EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Popular Epsom and Ewell Councillor Jan Mason dies

17 November 2026



A veteran councillor who “tirelessly” represented her community for more than three decades has sadly died, it has been announced.

Residents Association Councillor Jan Mason, who served on both Surrey County Council and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, passed away earlier this month.

The flag at Epsom Town Hall will be flown at half mast as a mark of respect to Councillor Mason.

Epsom & Ewell council leader Hannah Dalton (Residents Associations of Epsom and Ewell: Stoneleigh Ward) said: “It’s been an honour to work alongside Jan.

“She worked tirelessly on behalf of residents in Ruxley Ward and was a passionate advocate for people across Epsom & Ewell.

“Her commitment to public service was unwavering, earning her the respect and admiration of colleagues and residents alike.

“I know that councillors and staff will miss her kindness and great sense of humour. Her contribution to our borough will be long remembered.”

Councillor Mason was first elected to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council in 1995, and would go on to be elected to Surrey County Council in 2001.

She also served as Mayor of Epsom from 2009 to 2010, and gave her backing to several charities during her tenure including Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, St John Ambulance and Riding for the Disabled.

In a statement, a Surrey County Council spokesperson said: “We are sad to share the news that Jan Mason, County Councillor for West Ewell, has passed away.

“As a long-standing, highly respected member of the Residents Association, Jan was elected to Surrey County Council in 2001.

“She dedicated many years of service to the Communities Select Committee, as well as her role as an Epsom & Ewell Borough Councillor.

“Jan was a determined advocate who worked tirelessly on behalf of her residents. She will be remembered for her kindness, integrity and dedication to the communities she represented.

“Our thoughts are with Jan’s family and friends at this difficult time.”

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

Epsom and Ewell Times adds: During the course of our four years observing and reporting on Epsom and Ewell Council meetings we could always rely on Jan Mason to liven up proceedings. Never fearful of expressing her opinions in a plain and sometimes challenging way. She will be missed. Epsom and Ewell will be a little less colourful without her.

Jan Mason (Credit: EEBC)

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A former Epsom Long Grove Hospital patient remembered for his pacifism

17 November 2026



Barney Cohen (1897–1970)

By his nephew, Andy Strowman

There is a very quiet cemetery in London — East Ham Jewish Cemetery. You may be the only visitor there apart from the grave workers. Among the rows of stones lies one marked *Barnett Cohen* — the only one there by that name.

Barney, as the family called him, was born in 1897 in Whitechapel. His parents were Milka (Millie) and Hershel (Harris) Cohen, and the family lived at 17 Milward Street, behind the London Hospital. His brothers were Jack and David, his sisters Rachel and Rose. The same house later became my home too, long before I was born.

Barney grew up in hard times. Like so many of his generation, he left school at fourteen and joined the garment trade. He was gentle by nature, a man who never said a bad word about anyone. I think he lacked confidence — something I have inherited too.

When the Second World War broke out, he enlisted. But when faced with the prospect of killing, he refused. He simply could not harm another human being. For that courage — for it was courage — he was punished. He was placed in the guardhouse and later imprisoned in Wormwood Scrubs as a conscientious objector.

In prison he suffered terribly. His weight fell to five and a half stone. My grandmother Millie, desperate to save him, sought help from her sisters in North London. Together, they visited a government office, and — as the old East End saying goes — *the brown envelope changed hands*. Only then was he released.

A retired officer once told me what those conditions were like: “You wouldn’t have liked it in there. Tiny cells, no space, noise all night — shouting, banging, threats. We only stepped in if someone started hitting you.”

Barney came out of prison changed. He was nervous, forever scratching, anxious about his work. If he worked beside his brother Jack, he was always asking, *“Is this all right?”*

When I was sixteen, my mother told me that Uncle Barney had endured six sessions of electro-convulsive therapy at **Long Grove Hospital in Epsom** — the same hospital that later held Ronnie Kray. Long Grove closed in 1992, but its shadow remains.

Yet Barney was no shadow. Despite his suffering, he radiated kindness. He loved to make people laugh, performing little magic tricks that delighted us as children. Once, when I was about eight, he came to visit us during his lunch break from the Ellis and Goldstein factory. While he talked to my mother, I quietly bolted the front door so he couldn’t leave. My mother struggled with the latch and he burst out laughing — a moment of warmth I have never forgotten.

He married Dolly, and my mother, then fourteen, was his bridesmaid. Life was not easy for them. Poverty, mental illness, and misunderstanding strain any family, and in those days help was scarce and sympathy rarer still.

Barney once told a story about visiting London Zoo on a Sunday in his best suit. A commotion broke out near the monkey cage; he joined the crowd, only for one of the monkeys to run off and return — to spit a mouthful of water all over his suit. The crowd roared with laughter, and so did Barney. That was his nature — to laugh even when the joke was on him.

He died in 1970, still working, collapsing at his workplace at Ellis and Goldstein in Aldgate. His brother Jack said simply, “He always lacked confidence. If I was sewing beside him, he kept asking, *‘Is this all right?’*”

Barney’s life was not easy. He came from poverty, fought private battles with fear and illness, and faced the cruelty of others with quiet dignity. But he also gave laughter, love, and gentleness to those around him.

His was the untold story of so many — the sensitive souls caught in the machinery of war, poverty, and misunderstanding. He suffered because he refused to harm others. That is a kind of heroism that seldom earns medals.

When I think of Uncle Barney, I see not weakness but light — the quiet strength of a man who never stopped being kind, no matter what the world did to him.

I dedicate these words to him, and to all who, like him, struggled to fit into life yet gave it more compassion than it ever gave them.

Andy Strowman

Image: Barney at son’s wedding. Barney on right.

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You can read many stories of former patients of the cluster of Epsom psychiatric hospitals on the website of The Friends of Horton Cemetery

Local Epsom lad who became a radio shock-jock in sport passes

17 November 2026



James Whale (Michael James Whale) – 13 May 1951 – 4 August 2025

James Whale was born Michael James Whale on 13 May 1951 in Ewell, Surrey, into a middle-class family. His father, David, worked in a family clothing business before running The Green Man pub in Ewell; his mother, Anne (née Price), was a former ballet dancer. He attended Linton's Lane Secondary Modern and Longmead County Secondary Boys School in Epsom, as noted in your original obituary—he later admitted to disliking Longmead.

After first taking a job at Harrods and briefly becoming a DJ for Radio Topshop in the early 1970s, Whale began his radio career more formally in 1974 at Metro Radio in northeast England, gaining traction later at BBC Radio Derby.

Whale became nationally known during the late 1980s with The James Whale Radio Show on Radio Aire, which became a hit when simulcast on Yorkshire Television and later nationally on ITV. He pioneered what became known as "shock-jock" radio, with a brash, provocative style echoing American counterparts—this defined much of his broadcasting identity.

Broadcasting career highlights

- TalkSPORT (1995–2008): Whale hosted the late-night show on Talk Radio UK, later renamed TalkSPORT. He became a fixture of overnight radio until his controversial suspension in 2008 for urging listeners to vote for Boris Johnson—he considered legal action against TalkSPORT, which he later withdrew.
- LBC (2008–2013): Following TalkSPORT, he moved to LBC 97.3, hosting drivetime and other slots.
- Podcasting and BBC Radio: In 2013, he launched The James Whale Radio Show podcast, and later joined BBC Essex as a breakfast show presenter (2013–2016).
- Celebrity Big Brother: He appeared in Celebrity Big Brother in 2016, finishing in ninth place.
- talkRADIO & TalkTV (2016–2025): Beginning in 2016, he hosted evening shows on talkRADIO. He also presented James Whale Unleashed on both TalkTV and talkRADIO. He was suspended briefly in 2018 for a controversial interview—he later returned to air.

Whale was married to Melinda Maxted from 1970 until her death from lung cancer in 2018; they had two sons. In 2021, he married Nadine Lamont-Brown, who remained devoted to him through his illness.

Diagnosed with kidney cancer in February 2000, Whale underwent surgery and chose not to have chemotherapy. In 2006, he launched the James Whale Fund for Kidney Cancer, which later became Kidney Cancer UK (2016), a leading charity supporting patients and research.

In 2020, the cancer returned aggressively, spreading to his spine, brain, lungs, and remaining kidney—he documented this battle publicly and urged others to get tested. In 2023, he stopped treatment, acknowledging he was nearing the end of his cancer journey.

Whale was appointed an MBE in the 2024 New Year Honours for his contributions to broadcasting and charity. He spent Christmas 2024 in intensive care but celebrated his 74th birthday before entering hospice care, passing away peacefully on 4 August 2025 at age 74, with Nadine by his side.

James Whale is mourned as a broadcasting maverick—Britain's first "shock-jock"—who blended confrontation with compassion, particularly in helping distressed callers. Described as fearless and a beloved figure to many, he leaves behind a legacy of entertainment, advocacy, and resilience.

Image: James Whale – Taken whilst recording The James Whale Radio Show By Rob Deadairpodcast – Own work CC BY-SA 4.0

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Stella servant to local football passes

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Stella Lamont, Club President of **Epsom and Ewell FC**, passed away on Armistice Day 2023 at the age of 95. Born on September 1, 1928, Stella's association with the club spanned over fifty years. A devoted supporter since 1973, Stella initially joined the Committee in 1979, contributing significantly to the improvement of the Match Programme.

Throughout the '80s, she served as Press Secretary, and in 1993, under her guidance, the club won the prestigious "Special Category" programme award. Stella's dedication was further acknowledged in 1998 when she received a voluntary service award for 25 years of involvement with the Epsom and Ewell Boys League.

In 2003, Stella became the President of Epsom and Ewell FC, a position she held with pride. Despite facing health challenges, she remained actively engaged, taking on roles such as Membership Secretary and contributing to the match programme. Her lasting legacy includes her impact on local Boys football and the informative programmess she crafted with meticulous detail.

Stella's commitment endured, even as she faced declining health. In 2016, she received a long service award from the Surrey Football Association, a testament to her enduring influence. Stella's final years saw her contributing articles to the club's programme, showcasing her unwavering dedication.

Beyond her football involvement, a peculiar note in her history involved an appearance in a pop video, "We Stand Around" by I Ludicrous, filmed at the club's old ground. This charming anecdote reflects Stella's unexpected and lighthearted presence in the club's rich history.

As we bid farewell to Stella Lamont, her name will forever be remembered among those who shaped Epsom and Ewell FC into a close-knit family club. Rest in peace, Stella.

Advocate for Epsom's underdog remembered

17 November 2026



Roger Bristow was by a long stretch one of Epsom and Surrey's most successful criminal court defence advocates, dedicated to ensuring that all his clients received fair justice regardless of their guilt. He plied his profession at the Epsom Magistrates Court and many others in Surrey and the South East. Due to his prowess, he had many repeat customers.

A Law graduate of Bristol University where he met his wife Eileen, who survives him, he served his articles with the firm Lloyd and Davy and later became a partner in the (now demised firm) Kirkwoods. Both firms had offices conveniently located close to the centre of Epsom and a short walk from the local hostelries where he met many clients. He then became an independent advocate acting for several local firms of solicitors until he retired.

As a former client Martin Knight (author and local historian) remembers, "Roger was the 'go to' solicitor for Epsom youngsters who got into trouble with the law, helping them to find in court the best way through or out of the situations in which their behaviour or bad luck had landed them, whether the result was an acquittal or a fair sentence.

"I recall an incident when I and a few rowdy friends were passing the house of an off duty police sergeant en route home

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from the Plough Pub in Ewell. In the belief we were vandalizing his garden, the policeman charged out of his house in his pyjamas brandishing a truncheon, and pinned me to the ground. After arrest I was charged with attempted criminal damage (there was none). When asked by Roger in court why he had not shown us his police ID, the sergeant stated that he had not had time. Yet as Roger pointed out, he had found time to pick up his truncheon. The case was dismissed."

Roger was a well known local character in Epsom and invariably the soul of every party. He could hold court with his anecdotes, humour and sideways look at life. Roger served as a Conservative Councillor in Richmond on Thames for 4 years and later became a supporter of UKIP. Never one to hold back his views, he was yet much loved by all who knew him, whether they agreed with his politics or not.

It was my good fortune, as his articled clerk (1984 – 1986) to be inspired by his advocacy. He had genuine compassion for the 'mad and bad' who are so often trapped in circumstances somewhat beyond their ability to control. Many clients continued to contact him for informal advice long after their encounters with the courts had ceased.

A fan of local pubs, the Surrey countryside, his cat, Mahler, Noel Coward and the Daily Telegraph, in retirement Roger enjoyed long holidays and cruises with Eileen until Alzheimers exerted its limitations. He died suddenly on 9th September 2023.

Roger John Bristow 19th October 1944 – 9th September 2023.

Local historian Peter Reed will be missed

17 November 2026



In Loving Memory of **Peter Reed** (23/08/52 – 19/10/23). Peter Reed passed away on October 19, 2023, leaving a void in the hearts of many. Born and raised in Epsom and Ewell to James and Evelyn Reed, Peter's journey was defined by his unwavering dedication to his family and his profound impact on the community.

A man of generous spirit and unwavering kindness, Peter's life reflected a passion for understanding the inner workings of the world around him. From an early age, his curiosity led him to disassemble toys, cultivating an interest in creation, particularly in woodworking and exploring historical contexts. His inquisitiveness matured into a fascination with the evolution of technology, particularly in the realm of computers and their historical significance. His career path led him to utilize his technical acumen at the Inland Revenue, Lambeth Council, and a London medical center, where he not only honed his skills but also used his expertise to benefit various charitable causes.

Peter's profound love for history propelled him to join the **Epsom and Ewell History Centre** at Bourne Hall in 2005. There, he spearheaded the creation of the website and served as the dedicated webmaster for the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer. His commitment extended beyond mere content creation; he tirelessly assisted countless individuals, locally and internationally, with historical inquiries, demonstrating his wealth of knowledge and willingness to help others.

Recognized as the driving force behind the History Explorer website, Peter's collaborative efforts with local experts and his encyclopedic knowledge of the area facilitated an invaluable resource for researchers and history enthusiasts. His significant contributions were felt and appreciated by numerous individuals and organizations, symbolizing his profound impact on the preservation and promotion of local history.

While Peter leaves behind no immediate family of his own, he leaves a lasting legacy in the hearts of his sister, nieces, and a community that deeply appreciated his dedication and expertise. His loss is deeply felt, but his remarkable contributions to the Epsom and Ewell community will forever be remembered and cherished.

Peter Reed's passion, dedication, and selfless commitment to preserving local history have left an indelible mark. His legacy lives on in the continued work of those he inspired, ensuring that the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer remains a testament to his invaluable contributions to local heritage. He will be greatly missed, but his impact will resonate through the cherished memories and the enduring legacy he leaves behind.

Image: Peter Reed with his local history "angels".

Sue Bull – a special lady. An obituary.

17 November 2026

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Susan Helen Bull (Sue) was born in January 1958 in Dorset but her family moved back to Berkshire in the mid-1960s. Born into a farming community she and her older brother were the first in the family to go to university and Sue graduated in Economics from London University. She worked at Eversheds in the City of London as a Company Secretary and then moved to Epsom in 1982.

She was an active member of Christ Church (Epsom) for many years, becoming a very successful churchwarden, which led to a calling to ordained ministry. She was appointed Curate at St Barnabas Church in 1998 and continued to have a close association with the parish in her later work as a chaplain at both Surrey and Borders NHS Trust and Epsom and St Hellier NHS Trust. For several years she continued to lead St Barnabas Church on a voluntary basis while the church appointed a new vicar, leading worship and facilitating the church's wider links to the local community.

As a mental health chaplain, she saw the pain and lack of community support for the people discharged from mental hospitals and for people suffering from mental ill-health generally. A lifetime calling started, first founding the Monday drop-in in collaboration with St Barnabas Church, later founding the Love Me Love My Mind charity in 2008 and acting as Chair until her death in December 2022. The charity is run entirely by volunteers and is funded by grants and donations; it aims to break down stigma and inspire understanding about mental health.

At a time when very few spoke about mental health, Sue championed this cause, building a strong community in the Monday drop-in and raising awareness through the Epsom Mental Health and Wellbeing Festival. This annual event went from being a table in Epsom marketplace handing out leaflets, to a full week of activities with high-profile expert speakers. As it grew, Sue organised the festival in collaboration with other charities in Epsom and ran it with an army of volunteers. She was always an extremely competent, professional but unassuming leader. Sue had a flair for building connections. She was totally inclusive and developed an extensive network across every sector in our local community as well as nationally. The festival has been recognised nationally as a unique community engagement model, visited by NHS England and serving as a model for other areas.

Sue was an intellectual with a clear purpose. She studied Theology in Switzerland, gained a Masters in Theology from Dublin and was in the process of writing a PhD thesis about mental health and the Church. Her compassionate, deep spirituality was recognised when she became a chaplain for Westminster Abbey in 2018 and was part of the official prayer support for the late Queen's funeral.

Sue's loving, calm and self-effacing exterior hid a rooted commitment, strong sense of justice and steely determination for her calling, which at times could make her (as she would humorously say with a twinkle) 'more than a little awkward' for the benefit of others.

Sue did not have children, but through her calling became a supporting mother figure to many. She leaves behind two grieving families – her natural and acquired one.

Epsom has lost a very special lady.

You can find out much more about the Charity Sue inspired on the website linked here: Love Me Love My Mind

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Epsom curry pioneer Enam Ali MBE dies at 61

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The Epsom restaurateur, who founded the internationally renowned British Curry Awards, has passed away at the age of 61. Revered in the Bangladeshi community, Ali famously lobbied home secretary Priti Patel to introduce ‘vindaloo visas’ to save the great British curry house. Pre-Covid, the restaurants were closing at an alarming rate of two a week across the country, largely because of a lack of skilled chefs. The change to immigration rules was designed to plug the skills gap in this and other takeaway eateries.



Le Raj restaurant Firtree Road Epsom

Ali started the British Curry Awards in 2005 and they soon became known as the ‘Oscars’ of the industry. The awards have been addressed by the three most recent prime ministers – David Cameron, Theresa May and Boris Johnson – as well as a host of other leading political figures, such as Sir Vince Cable, Nigel Farage and Brandon Lewis.



Celebrities including the Duchess of York, Russell Brand, Naughty Boy, David Seaman, Pat Sharp, Lizzie Cundy and Heston Blumenthal have presented awards. Queen Elizabeth II contributed forewords to the award programmes, as have the likes of London mayor Sadiq Khan.

Ali owned **Le Raj restaurant in Epsom**, which has served a plethora of famous names, including Johnny Depp and Chris Tarrant. In 2012, Le Raj was one of the official food suppliers to the London Olympics, providing athletes with Bangladeshi halal curry.

His daughter Justine and son Jeffrey Ali said:

“Our father created an astonishing legacy as a pioneer of the UK curry industry. He believed that British curry had become the best in the world, developing from a late night meal to some of the most sophisticated and subtly spiced cuisine the country had to offer. That is why he was so determined to celebrate the industry with the British Curry Awards and through his other ventures, including the Spice Business Magazine and Ion TV.

“We already miss him dearly and have been overwhelmed by the messages of condolence we have received. Our father was greatly loved and admired by his fellow restaurateurs, Bangladeshi campaigners and even the most significant of politicians. We are devastated, but could not be prouder of our wonderful dad.”

Azeem Rafiq, the former professional cricketer who exposed the extent of racism in the sport to MPs last year, was a guest of honour at the 2021 awards. He said:

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"Enam provided me with such wonderful support during difficult times last year, He was a charming man, who made you smile with his warmth and kindness. I feel so sorry for his family, but they must remember all he achieved. Enam left a lasting, incredibly positive mark on the world."

Ali passed away in the early hours of Sunday 17 July, after a courageous two-year battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife Shakina; children Justine, Jeffrey and Jahid; and grandchildren Sophia and Ziyana.

Ali's burial takes plays in the Islamic section of Epsom Cemetery at 4pm on Friday 22 July. Non-observers are welcome to attend.

EMAN ALI 1960 – 2022



Long serving Councillor Clive Smitheram dies at 76

17 November 2026



Clive Smitheram, Councillor for West Ewell, passed away on April 25th aged 76. Clive's health had been deteriorating in the last few months and last week was taken to Epsom Hospital for tests and was diagnosed with Sepsis.

Clive was a central figure in West Ewell having lived there for over 30 years with his wife Gill and family and although a proud Cornishman, Clive was someone who knew everyone locally and if he didn't know someone, he knew someone who did! Clive was a former police officer, having served 31 years in the service and was a retired community safety officer. As an active resident, it led to Clive being elected as a Resident Association Councillor for West Ewell serving for over 20 years, Clive was a former Mayor of Epsom and Ewell in 2010- 2011.

Clive was always happy supporting and providing advice to the residents of West Ewell and had a very proactive approach to getting things done. Clive always believed that central politics should have no place in local issues and that councillors should be "local people dealing with local issues". He believed this common-sense approach best served the community and its residents.

Clive served on many different committees during his time as a councillor, having been Chairman of Crime and Disorder, Licencing and Scrutiny, as well as an active member of the Planning Committee. Clive provided a wealth of experience and support to all colleagues and was a great mentor and listener, with a positive approach to problem-solving. Clive was an active member of All Saints Church in West Ewell and became a member of Epsom Rotary Club in 2011, becoming

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President in 2014. Clive was voted an honorary member in October 2020. In addition, Clive was a founder member of the town's twinning association with Chantilly in Northern France and this year marks the 25th anniversary.

Lastly, we have lost a special person and good friend and our thoughts are with his wife Gill, his children Chris and Claire and his four grandchildren.

This obituary was written by Councillors Barry Nash and Monica Coleman, both representing West Ewell.

For more news on the council, please click here.

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