### **Derby stalwart sent over the Hill?**

Baronet **Sir Rupert Mackeson**, a former soldier, London banker and a passionate horse racing author, who loves Epsom, talked to the Epsom and Ewell Times's **Romana Sustar**.

"I joined the Army just before my nineteenth birthday in 1960 and spent four years in the Buffs. On leaving university, I converted my TA commission into a regular one and transferred to the Royal Horse Guards. In the autumn of 1966, I was posted to the Mounted Squadron stationed in London. Alas, soon afterwards, when on duty riding a black horse, I had an accident and broke my back. As a result, I now have great mobility problems and have to use a Zimmer frame." says Mackeson.

However, his passion for horse riding didn't stop after the accident; he found a way to stay in touch with the sport as an author and trader. Since early 1983 he has been involved with sporting books, paintings and prints.

Despite the accident, he had the great honour of escorting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on several state occasions, including her Birthday Parade and the State Opening of Parliament, often as Escort Commander – the senior mounted officer from the mounted regiment called "the Field Officer in Brigade Waiting".

"One may wonder how I carried out these duties, having broken my back. Luckily it was low down, and I had a corset with a metal back, which allowed me to carry out my mounted duties," explains Rupert.

In 1997 when three Jockey Club courses, Epsom, Sandown and Kempton, wanted more trade stands, he answered the call and traded on all three, averaging 50-60 days a year. Traders in those days got the security of tenure (protected tenant status) after a year or two, as they often had to start in poor positions and get better ones as other traders retired or died. That's how racecourses, county shows and equitation events like Badminton filled their inferior trade positions.

"Usually, everything regarding trade stands was done verbally on Jockey Club racecourses. Still, as Sandown wanted us there as often as possible, they sent out contracts to emphasise the rent reductions advantage of coming frequently," explains Rupert.

However, times have changed for traders with our lives embracing the digital age, and the effect of the financial crisis didn't leave anything untouched. **The Jockey Club** leadership transformed the layout, and the infrastructure changed.

Rupert Mackeson believed he was a protected tenant under the verbal agreement from 1997. In February 2023, he received an email from the Jockey Club saying that he could not trade in his usual position as they had other plans for Area 3, so they offered him a stand on The Hill.

However, for an older disabled person, who needs a Zimmer frame to walk, the new location on The Hill would present a challenge. The bitter feeling of not getting his permanent location at the Jockey Club made him feel unwelcome, disappointed and left behind.

The Jockey Club spokesman explained that despite trying to find an alternative solution, the previous locations are no longer available because of planned improvements.

The Jockey Club has been around for nearly 300 years, no doubt facing many difficult decisions as the world changes around them. They are not alone in this challenge.

After speaking with Rupert, I wonder if we forgot that some values from the past are valuable. He is a reminder that the sands of time only run in one direction and the importance of considering our older selves when taking difficult decisions to move our companies forward.

Rupert Mackeson books:

- Great Racing Gambles and Frauds
- Flat Racing Scams and Scandals (Metro Publishing, 2004) ISBN 978-1-84358-042-3
- Bet Like a Man (Eye Ltd, Bridgnorth, 2001) ISBN 1-903070-13-9

Tickets for this year's Epsom Derby festival Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd June are available on The Jockey Club website About Romy:

**Romana Sustar** is a multilingual freelance journalist, University Language Tutor, accomplished marketer and owner of Epsom Digital Ltd., a local digital marketing agency.

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/romanasustar/

### Post script:

This year he will not be at Epsom. He is, however, having a major exhibition of Piggott, Oaks and Derby memorabilia, including unique materials from Friday 16th of June till Tuesday the 27th excluding Sundays, 10am to 4 pm -at Weston Super Frames, 17 Locking Road, Weston Super Mare BS23 3BY

# Royal Patronage of Epsom College to continue?

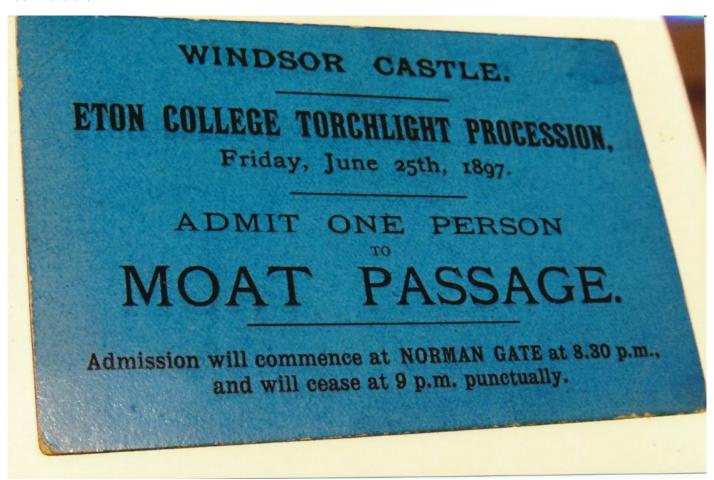
Epsom College has been honoured to receive unbroken royal patronage from a reigning monarch since 1855 when Queen Victoria became the College's first Patron and upon its opening by HRH Prince Albert.

Whilst the College's royal patronage is unbroken, with the recent passing of Queen Elizabeth II and after Saturday's Coronation it is hoped King Charles III will become Patron of Epsom College sometime in the future.

Queen Victoria never actually visited Epsom College. However, she did attend the Epsom Derby in 1840, having first attended it with her mother, as a twelve year old child in 1831.

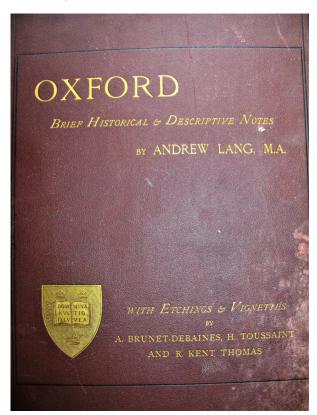
Queen Victoria watched "Little Wonder", a 50-1 outsider win the 1840 Epsom Derby and Her Majesty went on to present the jockey, the youngest and smallest in the race, with a gold whip for his victory.

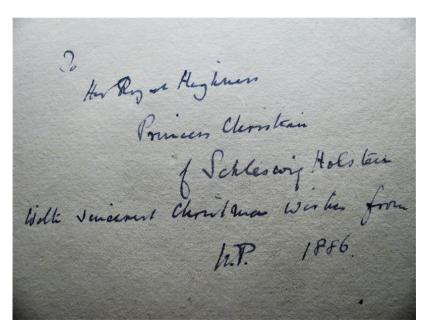
Queen Victoria had been expected to return to Epsom to attend further Derbys, but sadly after 1840 she never visited Epsom again. Perhaps because of the difficulties she had experienced getting to the race track due to crowds blocking her route. This led to the construction of Tattenham Corner Train Station, that was completed after her death in 1901 and was used by succeeding British monarchs.



The entrance ticket to The Eton College Torchlight Procession at Windsor Castle, which took place in Queen Victoria's presence during her Diamond Jubilee, was found inside a book purchased from Jo's Household Clearances in Ewell.

An interesting book about Oxford that was given to Queen Victoria's third daughter Helena, after she became Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, came from the same establishment a few years ago.





The book about Oxford, which bares the inscription date of 1886, was given to the Princess as a Christmas present. The timing of the gift would have coincided with her eldest son, Prince Christian Victor of Schleswig-Holstein, commencing his Oxford University education at Magdalen College.

If anyone knows whose initials are at the bottom of the inscription, or whether Queen Victoria's third daughter Helena had any links with Epsom that caused her book to be discovered in Ewell, please let me know by contacting The Epsom and Ewell Times.

## Surrey Police's nose for dog training

**Surrey Police** led the way in Police Dog development by offering a Metropolitan Police Officer, DC **Harry Darbyshire**, a transfer to the Surrey Constabulary in October 1947, where he was made a Sergeant and put in charge of the Force's new Police Dog Section.

Top image is Sgt Darbyshire with Anna of Avondale's son Loki

Whilst dogs had been used by British Police Forces in various limited capacities prior to the Second World War, it was not until after the war that Britain's Police Forces began to consider the possibility of using working dogs to undertake major Police work on a daily basis.

Sergeant Darbyshire was experienced in breeding dogs and training them according to the German method. This was the method Surrey Police had researched and decided to proceed with.

Sergeant Darbyshire owned a German Shepherd dog called "Anna of Avondale" that had previously belonged to a German soldier, who had served during the war. Anna of Avondale was Surrey Police's first operational dog and together with her son, Loki, formed the Surrey Police Dog Section that would go on to lead the way in Police dog development in Britain and abroad.

Surrey Police dogs that performed well would be included in the breeding programme, with under achieving dogs being removed from the Police Dog Section altogether.

Sir **Joseph Simpson**, the Chief Constable, who had recruited SergeantDarbyshire was a member of the Kennel Club and his interest in working dogs led to him sanctioning the expansion of the Police Dog Section and encouraging Surrey Police's dog handlers to enter civilian Working Trials. This led to the Surrey Police's Dog Section obtaining even greater recognition due to the high number of awards it won.

The Secretary of the Associated Sheep, Police and Army Dog Society (**ASPADS**) (also known as the Working Trials Society) has stated that, "Harry Darbyshire did more than any other person to put ASPADS, Working Trials and the Nation's Police Dog Sections on the map". Darbyshire was credited with training over 200 dogs in his 29 years police service. He was consulted from around the world, including Kenya and New Zealand.



I was delighted to discover that the photo album containing images of German Shepherd dogs that I had won on an online auction site, once belonged to Sgt. Darbyshire.

Surrey Police's first Police Dog, Anna of Avondale died in August 1950, but her name lives on in The Anna of Avondale Trophy, which serving Police Dogs and their handlers compete for every year in her memory.

The images accompanying this article were taken from the photo album and show Sergeant Darbyshire, who was awarded the BEM (British Empire Medal), with some of his working dogs.

Sgt Darbyshire's award of the BEM signed by the Monarch of the day.

# A Valentine unloved for over 125 years, till now

Another short and tragic life buried in an unmarked grave in Epsom's abandoned Horton Cemetery is brought to life by one of the volunteer team of researchers. The full story can be read on www.hortoncemetery.org

The story of **Valentine Ridley**: At just 6 years old, in 1897, we find Valentine and his sister Elizabeth in the Greenwich Union Poor School. Their father George is "in house", that is, living in the workhouse. There is no mention of Valentine's mother or his younger sisters. Later in October Elizabeth is released 'c/o Father'.

In May 1898 Valentine and all three of his sisters were admitted, along with their father, to the Greenwich Union Work House, their address is given as Snead Street, New Cross which is shown on Booth's Maps as "comfortable" two storey houses, with bay windows, usually shared by two families. Sadly, by August of that year Valentine was in the Brighton Road, School, Sutton. His father is now shown as 'out of house on leave'. In June of this year Valentine's youngest sister, Florence, was transferred to the Work House Infirmary where she died in October 1898, having lived a short sad life, so possibly George's 'leave' was due to this event.

Periods of leave were granted to look for work, deal with family problems or celebrations. Someone like Valentine's father George, became known as an "in and out" as they spent their lives in and out of the workhouse/infirmary.

The 1901 Census, taken on 31<sup>st</sup> March, shows all three children in the Banstead Road School, Sutton, but on 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 1901 Valentine, Elizabeth and Mildred are discharged from the Brighton Rd School and returned to the Workhouse again. These two schools were run by the same authority and seem almost interchangeable.

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on 18th November 1909 he is admitted to the Ewell Epileptic Colony where he lived for the next 7 years. According to the 1911 Census he developed Epilepsy when he was 16 years old, just one year prior to being admitted. With no family to care for him we can assume that the Greenwich Union was happy to pass his care to the Epileptic Colony in Ewell.

Valentine died on  $21^{st}$  February 1916 and was buried in the Horton Estate Cemetery on  $25^{th}$  February in plot number 2014a, he was just 23yrs old.

The 'Epsom Colony', part of the Epsom Cluster of five mental hospitals' had been opened in 1903 to care for "the Epileptic insane of the Metropolis". This new approach housed patients in a collection of villas, avoiding the stigma of living in a mental asylum. The treatment consisted of a specially regulated diet and doses of potassium bromide, the first effective treatment for controlling epilepsy. The patients were expected to contribute to their costs by working on the hospital farm or in the kitchens, laundry or bakery, all of which supported the Epsom cluster of hospitals.

Lesley Lee

Copyright: The Friends of Horton Cemetery

### Celebrating celebrated Surrey women

March is **Women's History Month**. You can discover important and inspiring stories of Surrey women in history on Surrey History Centre's (SHC) Exploring Surrey's Past website. Watch out for social media throughout the month too. The month also incorporates International Women's Day on 8 March. Both initiatives promote the achievements and contributions of women in the past and present, and the ongoing campaign for equality in all areas of life. From artists to actors, suffragettes to scientists, and gardeners to musicians,

**Harriet Grote**, (right in image) 19th century Radical 'female politician', hostess and patron. For Women's History Month, SHC celebrates the long life of a radical writer and hostess through the recollections of the Farrer family of Abinger Hall in Surrey, whose papers SHC hold.

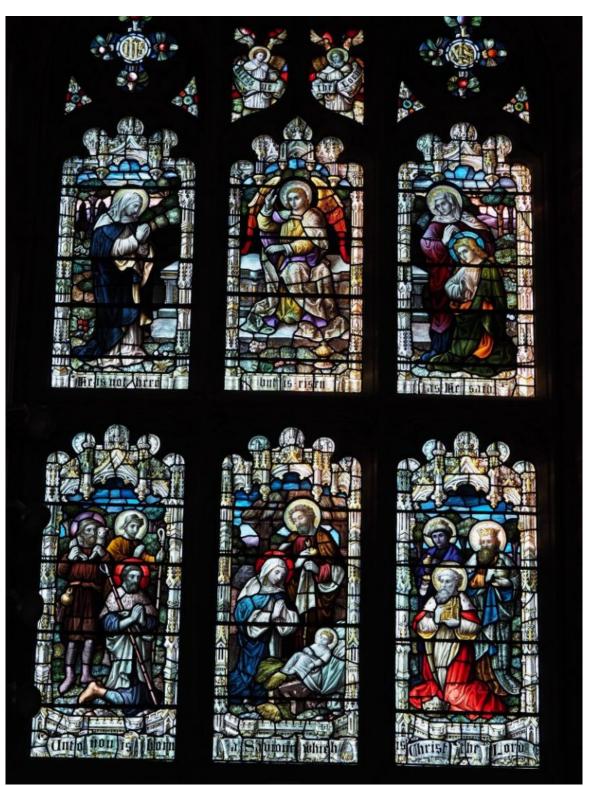
The 'Influential Women' section of case studies for SHC's Exploring Surrey's Past website was created by Surrey's museums and each museum revealed stories from their collections about talented and inspiring local women. These included **Margaret Robinson** of Chertsey (1920-2016), (centre in image) who was an artist, a puppeteer, and a model-maker with a worldwide fan base as a result of the models she created for Hammer Film, most noticeably *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Mummy*. You can read all of the stores here.

Surrey's women played a vital role during the First World War, serving as Red Cross nurses at home and abroad, working on the Home Front in the Women's Land Army, and being munitions workers in factories. The Surrey in the Great War website records and preserves their contribution and hosts research guides, film and fascinating stories about local women. One of the films you can watch captures a rural community caught on camera for a local newsreel, with members of the Women's Land Army demonstrated their ploughing skills in an inter-farm competition at Cross Farm, Shackleford, in April 1917. Find out more and watch the film.

Text and photos courtesy of The Surrey History Centre.

## Churchill's visits to Epsom

In 1903 Winston Churchill, then the MP for Oldham, visited Epsom College and unveiled a memorial stained glass window in memory of the Old Epsomians who had died in the Boer War. The memorial stained glass window was commissioned and paid for by Old Epsomians and designed by Francis Oldaker. Oldaker was an Old Epsomian and stained glass artist, he lived locally and is buried in Epsom's Ashley Road cemetery.



Unveiled by Winston Churchill. Image courtesy Epsom College

Winston Churchill was a fan of horse raising and attended the Epsom Derby on 4 June 1949 with his wife Clementine. He became Sir Winston in 1953.

I'm hoping that readers will be able throw light on a plaster bust of Churchill created by Churchill's only female cousin, Clare Sheridan in 1943.

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Clare Sheridan was a "colourful" character who established herself as a successful sculptor of portrait busts; her sitters included her then lover, the actor Charlie Chaplin together with H G Wells, Lord Asquith, Trotksy and Lenin. Her involvement with prominent Russians led to her being placed under surveillance by British intelligence much to the embarrassment of Churchill and his political colleagues who urged him to stay away from her.

Sheridan's bronze busts of her first cousin Churchill were created during World War 2, but only after Sheridan threatened to commit suicide outside 10 Downing Street if Churchill failed to allow her to sculpt him. Examples of her bronze busts of Sir Winston Churchill can be found at Churchill's former home, Chartwell as well as at Blenheim Palace, Harrow School and Hastings Town Hall, but the whereabouts of a smaller bust created by Clare Sheridan especially for Churchill's wife, Clementine is not known.

References to Clare Sheridan's bronze busts of Sir Winston Churchill can be found in quite a few of Churchill's WW2 letters, but having studied all the relevant letters in great detail, I have not been able to find out anything about the smaller plaster bust which I purchased at a London estate sale.

Could it be that the 9-inch-high plaster bust of Sir Winston Churchill that I acquired at an estate sale is the small bust of Sir Winston Churchill that wartime letters confirm was given to Churchill's wife, Clementine by Clare Sheridan?

Please contact The Epsom and Ewell Times if you have any information about Clare Sheridan's small plaster bust of Sir Winston Churchill.

### **Surrey celebrates LGBTQ+ month**

Surrey History Centre celebrates the February LGBTQ+ month with, among many others, the story of local born **Quentin Crisp**, who attended **Kingswood School in Epsom**. Born in Sutton and named Denis Charles Pratt in 1908, he changed his name in his twenties, had a colourful and controversial career and died in 1999.

"I started to wear make-up because it was necessary for me to live out my life getting up, going to work, buying food and going home again, so that someone could be seen to be homosexual and to be part of life."

This quote, following the screening of his acclaimed work **The Naked Civil Servant**, encompasses Quentin Crisp's attitude to his appearance and homosexuality – it was vital to his individuality, something on which he refused to compromise.

Throughout his life Crisp was a controversial figure; within the gay community he was not liked by everyone. However, his contribution to the gradual acceptance of openly gay men is universally acknowledged.

### **Early Years**

Born Denis Charles Pratt in 1908 in Sutton, then part of Surrey, he was the fourth child of Charles and Frances Pratt, a solicitor and a former governess.

Attending Kingswood Preparatory School in Epsom, Crisp was mercilessly teased for his effeminate behaviour. In 1922, he won a scholarship to Denstone College, near Uttoxeter, and on leaving in 1926, studied journalism at King's College London. Failing to graduate, he then took art classes at the Regent Street Polytechnic.

Leaving home to move to central London at the end of 1930, Crisp adopted his new name and cultivated an effeminate appearance that shocked many and provoked homophobic attacks.

Crisp attempted to join the army at the outbreak of the Second World War but was rejected and declared exempt by the medical board on the grounds that he was 'suffering from sexual perversion'. He left his job as engineer's tracer in 1942 to become a model in life classes in London and the Home Counties. He continued posing for artists into the 1970s. "It was like being a civil servant," he explained in his autobiography, "except that you were naked."

### Fame, acceptance and America

Crisp became a gay icon after the publication of his memoir, The Naked Civil Servant (1968), brought his exhibitionism and refusal to remain in the closet to the attention of the general public. In 1975, a film adaptation of The Naked Civil Servant was broadcast on British and American television making both actor John Hurt and Crisp household names. Crisp declared himself one of the great stately homos of England.

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Afterwards Crisp developed a one-man speaking show that toured Britain but he still felt like an outsider. In 1981, Crisp moved to New York where, experiencing a fuller sense of social acceptance, he continued his one-man show, An Evening with Quentin Crisp.

During his extraordinary life Crisp wrote a number of influential, controversial and provocative works, and acted in a variety of television dramas, films and stage plays, the last being the film Orlando with actress Tilda Swinton.

You can read more of this story and others from the Surrey History Centre HERE and use its interactive map to find out about the lives of gay figures who lived or had connections with the County of Surrey.

Courtesy Surrey History Centre

Image - painting by Ella Guru of Quentin Crisp - creative common licence

## One more Titanic plus another sinking survivor

Following Epsom and Ewell Times story on George Pelham, who survived the Titanic disaster and another ship sinking, local writer and historian **Martin Knight** tells us the story of another Titanic double-sinking survivor, buried in our Borough:

Few will be aware of Ewell's connection to the most famous maritime disaster of all time in which 1,514 people perished on RMS Titanic. Mary Kezia Humphries was born in Liverpool in 1870. In 1912 she was living in Nottingham with her husband David Roberts, who was the proprietor of the West Bridgford Motor Company. Mary joined the historic ship as a stewardess in 1st class and was rescued in lifeboat 11 as the boat was swallowed by the North Atlantic Ocean after colliding with an iceberg on the night of 15 April 1912.

Her husband and children experienced a torrid few days without knowing whether Mary had survived the tragedy or not and it was only after she was deposited by the Carpathian in New York that word finally reached home. However, the experience did not deter Mary from going back to sea, and in 1914 she was working again aboard the Rohilla when that ship went down in the North Sea. Mary told her family that the rescue from the Rohilla, a ship that was built in Belfast by Harland & Wolf like the Titanic, was a far more frightening ordeal than the one two years earlier. The sea was eerily calm when the Titanic sunk and if you were lucky enough to get into a lifeboat you were relatively safe but conditions were far more treacherous with the Rohilla. Eighty-five lives were lost. Mary is thought to be the only survivor of both disasters.

At some point Mary and David opted for a quieter life and settled in Ewell. Mary died in 1932 and her husband David was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident just a year later. They are buried together along with their daughters Daisy Bell and Kezia Nora in St Mary's Churchyard.

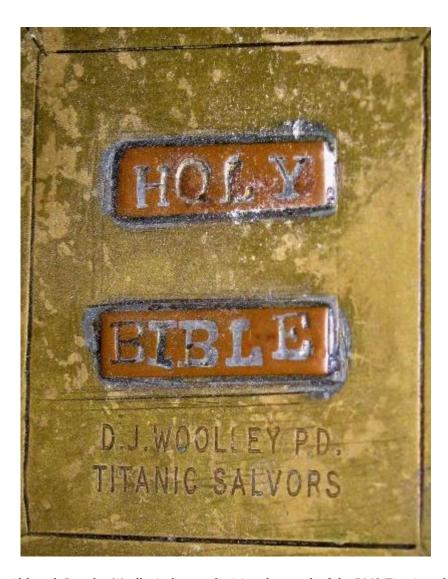
Related stories

Epsom's Titanic Ties

# **Epsom's Titanic Ties**

Epsom and Ewell Times' **History Detectorist** purchased this miniature brass bible box from The Princess Alice charity shop in Epsom 2 years ago in the belief it was a piece of World War 1 trench art, but after some light cleaning he was astonished to discover the word "**Titanic**" engraved on it.

Reference is also made to **Douglas Woolley**, who claims to own the salvage rights to the Titanic and who in the 1960s made plans to locate and raise the Titanic, a plan that involved inflating nylon balloons and attaching them to the Titanic's hull.



Although Douglas Woolley's dream of raising the wreck of the RMS Titanic and creating a floating museum in Liverpool was never realised, he wrote a book on the subject and continues to maintain that he owns the salvage rights to the "unsinkable" ship that sank off the coast of Newfoundland in the North Atlantic in the early hours of 15 April 1912 after colliding with an an iceberg.

The disaster resulted in the loss of an estimated 1,500 lives, partly due to a lack of lifeboats and 2 of Douglas Woolley's great aunts may also have drowned had it not been for a premonition which caused them to cancel their trip on board the Titanic at the last minute and not travel with their luggage which went down with the ship.

Could it be that the miniature brass bible box had once belonged to one of Douglas Woolley's great aunts, or perhaps one of the survivors of the Titanic?

Having wanted to raise the RMS Titanic, is it possible that Douglas Woolley was gifted the miniature brass bible box after it was salvaged from the wreck?

If the engraving on the miniature bible box was intended to deceive for the purposes of financial gain, then why was the box donated to a charity shop and why is the name "Douglas Woolley" engraved on it when the name of a member of the Titanic's crew would have caused the box to fetch more money at auction?



Unfortunately, Douglas Woolley is now an elderly gentleman and I have not been able to make contact with him, but if any readers can tell me anything about this interesting brass object and how it came to be purchased by myself in an Epsom charity shop, The Epsom and Ewell Times and myself would be delighted to hear from you.

**George Pelham served on the Titanic** as a Trimmer and survived the sinking. It is thought he survived another sinking of a ship during the First World War and these circumstances eventually led to his nervous breakdown and admission to **Horton asylum in Epsom** in 1935. 42 days after he was transferred to the neighbouring **Longrove Hospital** he died and was buried in the **Horton Cemetery** in Epsom on 14th October 1939.

You can read the full story on www.hortoncemetery.org and also read about the campaign to restore the Cemetery where 9000 patients of Epsom's cluster of psychiatric hospitals were buried between 1899 and 1955 and now lay abandoned.

### **Emily and Emmeline**

The suffragette movement is celebrated in the heart of Epsom with the statue of **Emily Davison** in Epsom's Market Square. At our neighbouring **Esher Theatre** between 24th and 25th February Emily's colleague **Emmeline Pankhurst**'s life and struggle will be brought to life in a drama play by **The Theatre Lab Company**. "Emmeline – The Suffragette Movement, follows the journey of the inspirational leader of the Suffrage movement on her life's mission to achieve the vote for women. Delving into the dynamics of the Pankhurst family, Emmeline explores the tensions that arose between her and her daughter Sylvia on militant tactics and social values, emblematic of the conflicts that divided the movement. Does the end justify the means?

Should the cause come first, no matter the personal cost? A story of the courage and sacrifice of the Suffragettes, their struggle and exaltation, and their undying determination that made history.

"A story to inspire the country to continue the fight for human emancipation."



#### ABOUT THE COMPANY

Theatre Lab Company is a London-based international theatre company, with reputation for mesmerising theatrical imagery, physical theatre/performance and work that crosses the boundaries of culture, language and taboo.

Notable credits include commendation from Off West End (2019), an award by Global Entertainment Awards for Most Innovative International Theatre Company — UK (2018), critiques selection at Avignon Festival D'OFF, (2014) and Prague International Theatre festival (2007), nominations for a Fringe First and Total Theatre Awards, Edinburgh Festival (2007) They have produced their shows in highly acclaimed venues like RIVERSIDE STUDIOS (2010-2014), Sadler's Wells Theatre (2016), Hoxton Hall Theatre (2017-2018), BT at Oxford Playhouse (2019) and National Theatre of Greece (2005).

#### Reviews

A thoughtful, well-researched and compelling production." 4. STARS \*\*\*\* LONDON THEATRE 1

"Every element of this production was so well thought out and meticulously refined to create a cohesive masterpiece." 4.5 STAR \*\*\*\*1/2 THEATRE AND OTHER THINGS LDN

"This is an important, informative and entertaining production that everyone should see." - BRITISH THEATRE GUIDE

Tickets: https://eshertheatre-tickets.ticketsolve.com/ticketbooth/shows/1173627634