

## Ada of Surrey inspires big AI project

7 February 2024



Drawing inspiration from **Ada Lovelace**, who resided in Surrey, a computing pioneer and translator who overcame societal barriers in the 19th century, the “ADA network” based at **Surrey University** aims to usher in a transformative era of AI research focused on digital inclusion.

**Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace** (*née Byron*; 10 December 1815 – 27 November 1852) was an English mathematician and writer, chiefly known for her work on Charles Babbage’s proposed mechanical general-purpose computer, the Analytical Engine. She was the first to recognise that the machine had applications beyond pure calculation. In 1835, she married the first Earl of Lovelace, becoming Lady King. They had a home in Ockham Park, Surrey.

The **University of Surrey** has been granted a multi-million-pound award from the **Leverhulme Trust** to spearhead a groundbreaking initiative aimed at ensuring equitable access to artificial intelligence (AI)-powered digital media. This ambitious project, named the Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships Network for AI-Enabled Digital Accessibility (**ADA**), will receive a grant of £2.15 million over eight years.

Professor **Sabine Braun**, ADA Director at the University of Surrey, emphasized the importance of digital media accessibility, stating that it is pivotal for engaging with various aspects of life, from public information to entertainment. The ADA project aims to leverage AI technology to make digital content accessible to individuals of all ages, languages, cognitive and sensory abilities, and physical mobility.

In today’s digital landscape, interacting with digital content involves complex sensory inputs. However, accessibility issues arise when individuals cannot access content in their preferred language or format. While traditional methods like text subtitles or simplified versions have been used to address these challenges, the sheer volume of digital content necessitates AI-driven solutions.

The ADA project seeks to advance AI-driven accessibility solutions by integrating insights from the humanities and social sciences to better understand user needs.

The Surrey Institute for People-Centred AI (PAI) will host the ADA project, aligning with its mission to advance AI from a human-centric perspective. The project will draw expertise from three renowned research centers at the University of Surrey: the Centre for Translation Studies (CTS), the Centre for Vision, Speech and Signal Processing (CVSSP), and the Nature Inspired Computer and Engineering Research Group (NICE).

CTS will contribute expertise in language and translation technology to improve media accessibility, while CVSSP will leverage its world-leading AI and computer vision capabilities. NICE will provide specific expertise in knowledge-driven AI and machine translation for under-resourced languages.

Professor **Adrian Hilton**, Director of PAI and CVSSP, highlighted ADA’s vision to establish a hub for high-quality research training in AI-enabled digital accessibility. By collaborating with Surrey’s Digital World Research Centre (DWRC), Digital Societies, and Brain and Behaviour research groups, the ADA project aims to drive meaningful advancements in AI accessibility, ensuring that media services are accessible and inclusive for all individuals and society.

Image: Daguerreotype by Antoine Claudet and Surrey University’s newest lab that has 200 machines which are each equipped with a Nvidia Quadro P4000 Graphics Card: useful for intensive jobs that require multiple cores in areas such as data science, AI and deep learning.

## Robot puts study at home pupil in the classroom

7 February 2024



One pupil at a Surrey primary school has been utilising virtual technology to help her keep-up with learning by sending a robot into class.

The robot is controlled by the pupil, and gives her the opportunity to be with her friends and classmates even though she cannot be in school physically.

**Cuddington Croft Primary** enlisted some cutting-edge technology when a Year 5 pupil was forced to take several months off school due to serious illness.

To enable Alexia to continue her studies remotely, the school arranged for an AV1 robot to attend lessons in her place, allowing the youngster to join her classmates virtually.

“The robot was on a table at school, and when Alexia was on, it would ‘come to life’, and its head could rotate to see the classroom,” said **Mike Skelton**, Head Teacher at Cuddington Croft, part of the GLF Schools Multi Academies Trust.

“The aim of the AV1 was to help the pupil to attend lessons while they were unable to be there in person,” explained Alexia’s teacher, April Riley. “It’s been brilliant at making that connection between the pupil and the class. It’s mainly for them to join in, listen to the lessons, and still feel part of the class.

“The first few times the pupil came online it was very exciting, and the other children were interested to see how it moved and when the eyes changed et cetera. However, it didn’t take much time before it started to feel normal.”

“What’s great is that they can log on and show off their learning and their work,” she continued. “That made them feel like they had done their part, and I think that sense of achievement was really important.

“We had a great example of this in our last English unit where everyone had to read a speech. The pupil came online and read their speech through the AV1, and everyone cheered afterwards.”

The portable robot was provided with the help of the **Surrey County Council** Access to Education Team.

“I really love my robot, as I can join in with the lessons in class with my friends and my teacher, and interact with them,” said Alexia, who is currently making a phased return to school. “It also makes me feel like I am in the classroom with everyone and lets me see everyone without being seen, as sometimes I don’t feel well.

“It allows me to answer questions and to change the colour if I don’t feel well but still want to listen into the lesson. Then my teacher knows I am there but might not ‘put up my hand’ to answer questions.

“I prefer to be in class, but sometimes that’s not possible because I am not well, but it still helps me to feel included in the class.”

“This technology allowed a child to feel included within her class during the toughest period of her and her family’s lives,” added Mr Skelton. “It added a sense of

normality and togetherness that could not have been achieved through sending work home.”

## Epsom youth show a taste for cooking

7 February 2024



On Saturday, 3rd February, three candidates from Epsom participated in the District Young Chef Competition held at Merton College for Rotary Young Chef, along with approximately 14 others from areas including Kingston, Redhill, and Morden.

While negative messages about the state of young people, crime, and issues are often heard, witnessing what took place gives us hope that there are many young, decent individuals who will grow up to become assets to our community. Let’s sing their praises!

The participants in the competition had two hours to prepare a healthy two-course meal. The quality of the food by all the young people was amazing, ambitious, tasty, and demonstrated a passion for food.

The day was made even more special by Emma from Rosebery School, who also took part in the local competition recently and was awarded first place for her outstanding salmon dish.

Emma will now move on to the regional round in Hampshire to cook once more. We, of course, congratulate Emma on her outstanding achievement and wish her the best of luck in the next competition.

Thanks also go to Joe from Epsom Rotary, who organized the local competition and is supporting our candidate through to the next round.

Epsom Rotary.

## NESCOT Saturday academies for the young

7 February 2024



Got a young person passionate about animals, cookery, e-sports, film making or another hands-on potential career? Our next Saturday Academy starts 24 Feb 2024 - book now!

The next set of Saturday academies for young people starts soon and places are filling fast. The academies are a popular set of 4-week Saturday courses which offer: Practical, enjoyable, hands-on learning. A taste of a subject for possible a career or further study. A chance to develop a leisure interest. Places in all subjects cost £95 for four three-hour sessions **Click here to book**

### Academy Subjects

We have Academies in Media Make-Up (SFX), Film-making, Music Production, Animation, Travel & Tourism, Animal Management, Cooking, Carpentry, Beauty and Babysitting & Childcare.

NEW for 2024:

- E-sports
- Anatomy for Sport

### Academy Format and Pricing

We hold Saturday Academies for young people at Nescot in Ewell, near Epsom. The Academies are fun and instructive Saturday courses that last four weeks. They start at 10am and finish at 1pm on consecutive Saturdays. The Academies will all start on Saturday 24th Feb 2024. **The total cost for all four Saturdays in any Academy is £95. Click on the link below for full details.**

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL DETAILS AND BOOKING](#)

NESCOT, Reigate Road, Ewell, Epsom, KT17 3DS  
[www.nescot.ac.uk](http://www.nescot.ac.uk)

## Top stuff for Cuddington Croft

7 February 2024



Staff and students at Cuddington Croft Primary had reason to celebrate when the latest SAT results revealed that the school ranked within the Top 10 in the county.

The Department for Education Performance Table for Key Stage 2 2023 SAT results showed that the school – which is part of the GLF Schools Multi-Academies Trust – was among the 10 highest performers out of 476 Surrey schools, according to the combined percentage of children attaining the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths.

“This is a really impressive achievement, considering the size of county and number of schools in Surrey,” said Mike Skelton, who is Head Teacher at the school. “If there was a table for combined greater depth scores, Cuddington would have been in the top three.”

“Cuddington is proud to be a consistently high achieving school,” he continued. “Post-covid, this is the first results published, so we are proud they continue to be this high, despite the disrupted learning caused by the pandemic.

“It shows the hard work of the staff from Nursery to Year 6 to enable the children to be successful and achieve their highest potential.”

Staff and parents alike at the school were delighted with the results.

“The staff were extremely proud of the hard work and dedication to support the children to achieve the results they did,” added Mr Skelton.

“A parent of a child in that cohort said: ‘It really is amazing. It makes us so proud of our child and the school. It has given our daughter the best possible start to secondary school.’

“Well done to all the children and all the staff for their hard work.”

Cuddington Croft PR.

## In the footsteps of the great man?

7 February 2024



The great orator **Sir Winston Churchill** was born in **Blenheim Palace** in 1874. 150 years later **Epsom’s own Blenheim High School** became a nursery for the next generation of orators. Twenty-one students from four local schools took part in **Youth Speaks: A Debate Competition** on Thursday 11th January 2024 evening at the Longmead Road school. Many adults run shy of public speaking, so to see and hear students speaking with such confidence and assurance was wonderful.

This local heat of the national competition was once again organised jointly by the Rotary Clubs of Banstead, Epsom and Sutton Nonsuch. Teams from The Beacon School, St Philomena’s and Wilsons School took part in the Intermediate section (11 – 13 years old) with teams from Blenheim High School and Wilsons in the Senior (14 to 17) section. Each team consists of a Chairperson, a Proposer and an Opposer.

The team from The Beacon School got the Intermediate competition underway debating that ‘footballers’ income should be taxed at a higher rate’. St Philomena’s discussed whether ‘social media makes us less social’, an important topic that affects many of us today. The team from Wilsons gave us a lively discussion on ‘climate change being the most pressing issue facing us’. In her summary, chair of judges Ros Rokison said that the team were outstanding and they were adjudged the winners of the Intermediate competition.

In the senior section both teams provided the large audience, which included Epsom and Ewell Mayor Cllr **Robert Geleit** (Labour Court Ward), with lively debates. The proposal that ‘the extra-curriculum is more important than the standard curriculum’ was debated by an excellent team from Blenheim High School. The proposer of this motion was particularly persuasive.

Then the proposal ‘this house believes extremism is inevitable’ was debated by a team from Wilsons. Although they exceeded the time limit of fifteen minutes, all three students were outstanding for content and delivery and they won the senior competition.

The three Rotary clubs thanked the excellent judges Ros Rokison and Ken Rokison. Ros gave each of the twenty-one students useful constructive feedback.

Public speaking is a hard skill to master, but such a useful skill to acquire and Rotary is proud to have given these young people this opportunity.

John Chamberlain.

## Epsom and Ewell schools get new CEO

7 February 2024





The new chief executive of one of the country's biggest multi academy trusts has a busy schedule in place as he prepares to visit all 42 schools under his watch during his first term.

**Julian Drinkall**, the new CEO of GLF Schools, has started 2024 with a pledge to visit all schools within the Trust, located in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey, West Sussex and the London Boroughs of Wandsworth and Croydon, during the spring term.

GLF's schools in Surrey are Banstead Infants, **Cuddington Croft Primary** (Cheam), **Danetree Primary** (West Ewell), **Glyn** (Ewell), **Rosebery** (Epsom), The Beacon (Banstead), **The Vale Primary** (Epsom), Warren Mead Infants (Banstead), Warren Mead Juniors (Banstead), Cordwalles Juniors (Camberley), Frogmore Juniors (Camberley), Hammond (Lightwater), Lightwater Village, Pine Ridge & Lorraine Federation (Camberley). Lime Tree (Merstham), Merstham Park, Merstham Primary, Salfords Primary,

Mr Drinkall replaced the outgoing and founding CEO **Jon Chaloner**, who stepped down from his role last month after 11 years of leading the organisation through a period of continued growth. The pair worked together in the weeks leading up to the Christmas break to help the transition before the New Year. [Many will remember Jon Chaloner during his headship of Glyn School in Ewell.]

Mr Drinkall said "GLF Schools is in an enviable position, with many great schools and poised to go from strength-to-strength. I intend to visit all our schools in my first full term. Context is everything in schools and, as with our children, each and every one of them has different needs at different moments in time.

"It is that context and that ambition that I want to learn about, and I am looking forward to getting to know as many of our staff as possible, as well as our students, parents and carers, schools and communities, and hearing about the incredible work that everyone is engaged in and committed to."

Mr Drinkall has held a variety of education CEO roles and was CEO of the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), leading its turnaround over a five-year period. He said he was both 'delighted and proud' to be starting work for GLF Schools, which provides education to over 17,000 young people aged from two to 19, in a diverse array of settings and employs around 2,500 members of staff.

He added: "I'm looking forward to establishing new dreams and possibilities for our Trust, and I'm committed to finding innovative and supportive ways to make that happen for all our children and young people."

## Caught the Christmas Epsom Stagecoach to Paris

7 February 2024



**20 DECEMBER 2023:** Gifted students from local **Stagecoach Performing Arts Epsom** were chosen to take part in Disney's festive show, Let's Sing, in Disneyland Paris at the weekend.

The troupe of 21 students, aged between nine and 19, performed alongside Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Donald and Daisy Duck, and Goofy, as well as professional Disney singers, in a magical and spectacular choral story that was performed four times over the two days.

Taking to the specially decorated stage with scenes from Disney's Main Street USA and the Disney Christmas tree, the students gave a heart-warming performance of festive songs.

The students also took part in a choral workshop with Disney choirmasters and professional stage rehearsals and sound checks, learning how large-scale productions such as this are put together. Skills they can take forward for future performances and productions, and into their professional lives.

**Stagecoach Epsom Principal Rachel Crouch said:** "We've taken part in Stagecoach's event, *Disney Dance the Dream*, before, but this was the first time we had performed at Christmas time. The students thoroughly enjoyed it and learnt a lot from the experience. It was fantastic to watch them on the stage singing alongside such iconic Disney characters, and lovely to be there for the festive season."

Stagecoach Performing Arts opened its first school 35 years ago and, since then, it has seen more than one million students unlock their creative potential. Provided with the support and dedication of the experienced Principals, the students learn so much more than how to sing, dance and act. Stagecoach helps them blossom into well-rounded individuals, ready to embrace life and all its exciting opportunities.

With a network of over 55,000 students and more than 3,000 extra-curricular performing arts schools worldwide, Stagecoach aims to make a difference in its students' lives by teaching Creative Courage for Life and many children have gone on to study and work in performing arts from blockbuster films to countless roles in local theatre productions. Early stages classes are available for children aged four to six and main stages classes take place for six to 18-year-olds every weekend during term time.

For more information about Stagecoach Performing Arts Epsom, please visit [www.stagecoach.co.uk/epsom](http://www.stagecoach.co.uk/epsom) or phone 01737 669504.

### About Stagecoach

Stagecoach Performing Arts was founded in 1988 and continues to grow as the UK's largest network of extra-curricular performing arts schools for children, with over 50,000 students enrolled in our weekly classes worldwide.

One of the first extra-curricular children's performing arts schools in the country, we aim to inspire our students, making a difference in their lives by teaching *Creative Courage For Life*®.

With 350 franchisees and 3,000 teachers worldwide, Stagecoach operates over 2,000 schools and classes and has a presence in eight countries including Canada, Germany, Malta, Spain, Gibraltar, Lithuania and Australia.

Notable alumni are Emma Watson, Jamie Bell, Eleanor Tomlinson, Tuppence Middleton, Tom Fletcher, Dani Harmer, Josh Cuthbert, Danny Mac, and Charlotte Jaconelli.

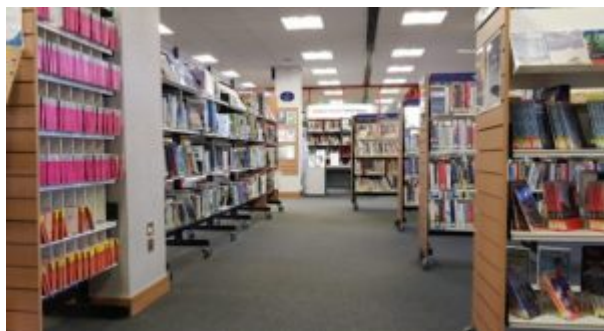
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For more information visit the website [www.stagecoach.co.uk](https://www.stagecoach.co.uk).

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## RAAC's latest victim

7 February 2024



Redhill Library has had to close with immediate effect following further investigations of the known reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in the building. The closure of the library will allow more detailed assessments and immediate safety measures to take place to ensure the building is safe to reopen to residents.

We understand the short notice closure of the library will cause disruption for library users and staff. However, as residents would expect, safety is our top priority.

At present, as the discovery of RAAC in the library building is very recent, further urgent work will need to be undertaken before we can provide any details on mitigation measures or timelines for re-opening.

Further announcements and updates regarding Redhill library will be shared via the **Redhill Library web page**.

**Merstham Library** and **Reigate Library** remain open for residents.

Redhill Library is a Surrey County Council designated warm space, alternative warm spaces in Redhill can be found **here**.

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## Sunak in Surrey

7 February 2024



The **University of Surrey** welcomed Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and **Guildford MP Angela Richardson** to campus on Thursday (30 November).

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Epsom and Ewell Times notes the Guildford Parliamentary Constituency is rather marginal. The 2019 General Election result was:

Conservative Angela Richardson 26,317

Liberal Democrats Zöe Franklin 22,980

Labour Anne Rouse 4,515

Independent Anne Milton 4,356

Peace John Morris 483

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During their visit, the Prime Minister and Ms Richardson met nursing students and staff from the School of Health Sciences, where they observed practical lessons taking place. They also toured Surrey's world-class facilities, including a unique immersive simulation suite which digitally replicates different healthcare settings. The Prime Minister also took the time to personally speak to Surrey's students to learn more about their journey in becoming nurses and why they chose to pursue the profession.

Professor **G Q Max Lu**, President and Vice-Chancellor, of the University of Surrey, said:

"I am honoured to welcome the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak and Angela Richardson MP to the University of Surrey campus. Our reputation for training highly skilled and inspiring health care professionals precedes us. The strength of our excellence in teaching and student support makes Surrey an exceptional place to study. We are delighted to have this opportunity to showcase some of our state-of-the art facilities to our distinguished visitor.

"As part of our commitment to producing the sought-after health professionals for the future, we are pleased to be welcoming our first cohort of medical students in 2024. Combined with the innovative biomedical and healthy living research undertaken at Surrey, we are steadfast in our contribution and support to the NHS and our communities."

The School of Health Sciences, which sits within the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, at the University of Surrey continues to go from strength to strength. The calibre of nursing programmes at the school are both nationally and internationally recognised, being ranked seventh in the QS World University Subject Rankings and eight in the UK (The Times / Sunday Times Good University Guide 2024). This builds on an established history of the school, which recently celebrated 40 years of educating nurses at Surrey.

Professor **Paul Townsend**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences at the University of Surrey, said:

"It is an enormous privilege to have the Prime Minister and our local MP visit us.

"Surrey is not only the home to cutting edge research but is a world leader in educating health professionals of the future. Our team of dedicated teaching staff work hard to ensure that our students have the knowledge and skills needed to care for patients and that they embody the culture and values of the NHS. It is a great honour to be a part of the Surrey family and to witness our students succeed in their studies."

Jackie McBride, Associate Professor, Head of Department: Professional Preparatory Programmes at the School of Health Sciences at the University of Surrey, said:

"I am delighted that the Prime Minister has met some of our future healthcare professionals here at the University of Surrey. I am beyond proud of our students

and of everything they have and continue to achieve. Nursing is more than a job, it requires dedication, empathy, knowledge, and skills, and I know the Prime Minister will have seen today all these attributes in our students.”

Surrey University Press Office