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Polish precursor to Turing’s code cracking gets Surrey plaque

12 November 2026



Henryk Zygalski (1908–1978), a Polish mathematician who helped break the Enigma cipher before the Second World War, laying the foundations for Alan Turing’s work at Bletchley Park, has been honoured with a commemorative plaque at the University of Surrey. After the war, he taught mathematics at Battersea Polytechnic and the University of Surrey for 17 years without his colleagues learning what he had done.

Zygalski was a mathematician at the Polish Cipher Bureau, with Marian Rejewski and Jerzy Różycki, who worked out how to read messages sent on Germany’s Enigma machine in the 1930s. In 1938, he devised the Zygalski sheets – large, perforated cards that, when stacked on a light table, showed codebreakers how the machine had been set up.

In 1939, weeks before Germany invaded Poland to start the Second World War, the Polish team shared everything they knew about Enigma with British and French intelligence. Their work laid the foundations for Alan Turing and his colleagues at Bletchley Park.

The plaque was revealed today (Wednesday 11 November), Poland’s National Independence Day, by Professor Stephen Jarvis, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Surrey, and Rafał Wiśniewski, Chargé d’Affaires ad interim at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London.

Members of Zygalski’s family, representatives of the Polish community and historians, including from Bletchley Park, attended.

Professor Stephen Jarvis, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Surrey, said:

“There is something rather wonderful about knowing that one of the people who helped change the course of the Second World War subsequently spent his days teaching mathematics to students at Surrey, with little indication of the extraordinary life he had led.

“I am delighted that his contribution is now being recognised, and that future generations of students and colleagues walking past the plaque might pause for a moment and wonder about the remarkable life of Henryk Zygalski, mathematics lecturer at the University of Surrey.”

When Poland fell in September 1939, Zygalski escaped through Romania to France, where the Polish codebreakers kept working on Enigma. After Germany occupied the south of France in 1942, he crossed into Spain, where he was arrested, then reached Portugal. A British naval vessel took him to Britain in 1943, where he joined the Polish Signals Battalion.

Unwilling to return to a Poland under Soviet control, he stayed in Britain. He taught mathematics at the Polish University College in London from its founding in 1947. When Battersea Polytechnic took over the college in 1951, he was one of only eight staff offered posts. The polytechnic was the forerunner of the University of Surrey, established in 1966.

Those who worked with him at Battersea and Surrey never knew about his part in the war, according to a biography by J J O’Connor and E F Robertson of the University of St Andrews. His nephew, Dr Jeremy Russell, has said Zygalski “never talked about it spontaneously”.

Surrey University

Glyn School’s ‘forgotten’ servicemen commemorated 80 years after war

12 November 2026

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Six former pupils of Glyn School in Ewell who lost their lives in the Second World War are to have their names added to the school's war memorial more than 80 years after their deaths.

The names were discovered through research undertaken by history teacher Alex Summers for a book marking the school's centenary. The six men had been omitted from the original memorial, either because they had moved away after leaving school or because their parents had lost contact with the school.

A special ceremony will be held at Glyn School at 10am on Friday 13th November to commemorate the six former pupils and add their names to the roll of honour.

The service will be attended by Headteacher Jo Garrod, Helen Maguire MP for Epsom and Ewell, a former Captain in the Royal Military Police, Mayor of Epsom and Ewell Councillor Lucie McIntyre, Reverend Sue Ayling from St Mary's Church in Ewell, staff, pupils and relatives of those commemorated.

The six former pupils

Michael Daniell was killed in action on 22nd February 1941, aged 23, when his aircraft crashed while on patrol over the Atlantic. His family lived on Epsom High Street, where they worked as newsagents.

Henry Whitticks was killed in action on 24th November 1943, aged 29, while returning from a bombing raid on Berlin. His father was a police officer, and Henry also joined the police after leaving school. He had been an editor of the school's first newsletter.

James Sherriff was killed in action following an aircraft crash on 18th June 1942, aged 24. He is buried in Epsom Cemetery. He came second in his form in 1928, and his family lived on Worple Road, Epsom.

Bernard Preece died as a prisoner of war in Japan on 12th December 1942, aged 25. He attended Glyn for two years. His father worked as a musical instrument manufacturer.

John Bury was killed in action in Greece on 26th April 1941. He attended Glyn for four years, and his family lived on Ferndale Road, Banstead.

Peter Poulten was killed in action in Italy on 11th December 1943, aged 22, while serving with the Parachute Regiment. He attended Glyn for eighteen months. His mother contributed towards silver trophies for House Cross Country and Cricket.

Remembering Glyn's wartime generation

In all, 38 former Glyn pupils lost their lives during the Second World War. Around one in five pupils who started at the school between 1931 and 1933 died in the conflict.

More than 200 former pupils and staff served in the armed forces during the Second World War, while at least three members of staff also fought in the First World War.

Former pupils, staff, parents and the wider school community have contributed donations to fund the new memorial.

George Howard, history and politics teacher at Glyn School, said:

"Over 200 former students and staff served in the military in the Second World War and at least three members of staff fought in the First World War as well. The school's war memorial is a permanent reminder of their courage and sacrifice and, thanks to the dedicated research into the school's one hundred-year history, the names of another six former pupils will be forever remembered as we add them to that roll of honour with a sense of deep pride."

Helen Maguire MP, Member of Parliament for Epsom and Ewell, said:

"As someone who has served their country, I understand what it means to put on the uniform knowing what it may cost. These six young men from our community made the ultimate sacrifice, and they deserve to be remembered alongside their schoolmates. I am very glad that Glyn School is making sure their names are never lost again."

The addition of the six names will ensure that their sacrifice is recognised alongside that of their fellow pupils, correcting an omission that has endured for more than eight decades.

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How three Epsom and Ewell wedding venues came into public hands

12 November 2026



On Wednesday 29 September 1937 the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey presented Epsom and Ewell with its Charter of Incorporation, from a platform put up for the day in Epsom High Street. The same day, Nonsuch Park had its official opening.

The mansion in that park is one of six places in the borough licensed for civil ceremonies. Three of the six are at Epsom Downs Racecourse, Epsom College and the Royal Automobile Club's Woodcote Park.

The other three, Nonsuch Mansion, Ewell Court House and Bourne Hall, are in public hands, and each got there by a different route.

Bought by four councils

Nonsuch is named after the palace Henry VIII began there in 1538. It was mostly pulled down in the 1680s.

The house in the park today took its shape between 1802 and 1806, when Jeffry Wyatt, later Sir Jeffry Wyatville, enlarged an older house for Samuel Farmer, MP for Huntingdon. Historic England's listing calls it an early commission in the Tudor Gothic style that Wyatt later took to Windsor Castle. He modelled its entrance front on pictures of the lost palace.

Beside the front door is a terracotta tablet inscribed with the date 1543 and Henry VIII's name in Latin, which the listing describes as a fragment of the palace.

The Farmers held the estate for more than a century. Between the wars new houses went up along its southern edge, and work began on an arterial road through the park.

Four councils bought the mansion and 263 acres of the Little Park as public open space: London County Council, Surrey County Council, Sutton and Cheam Borough Council, and Epsom and Ewell, then still an urban district.

The road was abandoned, though its embankment can still be traced. A joint committee has managed the park ever since.

Couples now marry in the mansion's Orchid Room, which has stained glass and large bay windows.

Saved by its neighbours

Ewell Court House on Lakehurst Road was rebuilt for a marriage.

It began as Avenue House, named for the elms that lined its approach from Kingston Road. It was one of the gentlemen's houses built after the fame of Epsom's spa drew London merchants here in the late 1600s.

The house passed to the Bridges family, whose money came from gunpowder mills on the Hogsmill. The mills closed in 1875 because they could not meet new safety laws.

Four years later John Henry Bridges married Edith Tritton and set about making a new home for them both. J. Alick Thomas, a local architect then new to practice, rebuilt the house in the Old English style, keeping its old core, and the millpond became an ornamental lake.

Stonework and panelling were marked with a B and an anchor, for the family motto, "Heaven My Haven".

The Stoddarts, who followed the Bridges, sold the house to the council in 1935.

In the autumn of 2003, the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer records, the council resolved to dispose of it for residential development. Local residents formed the Ewell Court House Organisation, ECHO, whose business plan for a mix of commercial and community uses persuaded the council to reverse its decision.

Ceremonies are held today in the Social Suite, with its polished maple floors and high moulded ceilings, which opens onto a terrace overlooking the lake. The grounds still have their cascades, rock pools and grotto.

Listed for its space-age flair

Bourne Hall in Spring Street takes its name from an older house. Garbrand Hall, a country house of about 1770, was praised in the gardening press of the 1870s for its chrysanthemums and orchids. It was renamed Bourne Hall when it was bought for a school in 1926.

The council later bought the estate on condition that the grounds were preserved. The old house, in poor repair, was demolished in 1962.

In its place A.G. Sheppard Fidler and Associates designed a round building under a copper dome, with twenty precast concrete ribs rising out of it and a glass-fibre rooflight at the centre. It opened in 1970.

Historic England, which listed it at Grade II on 30 April 2015, says the result resembles a flying saucer and was designed

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to sit low in the mature grounds. The café inside is the Flying Saucer Café.

The listing also cites its generous, top-lit interior and a ramp and lift that built in disabled access from the start. It notes a stainless steel plaque in the foyer recording the official opening by the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey.

Bourne Hall holds weddings and civil ceremonies, and some of Garbrand Hall's trees can still be seen in its grounds, above the springs where the Hogsmill rises.

All six are on Surrey County Council's list of approved venues. The Wedding Venue List, which covers every licensed wedding venue in England and Wales, has them on one page at weddingvenuelist.co.uk/venues-in/epsom-and-ewell.

Epsom's silent firework display seeks public home

12 November 2026



Epsom radio founder hopes vintage fireworks will spark a museum

Thousands of vintage British fireworks collected by Epsom-born Radio Jackie founder Tony Collis could one day help preserve the history of a once-thriving British industry.

Tony, who still lives in Epsom, has spent more than 30 years assembling a collection stretching from the 1920s to the 1990s. Behind it are memories of childhood Bonfire Nights, when his father turned the family's back garden into the setting for one of the highlights of the year.

"I remember Bonfire Night being a big feature of the year. My father thoroughly enjoyed it, and, as kids, my brother and I would be taken to the bottom of the garden, where there was a bonfire. Back then, the fireworks were very small, but because we were small and they were let off in close proximity, they always looked bigger!"

The celebrations extended beyond the family garden.

"It was a magical time. We'd have potatoes cooking on the bonfire to eat afterwards, and the whole street seemed to join in. The gardens were laid out in a line, with a bonfire at the end of each garden, so the atmosphere along the street was electric, really fabulous."

From garden memories to glass cabinets

Speaking to World of Collecting, Tony explained how those memories inspired him to begin collecting in the early 1990s. Most of his thousands of items date from the 1950s and 1960s.

Manufacturers represented include Standard, Brock's and Pains, the latter having a local connection through its manufacturing base in Mitcham.

The collection is arranged by manufacturer and type, with much of it displayed in glass cabinets away from sunlight to protect the colourful paper designs. A recreated shop-counter display, complete with stock boxes, recalls childhood shopping trips with his mother.

"I also have a short counter display, like the sort you might have seen in a newsagent, with stock boxes of fireworks."

Among his favourites are air bombs, remembered for their noisy contribution to garden celebrations in the 1960s.

A museum ambition

Tony hopes the collection will eventually find a permanent home where the designs and history of British fireworks can be appreciated by future generations.

"I'd love people to learn a bit more about them, so ideally I'd love my collection to go into a dedicated museum about British firework making through the ages. I understand that people can be wary of fireworks, but a museum could help them appreciate the designs, colours and history of the industry.

"I'd also like the museum to be dedicated to the ethos of Bonfire Night, which I feel is slowly being wiped out at the moment."

A member of a Sussex Bonfire Society, Tony previously organised large displays himself. These days he attends the celebrations in Lewes, valuing the communal traditions of gathering around a fire as well as the fireworks.

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Appeal for forgotten fireworks

For Tony, collecting is about preserving something he loves rather than pursuing a financial return.

“My collection isn’t about making money. I collect these things because they interest me, and I enjoy showing them to people.”

He hopes anyone discovering old fireworks will contact him rather than set them off.

“This is part of an appeal: If anyone comes across old fireworks, particularly examples with blue touch paper, I’d ask them not to set them off and to give me a call on 07956506300. I’d be happy to collect them.”

The full interview and photographs of the collection appear on the World of Collecting website.

Lionel Blackman

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Image credit Tony Collis

Surrey Fesitival: Winnie-the-Pooh, refugee histories and music-making machines and more…

12 November 2026

How did a Surrey town help people fleeing the Nazis? What can Winnie-the-Pooh’s woodland tell us all about belonging? And what does a mechanical piano teach us about music in the age of AI?

The University of Surrey is inviting the public to explore these questions through ten free events during the Being Human Festival, running from 5 to 14 November 2026. Held across Guildford, Dorking and Compton, its programme brings archives, performances and hands-on activities together under this year’s theme, ‘Crossroads’.

At Refugee Voices from World War II, visitors will discover how ordinary people in Dorking helped those escaping the Nazi regime. A pop-up exhibition at Dorking Museum on 7 November, 10am–4pm, draws on the Dorking Refugee Committee’s archive from 1938–1949, documenting both the difficulties refugees faced and the support they received. Visitors can explore a new website developed by Surrey academics and speak with historians, curators and teachers about this local history of solidarity.

On 8 November, 11am–4pm, Into the Hundred Acre Wood: Queering Space in Children’s Literature offers a different perspective on some of Britain’s best-loved fictional landscapes. At the University’s Library, Dr Amy Louise Morgan will explore how children’s literary spaces open up possibilities for imagination and transformation through queer theory. Visitors will receive guided access to archive materials relating to E. H. Shepard, illustrator of Winnie-the-Pooh and The Wind in the Willows, before creating their own literary worlds in a workshop with award-winning author Ally Sherrick. The event is for ages 16 and over.

The relationship between human creativity and machines takes centre stage at The Evolution of Musical Creativity, at the Guildford Institute on 11 November, 7pm–8pm. Composer and music technologist Milton Mermikides will trace a history stretching from ninth-century programmable machines in Baghdad to today’s AI-driven music. Historical demonstrations and musical examples will explore how technology has repeatedly changed the way people compose, perform and listen.

Dr Lucy Ella Rose, Lecturer in Victorian Literature and event lead at the University of Surrey said:

“These events show how stories from the past speak directly to questions we face today: how we welcome people seeking refuge, who feels a sense of belonging and what happens when machines become part of the creative process.

“We’re inviting people to get close to the archives, meet the researchers and try things for themselves. Whether you come for Winnie-the-Pooh, wartime history or a live performance, there’s an opportunity to discover something unexpected about Surrey and the wider world.”

Elsewhere, families can explore Lewis Carroll’s Surrey connections through immersive Alice in Wonderland storytelling, performance and ‘imagination stations’ at the Guildford Institute on 7 November. Dorking Museum will also host refugee-history zine-making workshops that day.

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Music events include a live pianola concert with Rex Lawson on 5 November, an online player-piano exhibition throughout the festival and an interactive schools' session on 9 November.

Another event, Older LGBT+ Housing and Care at a Crossroads and Beyonde, explores how housing and care can better support LGBTQ+ people in later life. Taking place at the International Longevity Centre in London on 5 November, 5pm–7pm, the event combines a short animation, conversation and an interactive theatre workshop inspired by Surrey's Life House Project. Open to anyone aged 16 and over, no theatre experience is needed.

Creative writers can explore Turner's life and art at Watts Gallery on 13 November, while a family concert celebrating composer Richard Stoker at Guildford United Reformed Church on 14 November will bring together opera, literary song settings and music from Pirates of the Caribbean.

Explore the full programme and booking details. Advance booking is required for most events.

Surrey University

Your memories can help tell Epsom and Ewell's 90-year story

12 November 2026



Epsom and Ewell residents are being invited to delve into family albums and memories as the borough prepares to celebrate its 90th anniversary next year.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is asking people to contribute photographs, personal recollections and stories spanning the nine decades since the borough was created in 1937.

The anniversary comes at a particularly significant moment in local history. The celebrations will coincide with the final year of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council before local government reorganisation sees its functions pass to the new East Surrey Council.

The Council says it is developing a programme of events and activities intended to celebrate the borough's heritage, achievements and community spirit. Residents' contributions will help build a record of local people, places, events and everyday life through the decades. 90th

Council Leader Cllr **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) said the authority wanted to celebrate "the people, places and moments that have shaped Epsom and Ewell over the last 90 years", adding that family photographs, memories of community events and accounts of how the borough has changed could all help tell its story.

Contributions to the Council can be sent to **ninety@epsom-ewell.gov.uk**.

The Epsom and Ewell Times would also be delighted to hear from readers who have photographs, recollections or stories they would like to share with the wider community.

This is intended to complement, rather than duplicate, the Council's anniversary project. Material sent to Epsom and Ewell Times may, where suitable and with the contributor's agreement, form the basis of articles or features during the anniversary year.

There is an additional reason why readers may wish to share their memories with the Times. Each weekly edition of the Epsom and Ewell Times is legally required to be deposited with the **British Library**, creating a permanent historical record of the newspaper and the local life it reports.

That means a photograph, recollection or family story published by Epsom and Ewell Times would not only be shared with today's readers, but become part of an archived record available to future generations.

We would particularly welcome memories which capture ordinary life as well as major events: schools and workplaces, shops that have disappeared, sporting clubs, neighbourhood celebrations, wartime and post-war memories, changing streets and buildings, local characters, community organisations and photographs showing how familiar parts of Epsom and Ewell once looked.

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Readers are encouraged to contribute to the Council's own 90th anniversary collection. Those who would also like Epsom and Ewell Times to consider their material for publication can send it to **admin@epsomandewelltimes.com**, ideally with names, dates and locations where known, together with a few words explaining the story behind any photograph.

As the borough enters its 90th year — and the final chapter of the Borough Council itself — there may never be a better moment to gather these memories while those who can tell their stories are still able to do so.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has applied to the UK Government to create a body of "Charter Trustees" which would continue the mayoral and other civic traditions of the Borough beyond April 2027. The Charter Trustees would be the Councillors elected in the Epsom and Ewell districts to the new East Surrey Council.

Epsom and Ewell Mayor leads delegation to Chantilly to celebrate 30th anniversary of twinning

12 November 2026



Epsom and Ewell enjoys a robust, and mutually beneficial, twinning arrangement with Chantilly in France and this year marks the 30th anniversary of the close fraternal ties between the two historic horse racing towns. To commemorate the occasion a 14-strong delegation from Epsom and Ewell, led by the Mayor, Cllr Lucie McIntyre, made the journey to Chantilly for a packed programme of events.

The visit, which was paid for by individual contributions, also included representatives from Nescot and the Jockey Club, four current borough Councillors, three former Mayors and other members of the twinning association, all with varying abilities in speaking and understanding French.

This was Mayor Lucie's first visit to the historic twin town, and she was able to meet her opposite number, Benedicte De Cacqueray, and several Maires-Adjoint (Deputy Mayors). There was a certain poignancy to the visit in that Lucie will be Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's last-ever Mayor following local government reorganisation and the precise future of twinning arrangements between the two towns is under review.

Of the programme of events provided by the French hosts over the weekend of September 11-13, four were horse related, and some not without incident. A morning visit to the training stables of Alessandro and Ilaria Botti was followed by a drive deep into the forest which is criss-crossed with world-class all-weather training runs. Just as the delegation arrived, a jockey fell from a galloping horse but thankfully neither was harmed.

Marin Lecour-Grandmaison Director of France Galop showed the delegation round the Chantilly race course which operates 11 months of the year with 55 race days. Other equine-related highlights included a visit to the Living Horse Museum and the presentation by Mayor Lucie of prizes at the Polo Club de Chantilly, a facility big enough for seven playing pitches.

The Epsom and Ewell delegation also visited the town's Lace Museum, home to some exquisitely beautiful pieces, one of which for example took 20 people a year to produce, as well as the Tennis Club of Chantilly. The agenda also included a trip to the historic St Peters Church, which has strong ties with the anglophone community in Chantilly, and a chance to see a new film on the wartime life of De Gaulle, including his time in the UK.

No trip to Chantilly would be complete without a visit to the fabulously beautiful Chateau and a chance to make Chantilly creme – a task that the Mayor excelled at!

Councillor Lucie McIntyre says, "I was delighted to join the Epsom and Town Twinning Association in celebrating this milestone and thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality provided by our French hosts as well as a chance to see so much of the wonderful town of Chantilly."

While the 30 year anniversary celebrations are taking place in 2026 it was in fact on 30th September 1995 that the Mayor of Chantilly signed the Twinning Charter. However a similar ceremony followed in Epsom in March 1996, signed by our then Mayor, Councillor Cyril Frazer, and this completed the formalities. The Epsom and Ewell Twinning Association was subsequently appointed by the Borough to develop and run the twinning which it has done ever since.

Cllr Clive Woodbridge (RA Ewell Village)

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Former Mayor Brian Angus (RA)

The Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association

Photo credit: Steve Bridger

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Epsom & Ewell Borough Council publishes final Annual Report

12 November 2026



Today, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has published its 2025/26 Annual Report, marking the authority's final annual report before local government reorganisation and reflecting on almost 90 years of service to residents.

The report showcases both the council's achievements over the last financial year and key moments from its history since the Borough of Epsom and Ewell was established in 1937.

The council will be 90 years old when it is dissolved ahead of East Surrey Council's Vesting Day on 1 April 2027.

The report highlights key achievements over the past year, including:

- setting a balanced budget for 2026/27 without cuts to services
- allocating more than £1.6 million to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) projects supporting local infrastructure and community organisations
- determining around 94% of planning applications within statutory timescales, including 100% of major applications
- progressing the borough's Local Plan through Public Examination, helping to shape how future development is managed while protecting the borough's green spaces, heritage and character
- progressing the council's Climate Change Action Plan through energy-efficiency improvements and renewable energy investment
- preventing or relieving homelessness for 525 households and supporting vulnerable residents through housing and home improvement services
- launching new health and wellbeing initiatives for young people and families across the borough.

As well as highlighting the council's work during 2025/26, the report celebrates 90 years of local government in Epsom & Ewell, featuring notable milestones from the borough's history, including the creation of the borough in 1937, the establishment of Bourne Hall and the council's support for residents through national events including the Second World War and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Jackie King, Chief Executive of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said:

"This Annual Report is a particularly significant one, as it will be the last published by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council before the authority becomes part of the new East Surrey unitary council in April 2027.

"While the report highlights the achievements of the past year, it is also an opportunity to reflect on almost 90 years of public service and the people who have made that possible.

"Over nine decades, generations of councillors, officers, volunteers and community partners have helped shape Epsom & Ewell into the thriving borough it is today. As we enter a period of significant change for this borough and Surrey as a whole, this report recognises the lasting legacy they leave behind.

"It has been an honour to serve this borough and I hope residents will enjoy looking back on the council's history as we prepare for the next chapter of local government in Surrey."

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Hannah Dalton, Leader of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, added:

“This report is an opportunity to reflect on 90 years of service to our communities and the lasting contribution the council has made to life in Epsom & Ewell.

“Since the council was established in 1937, it has been led by the Residents’ Association, with a strong focus on local priorities and community values. As we prepare for local government reorganisation, I am proud of what has been achieved by generations of councillors, officers and community partners working together on behalf of residents.

“While this chapter is coming to a close, the legacy of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and the strong sense of local identity that defines our borough will endure.”

The report is available on the council’s website at: Epsom & Ewell Annual Report 2025/26 | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Dorking’s wartime refugee committee records go online for the first time

12 November 2026



Rich historical records of how the small town of Dorking sheltered people fleeing Nazi persecution during World War Two are now fully searchable and publicly accessible online, thanks to a partnership between the University of Surrey and Dorking Museum.

Formally launched today (24 September), dorkingrefugeearchive.org digitises the papers of the Dorking and District Refugee Committee – a group of volunteers who were able to find housing, work and medical care for refugees arriving in the Surrey town between 1938 and 1949. Until now, the records, which are frequently requested by researchers, have only existed in paper form at the Dorking Museum.

The website organises the committee’s work into five themes – solidarity, caring for refugees, children, the post-war years and the people involved.

In collaboration with the history department at Dorking’s Ashcombe School, the project has also produced teaching resources, which are freely available to other schools, researchers and community groups.

Professor Constance Bantman, co-project lead and Head of Literature and Languages at the University of Surrey, said:

“Making this archive accessible means the stories held in these records, of both the refugees and the people of Dorking who supported them, can finally reach the audience they deserve. It is a resource for researchers, but just as importantly, it’s a resource for the town itself.”

Surrey first announced the project in May 2026, sharing individual stories held within the collection, including that of Sir Erich Reich, who arrived in Britain on a Kindertransport in 1939. Ralph Vaughan Williams (the composer) personally brought the four-year-old to safety in Dorking.

Dr Beth Palmer, co-project lead from the University of Surrey, said:

“These remarkable papers hold enormous detail, individual cases, letters, decisions that changed lives. Dorking’s history as a place of welcome and support is genuinely remarkable, and until now, only a small number of people knew about it. Putting the archive online, alongside resources for schools, means this chapter of Surrey’s history can be taught, studied and understood well beyond the archive’s four walls.”

Kathy Atherton, Chairman of the Dorking Museum, said:

“The Refugee Committee papers are among the archive’s most frequently requested resources. Digitisation not only opens them up to a far wider audience but also protects the physical fabric of the collection from over-handling by researchers.”

Surrey University

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Heritage doors open across Epsom and Ewell

12 November 2026



Historic buildings, forgotten stories and rarely seen corners of Surrey will be brought to life when Heritage Open Days return from Friday 11th to Sunday 20th September.

The annual festival offers free access to historic places, guided walks, exhibitions and talks. This year’s theme, “Everyday Histories”, celebrates the lives, work and experiences of people whose stories may not always feature in traditional accounts of the past.

Among the many events taking place across Surrey are a dozen opportunities to explore the heritage of Epsom and Ewell, ranging from the history of the borough’s spa and racecourse to Ewell’s buildings, local currency and the lives of thousands of patients once treated in Epsom’s psychiatric hospitals.

Remembering the 9,000 at Horton Cemetery

A particular focus of the local programme will be Horton Cemetery – 9,000 People Remembered, taking place on Saturday 12th September from 10am to 4pm.

Around 9,000 former patients of Epsom’s cluster of five psychiatric hospitals were buried in Horton Cemetery between 1899 and 1955. Most lie in unmarked graves and, for decades, their individual identities and life stories were largely forgotten.

The Friends of Horton Cemetery have been working to restore those identities through historical and family research. Visitors will be able to meet researchers and volunteers, explore displays, listen to audio material and learn about some of the people buried there.

The event will be held on land adjacent to the cemetery in Hook Road. The cemetery itself remains inaccessible, but free parking will be available close to the event. Admission is free and advance booking is not required, although the organisers expect the site to become busier later in the day.

A linked event, The History of Horton Asylum and Horton Cemetery, will run at The Horton Arts Centre in Haven Way from 10am to 4pm on the same day.

The Grade II-listed arts centre occupies the former chapel of Horton Hospital. Its exhibitions, presentations and tours will examine the history of Epsom’s five psychiatric hospitals and the lives of the patients and staff who lived and worked within them. Researchers will also be available to help visitors investigate possible family connections.

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Local events across the ten days

The borough's programme begins on Friday 11th September, when St Martin of Tours Church in Church Street, Epsom, will open from 9.30am to 1pm. The parish church will also be open on most days during the festival:

- Saturday 12th September, 10am to 5pm
- Sunday 13th September, noon to 6pm
- Monday 14th to Friday 18th September, 9.30am to 1pm
- Sunday 20th September, noon to 6pm

On Sunday 13th September, a guided Epsom Salts and Spa Walk will leave the historic Assembly Rooms in the High Street at 11am. The walk will explore how Epsom's mineral waters transformed the town into a fashionable spa destination. Advance booking is required.

Ewell Court House, in Ewell Court Avenue, will welcome visitors between 10am and 2pm that day, offering an opportunity to discover more about the history and architecture of the house. No booking is required.

Also on Sunday, the Service Wing Museum at Nonsuch Park will open from noon until 4pm. The museum occupies part of the surviving service wing of the former Nonsuch Mansion and contains displays relating to the history of the estate and the lost Tudor Palace of Nonsuch. Admission is free without advance booking.

Bourne Hall will host Everyday Histories in Worcester Park from the Iron Age to the Computer Age at 2pm on Monday 14th September. The talk will follow the development of the area through archaeological discoveries, changing communities and more recent technological history. Booking is required.

On Tuesday 15th September, former professional jockey Caroline Baldock will lead Life on the Downs, a guided walk around the Derby course at Epsom Downs Racecourse. The walk begins at 10am and is expected to last approximately 90 minutes. Places are limited and must be booked in advance.

Lost Buildings of Epsom will be the subject of a talk at Bourne Hall at 2pm on Wednesday 16th September. It will recall notable local buildings that have disappeared through redevelopment, demolition or changing uses. Advance booking is required.

Two events follow on Thursday 17th September. Ewell Village, People and Places is a guided walk leaving Bourne Hall at 10am, while Token Coins in Ewell and Epsom, at Bourne Hall Museum at 2pm, will explore the tokens issued by local traders when official coinage was in short supply. Both events require booking.

The local programme concludes on Saturday 19th September when Ewell Castle School opens its doors to visitors from noon until 3pm. The school is celebrating its centenary, having been founded in 1926 when H R Budgell acquired the Castle and opened a school for an initial intake of 40 boys. Advance booking is required.

All Heritage Open Days events are free, but capacity is limited for several of the guided walks and talks. Visitors should book promptly where required and check the individual listings before travelling, as arrangements can change.

The full Surrey Heritage Open Days programme and event search provides details of events across the county, including opening times, accessibility information and booking arrangements.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Bringing centuries of Surrey records into the 21st century

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Residents, researchers and history enthusiasts will soon find it easier than ever to explore Surrey's rich heritage thanks to a major investment in a new collections management system at the Surrey History Centre, by Surrey County Council.

Home to Surrey's archives, Surrey History Centre, with accredited status by The National Archives, cares for an extraordinary collection spanning more than 900 years of history. Its six miles of shelving contain around six million documents, manuscripts and parchment records dating back to the Middle Ages.

The collection includes family and house history records such as parish registers, census returns, civil registration records, poor law records, electoral registers and manorial records. It also houses thousands of historic photographs, postcards, watercolours, engravings and archive films, alongside local history books, directories, newspapers, periodicals and historic maps.

Among its treasured special collections are records and papers connected to notable Surrey figures and businesses, including Lewis Carroll, renowned garden designer Gertrude Jekyll and the Broadwood piano family.

Managing and preserving such an extensive collection is a significant undertaking. The introduction of the new collections management system will transform how people discover and access Surrey's archives, making searches faster, more intuitive and more comprehensive.

The improved online catalogue will be available Monday 14 September and provide an improved user experience, helping users quickly locate the records and documents they need. Documents can then be ordered up from home in advance of their visit to the Surrey History Centre.

Councillor Mark Nuti, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Communities, said: "Our archives tell the story of Surrey and the people who have lived, worked and shaped our county over hundreds of years. By investing in modern technology, we are helping to ensure these invaluable records can continue to be discovered, explored and enjoyed by future generations.

"This is about investing in the future to gain access to the past. The new collections management system will make it easier for residents, family historians and researchers to explore Surrey's rich heritage, with improved search functionality and the ability to request documents before visiting the Surrey History Centre. These improvements will help people plan their research more effectively and make the most of their time with us, while encouraging even more people to discover the fascinating stories held within Surrey's archives."

The investment forms part of Surrey County Council's commitment to preserving the county's heritage while making public services more accessible and user-friendly through digital innovation.

For more information about the Surrey History Centre and its collections, visit: Surrey History Centre – Surrey County Council

Surrey County Council

Image: John Speed – 1610 – Map of Surrey (including Nonsuch Palace) Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc. raremaps.com. public domain

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UK's "first and only" craft museum in Surrey open day

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One of Surrey's most important buildings, and the UK's 'first and only' craft museum, is to host a special event to show off the vital restoration work going into saving the historic Grade I site.

Wilmer House in Farnham was allowed to fall into disrepair, but in March 2023 benefited from £700,000 in Arts Council funding to carry out essential repairs to its Georgian home in West Street.

It was soon discovered that the problems ran much deeper and a further £700,000 was needed to repair decaying brickwork, collapsing windows, and eroded mortar joints, as well as the visible cracking throughout.

Waverley Borough Council, which has a legal duty to maintain the building, has stepped in to fill the funding gap but, to rally support within the community for the project, is hosting an open day at the Farnham Museum.

Councillor Kika Mirylees, Waverley Borough Council's community services portfolio holder, said: "Willmer House is a building of enormous historical and cultural significance to Farnham.

"We are delighted to invite residents to join us for what promises to be a fascinating evening of discussion and discovery.

"The event offers a unique opportunity to hear directly from experts involved in heritage conservation and to learn more about the exciting restoration plans for this much-loved landmark."

The free event is part of the council's "every brick counts" campaign that offers residents the opportunity to contribute to the preservation.

The council said the building uses gauged brickwork, one of the most expensive building methods often seen on the finest buildings around the world.

The free open event takes place on Monday September 14 2026 and will be hosted jointly by the council and The Farnham Society from 7.30pm to 9pm.

It will feature a panel including representatives from Arts Council England, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, conservation consultant Graham Abrey, historic brick conservator Emma Simpson MBE, and local historian and author Dr Roy Waight.

Simon Bradbury, vice chairman of The Farnham Society, said: "The Farnham Society has been campaigning to preserve Farnham's heritage since 1911.

"Willmer House, as a Georgian town house, is an important part of that heritage.

"Coming out of the wealth generated from the hop trade, Willmer House is a Grade I listed building, noted in particular for its brickwork, rated as one of the finest examples of Georgian brickwork in the country."

The event is free to attend, but places should be booked in advance.

Chris Caulfield Local Democracy Reporter

Related reports:

Farnham Museum repairs hitting £2M

Image: Wilmer House, West Street, Farnham (image WBC)

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