it has been transformed by residents and volunteers into the attractive piece of managed natural woodland that it is today.

It was during one of my own walks through the woodland that I discovered a cast iron fire grate close to the rear of Woodcote House that had been unearthed by tree roots. Having obtained permission from one of the trustees of The Millennium Green to remove the fire grate, I contacted Bourne Hall Museum in Ewell and was later informed by one of the curator's contacts that the cast iron fire grate is likely to date to the 19th Century and was probably used inside a room of Woodcote House prior to being replaced and buried in the ground at the back of the building.



Four times a year The Woodcote Millennium Green Trust holds maintenance days to help with the upkeep of the green which can be found at the rear of Epsom General Hospital.

It is a great community experience open to all ages and abilities so if you would like to get involved, or make a donation to fund maintenance and improvements, please email:

info@woodcotemillenniumgreen.org.uk

The Wisdom of Epsom

15 January 2024



The Wizard of Oz is this year's Epsom Playhouse Pantomime. Running Friday 15th December 2023 to Monday 1st January 2024. Book Tickets [HERE](#). And it is a good excuse to tell you about a past star of family entertainment who lived for many years in **Epsom**.

One of Epsom's most famous and best loved former residents did not seek assistance from a wizard when seeking to overcome his difficulties, but chose instead to look for practical solutions and to work extremely hard to achieve his goals, thereby becoming an inspiration to us all.

The story of **Sir Norman Joseph Wisdom**, OBE who was an English actor, comedian, musician and singer will surely be made into a film in the future (he starred in 17 of his own) because despite his enormous successes, Sir Norman Wisdom was just as likely to be seen walking cheerfully down Epsom High Street acknowledging anyone who recognised him, as he was driving his Rolls Royce on his way to London for work.

From having had the privilege of meeting Sir Norman Wisdom in Epsom High Street on a few occasions and given him the thumbs up, I am embarrassed to have to admit that I was not fully aware of how big a star he was until researching material for this article, partly because of how humble he remained during the time he spent living in our town which he only left when his health began to fail him and his family became increasingly responsible for his care.

Sadly, the love and care the elderly Norman received from family members towards the Autumn of his life was quite unlike that which he had experienced when he was a young boy growing up.

Indeed, Norman Wisdom was only 14 years old when he arrived at Victoria Train Station in London, cold and alone and in need of somewhere safe to sleep, having been abandoned by his mother and rejected by his father who slapped the tearful Norman across the face and slammed the front door on him when telling him to go away because he was not wanted. Norman would never see his father again after this incident.

With only 2p in his pocket, Norman approached a hot drink stall at Victoria Train Station late one night and purchased a cup of tea from the vendor who took pity on the young Norman and kindly gave him a hot pie for free. A helpful conversation with the vendor followed and this led Norman to apply for a job with the British Army band even though Norman at the time could not read music or play any musical instruments.

It was permissible for Norman to apply to join the army band even though he was too young to join the army itself. Norman had planned to lie about having musical abilities, but not surprisingly it took very little time for the band master to establish the truth when Norman was unable to confirm the meanings of "flat" and "sharp".

By putting on what Norman in later life would describe as being the best act of his life, a tearful young Norman managed to convince the band master that his need for food and lodgings would make him a good recruit and indeed, by 1936 Norman Wisdom had become the fly weight boxing champion of the British Army in India, although the number of fights Norman took part in is unclear. By pretending to get punched by an invisible boxer whilst shadow boxing, Norman would make his friends laugh and his ability to do this with relative ease gave him great satisfaction.

During World War 2 Norman Wisdom transferred to The Royal Corp of Signals at Cheltenham and it was during this time that he participated in a charity show in Cheltenham, prompting the actor Rex Harrison to suggest that after the war Norman should consider pursuing a career in entertainment, which young Norman subsequently chose to do.



Norman Wisdom's big break came when he was asked to perform at The Victoria Palace in London where Laurel and Hardy and Vera Lynn topped the bill, not far from the place where Norman had once struggled to pay for a cup of tea as an unloved, cold and lonely 14-year-old boy who had failed to gain anyone's attention let alone a large audience's applause.

Norman Wisdom went on to become a massive celebrity and did not look back after acquiring his funny little suit and cap at a junk shop which became as famous as Charlie Chaplin's bowler hat and cane.

According to Sir Tim Rice, in the 1950s "a new Norman Wisdom film was like a new Beatles album coming out".

Norman was a "work horse" who continued to work extremely hard right up until the end of his life, but his busiest period ran from 1950 - 1968 with him becoming a huge hit on both sides of the Atlantic

The photographs with this article include images of a London Palladium pantomime programme dated 1960 which I purchased from the Princess Alice Hospice charity shop in Church Street in Epsom shortly after an elderly Norman had

been moved out of his flat off of Church Street by family members for care purposes.

Norman enjoyed massive success in Albania where large crowds would gather to catch a glimpse of him and call out "Pitkin" after the name of his hapless character in a series of comedy films he starred in.

Norman Wisdom's list of achievements is far too long to include in this article and this article is sadly too short to document all of his remarkable charity work.

If Norman had any regrets before his passing at the age of 95 on 4 October 2010, they would probably include his failure to show a large, world-wide audience how good a straight actor he was, but Norman was a man who was grateful for the opportunities life had laid before him for seizing, to the extent that he always maintained he owed everything he had to the army where he learned how to read music and play musical instruments and get on in life after he had been rejected and abandoned by his parents at such a young age.

It was a great honour for me to have met the great man himself who returned to England from America where everyone loved him because he loved his children more than the considerable fame and fortune he was attracting there (only Peter Sellers could fill the comic void Norman left behind in America).

Sir Norman Wisdom, OBE will continue to make people laugh wherever his legendary films continue to be shown.

Whilst he was undoubtedly a comic genius, he was also a multi-talented all-round entertainer as well as a very nice man who only allowed his negative life experiences to shape his life and career in a positive way.

Surrey women who stood for Parliament 1918

15 January 2024



On 14th December 1918 women across the country turned out in their thousands to first vote in a General Election. In some areas they outnumbered men voters by 20 to 1.

The Representation of the People Act 1918 had been passed in February 1918, and widened the parliamentary electorate to women over the age of 30 (but still required a minimum property qualification).

Men over the age of 21, including the millions of soldiers returning from the First World War, were also able to vote for the first time. Due to wartime casualties women outnumbered men in the population as a whole, and under the new provision women would make up around 43% of the electorate. However, imposing a higher age qualification for women ensured that they did not become the majority in the electorate.

Whilst universal franchise for women would take another 10 years, the passing of this Act forever changed the established way that political parties campaigned and canvassed during elections.

Find out how Surrey women responded to their newly won voting rights with our Exploring Surrey's Past web page <https://bit.ly/2pqRC3c>.



The Emily Davison Memorial Statue in the Market Square Epsom. A suffragette who died in Epsom after a protest at the Derby for women's voting rights.

Top image: All three Surrey women fought for seats in the 1918 General Election but were unsuccessful. Credits: Postcard showing 'Mrs Despard, President, The Women's Freedom League (SHC ref 10065/1) Postcard of Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, 'Joint Editor of "Votes for Women" - Honorary Treasurer National Women's Social and Political Union. 4 Clement's Inn, W.C.' (SHC ref 10065/2; this postcard was originally from an album compiled by Women's Freedom League members, Edith, Florence and Grace Hodgson). Norah Dacre Fox in her youth.

Surrey History Centre

Read more from the Surrey History Centre [HERE](#)

Bonkers about bunkers in Epsom

15 January 2024



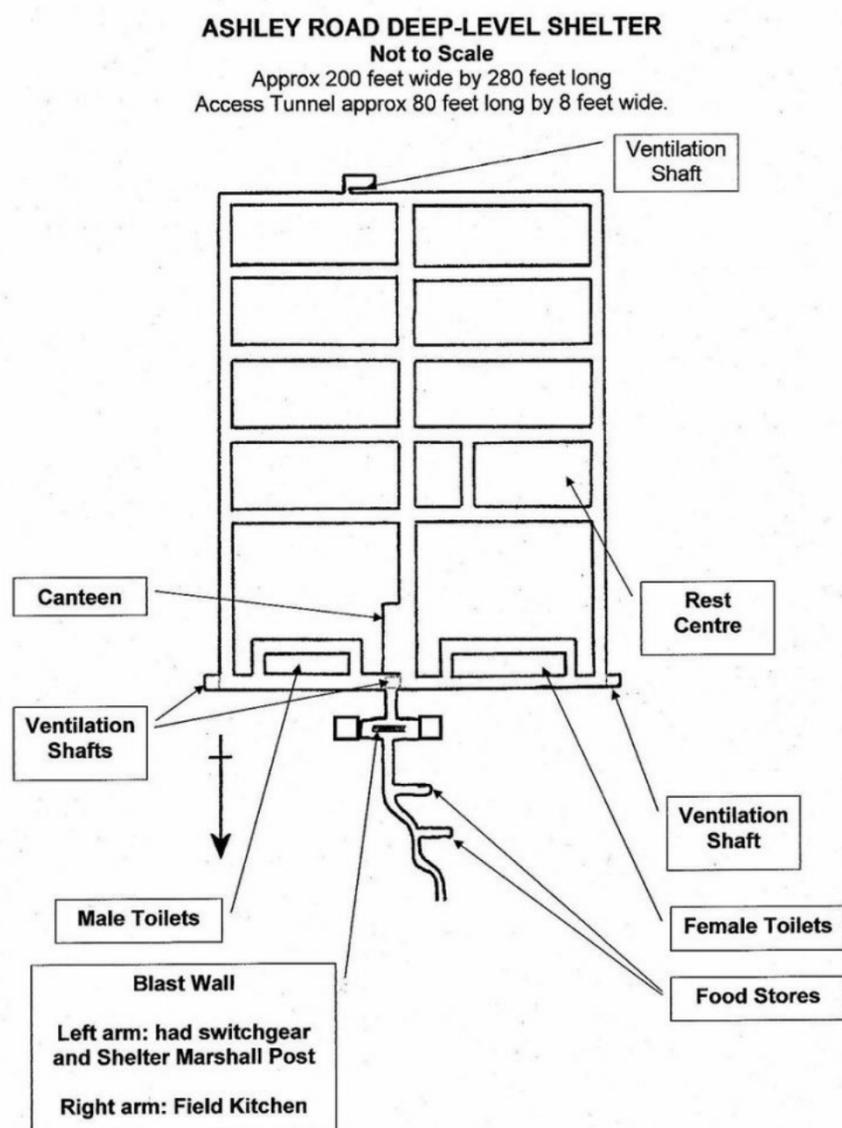
The Epsom and Ewell Times joined a group of bunker-busters to explore the little known World War 2 underground complex.

Located in 5 acres of private woodland on the west side of Ashley Road, Epsom can be found one of Epsom's largest, but least known historic buildings which needs to be preserved for the future due to its local and national importance.

The development was capable of accommodating 1500 people and included staff offices, a medical treatment area, a kitchen, toilet facilities and a small bathroom.

Although built at a cost of £1.3 million in today's money between 1941 and 1942, one visitor to the development left after 2 nights because he considered it to be "damp, chill and dismal" inside.

According to The Epsom and Ewell History Explorer, in 1942 people entering the development were advised to bring wraps or thick overcoats and lighting was by 12V bulkhead filament fittings served by metal conduited electric cables. The Epsom and Ewell History Explorer also states that 40 stand-by paraffin hurricane lamps along with fresh drinking water were supplied by the Epsom and Ewell Borough.



The Ashley Road Deep-level Shelter is an underground World War 2 air-raid shelter that has 17,000 square feet of tunnels ranging from 10-20 metres in depth (see plan kindly provided by Bourne Hall Museum) which sadly relatively few of the borough's residents know exists.

The spoil from the digging of the tunnels was piled up on top of them to increase the effectiveness of the shelter.

According to a report prepared in 1992 by Building Management South East, "The shelter is formed of a grid of tunnels bored and cut into the chalk and flint sub-strata and variously lined with brickwork and metalwork.

There are two main ventilation/access shafts, one at the north-east and another at the north-west corner of the shelter and a further shaft rises centrally from the north end"

"The entrance tunnel and all tunnel intersections are brick lined and the remaining tunnels are lined with either open mesh or galvanised corrugated iron sheeting, supported on various types of steel-sectioned portal frames."

The speed with which the WW2 air-raid shelter was built and the documented costs associated with its construction have given rise to a lot of speculation about what may have existed on the site prior to any building work commencing and talk of a Northern Line tube tunnel extension, a place for the dead as well as an earlier air-raid shelter funded by Lady Sybil Grant the daughter of Lord Rosebery is not uncommon on the internet.

Mr Jeremy Harte, the curator at Bourne Hall Museum does not believe, however that there is any evidence to suggest the Ashley Road Deep-level Shelter has any mysterious origins and has written to me stating that the land in question was requisitioned by Surrey County Council for a deep air raid shelter on 8 February 1941 and the tunnels were dug in undisturbed native chalk in the same year.

Perhaps the speed with which the underground air raid shelter was constructed should not come as a surprise to anyone, after all our country was at war with Germany and the threat of bombing and a German invasion were very real.

Whilst the Ashley Road Deep-level Shelter was not completed until after the blitz, no one knew how the war would develop, so it is comforting to know the people of Epsom and Ewell were prepared and would have had somewhere to seek refuge if the threat posed by Hitler's V1 and V2 rockets had escalated.

The Ashley Road Deep-level Shelter is now privately owned, but Hidden History Tours offer guided tours around the complex and can be contacted via their website.

The air-raid shelter serves as a lasting reminder of the devastating impact war has on communities.

Veteran lives celebrated at Epsom's Comrades Club

15 January 2024



With funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, Surrey County Council has captured the life stories of four veterans and presented the booklets to them and their families in a special ceremony at **The Comrades Club, Epsom** in The Parade, Epsom

Part of the Force for Change project, the funding provided was to identify former service personnel living in Surrey who were not already known to the council, document their life stories and look at how veterans can be further supported.

The project focused on three areas of Surrey – Epsom & Ewell, Guildford and Surrey Heath. Activities organised to engage veterans included canal boat trips, basketball sessions, outdoors and indoor archery, fire skills and model-making sessions.

Alongside this, newly trained volunteers from **Bourne Hall museum in Ewell**, supported by trained staff from the Surrey History Centre worked with the veterans to document and record their life stories. The booklets created will be stored in the Surrey History Centre for future generations, and copies have been presented to the veterans and their families.

Chair of the Council, Saj Hussain is the Armed Forces Champion for Surrey County Council. He said: *“Preserving the life stories of our veterans is not just a responsibility; it’s a tribute to their sacrifices. Through the Force for Change project, we’ve had the privilege of documenting and sharing these remarkable journeys. These booklets serve as a testament to their dedication and resilience, ensuring that their legacy lives on for future generations and their families to learn from and be inspired by.”*

Councillor Kevin Deanus, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue, and Resilience, said: *“Time is running out for us to capture these important stories and ensure they are documented for future generations. We are delighted to have been able to support this project, to be able to connect with and provide support for more veterans in Surrey.”*

One of the volunteers, Phil Read, documented Tegwyn Bryn Lloyd’s story. Sadly, Tegwyn passed away last year shortly after completing his life story. **Phil said:** *“He [Tegwyn] came across as a very gentle soul to me, God fearing and that. Very gentle but yet did his duty and that overrode everything else and that came across to me more than anything.”*

Throughout the project veterans were connected to the veteran hubs across Surrey for ongoing social activities and support.

If you or a family member is serving, has served, or if you support members of the Armed Forces community, you can download the free Forces Connect app from Apple or Google stores. The app signposts to a wide range of support services.

Latest news from Surrey History Centre

15 January 2024



UK Disability History Month runs from 16 November to 16 December and aims to promote disabled people’s rights and their struggle for equality now and in the past.

This year’s theme is Disability, Children and Youth and to coincide with this **Surrey History Centre** (SHC) has announced a collaboration with Professor **Jane Hamlett** from Royal Holloway, University of London’s History Department working on a project to uncover and share the histories of children at schools for the deaf and blind.

From the early twentieth century some of the leading residential schools for the deaf and blind were based in Surrey,

including the Royal School for the Blind, Nutfield Priory and Burwood School. When the schools closed in the 1980s and 1990s their records were accessioned by SHC.

The research team will carry out a new archival survey of this material, uncovering historical experience from the archives. The project aims to use participatory research to create a new historical narrative about these children's lives, through collaboration with charities who work with young people with learning disabilities. The research will be used to inform a new guide to history of disability on SHC's website Exploring Surrey's Past and a new audio resource that will narrate stories from the archives.

See more news and events from The Surrey History Centre [HERE](#)

Local historian Peter Reed will be missed

15 January 2024



In Loving Memory of **Peter Reed** (23/08/52 - 19/10/23). Peter Reed passed away on October 19, 2023, leaving a void in the hearts of many. Born and raised in Epsom and Ewell to James and Evelyn Reed, Peter's journey was defined by his unwavering dedication to his family and his profound impact on the community.

A man of generous spirit and unwavering kindness, Peter's life reflected a passion for understanding the inner workings of the world around him. From an early age, his curiosity led him to disassemble toys, cultivating an interest in creation, particularly in woodworking and exploring historical contexts. His inquisitiveness matured into a fascination with the evolution of technology, particularly in the realm of computers and their historical significance. His career path led him to utilize his technical acumen at the Inland Revenue, Lambeth Council, and a London medical center, where he not only honed his skills but also used his expertise to benefit various charitable causes.

Peter's profound love for history propelled him to join the **Epsom and Ewell History Centre** at Bourne Hall in 2005. There, he spearheaded the creation of the website and served as the dedicated webmaster for the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer. His commitment extended beyond mere content creation; he tirelessly assisted countless individuals, locally and internationally, with historical inquiries, demonstrating his wealth of knowledge and willingness to help others.

Recognized as the driving force behind the History Explorer website, Peter's collaborative efforts with local experts and his encyclopedic knowledge of the area facilitated an invaluable resource for researchers and history enthusiasts. His significant contributions were felt and appreciated by numerous individuals and organizations, symbolizing his profound impact on the preservation and promotion of local history.

While Peter leaves behind no immediate family of his own, he leaves a lasting legacy in the hearts of his sister, nieces, and a community that deeply appreciated his dedication and expertise. His loss is deeply felt, but his remarkable contributions to the Epsom and Ewell community will forever be remembered and cherished.

Peter Reed's passion, dedication, and selfless commitment to preserving local history have left an indelible mark. His legacy lives on in the continued work of those he inspired, ensuring that the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer remains a testament to his invaluable contributions to local heritage. He will be greatly missed, but his impact will resonate through the cherished memories and the enduring legacy he leaves behind.

Image: Peter Reed with his local history "angels".

Epsom's Erotica By Candlelight

15 January 2024



A pale and slender man, suffering from ill health, began drawing an image by candlelight inside a room in Epsom's Spread Eagle Hotel in June 1896 probably knowing he was nearing the end of his life.

A year earlier the same man's career had taken a dramatic turn for the worse when he was sacked from his job through no fault of his own and now, he found himself alone, poverty stricken and shunned as a consequence of Oscar Wilde, the poet and playwright being arrested and charged with gross indecency.

With one lung barely functioning and the other becoming affected, (as determined by an Epsom doctor) the well-dressed dandy who liked to wear dove-grey suits, hats, ties and yellow gloves continued to create ink drawings inside his two rooms at The Spread Eagle Hotel in Epsom, albeit for a much-reduced client base.



Aubrey Beardsley

The frail man who had booked himself into The Spread Eagle Hotel was the artist, Aubrey Beardsley, but this was not his first visit to Epsom, as he had previously spent two of his difficult childhood years living in lodgings in Ashley Road, a short distance from where The University of the Creative Arts campus is today. Sadly, Aubrey had contracted tuberculosis as a young boy, but could take long walks on the Downs in the fresh air with his mother and sister, Mabel as recommended by his doctors.



Now, thirteen years later, Aubrey Beardsley had returned to Epsom on the advice of his doctors to breathe the town's better air whilst walking on the Downs which he did for the duration of his visit, although such walks were becoming increasingly difficult to undertake.



Illustration by Beardsley for Oscar Wilde's Salome

Whilst Aubrey's second stay in Epsom only lasted a few weeks, he managed to complete eight illustrations in The Spread Eagle Hotel for a proposed privately printed edition of the ancient Greek comedy *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes which could be sold expensively to connoisseurs by his publisher. The *Lysistrata* drawings are sexually explicit and these illustrations together with his drawings for Oscar Wilde's disturbing drama *Salome* (the play premiered in Paris in 1896) are among Aubrey's most famous.

According to Wikipedia, Aubrey Beardsley was "the most controversial artist of the Art Nouveau era" who was "renowned for his dark and perverse images and grotesque erotica, which were the main themes of his later work".

Wikipedia goes on to add that Aubrey "satirized Victorian values regarding sex, that at the time highly valued respectability", so it is not surprising that he chose to hide himself away in The Spread Eagle Hotel in the aftermath of the now outdated scandal involving Oscar Wilde and his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas which led to anyone associated with Oscar Wilde being suspected of sodomy.

Despite the sexual nature of his imagery, there is no evidence to suggest that Aubrey had sexual relations with anyone regardless of their sexual orientation, although the precise nature of his relationship with his sister, Mabel (who he drew

naked in an illustration which also included his client Oscar Wilde and a goat - legged faun) will undoubtedly continue to form the topic of discussion amongst historians and art critics.

Upon departing Epsom where he had completed some of his best works, Aubrey Beardsley continued to suffer from declining health leading to him having a violent haemorrhage in December 1896 and moving to the French Riviera in April 1897 in an attempt to prolong his life.

Sadly, Aubrey's days were numbered and it was whilst he was on his death bed in the French Riviera that Aubrey wrote to his publisher pleading with him to destroy the illustrations he had drawn in Epsom at The Spread Eagle Hotel. The publisher sent a telegraph to Aubrey telling him his dying wish had been granted, but the truth is the publisher lied and kept the illustrations for his own financial gain - an act that perhaps we should forgive him for selfishly carrying out.

Aubrey Beardsley died of tuberculosis in the early hours of 16 March 1898 in the presence of his mother and sister.

Aubrey may only have been 25 years old at the time of his death, but despite his young age, according to The Guardian Newspaper, "he put sexuality at the centre of modern art for the first time" and spread "his influence across Europe - to Vienna, Paris and Barcelona - 25 years before surrealism".

As the erotic ink drawings of the pale and slender young man which influenced world famous artists such as Picasso, Schiele and Klimt remain extremely important today, let us hope that in the near future a new plaque with the name "Aubrey Beardsley" prominently displayed on it will be attached to the front of The Spread Eagle (the existing plaque makes no mention of Aubrey) to remind everyone of the talented artist who came to Epsom to draw some of his most thought provoking and imaginative illustrations long before there was any acceptance of fluid sexualities and total freedom of expression.

The Spread Eagle in Epsom High Street is perhaps more significant than many people realise as a result of Aubrey Beardsley staying there and drawing erotica by candlelight.

Local community gathered at Horton Cemetery

15 January 2024



On **World Mental Health Day** 10th October on a working and un-seasonally hot day, young and old gathered in commemoration of the 9000 patients buried in Epsom's abandoned Cemetery.

The events were the climax to a year long project of The Friends of Horton Cemetery, supported by **Kings College** and **Dr Alana Harris**, local resident and Reader in History at the University. Entitled "Out of Sight, Out of Mind", the project raised awareness throughout the Borough of the lives of 9000 patients buried between 1899 and 1955. In their memory nearly 1600 ceramic flowers were uniquely painted by hundreds of concerned citizens as they contemplated the stories and photographs of individual patients.



Hardy poem reading



Faith leaders read a committal together

The celebration started in a private field provided for the day by local farmer Mr Seymour Bourne and located right next to the five acre Cemetery. The largest asylum cemetery in Europe. Under a blazing Autumn sun the gathering was addressed by the charity's secretary **Mr Lionel Blackman**, who called for a rejection of a local council categorisation of the Cemetery as "amenity woodland". The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, **Cllr Robert Geleit** (Labour Court Ward) spoke of Epsom's historic connection to the five psychiatric hospitals in the Borough.

Patron of the charity, **Chris Grayling** MP sent a message, read by Horton Ward Cllr **Kieran Persand**: *"It's easy not to realise, as you drive past, the piece of history that lies behind the fence. Thousands of people lived in the old hospitals, lived and died mostly anonymously. They have no gravestones to mark their final resting place. And disgracefully the cemetery has been allowed to rot by its current owners. It is a credit to the work of the **Friends**, and of people like **Alan Carlson** who raised the money for a memorial, that their memory has not been lost. I hope one day that the cemetery can be taken back, and turned into a real garden of remembrance for those who passed so much of their lives here."*

Theresa Keneflick, a trustee of the charity and head of St Josephs Primary School spoke and brought a school choir who sang "True Colours" by Cindy Lauper.

The following each read a verse from Thomas Hardy's 'Voices from Things Growing in a Churchyard':

Rosie Spence, relative, on behalf of her great, great, great grandfather. **Allen Price** from Love Me Love My Mind. **Carmen Nel**, NHS Clinical Practitioner. **Audrey Ardern-Jones**, local poet and project volunteer. **Charles Wood**, former Nurse at Manor Hospital and Horton Hospital. Kevin McDonnell, Friends of Horton Cemetery Trustee and lead researcher of the lives. **Timothy Folkard**, project volunteer.

Then voices from the Cemetery were spoken by **Epsom Players** representing the lives of Enid Barnet and Richard Waterer.

Dr Alana Harris explained the symbolism of the ribbons everyone had tied for the day to the fence near the Cemetery.

Rev Nick Parish and Judith Mitchell (St Martin's Church of England); Fr Stephen O'Brien (St Joseph's Catholic Church); Pastor Josh Selfe (Epsom Methodist Church); Clerk Frances Touch (Epsom Quakers) said in unison:

"We are gathered to remember these 9000 souls who lived and died in Epsom - to remember them and to make representations that they might have dignity and rest in their death.

To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose on earth. A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted. A time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build up.

We affirm our mutual commitment to honour the residents of Horton Cemetery and to work for their memorialisation. Amen."

Finally a trumpet solo 'Marking the Unmarked' - was performed by its composer **Erin Symonds**.

The gathering then followed Scots Piper **Bob Ash** to the former Horton Chapel where a Memorial Garden of the ceramic flowers was unveiled. The audience was addressed by Patron of The Friends of Horton Cemetery, **Baroness Sheila Hollins**, who once worked in the St Ebbas Hospital in Hook Road, Epsom. Dr Harris concluded speeches with an overview of the project and its significance and meaning.

'In Memoriam' a film created by Cameron Cook, Jack Daly and Mica Schlosser of Kings College simply rolled the 9000 names to suitable music. The audience was spellbound.

Company Concentric performed a dance 'Garden Unlocked' and led the audience to the Memorial Garden unveiling. This involved the planting of final flowers within the Forget Me Not installation by **Sue Littleboy** planting for James Poppelwell (great grandad, 1867-1914, d. Long Grove, grave b977); **Nari Fairbanks** (by proxy as resident in NT, Australia) - planting for Charles Holdgate (great, great, great uncle, 1854-1932, d. Long Grove, grave 1105a); **Iveta Goddard** - creator of the ceramic flowers used in the memorial garden and **Lauren** of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School.

Joining the 200-odd strong audience beside Horton Cemetery were Liberal Democrat PPC **Helen Maguire**, Chair of Epsom and Ewell Labour Party **Mark Todd** and **Gina Miller** the True and Fair Party PPC for the constituency. And as ever on her push-bike, Cllr. **Alison Kelly** (LibDem Stamford) and **Janice Baker** a leader of the local Green Party. Two Residents Association Councillors appeared including Cllr Phil Neale (Cuddington Ward) and another.

From "Princess" to Pauper's grave in Epsom

15 January 2024



9000 patients of Epsom's cluster of now closed psychiatric hospitals were buried between 1899 and 1955 in a now abandoned Cemetery. The Friends of Horton Cemetery are writing their life stories and seeking to reclaim the five neglected acres from a property speculator.

The **Horton Cemetery** is located between Horton Lane and Hook Road, **Epsom**.

On **10th October 2023** from 1.00pm The **Mayor Cllr Robert Geleit** (Labour Court Ward) and Mayoress of **Epsom and Ewell** will lead councillors, Aldermen of the Borough and the public in commemorating the lives of the 9000. The commemoration will begin beside the Horton Cemetery. Parking is open in the Hook Road Arena. Ceremonies will start at 1.00pm so the public is advised to park no later than 12.45 to allow time for the walk.

If you intend to attend the event you are requested to complete this simple online RSVP form.

If you are attending you should read the advice of The Friends of Horton Cemetery on the ground conditions and lengths of walks involved. Click [HERE](#).

Here is a taster of just one of the hundreds of life stories written by the volunteer team of the Friends of Horton Cemetery charity. **Steve Johnson**, one of the research team leaders, delved into the extraordinary story of a Polish aristocrat who's

family's lives were upturned in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Felicja Staszewicz, daughter of Aleksander Skirmunt and Teofila Skirmunt (née Lubańska) was born c1873 - the seventh of nine children - at the family country estate of Porzecza, Piński (now Belarus), the family having retained its Polish heritage despite the partition of Poland in 1795.

At the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917, Felicja and Piotr, together with their family, moved to Vilnius where they remained until the end of WW1. Tragically, Marta-Karolina committed suicide at the outbreak of the revolution.

It is unclear where Felicja and Piotr moved to after WW1, but Piotr died in 1929, and by 1939 we find Felicja living in Teklinopol (her country estate near Vilnius which she had inherited from her mother) with her youngest daughter, Matylda, who had moved there in 1923 after her marriage to Jan Myśliński (also from a notable family that traces back to 1670).

On the 17th September 1939 the Russian army crossed the border and Felicja and Matylda, together with her two young daughters, Janina and Jolanta, were forced out of their home and moved to the nearby village of Wilejka.

On the 13th April 1940, in the middle of the night, the family were arrested and, together with thousands of others, taken by cattle train into Russia as slave labour. Two of Felicja's sons, Aleksander and Jan Leon were taken by the Russians and were amongst the mass murder of thousands massacred in the forests of Katyń.

Read the full story [HERE](http://www.hortoncemetary.org) on www.hortoncemetary.org

Ewell History Day returns to Bourne Hall

15 January 2024



Bourne Hall in **Ewell** is hosting a celebration of local history on Saturday 16 September. Ewell History Day will take visitors on a journey from the Bronze Age up to World War II.

The public will be able to see blacksmith **Dr James Dilly** cast a bronze axe head, watch as Iron Age folk make offerings to their gods in Bourne Hall lake, witness a gladiator fight, meet Henry VIII, try their hands at some brass rubbing, learn about the Ewell witch and listen to wartime stories from the Hampshire Regiment.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, Chair of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Community and Wellbeing Committee, said, "Last year's Ewell History Day was sadly cancelled following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, so I am pleased to see it return this year.

"What better way to learn about the interesting and varied history of this area, than to see it come to life before your eyes? It's sure to be a fun day out for all the family."

The Programme:



10am	Opens to the public
10.30am	Romans march down Ewell Village from the Grove to Bourne Hall
11am	Mayor opens History Day. Iron Age folk throw gifts in the lake
11.30am	Witchhunter tells the true story of Joan Butts - the Ewell witch
12pm	Fight to the death between a local Iron Age warrior and gladiator
12.30pm	Bronze Age metal smelting
1pm	An audience with Henry VIII
2pm	Children learn a Roman Army drill
2.30pm	Witchhunter tells the true story of Joan Butts - the Ewell witch
3pm	Bronze Age metal smelting
3.30pm	Children learn a Roman Army drill
4pm	An audience with Henry VIII
4.30pm	Fight to the death between a local Iron Age warrior and gladiator
5pm	Finish

Ewell History Day runs from 10am to 5pm, and entry is free.

The Flying Saucer Café will be open for refreshments.

Healthy future for Epsom’s restored White House

15 January 2024



The **White House**, located at 16 Waterloo Road, **Epsom**, nestled between Blacks Burgers and Nandos, is a Grade II listed building that dates back to the early 1700s. Recently, it has undergone a beautiful restoration in preparation for an exciting new phase in its rich history.



The new owner has successfully preserved the building's charm and character, while modernizing its internal features to create comfortable and contemporary treatment and therapy spaces. The White House is transformed into a Health and Wellness Centre, where professionals with various skills can utilize rooms once occupied by two historically significant individuals, as confirmed by the plaque on the building's front, visible from the pathway.

Around 1800, Prince George and Mrs. Fitzherbert resided in the same building now known as The White House. However, the question arises: What became of Princess Caroline, the woman Prince George married just five years earlier, and why is her name absent from the plaque?

While King George III led a scandal-free life, the same cannot be said for his son, Prince George, who lived an extravagant lifestyle characterized by heavy drinking and entertaining mistresses. Burdened by mounting debts, Prince George sought financial assistance from his father, who agreed to help him under the condition that Prince George marry his cousin, Princess Caroline of Brunswick.



Although Prince George had previously secretly married the twice-widowed Maria Anne Fitzherbert, this marriage was invalid because King George III had not consented to it. On April 8, 1795, Prince George married Princess Caroline at the Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace. However, the couple proved incompatible despite Caroline giving birth to Princess Charlotte, George's only legitimate child, just nine months after their wedding ceremony.

Upon their first meeting, Prince George called for a glass of brandy, while Princess Caroline commented on how much thinner and more handsome George appeared in the portrait she had seen of him. Prince George found his wife unattractive and "unhygienic" and could not bear to have intimate relations with her (he ensured he was drunk on the night of their wedding). Princess Caroline, on the other hand, was beloved by the public, who generally despised her husband, "the Prince of Pleasure," due to his continuous overindulgence and accumulating debts.

On January 29, 1820, George ascended to the throne as King of the United Kingdom and Hanover, with Caroline becoming Queen Consort in name. George sought a divorce from Caroline but couldn't obtain one due to the weak evidence against her. This was partly because Caroline was held in high regard by the public, who viewed George's conduct as immoral.

Caroline was barred from attending King George IV's coronation on July 19, 1821, and subsequently fell ill in London. Tragically, she passed away three weeks after the coronation she had not been allowed to attend. Her funeral procession moved slowly through London en route to Brunswick, where she was laid to rest. This allowed George to continue his romantic attachment to Maria Fitzherbert and entertain other mistresses.



The brass medallion, which I purchased a few years ago at **Oxfam in Epsom High Street**, likely belonged to one of Queen Caroline's supporters before her death. It resembles a miniature portrait, much like the one of Prince George shown above. "Caroline Queen of England" is inscribed around the perimeter of the medallion, featuring a bust of King George IV's lawful wife.

The brass medallion serves as a poignant reminder of how poorly Queen Caroline was treated by her husband, King George IV, and underscores the ongoing need to ensure that women from all cultures and walks of life are shown respect and treated fairly in today's modern society.

Fair photography of Ewell man celebrated

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Fairground enthusiast, **Philip Bradley of Ewell**, 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, held at **Surrey History Centre**, is of national importance, providing an invaluable history of twentieth century fairgrounds (SHC ref 6790). You can find out more about Philip Bradley and his archive on the Exploring Surrey's Past website

The top image shows a superb shot taken by Bradley of Elias Harris' Wall of Death ride, 'The Demon Riders', at Lindfield Fair, 1949.

We all remember the fun and excitement of going to fair - the thrilling rides, the sights and sounds of fairground machinery, eating too much candyfloss, and the tears and tantrums at not being able to win a cuddly toy on the coconut shy! If you're interested in researching fairgrounds in Surrey, or just want a trip down 'Memory Lane', look no further than our Exploring Surrey's Past website 'Fairgrounds in Surrey' theme pages to discover all about fairs in the county and the sources we hold here Fairgrounds in Surrey (exploringsurreyspast.org.uk).

[Click here for the full newsletter from Surrey History Centre](#)

Another King "Charles the III's" Epsom affair

15 January 2024



Bramshott House in Epsom's Market Place is a late 17th century, Grade II listed building that was built to provide accommodation for the rich and famous of the period who wanted to visit Epsom and its well to sample its famous waters.

Now better known as the premises of Caffe Nero, Bramshott House displays a plaque reminding coffee lovers that a very special royal visitor used to be invited back to the building by a woman for a coffee as long ago as 1670.

The woman in question had a lively personality that attracted many men, the most notable being a King.

Called "pretty, witty Nell" by **Samuel Pepys** who praised her performances as one of the first actresses on the English stage, Eleanor ("Nell") Gwynne rose from humble beginnings to become best known for being the favourite mistress of King Charles II, with whom she would go on to have two sons.

Having previously been the mistress of Charles Hart and Charles Sackville, Nell jokingly called the King "**her Charles the Third**".







The love affair between **King Charles II** and **Nell Gwynne** began in April 1668 when Nell was attending a performance at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields and caught the attention of the King who preferred to flirt with Nell than watch the play (King Charles II never made any attempt to keep the affair a secret).

Samuel Pepys knew **Epsom** well and confirmed in his diary entry for 14 July 1667 that Nell Gwynne was in residence at what we now call Bramshott House where she helped "keep a merry house". Nell lived in two little bay-windowed rooms overlooking the street, one of which was used as a bedroom and the other as a sitting room.

When Nell Gwynne entertained King Charles II, the King's court would stay in **Epsom's Assembly Rooms** (now occupied by **Wetherspoons**).

King Charles II died on 6 February 1685, but whilst on his deathbed made known his deep affection for "pretty, witty Nell" when instructing his brother, James II, "let not poor Nelly starve".

Sadly, the two bay windows that Nell Gwynne used to look out of and the balcony she used to sit on, no longer form part of Bramshott House, but the plaques on the building and the King Charles II cast iron fire-back that that I purchased from **The Princess Alice Hospice** charity shop in **Church Street** in Epsom a few years ago help to remind us of a rags to royalty true-life story not unlike that of Cinderella that was acted out opposite the site of today's Epsom's Clock Tower by one of England's earliest female actors.

Next time you order a coffee at **Caffe Nero** spare a thought for "pretty, witty Nell" who won the heart of a King, if not

that of some unforbearing past historians.



Ugandan Asian refugees in Surrey 50 years on

15 January 2024



On 4 August 1972, the Ugandan dictator, General Idi Amin, ordered around 60,000 ethnic Asians to leave the country



within 90 days. In the autumn and winter of 1972 to 1973, over 28,000 Ugandan Asians refugees who held British passports, arrived in the UK following their eviction, after hastily organised and often fraught journeys. Most left behind their entire wealth and worldly possessions.

The Home Office organised The Ugandan Resettlement Board (URB) to set up camps across the country in which to house in-coming refugees. The majority were billeted at large camps across the UK but one small temporary camp was located in Surrey, at Hobbs Barracks, near Lingfield.

In 2022, the 'British Ugandan Asians at 50' project marked the 50th anniversary of the expulsion of Asian communities from Uganda.

The **Surrey History Centre** has made the following appeal: "South Asian culture has made a significant impact on Britain and its rich and proud heritage has blended into the British way of life, contributing to the diversity of our nation. Celebrating South Asian Heritage Month (18 July to 17 August), provides an opportunity for us to discover, embrace and celebrate the history and identity of British South Asians. Find out more about the South Asian Heritage Month campaign.

This year's theme 'Stories to tell' promotes the unique stories that make up South Asian communities, but it is also an opportunity to share your memories and preserve them in the archives at Surrey History Centre. Documenting South Asian presence in Surrey is key to making our heritage collections representative of all communities in the county. If you have stories or material which you can contribute, we'd be delighted to hear from you."

You can read more about the history of the Surrey county wide support for the refugees and other initiatives of the Surrey History Centre [HERE](#).

Surrey History Centre

Image: Refugees arriving at Stansted Airport 1972 cc National Education Network