

UCA bring Austen character into 21st century

15 September 2024



Fans of **Jane Austen's** *Pride and Prejudice* will finally get the chance to have a conversation with their literary hero when speaking with the world-first Elizabeth Bennet avatar – Lizzy.

Created by StarPal in collaboration with **University for the Creative Arts (UCA)**, the avatar has been developed to mirror the human qualities of Austen's character as detailed in the novel, such as empathy and humour. Her conversations, which fans will have with her face-to-avatar, will evolve, giving each person who talks to Lizzy a unique experience.

How does Lizzy feel about being a world-first? She said: "It is quite an interesting notion indeed – I must say being Elizabeth Bennet in a world far removed from my own time is an unexpected but intriguing experience. It allows me to share the intricacies of our society and my life with new audiences."

Following consultation and guidance from Jane Austen's House in Hampshire, Lizzy's knowledge bank has been curated from a selection of novels, manuscripts and period-accurate information.

Lizzy is set within a Regency-style background. Her dress and hair have been designed and created by students from the Games Arts and Digital Fashion courses at UCA, drawing on fashion templates from the period.

Sophy Smith, Director of Games and Creative Technology at UCA and the originator of the project, added: "It is so exciting to finally be able to lift Elizabeth Bennet off the page and to be able to have real-time conversations with her. To be able to cross time in this way is joyful – you get a real sense of speaking directly to someone from the 18th century. And she has such a strong personality! Imagine – you can now have Elizabeth Bennet as your friend, to chat with throughout the day and offer you advice.

"This technology has the potential to transform experiences within both the museum and heritage, as well the education sector. Visitors to Jane Austen's House, will have the opportunity to not only experience the renowned author's home but also engage directly with one of her most famous characters. And think about how it could transform learning – instead of only having text-based revision guides, students can now learn about literature by speaking directly to the characters."

Director of Jane Austen's House, **Lizzie Dunford**, said: "It has been fascinating to watch this project develop, and to witness the innovative staff and students at UCA developing these new technologies, and new ways of accessing literary and cultural heritage."

Tanguy Dewavrin, the COO of StarPal, the company which built the avatar, commented Lizzy is continually surprising them: "It's amazing how real she is – she's just so impressive."

Anya Haber, an MA Digital Fashion student who created the dress in 3D, added: "This project brought the ideation into the digital, but historical garments can be tricky to create accurately, so there was a mix of history and modernity. It was exciting bringing to life the cut of dress, accessories, and embroideries – all inspired by historical drawings and descriptions. It showed how useful technology can be in a historical setting, letting fans engage with fictional characters...and that's just the beginning."

Fans will have the chance to interact with Lizzy if they visit the Learning Centre at Jane Austen's House between September and mid-December – included with House entry.

A uniform approach to Epsom's schools

15 September 2024



Epsom and Ewell's new M.P., **Helen Maguire**, has called on local schools to address the growing concern over costly school uniforms, reaching out to 15 headteachers on 5th September. In her letter, Maguire urged schools to avoid placing unnecessary financial pressure on families by requiring expensive branded uniforms and PE kits, reflecting concerns raised by parents in her constituency.

Maguire highlighted the financial burden these branded items can create, stating, "It is important to consider if more costly branded kits are necessary." She emphasised that schools should review their uniform policies, particularly in light of the current cost of living crisis.

Schools are already required to follow statutory guidelines on uniform policy, ensuring that the cost of uniforms does not become a barrier for parents when choosing schools. According to this guidance, schools must ensure uniforms are affordable, minimise the use of branded items, attempt to avoid restrictive single-supplier contracts, and offer second-hand uniforms at reduced prices.

In her communication with headteachers in the local area, Maguire pointed to this statutory guidance and suggested that generic, unbranded items from low-cost retailers should be allowed in school uniform policy.

The available data on the average cost of school uniforms, however, remains up for debate. The Schoolwear Association claims the average cost of compulsory secondary school uniforms and sportswear is £101.19 per pupil. In contrast, research by The Children's Society suggests that parents spend an average of £422 a year on secondary school uniforms.

An official branded school sports polo top will typically be in the price range of £10 and £15, whereas a pack of two unbranded sports polo shirts from a lower-cost retailer like ASDA can be purchased for around £4-6. In this case, Maguire's suggestion to allow generic, unbranded clothing could offer struggling families much-needed relief amidst a cost of living crisis.

However, there are differing views on the role of uniforms in schools, and Maguire's approach seems to forget the findings of some of the great minds of Sociology. For instance, Stanley Cohen made the argument that reducing visible differences in dress can help lower social tensions among young people. Renowned sociologist, Émile Durkheim believed that uniforms helped in fostering a sense of community and solidarity, while David Brunsma argued that consistent dress codes promote social equality and reduce status competition based on clothing.

While it's entirely reasonable to want to relieve struggling families of unnecessary financial burdens, it's also important to recognise the value of maintaining uniformity in school dress. The potential impact on children's welfare in a school environment ought to be considered when considering such changes.

The **Epsom & Ewell Times** reached out to multiple schools in the local area for comments on Maguire's stance on the cost of school uniforms. As of now there has been no comments, we await a response to these three questions:

1. How are you addressing concerns around the cost of school uniforms and PE kits for families?
2. Are there any plans to introduce or expand the availability of unbranded or second-hand options for your pupils?
3. What measures are in place to ensure that uniform costs do not become a barrier for students attending your school?

As the conversation continues, it remains to be seen whether local schools will adapt their uniform policies to ease the financial strain on families, while still maintaining the sense of unity, equality and school pride that branded uniforms are said to have.

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Rosebery Park Public Party - Sat 21st Sept.

15 September 2024



Rotary is a global Club of like-minded individuals, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers founded in 1905 in Chicago in the United States, working to give something back to the community they live in. Epsom Rotary Club is celebrating one hundred years of working with the Community in Epsom on 21st September in **Rosebery Park**. This will be a fun filled day for all the family with market stalls, rides for children, entertainment, and food stands. It promises to be a day of family fun and entertainment. [See event entry [HERE](#)]

Rotary began its association with the people of Epsom in June 1924 with an inaugural lunch held by local businessmen marking the start of the Rotary Club of Epsom. Early Community involvement provided a member representative on the Epsom Cottage Hospital Committee and supporting street collections for the hospital fund. Very quickly the club provided support for disabled service men at the Star and Garter home and the Club began providing Christmas hampers to local distressed elderly.

The Armed Forces service connection was restored recently in 2020 when Surrey County Council and Royal British Legion Surrey started a monthly hub for military veterans who were potentially isolated and lonely. This is organised by Epsom Rotary and RBL Epsom and Ewell in partnership, with two offshoot activity groups, archery and model making. Over thirty members of various ages, men and women have formed small friendship / support groups of their own and are offered coach outings such as to the D Day Museum Portsmouth. This year we have organised trips to the Poppy Factory in Richmond, and the Christmas lights in the West End.

Veterans' Hub members and supporters

Into the late 1920s/30s Epsom Rotary worked locally as Rotary members played an active role in restarting the Epsom Chamber of Commerce and nationally providing cash and clothing for the hunger marches during the General Strike in 1926. The Club continued to expand its involvement locally during the second World War by supporting Armed Forces personnel at the anti-aircraft gun sites at Ashted and Headley and the Canadian soldier's military hospital at West Park.



In the Community the Club was instrumental in starting the Annual Careers exhibition in 1957 and soon after visits to Wisley Gardens were organised for the

elderly in the community. In 1957 Epsom Rotary set up a Christmas tree by the clocktower in the town Centre which was an annual event for many years. During the 1970s Thomas the tank engine arrived as part of the Christmas Street collections. The train was constructed by apprentices at Epsom Coaches and remains the centre piece of Christmas collections to this day focussed on Epsom and Langley Vale, now renamed as Tilly the train. These are always joyous occasions with great excitement amongst both children and parents as the train approaches.

Recent years

In 2012 in conjunction with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council the Rotary clubs of Epsom and Ewell organised a Community Fun day at Hook Road arena with a fun fair, pitches for local artisans and charities. This proved highly successful and continued until 2019 until the pandemic.

The Centenary Party in the Park in Rosebery Park is a natural successor to this with the added element that it is a celebration of one hundred years of Epsom Rotary serving the Community. In recent years, the Club has developed more “service related” projects which involves members giving more of their time to work on Community projects. This approach has always been part of the Rotary ethos. Examples include supporting the Veterans Hub highlighted earlier, leasing an allotment from the local Council with a small group of resolute members growing an increasing volume of fruit and vegetables which are donated over the summer months to the Pantry, the Good Company/Food Bank shop in South Street in Epsom.

A current activity is providing support/volunteers to work on an Epsom BID led project called Family Fridays that provides family activities in the town centre for young families in the school summer holidays.

Epsom Rotary continues to prioritise support for young people with regional competitions for Young Musicians, Young Chef and French speaking competitions.

International

The first international visit undertaken by the Club was to the Rotary Club of Rheims in France in 1937 and the Club now has an association with the Rotary Club of Chantilly in France which started in the 1990s and there have been several visits in both directions. This ties in with the town twinning of Epsom and Chantilly and reinforces our shared involvement with the horse racing industry.

The Club has been involved in several international projects with the current focus being AMECA, a small charity in Malawi providing medical services to the local community in a rural setting. The charity has recently built a maternity unit in an area in great need of support for women and children. Secondly, we have supported the Zimbabwe Victims Support Fund for the last five years, which is a small charity supporting dispossessed families, mainly women and children in Zimbabwe.

The future

As we have seen Rotary continues to evolve whilst reacting to the needs in the local community. We face many challenges, particularly attracting new members from the diverse spread of residents locally the Club needs to continue to thrive. There is less emphasis on procedure and formality which potentially enables a wider cross-section of the local community to become involved.

Rotary is a unique organisation which like no other, gives opportunities to become involved in education, community support, training, international activities, visits to other countries, social welfare, and hands-on experience. The challenge is to ensure that our Club can adapt to whatever the future holds yet retain our essential purpose of ‘service above self.’

Summary

Throughout the Clubs “100 years in Epsom”, it has actively looked for opportunities to take part in local charity projects. One of the threads which runs through the Club’s history is its contribution to the local community and its close relationship with the Borough Council. From the beginning its membership has included ex-mayors, councillors, and senior officers of the local authority. Over the past one hundred years it has participated in civic ceremonies, attended the annual Mayor’s reception and nowadays the incoming mayor is an honorary member of the Club.

Jim Munns – Joint President Epsom Rotary Club

If you wish to join Epsom Rotary you may apply [HERE](#)

Government Minister immerses herself in NESCOT

15 September 2024



Staff and students were delighted to host Baroness **Jacqui Smith**, the Department for Education’s Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education on her visit to **Nescot** (North East Surrey College of Technology) in **Ewell Epsom** on Tuesday, 3 September.

Nescot Principal and CEO, **Julie Kapsalis** and **Chris Muller**, Chair of Governors, welcomed the Minister and were proud to showcase the college’s state-of-the-art facilities, courses, study programmes and skills provision. The Minister had a tour of the Skills Park that included meeting students, apprentices, staff and the college’s employer partners.

Upon arrival, the Minister met Creative Media student, Charlie who won gold at WorldSkills UK 2023, the college’s new alpacas, Dolly and Florence (from the on-site farm) and Rhubarb, the assistance dog.

The Minister was introduced to students studying on Nescot’s new courses in Construction Skills for Highway Maintenance delivered in partnership with leading highway maintenance contractor, Ringway. She observed demonstrations from students who were learning to lay concrete slabs and drive virtual diggers.

Supporting the Government’s ambition to grow apprenticeships, the Minister met apprentices from the construction industry, from Ridgeback, Premier Heating and Watkins Cole. She heard how Nescot has supported many of the students through progression pathways and finding employers. She was particularly interested to hear how Nescot is working to recruit more women into the construction trades through role models and working with employers including Wates.

The Minister was shown the college’s new state-of-the-art immersive learning spaces with virtual reality driving simulators and a variety of artificial intelligence tools offering students an innovative learning experience. The Minister also met Pepper, the humanoid and programmable robot from The Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology (IoT) at Nescot. The IoT offers specialist courses and apprenticeships available in digital technologies to equip learners with the relevant skills in an increasingly tech reliant world.

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO along with Nescot’s senior leaders had the opportunity to speak to the Minister about some of the college’s challenges and successes. She said, “We are thrilled and honoured that the Minister chose to visit Nescot at the start of the academic year. The FE sector plays a critical role in not just the training and education of young people and adults, but it is at the forefront of enabling social mobility and meeting the local skills and employment needs.”

Essential to Nescot’s success are the college’s relationships with businesses and the community. Ringway, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Surrey Chambers and Wates had the opportunity to meet with the Minister to talk about their skills needs and work with the college.

Lewis Bridgman, Service Director, Ringway said, “The collaboration between Ringway and Nescot is a shining example of how local partnerships can foster

economic growth and community development in Surrey. By investing in the next generation of engineers, the community is setting a strong foundation for long-term prosperity within the delivery of the Surrey Highways service. This approach not only benefits current residents but also ensures that the future workforce is well-equipped to maintain and enhance the region’s infrastructure, contributing to a robust and sustainable economy.”

Julie added, “On behalf of all our staff and students, I thank the Minister for taking the time out of her busy schedule to visit us. We hope our wonderful staff and students (and animals) have left a lasting impression. I would also like to thank our employer partners for their ongoing support and collaboration.”

The visit concluded with plastering student CJ presenting the Minister with a sculpture of a dog made by her department.

Image: Baroness Jacqui Smith, the Department for Education’s Minister of State for Skills road-testing the vehicle simulator in Nescot’s new immersive learning space.

Trust the public to check our rivers

15 September 2024



The **Big River Watch** is returning. From 6th to 12th September, the **South East Rivers Trust** is inviting people across the South East to join the only UK and Ireland-wide citizen science survey of river health, which has attracted more than 9,000 participants in its first year.

Anyone can join the Big River Watch by downloading the free, easy-to-use app and spending 15 minutes by their local river, answering the simple survey questions. The results will be made available on an interactive dashboard and will help drive action to improve rivers both on-the-ground and via campaigns and political advocacy.

We want to build a complete picture of river health, and topics covered include the plants and wildlife people can see, as well as visible signs of pollution or observations on flow levels. Some of the rivers and chalk streams across South East England provide habitats for rare species such as Beavers, Otters, Nightingales, Turtle Doves, Salmon and Brown Trout. It’s essential that we try and restore healthy ecosystems for these rare species and local communities by carefully monitoring the health of the waterways across the region.

The South East Rivers Trust is running a series of volunteer events across the South East throughout September, including river clean-ups, gravel seeding and planting, where local communities can get involved and help restore their river: www.southeastriverstrust.org/events

Bella Davies, CEO at The South East Rivers Trust, said: “People across the UK and Ireland are becoming more and more interested in the health of their rivers, using their voices – and their votes – to show they care. With the Big River Watch, anyone can get involved in monitoring signs of pollution, spotting wildlife, and sharing their connection with their local river. This isn’t just important for us gathering data but is also empowering for people who are demanding better for our rivers.”

Tessa Wardley, Director of Communication & Advocacy at The Rivers Trust, said: “We know that no rivers in England are in good overall health, but we also know that environmental monitoring is currently very sparse. Having a large set of data from one weekend will help our experts to understand what’s going on in our rivers, and what needs to be done to make them cleaner, healthier, and part of a thriving wider environment. As well as learning where pollution and wildlife are spotted, we also want to know how spending time near rivers affects people’s wellbeing, so I’d encourage anyone and everyone to spend some time by their river and make their voice heard.”

- The survey includes questions on river wildlife, signs of pollution, and health and wellbeing
- Results will be updated in near-real time on the **Big River Watch Data Dashboard**
- More than 9,000 people have now taken part in the Big River Watch, 59% of those being new to citizen science

Related reports:

[Chalking up a victory for the Hogsmill](#)

[Voles let loose on the Hogsmill](#)

[Ewell’s wetlands to be celebrated on an open day](#)

Image: Views of the Hogsmill River that runs through Epsom and Ewell

Phil Bradley of Ewell was a fair man

15 September 2024



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

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

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

Fairs during Wartime

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

Surrey History Centre

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

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

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

Online Zoom Talk

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

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

Cost: £6
96 spaces available – book this event

Landmark pub re-assembles Tuesday

15 September 2024



The **Assembly Rooms** pub, in Epsom, is reopening at 8am on Tuesday 3 September, following an extensive refurbishment project, costing £1.375 million. The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell Councillor **Steve Bridger** (RA Stamford) will officially open the pub on the day.

The Assembly Rooms is a Grade II listed building. It was built around 1692, during a period when Epsom was renowned for its spa and as a fashionable retreat for the wealthy and aristocratic. The original purpose of the Assembly Rooms was to provide a venue for social gatherings, balls, and entertainment for those visiting the town to enjoy its spa waters.

The building is noted for its classical architectural style, which reflects the aesthetics of its time. It features a symmetrical façade and large windows, typical of Georgian architecture, intended to create an elegant and welcoming space. Inside, the building originally boasted a grand ballroom, which would have been used for dances and social events.

The **Epsom Protection Society** was active in ensuring the survival of one of the Borough’s premier historic buildings.

With the decline in the popularity of Epsom’s spa by the mid-18th century, the Assembly Rooms underwent several changes in usage. It adapted to meet the evolving needs of the local community and continued to serve as a venue for various events, including public meetings, concerts, and theatrical performances. There followed a period of retailing uses and emptiness until 1966 when it served as the offices of the National Counties Building Society.

Now a pub, first opened as a **Wetherspoon** in April 2002, it has been completely refurbished over the Summer months. The customer area has also undergone a full refurbishment, as well as the relocation and upgrade to the bar area, including an upgrade to the drinks dispense equipment.



The pub has been fully redecorated throughout, including the installation of a bespoke new carpet and additional furniture. Customer area air conditioning has been upgraded, customer toilets repaired and redecorated, and new artwork added to the customer area. External signage and lighting have also been replaced and upgraded.

(New interior photographed)

Behind the scenes, the kitchen facilities and equipment has been upgraded, with an open gantry food hoist room, as well as new staff facilities created.

The Assembly Rooms pub will be open from 8am until 12 midnight Sunday to Thursday, and 8am until 1am Friday and Saturday. Food will be served throughout the day, from opening until 11pm every day.

The pub will be open for family dining, with children, accompanied by an adult, welcome in the pub until 9pm, throughout the week.

Pub manager **Sel Devecioglu** said: "The £1.375 million investment highlights Wetherspoon's commitment to the pub and its staff and customers, as well as to Epsom itself. We are delighted that we have also been able to create 15 new jobs for local people. The team are looking forward to welcoming customers back into The Assembly Rooms and we're confident that they will be impressed by the new-look, upgraded pub."

Epsom Playhouse gets a 40 year uplift

15 September 2024



Epsom Playhouse opened in 1984 as part of the development of The Ashley Centre and since opening has hosted a wide and varied programme of events featuring both professional and community productions. Highlights including The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Stephane Grappelli, Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen, the James Last Orchestra, Instant Sunshine, Jack Dee, Harry Hill and many many more.

At the beginning the Council head hunted **Graham Stansfield** (deceased 2018) for his contacts in the entertainment world which helped establish the Playhouse's reputation early on. Then all the theatre seats could concertina into the back wall, opening the space for balls and exhibitions. Expensive to maintain and service these seats were replaced by the comfortable fixed seating that remains today.

The Playhouse is home to a variety of local amateur ensembles including the Epsom Symphony Orchestra and the Epsom Players.

The former "members bar" or "upstairs area" has been defunct for many years and is getting a long overdue facelift and repurposing. It will become available for private hire for functions.

A spokesperson for EEBC said "We are currently working on improvements to Epsom Playhouse using an allocation of monies from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

One of the first areas for development is the bar on the ground floor. Soon, this will split into two – there will be one bar for bottled drinks and one area for draught – alleviating some of the queues that can happen at busy times. The ground floor bar will also benefit aesthetically from a new artistic mural, depicting singer and actress, Evelyn Dove. As well as this, there are also plans to add a new platform lift to aid accessibility to the upstairs area, which will itself be transformed with a mezzanine overlooking the foyer, improved seating, new flooring, another artistic mural and a refurbished bar area."

Speaking of the upcoming plans to develop facilities, Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee said, "Epsom Playhouse is a wonderful entertainment venue for the borough, and I am delighted that it is now benefitting from a much-needed uplift, which will help it to reach its full potential as a place for creatives to gather, perform and spectate!"

Epsom Playhouse's programme of events and successes are under the management of **Elaine Teague**.

UK SPF funds were allocated to help places around the country deliver enhanced outcomes, in recognition that even affluent areas contain pockets of deprivation and need assistance.

The main Auditorium seats 450 and plays host to major leading theatrical companies, including opera, dance, drama, comedy, light entertainment, variety, popular children's shows and more.

The Myers Studio within the Playhouse seats up to 80 and is used as a regular venue for professional productions, and community events. Both the Auditorium and the Myers Studio are available for both corporate hire and private hire.

For more information visit www.epsomplayhouse.co.uk

Walk on the Downs to feel Up.

15 September 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is hosting a walk around Epsom Downs on 10th September to coincide with World Suicide Prevention Day. This event supports the council's Suicide Prevention Action Plan and aims to raise awareness of support and resources available to help those suffering from mental health issues or directly impacted by the loss of someone to suicide.

Funding has been allocated from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to **We Power On** to help residents access support in the borough. Chris, founder of the organisation, will lead the walk for adults aged 18 and above.

Immediately after the walk, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will host another event where Chris will talk about his story and the importance of having support available for people suffering from mental health problems. A scribe will create artwork which will then go on a 'tour' of the borough ending up at the **Epsom Picturehouse** on 10th October to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Day.

Residents will need to register to attend - 50 spaces are available for the walk and talk, and a further 50 spaces for those who only wish to attend the talk. Register [HERE](#)

End Stigma Surrey is also supporting this event, they are dedicated to raising awareness and reducing the stigma of mental health and are part of the council's wider Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee said: "Mental health issues can have a devastating effect on sufferers and those close to them. No one should have to face mental health challenges alone and it's important as a council that we do all that we can to ensure vulnerable residents are informed, and can access, vital support when they need it.

Working with partners is an essential part of our Suicide Prevention Action Plan and I'd like to thank We Power On, End Stigma Surrey, and The Jockey Club for their support with this event.

I'd encourage anyone experiencing mental health issues to seek help. One life lost is too much."

Chris, founder of We Power On said: "I'm pleased to be able to support the council with its walk and talk. Walking helped me especially during Covid lockdown and I'm looking forward to leading the walk across Epsom Downs and also sharing my experiences in the following event. It's important for everybody to know that they're not alone, encourage conversations and keep highlighting where those people suffering from mental health issues can turn to for support."

Image credit: Marathon - License details

Epsom welder's widow seeks help with cancer claim

15 September 2024



A woman who believed her incurable cancer may have been caused by washing her husband's work clothes is looking for information. Annette, who was married to a former welder in is appealing for information following her diagnosis with an incurable form of cancer linked to asbestos exposure.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral composed of thin, needle-like fibres which was widely used in construction. Asbestos was completely banned in 1999 after research showed swallowing and breathing in the fibres trap them in the body, inflaming and scarring the lungs which can cause cancer.

Peter Vaughan, Annette's husband, worked as a welder around **Epsom and Ewell** throughout the 1960s, 70s and 80s, where he is believed to have come into contact with asbestos used in insulators for buildings and machinery such as asbestos blankets or gloves.

Annette claims she may have been exposed to asbestos while washing Peter's work clothes, if he came into contact with asbestos while at work. Annette was diagnosed with the rare and aggressive cancer, mesothelioma, in summer 2023 - six years after Peter sadly died in 2017.

Now, with the help of legal firm Leigh Day, Annette is appealing to Peter's former colleagues to help her with information about conditions at his work. She hopes the information will help her bring a legal claim as she faces the incurable disease.

"Mesothelioma is an aggressive, terminal form of cancer which can develop in an individual later in life even through secondary exposure to asbestos," said Claire Spearpoint, asbestos claims solicitor at law firm Leigh Day. "Annette believes that this may have been the case with her diagnosis, however following Peter's death she has limited access to information regarding the possible presence of exposure at his former places of work."

Leigh Day is looking to support Annette's claim by speaking to anyone who worked at Surrey Sheet Metal Crafts, Grundy Teddington and Vestec throughout the 1960s to 1980s. They may be able to offer information if asbestos was used and how asbestos exposure occurred. Annette is also hopeful that any local tradesmen who worked in the **Epsom and Ewell** area at the time may be able to offer information that could be of help.

Peter worked as a welder and director at Surrey Sheet Metal Crafts between 1965 and 1967, a company he set up with two other men. He was then employed at Grundy Teddington in the Twickenham and Teddington area throughout 1970 to 1971, before working at Vestec for 12 years between 1975 and 1987. During his time at Vestec, he was a supervisor and often referred to as 'guvnor'.

While former employees who overlapped with Peter at these companies would be particularly useful, Annette is also looking to speak to anyone who worked at Surrey Sheet Metal Crafts, Grundy Teddington or Vestec who could offer information on the kind of work undertaken.

All three companies are no longer in existence and have been dissolved, one as recent as March 2024. If you can provide any relevant information please contact Claire Spearpoint at: cspearpoint@leighday.co.uk

Picture of Peter Vaughan as a younger man (Credit: Leigh Day)