

# Passion in the heart of Epsom

2 April 2023



**Epsom Chamber Choir** performed “**Music for Passiontide**” in Epsom’s **St Martin’s Church** on Saturday 25th March in a varied programme of singing and playing. Passiontide is a name for the last two weeks of Lent, and the repertoire for the concert, which was directed by guest conductor **Jack Apperley**, had been carefully chosen to reflect the emotions and suffering of this time.

The central work was **Dieterich Buxtehude**’s Membra Jesu Nostri, a Passion-meditation for Holy Week, which consists of a series of seven cantatas. On this occasion, the cantatas were performed over the course of the evening, interspersed with other a cappella anthems and motets.

For the Buxtehude, the choir was joined by the **Chamberlain Ensemble**, an early music group of 9 members, including violins, a violone (a large viol), viols, theorbo and organ, along with four excellent soloists (Lily Platts – soprano, Pete Dockrill – alto, Dominic Edwards – tenor, and Fionn Ó hAlmhain – bass). I was particularly moved by Lily’s aria in the third cantata, “Ad manus” (to the hands) and I very much enjoyed the well blended trios with alto, tenor and bass in the later cantatas.

The accompaniment by the Chamberlain Ensemble enhanced the variety of moods, often reflective and sombre but sometimes uplifting, and the sound became even more intense when 5 viols joined in the sixth cantata for orchestra and soloists alone. Each member of the ensemble added to the texture and brought out the beauty and sensitivity in the music. An extra special mention needs to be made here to one of the viol players, **Helen Williams**, who is also a long-standing member of the Chamber Choir.



But what of the **Epsom Chamber Choir** themselves? They obviously knew all the music very well and maintained good contact with the audience throughout. Dynamics, diction and storytelling were beautiful and well executed, and the blend and balance between the voice parts (as many as 9 in **Paul Mealor**’s Ubi Caritas) was clearly heard.

The anthems and motets were all unaccompanied and ranged from the 16th to the 21st centuries. I had two particular favourites. To begin the second half of the concert, the choir processed to the back of the church, formed a semi-circle using the full width of the building, and sang **Antonio Lotti**’s 8-part Crucifixus (written around 1718). The sound was fuller in this configuration, as if surround sound had been switched on... The suspensions were spine tingling, and the emotional intensity exceptionally powerful representing the agonies of the Crucifixion. You could have heard a pin drop at the end.

My other favourite was Crux Fidelis, (Faithful Cross) with music by **Sarah MacDonald** (born in 1968) and set to words written by **Emilia Lanier** (1569 – 1645) and **Emily Dickinson** (1830-1886). The piece is not as complex from a musical point of view as some of the others we heard, but you could tell that the choir were fully engaged in delivering its message, with the meditative refrain of “Crux Fidelis” underpinning the excellent storytelling.

**Jack Apperley**, the Guest Conductor for this concert was in fine form, giving clear direction throughout. His energy, his explanations of the music in between items, and his obvious enjoyment of the performances, completed the experience for everyone.

Anne Ridge

# Legally Blonde at Epsom Playhouse

2 April 2023





The Epsom Players performance at the Epsom Playhouse on Tuesday 21st March is reviewed by Nigel Dams for Sardines and reprinted with permission. It runs till Saturday. Tickets from Epsom Playhouse box office

Until I spoke with one of the cast members (the leading cast member actually, the glorious Lydia May Whiteside) after the show, I thought this was a professional production.

When the curtain went up, I thought, hang on, amateurs can't afford a set like this. And then when the dancing began, I thought, hang on, amateurs can't afford dancers like this. Same with the singing.

So I decided they must be pros, and settled back to be more and more entertained as the evening went on.

Let me get the minor niggles out of the way first. I couldn't always make out the words the singers were putting across. This was sometimes because the band, especially the horns, were just a shade too loud, sometimes because the lead was not cutting through the chorus, and sometimes because the vocal frequencies blended too much with the band's. But this was only in the beginning, really, and got better as the show progressed.



Also, when the stage crew flew in various bits of scenery, they sometimes hung suspended and swinging an inch above the boards, which was pretty distracting. It seemed to me that another inch would have grounded them, and eliminated that.

But the rest was great, and kept getting better and better.

Right from the opening number I kept thinking how sharp the choreography was – kudos to Della Bhujoo – and how fit and well-drilled the dancers were. I have great respect for people who can do intense cardio and sing at the same time. They were singing very well too, all of them. Harmonies were crisp and close, high notes and belt notes all well struck, all very impressive. I must make special mention of the eye-popping opening number in Act 2. The entire troupe were skipping (sorry, jumping rope) in time to the music, with great vigour, while singing, led by Millie Shields as Brooke. Max respect. Especially because Ms Shields had to speak shortly afterward and you could barely tell she'd been working out.

It seems unfair to single anyone out from the cast, because they were all excellent, but I must mention Imogen Smart-Steele as Paulette (excellent accent, great singer), Akhil Gowrinath likewise and Ms Whiteside, who led the whole show, playing an enormous part with total confidence, swagger and beguiling blondness. Oh, and the two dogs who were obviously classmates at RADA.

A final special mention to the whole cast for the 'Gay or European?' number, which was .... perfect, and very funny.

I have to say again, I can hardly believe that this show was done by amateurs (am I allowed to use that word any more?) it was so slick, so tight, so well done. My humble and sincere congratulations to Director Chris Malone, Musical Director Dan Francis and the entire cast, band and crew. Superb.

Nigel Dams

Reprinted courtesy of Sardines Magazine

## Suffragette stage play review

2 April 2023



**Sarah Dewing**, who initiated the statue of Emily Davison in Epsom's Market Square reviews “**Emmeline**” a play about the foremost British suffragette, Emmeline Pankhurst, and the fight for the vote for women at the start of the 20th century.

“Emmeline” was performed at Esher Theatre on 24th and 25th February, as part of a tour that began in Oxford and will end in Manchester on 8th March, International Women's Day, It is the debut play of young playwright and actor Beatrice Hyde, who also played Sylvia Pankhurst in the production. It was staged by the Theatre Lab Company, a London-based theatre company and was directed by Its Artistic Director, Anastasia Revi.

Beatrice condensed thirty years of suffragette history into two and a half hours, which sounds intense, but the interval broke it up nicely. She spent five years researching the Pankhursts and the events that took place around the struggle for government acceptance of women's suffrage.

The play focused on the relationships between the newly widowed Emmeline and her three daughters, Christobel, Adela and in particular, Sylvia. Her relationship with her mother becomes increasingly fractious as the strategies pursued by the Women's Social and Political Union, founded by Emmeline, become increasingly at odds with her socialist principles. These were encouraged further by her relationship with the founder of the Labour movement, Keir Hardie.

At the same time as we are let into the Pankhurst family dynamics, we are shown their social and political context including the debate around the cause between prominent politicians of the day and many of the stand-out events during the suffragette era, including the actions of Emily Wilding Davison at the Epsom Derby in

1913.

The play was well acted by a diverse cast of actors, with a stand-out performance by Georgie Rhys as Emmeline in particular. Direction was impressive, given the sheer intensity of the plot, and coordination of all the different aspects of the production.

The set was very simple but effective, with a two-tier stage with raised platforms at the rear and sides, minimalist lighting and a variety of props that often acted as symbols rather than literal objects. The sound design accompanying the production was an important aspect of the overall impact of the play, with several authentic and beautifully sung suffragette songs. reprieved throughout the play to rousing effect.

I loved the use of the background presence of an actor portrayed as the “heroic woman” motif throughout the play, representing the movement and its ups and downs. This was inspired by an illustration on the front page of an original Suffragette newspaper. I also thought the sound design and production really took the play to a different level.



Emily Davison Statue and the play Emmeline

For me, the psychological aspects of the play highlighted the personal costs, as well as rewards and triumphs, that are paid by those in single-minded pursuit of a mission to the exclusion of all else, including health, safety and relationships with loved ones. The play alludes to Emmeline’s drive to finish the work started by her beloved husband as the source of this obsession.

Ironically, without those like Emmeline and her daughters, who willingly devote their lives to a cause, social progress could not happen. In this case, women would not have the rights they have today, even if there is still a away to go. This is brought home to the present day at the end with a scene where Emmeline is portrayed as her statue outside the Houses of Parliament, This play is an impressive debut for Beatrice Hyde, but also a production that I would highly recommend for anyone with an interest in 20th Century history, women’s rights and psychological drama.

**Sarah Dewing**  
**Chair**  
**Emily Davison Memorial Project**

## After Ronnie Scott’s? Epsom of course!

2 April 2023



Fresh from their ‘Two for the Road’ concert at **Ronnie Scott’s**, internationally renowned virtuoso jazz guitarist visiting from Norway, **Frode Kjekstad** is pairing up with local legend **Nigel Price**. Together with Italian drum sensation **Laura Klain** and the brilliant **Mikele Montolli** on double bass, they will give a special live concert in the heart of Epsom on **Saturday 11th March**.

Epsom Jazz Club, resident in the Oaks Room, Church Street, Epsom has sold out all its regular Tuesday concerts this season. So this is the last chance to enjoy the unique cabaret seated venue until next season starts in May. A real taste of the world famous Ronnie Scott atmosphere and music brought to your own Town.

Frode has wowed audiences whilst playing alongside heavyweight jazz stars such as Dr Lonnie Smith, Mike LeDonne and Eric Alexander.

Epsom Jazz Club advises buy your tickets in advance. Go to [www.epsomjazzclub.com](http://www.epsomjazzclub.com) for tickets.

## Surrey celebrates LGBTQ+ month

2 April 2023



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

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

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

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



## Early Years

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

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

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

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

## Fame, acceptance and America

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

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

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

Just short of his 91st birthday, Quentin Crisp died in November 1999, in Manchester on the eve of a nationwide revival of his show. With a minimum of ceremony his body was cremated and his ashes flown back to the US and scattered across his beloved Manhattan..... "

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

Courtesy Surrey History Centre

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

## Emily and Emmeline

2 April 2023



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

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

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



### ABOUT THE COMPANY

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

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

### Reviews

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

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

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

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

## Spring comes early for Epsom and Ewell jazz fans

2 April 2023



Question: What do the following three people all have in common? An accordion player with the Strictly Come Dancing live band, one of the most exciting vocalists of her generation and a finalist in the 2022 BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year competition?

Answer: Starting on Tuesday the 17th of January at 7.30pm in Epsom's cabaret style venue at the Oaks Room, Church St, Epsom, they are all playing at the Epsom Jazz Club in the next three months!

The Epsom Jazz Club launches its "Spring season" of concerts on **Tuesday 17th January** with the tantalising **L'Esprit du Jazz** quartet taking to the stage in **The Oaks Room** for a highly anticipated performance.

Incepted less than a year ago, Epsom Jazz Club has gone from strength to strength, steadily building its audience for their monthly Jazz gigs. The cream of UK Jazz have accepted invitations to perform at the new Club and have collaboratively helped create something rather special. The intimate 70-seater venue, with each table adorned with a charming cocktail table lamp, is the perfect setting to sit back and listen to some of the very best professional Jazz musicians the UK has nurtured. The venue has a bar open just for the jazz guests.

Accordionist **Karen Street** along with her bandmates **Sam Dunn** (guitar), **Charlie Pyne** (double bass & vocals) and **Katie Patterson** (drums) kick things off for Epsom Jazz Club at 7:30pm this coming Tuesday evening (17th January). Dave Gelly from The Observer noted that "Karen Street has evolved an entire vocabulary for the accordion that works beautifully in the jazz context without forfeiting the instrument's awkward individuality".

The vast array of jazz styles explored at Epsom Jazz Club and the variation of instrument lineup each month is purposeful and well-curated. A Piano Trio may perform one month, followed by an all-string Gypsy Jazz ensemble the next. French Musette and the world of Tango will be explored on one given Tuesday evening, while lilting Afro Cuban inspired grooves and hard hitting modern jazz & funk numbers will be offered up at a subsequent event.

The acts booked are no strangers to the renowned jazz stages of London's **Ronnie Scott's**, Nottingham's **Peggy's Skylight** or Brighton's **Verdict Jazz Club**. For the price of a train fare into London you can now buy a ticket to see world class jazz musicians performing within the Borough of Epsom & Ewell. A growing number of local residents clearly appreciate this and are in the audience for every concert. Other jazz fans are more selective and only pop along every so often when the lineup suits their tastes. And some are just waiting for leading UK jazz guitarist and longtime Epsom resident **Nigel Price** to make his return to the Club's stage (hint: he'll be back in June!).

Epsom Jazz Club welcomes everyone equally - there's no members-only clique, no tiered ticket pricing, and not a raffle in sight! If the accordion isn't your thing, how about a wondrously charismatic and mesmerizing jazz singer with outstanding vocal ability? **Emma Smith** brings her loyal trio of gentlemen (**Jamie Safir** piano, **Conor Chaplin** double bass, **Luke Tomlinson** drums) with her to Epsom on **Tuesday 21st February**. Or how about going to see multi-award winning young saxophonist and composer **Emma Rawicz** perform, accompanied by **David Preston** (guitar) and **Scottie Thompson** (piano), on **Tuesday 21st March**?

The Oaks Room venue with bar open for just the jazz club is at the back of the Conservative Club on Church Street, Epsom and is a fine addition to Epsom's Live Music venues. Tickets are just £15.

For more information on the Spring 2023 jazz programme please visit <http://EpsomJazzClub.com> or @EpsomJazzClub on Twitter/Instagram/Facebook - tickets are on sale now!



# Spring 2023

TUE 17<sup>TH</sup> JAN



L'Esprit du Jazz

EMMA SMITH



TUE 21<sup>ST</sup> FEB

TUE 21<sup>ST</sup> MAR

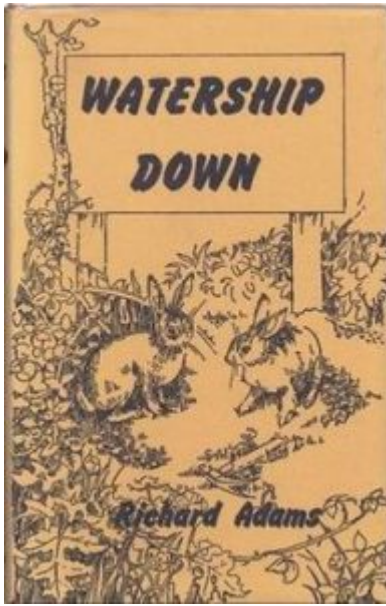


Emma Rawicz

## How "Watership Down" might have been....

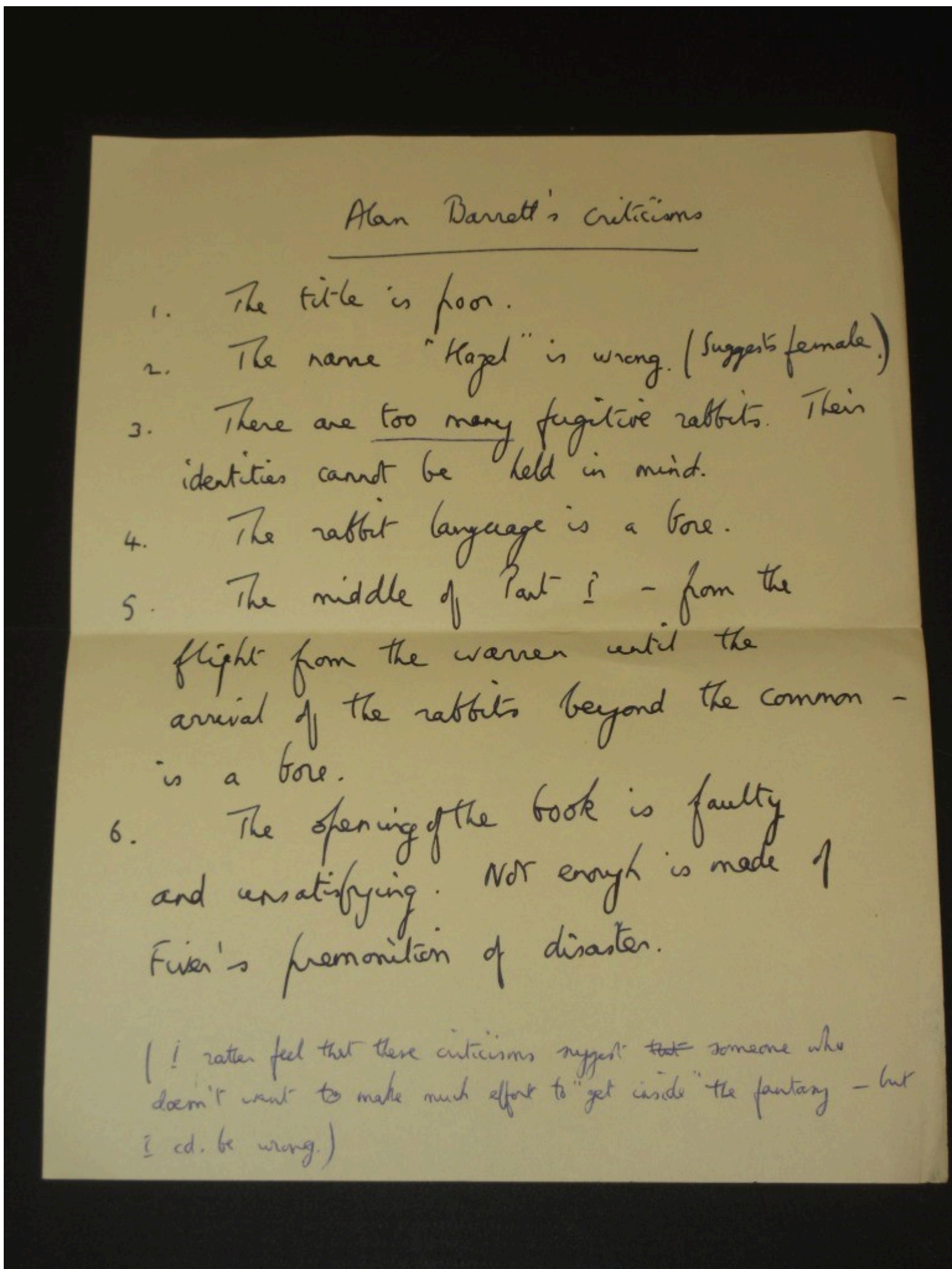
2 April 2023





Exclusive to Epsom and Ewell Times a local resident known as “**The History Detectorist**” will disclose on these pages intriguing discoveries. Today’s discovery relates to “**Watership Down**”. In the coming months other intriguing discoveries will be revealed.....

The History Detectorist could not believe his luck when he discovered pre-publication notes relating to the international best-selling novel, “Watership Down” that had remained hidden inside a book that had once belonged to the book’s author, Richard Adams.



A lifelong fan of Watership Down, he purchased a box of books from a book dealer who had won them at auction prior to the much publicized sale of Richard Adams’s more valuable books which he had collected prior to his passing in December 2016 aged 96.

Among the books purchased from the dealer were papers and photographs that had been found inside the books won at auction which are now known to have belonged to Richard Adams also.

“The significance of Richard Adams’s notes were not fully understood until I approached Oxford University and corresponded with Richard Adams’s daughters”, said the History Detectorist, who went on to discover that Alan Barrett, whose name is mentioned at the top of the notes, was an Oxford University friend of Richard Adams. Barrett would give his opinion on the likely success of many of Adams’ books and suggest changes etc. “It would appear that the notes were hidden away for more than 50 years so I was delighted to be able to send copies of them to Richard Adams’s family”.

Fortunately, in this instance Alan Barrett’s criticisms did not deter Richard Adams from publishing his first novel, Watership Down, although at the time the notes were drafted the popular story of rabbits fleeing their home and being forced to find a new one was due to be called “Hazel and Fiver”, a title that Alan Barrett clearly objected to and possibly helped to change prior to the first publication of Watership Down in 1972.

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## An Epsom Christmas poem

2 April 2023



Christmas comes early in the month of December  
But preparations start as early as September  
Toys appear in the shop and the store  
And children’s expectations start to soar

Adverts appear in the News and TV  
Of miraculous games for all to see  
Visions of food and decorations so high  
Make us all wish that the time was nigh

But leaves have not fallen from the trees  
And flowers are still buzzing with the bees  
Why are we tempted in this way?  
When the Christ child’s birthday is still far away

Have they forgotten that the presents we bring  
Are only reminders of the presents for Him  
Of frankincense and myrrh and gold  
Foretelling the scriptures story of old

And when finally the great day is here  
Let us remember, amidst our good cheer  
As we celebrate around the table,  
The baby Christ child, born in a stable

**Michael Barber** (first published in 2012)



Michael moved to the Wells Estate in 1966 for his first family home. He continues to live there to this day. He has lived in the Borough for all of his 87 years as his parents lived in Stoneleigh. His connections with Epsom have been as President of the Epsom Cycling Club from 1981 to 1991, and he joined the Epsom Male Voice Choir in 2010 and continues to be a keen and popular member of the choir. He started writing poetry seriously when he became treasurer of the Headley Poetry Group. This group meets monthly to read and share poetry – Michael has had poetry published in the Epsom United Reformed Church Newsletter, the Mickleham Parish Magazine and the Brooklands Museum Volunteers Newsletter.

Notes authored by Audrey Ardern-Jones

Epsom Clock Tower image source: Clive Darra – <https://www.flickr.com/photos/osde-info/4252252710/>

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## Surrey inspiration for writing and photography

2 April 2023





**Fanny Burney** (1752-1840) lived and wrote in Surrey and was inspired by the area's beautiful countryside and gardens in the Mole Valley area, particularly around Bookham, Mickleham and Box Hill. To celebrate Fanny Burney and the area she loved, Surrey Libraries and Surrey Heritage are pleased to announce our Photography Competition 'Frances Burney's Surrey'.

SHC would love to receive your photographs of places or buildings around Surrey, especially in the Mole Valley area, which were associated with Fanny Burney, or which inspire you today.

The competition is open from now until Sunday 22 January 2023. Submissions should be made online and emailed to [leatherhead.library@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:leatherhead.library@surreycc.gov.uk) and should have been taken during the competition period only.

We would also be pleased to receive printed entries, together with your contact information, at Leatherhead Library.

The winning entry will be announced in February 2023. The winner will receive an Amazon voucher for £50. Two runners-up will each receive an Amazon voucher for £25.

A selection of entries will be on display in Leatherhead Library from December 2022 onwards.

For full details please go to the Surrey History Centre's December newsletter [HERE](#)

Text courtesy of the Surrey History Centre