



## Banned fan cheers on Epsom and Ewell FC from tree

A lifelong supporter of Epsom & Ewell Football Club has taken to watching matches from a nearby tree after receiving what he describes as an “unwarranted” lifetime ban from the club’s ground.

Richard Lambert, 58, has followed the ninth-tier side for nearly 44 years. The ban was imposed in January following a long-running series of disputes with the club’s committee.

Mr Lambert told the BBC he believes the suspension was triggered after he altered the name of his personal X (formerly Twitter) account to appear as if it were the club’s official account. He has been a frequent critic of the club’s management on social media and on his personal website, with some posts directed at individual committee members.

Since April, the BBC says it has approached Epsom & Ewell three times for details about the ban. The club has declined to discuss the matter beyond stating: “We have had a number of issues with this supporter over the years. We do not want to discuss this any further. The matter has been dealt with.”

A letter from the club to Mr Lambert, seen by the BBC, cites only a breach of a previous agreement over use of social media. It referred to an “indefinite” ban, but the club has since told the BBC it is now for life. Mr Lambert says he has not been officially informed of this change.

Mr Lambert, who first attended a match as a 15-year-old in 1981, has served as the club’s historian for two decades, producing statistical archives and match reports. “All I want to do is see my team play,” he said, “but I also want to see the culture at our club change towards valuing its supporters.”

Lifetime bans from football stadiums are rare and generally imposed only for serious offences or criminal acts, which is not alleged in this case. Clubs, however, are entitled to refuse entry to anyone without giving a reason.

The Football Supporters’ Association told the BBC it had attempted to mediate between Mr Lambert and the club but received no response from the club’s committee. “At non-league level, fans are the lifeblood of the game,” said the FSA’s Garreth Cummins. “In a situation like this, we don’t see that either side is winning.”

Mr Lambert initially watched games from outside the perimeter fence but says that after the club stationed security to move him on, he began climbing a tree for a better view. He ended last season 30ft up overlooking King George’s Field in Surbiton. This season, the Salts have returned to Leg O’Mutton Field in Cobham, sharing with Cobham FC, and Mr Lambert has found a lower tree with a full view of the pitch.

Founded in 1918 as Epsom Juniors, Epsom & Ewell’s greatest moment came in 1975 when they reached the inaugural FA Vase final at Wembley, losing 2-1 to Hoddesdon Town. Last season they lifted the Southern Combination Challenge Cup, defeating Abbey Rangers 1-0 in the final. The Salts averaged around 90 spectators at home league matches in 2024-25.

“If the ban stays in place for life,” Mr Lambert told the BBC, “then I’ll be climbing this tree for the rest of my life – or at least for as long as I’m physically able to.”

Richard Lambert sitting in a tree looking on to the pitch where Epsom & Ewell play, with his back to the camera and the pitch in the background

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

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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## Today's Epsom racing tips

Epsom Racecourse presents its latest race meeting on Thursday evening, with a total of six races; five handicaps and a juveniles' novice race.

*Read on for a full preview of and tips from the Epsom card, courtesy of Racing TV, who provide all of the latest **free bets** offers.*

Kicking off the evening's action is an apprentice handicap over a mile and two furlongs (5.50). Etretat won last time out at Newcastle just five days ago and carries a penalty as a result, although is given three pounds back by his claiming rider. He is more of an all-weather specialist, however, having never won a race on turf, and is easy to look past. Despite carrying top weight, Carnival Day looks capable of winning this due to remaining on the same mark as when running well for fourth of 12 at Yarmouth last time, and has good form at this track, which is a big positive.

Next is a two-year-olds' novice run over seven furlongs (6.25). Of the six runners, Dylan Cunha's Champagne Dream is the only newcomer here; a colt by Oasis Dream who is probably best watched this term, looking on paper to be more a next-season sort. William Knight's horses are running well at present, and his colt Norfolk Blue looks to have a solid chance. This son of A'Ali placed a close second last time out at Lingfield, and is given a handy three pounds by his rider, Brandon Wilkie.



Race three is a mile and a half handicap (7.00). King's Castle seeks a hat-trick, having won his last two starts at Ffos Las and Sandown under the same rider; seven-pound claimer Taryn Langley. He wears a first time hood, and shouldn't have too much standing in his way here at a track that he likes. Chips And Rice ought to be in with a big chance here, fit from a hurdling campaign and now on a very workable Flat mark for today. Jockey Pat Cosgrave is in good form, and Robert Stephens' horses are running well at present too.

Following is an extended mile fillies' handicap (7.30). We have only four runners here, all of which have won at least one race this term. Pink Azalea seeks a hat-trick, having won her last two starts at Ripon and Carlisle, and has Jack Dace's seven pounds in hand. Both Brielle and Revelance won their last starts, but Brielle's win was more applicable to this race. She does have a lot of weight to shoulder now though, hence it might be better to side with Revelance today, whose form is of a very promising level.

Penultimately we have a seven-furlong handicap for three-year-olds (8.00). With nine runners, this is a competitive affair. Miakoda won his last start under Pat Cosgrave, who rides again today, and though this will be a tougher ask, this gelding may prove to suit this track quite well and could make a good show of himself. That said, he might not appreciate any rain that falls, so it may be safer to side with the likes of Uncle Simon, who can handle ground with some give and comes here in good form having been a very close second last time at Redcar, and represents a trainer in form.

Last of all is a six-furlong handicap of eight runners (8.30). Twirler carries a five-pound penalty, having won her last start at Windsor five days ago, but is given the weight straight back by her claiming rider, so could easily be in contention once again. David O'Meara's veteran, the 11-year-old Musicka, is a course and distance winner who was last seen finishing third of eight at this track, so could also be a player despite carrying top weight.

#### Epsom selections - Thursday:

5.50 - Carnival Day

6.25 - Norfolk Blue

7.00 - Chips And Rice

7.30 - Revelance

8.00 - Uncle Simon

8.30 - Musicka

Horses racing Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

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## Epsom charity backs Ukrainian wheelchair athletes in world championship

*Surrey Stands with Ukraine*, the Epsom-based humanitarian charity operating under Harrop HR Missions Ltd (Registered Charity No. 1117155), is proudly sponsoring the Ukrainian Pickleball Team at the prestigious **English Open Pickleball Tournament** in Telford this summer, taking place from **6-10 August 2025**.

This powerful gesture of international solidarity comes with a particular emphasis on supporting Ukrainian **wheelchair athletes**—many of whom suffered life-changing injuries during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

Founded in early 2022 by Ukrainian and British friends, Surrey Stands with Ukraine has grown to become one of the UK's most active grassroots support groups for Ukraine. To date, the charity has delivered more than **£4 million** in humanitarian aid, including over **10,000 mobility aids**, **40+ tonnes of medical supplies**, and **140 aid vehicles** to those in need across the country. It also funds Ukrainian NGOs and institutions, with a strong focus over the past 18 months on **rehabilitation from physical and psychological trauma**.

Now, that mission expands to the world of sport.

The Ukrainian Pickleball Team arriving in Telford includes several inspirational wheelchair athletes whose journey into sport has been shaped by wartime adversity. For many, pickleball has become a vital outlet for physical recovery, psychological strength, and renewed purpose. Their participation in this international tournament is seen as a powerful symbol of national resilience—and comes at a time when Ukraine's sporting community continues to suffer, having lost **487 athletes** since the full-



scale Russian invasion began.

“We are honoured to sponsor the Ukrainian Pickleball Team and shine a light on these remarkable athletes,” said a spokesperson for Surrey Stands with Ukraine. “Their participation in the English Open is a testament to their courage and a reminder of the human toll of the war. They represent not only Ukraine, but also the enduring spirit of all those affected.”

As part of its sponsorship, Surrey Stands with Ukraine is covering travel and accessible accommodation costs to ensure that all team members, especially the wheelchair athletes, can compete on equal terms.

The **English Open Pickleball Tournament**, held annually in Telford, is one of Europe’s premier events in the sport. This year’s edition promises to be especially meaningful with the Ukrainian team’s presence on court.

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## Event Details

- **What:** English Open Pickleball Tournament
- **When:** 6–10 August 2025
- **Where:** Telford, United Kingdom
- **Team:** Ukrainian Pickleball Team, including wheelchair athletes, sponsored by Surrey Stands with Ukraine

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## About Surrey Stands with Ukraine

Operating under Harrop HR Missions Ltd, Surrey Stands with Ukraine is a registered UK charity supporting civilians, hospitals, and trauma centres across Ukraine. Founded in February 2022, it continues to deliver aid, funding, and solidarity from the UK to those most affected by the war.

### Contact

Email: [surreystandswithukraine@gmail.com](mailto:surreystandswithukraine@gmail.com)

Website: [surreystandswithukraine.org.uk](https://surreystandswithukraine.org.uk)

Phone: +44 7920 008048

### Donate

Support the charity’s Trauma Rehabilitation Fundraiser at  
<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/trauma-rehabilitation-pack>

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## Meet Two of the Athletes: Stories of Courage

**Oleksandr, 30, from Mykolaiv**, was serving as a frontline medic when a Russian shell strike in 2023 caused devastating injuries to both his legs. After undergoing multiple surgeries and losing mobility, Oleksandr found himself struggling with isolation and trauma. Introduced to pickleball during rehabilitation in Lviv, he quickly found strength in sport and camaraderie. “Pickleball gave me a reason to get out of bed again,” he says. Now a wheelchair athlete, he’s competing internationally for the first time in Telford.

**Natalia, 27, from Dnipro**, was wounded in a missile attack while volunteering at a humanitarian centre in early 2022. With long months of rehabilitation behind her, she turned to pickleball as a low-impact sport that helped her regain balance and confidence. As one of the few female wheelchair players on the Ukrainian team, she says the sport has become a symbol of her resilience. “We lost so much—but we didn’t lose our spirit,” she says.

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# Coroner visits Surrey cricket hero’s mental decline

Coroner’s Inquest visits the loss of former England and Surrey batting great **Graham Thorpe MBE**, who died in August 2024 aged 55. Following an inquest held this week at Surrey Coroner’s Court, his life and tragic death have returned to the headlines, casting fresh light on his legacy and personal struggles.



Born in Farnham, Surrey on 1 August 1969, Graham Thorpe rose through the county's cricketing ranks with prodigious talent and steely determination. He made his first-class debut for Surrey County Cricket Club in 1988 and quickly established himself as one of the most technically gifted left-handers of his generation.

Thorpe's early promise blossomed into a formidable career with Surrey, for whom he scored over 21,000 runs across formats. His stylish strokeplay, calm temperament, and ability to perform under pressure made him a linchpin for the county during the 1990s and early 2000s.

Surrey's return to success in the late 1990s—including their Sunday League title in 1996 and County Championship victories—bore Thorpe's fingerprints, and his bond with the club remained strong well beyond retirement. He later served as Surrey's batting coach, mentoring a new generation of cricketers at the Oval.

Thorpe made an instant impact on the international stage, scoring a century on his Test debut against Australia in 1993. Over a 12-year England career, he compiled 6,744 Test runs at an average of 44.66, with 16 centuries—cementing his place among the country's most reliable middle-order batsmen.

He was central to key series wins in the subcontinent, notably England's victories in Pakistan and Sri Lanka in 2000, and was named a Wisden Cricketer of the Year in 1998. His unbeaten 200 against New Zealand in 2002 was widely hailed as one of the finest innings of its era.

A naturally modest figure, Thorpe's contribution to English cricket went beyond runs. He embodied a quiet resilience and professionalism that won the admiration of teammates and opponents alike.

After retiring from playing in 2005, Thorpe remained in the game as a respected batting coach, including roles with Surrey and later as a key figure in the England coaching setup. He was part of the ECB's elite coaching team and served as a mentor to many of England's current generation of batters.

However, his career in coaching came to a sudden end in 2022 following the fallout from a video showing players drinking after a heavy Ashes defeat in Australia. Though not the subject of disciplinary action, Thorpe lost his role as England's batting coach soon after—an event that proved devastating.

This week's inquest at Surrey Coroner's Court revealed the full extent of Thorpe's mental health battle, casting a sombre shadow over his final years.

Thorpe had reportedly suffered from anxiety and depression since at least 2018. After the loss of his ECB coaching job in 2022, his condition deteriorated significantly. He became socially withdrawn, suffered from insomnia, and described feelings of shame and worthlessness.

His wife, Amanda, told the inquest that he had even asked her to assist him in dying, expressing an intention to seek assisted suicide in Switzerland. In April 2022, he attempted suicide and spent weeks in intensive care. Though he made a partial physical recovery, the psychological toll persisted.

On 4 August 2024, Thorpe tragically died after being struck by a train at Esher railway station. The coroner concluded that he had taken his own life. His family chose to speak publicly in the hope of raising awareness and encouraging open conversation around mental health in sport.

Surrey County Cricket Club paid tribute to Thorpe, calling him "one of the finest cricketers the club has ever produced." The club has honoured his legacy with a commemorative gallery at the Oval and moments of silence at matches.

Teammates and former England captains described Thorpe as a "warrior at the crease" and a "gentleman off it," highlighting both his cricketing prowess and quiet dignity.

Thorpe's story has also reignited national debate about the mental health pressures faced by elite athletes and the need for more robust support structures—both during and after their careers.

Graham Thorpe's life was rich in achievement, marked by loyalty to Surrey, excellence for England, and a deep love for the game. But his death also reminds us of the vulnerabilities behind even the most accomplished public figures.

As his family bravely noted, "Graham's legacy must be more than his cricket. Let it also be a call to look out for each other."

Thorpe is survived by his wife Amanda and their children. He remains, to many in Surrey and beyond, a hero of the game—and a symbol of the need to treat mental health with the seriousness it deserves.

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**If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health, contact Samaritans at 116 123 or visit**



[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org).

Image: Graham Thorpe selfie in 2005. Attribution: Jguk at English Wikipedia Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported

## Epsom and Ewell will judge change at their leisure

When Epsom & Ewell Borough Council announced that **Better** will hand over management of the Rainbow Leisure Centre to **Places Leisure** in October 2025, many locals who have experienced booking glitches, understaffed gyms, and declining poolside conditions breathed a silent sigh of relief. The question now: how quickly will the promised improvements materialize?

### Why the Council Doesn't Run Itself

The council does not manage leisure centres directly—instead, it contracts out operations. That's why swathes of public facilities across the borough, including the Rainbow Centre, are run by third-party providers. The rationale? Private operators like Better specialise in facility management, class programming, and membership administration. But that also means the council steps back, paying providers rent and oversight rights in exchange for promised upkeep and performance.

### Transparency and Value for Money—Still in Question

Although the council has described Places Leisure as a “social enterprise,” it has offered no specifics about terms: contract length, rent paid, baseline investment, or expected improvements remain undisclosed. Without that data, taxpayers and users have no firm guarantee of value—simply a brand change.

Councillors have stressed that this switch aims to bring greater “community focus” and better reinvestment of any surplus—hallmarks of the social enterprise model. Yet sceptics point out that social enterprises aren't automatically transparent: some still report hefty executive pay packets. In particular, the CEO of **Places for People** the ultimate owners of Places Leisure reportedly earned £565,426 in 2023-2024, raising eyebrows among voters who wonder.

### A Closer Look at Places Leisure's Reputation

The local press release paints Places Leisure as a community-minded organisation, but reviews from employees and users tell a different story. Feedback on sites like Indeed and Breakroom varies significantly. Some praise friendly culture and flexible working, while others warn of poor management:

“Management loved to bully young lifeguards... poor pay”

“Awful communication, awful leadership... spend too much time fixing their mistakes”

On Trustpilot, users have lodged complaints about broken equipment, overcrowded classes, and appalling changing-room hygiene—low-grade experiences raising legitimate concerns over upkeep standards as they transfer from Better to Places Leisure.

### The Case of the 'Midnight Lane-Booking' Mystery

Among the most frequent user frustrations at Rainbow Centre is the so-called **midnight lane-booking blackout**—where lane reservations vanish at midnight, impairing swimmers' schedules. While formal documentation is scarce, social media posts and member forums share similar experiences, consistent with online complaints directed at Better about buggy booking systems. Whether this was down to software limitations or internal policy remains unclear—but users will expect Places Leisure to fix this fundamental flaw.

### A Moment for Accountability

This handover is more than a change of logo: it's a test of the council's commitment to local services. Users are invited to watch the roll-out carefully, demanding updates, realistic targets, and transparent accounting. Social enterprise status sounds progressive—but without openness, it can be nothing more than a sticker on the door.

### The Bottom Line

Epsom & Ewell's move away from Better reflects mounting pressure from dissatisfied users. But who wins—the community or the





balance sheet—depends on what happens once the ink is dry. Will we get a truly improved Rainbow Centre, or just a rebranded disappointment?

Time—and transparency—will tell.

Image: Credit Mertbiol Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication

## Epsom's six races; five handicaps and a fillies' maiden

Epsom Racecourse presents its latest meeting on Thursday evening, which consists of six races; five handicaps and a fillies' maiden.

*Read on for a full preview of the Epsom card, courtesy of Racing TV, who have the very latest horse racing **free bets** offers.*

The first race at the track – which is the UK's cheapest Grade One racecourse, according to the **Racing Post** Price Index – is a mile and a half three-year-olds' handicap (5.50). A competitive affair, this is a tough race to call. Stormy Monday is well proven over the trip, while Only One Blue and Nobleman look likely to enjoy the extra couple of furlongs, stepping up in trip for the first time. Newmarket trainer Harry Eustace is having a very good season and, therefore, his runner Vulcan Way is of some interest, but Sir Mark Prescott's Bosphorus Rose should be able to finish strongly here and win for a bang in-form yard.

A two-year-old fillies' maiden is next, run over seven furlongs (6.25). From a field of nine, four are newcomers, all with useful pedigrees. Ollie Sangster's Court Of Stars and Eve Johnson Houghton's Mystic Moment set the standard on form, both having picked up places, but the former looks to have the most potential on paper and ought to be today's winner.

Next is a seven furlong handicap (7.00). Both Daisy Roots and Finbar's Lad seek to make it back-to-back wins, although the latter does carry a five-pound penalty having won at Chelmsford only nine days ago. Course and distance winner G'Daay comes here in a good strain of form, having placed on both of his last starts, and is given a chance by the handicapper in remaining on the same mark. With a seven-pound claimer in the saddle, this could be his day.

Race four is a six-furlong handicap (7.35). Harry Eustace's Kisskodi seeks a hat-trick, having won his last two starts at Leicester and Brighton. With rider Jack Nicholls' seven-pounds in hand, they could go well again, but this might be a tall order for a three-year-old up against older, hardened handicappers. 11-year-old Muscika has a good record at this track and is back down to a workable mark, so should be right there at the finish.

The penultimate race is a handicap run over the extended mile (8.10). Orbaan carries a penalty having won last Friday at Beverley, so this may prove to be too much of an ask. Golden Circet looks promising equipped with a visor for the first time, back down in trip from 10 furlongs last time, while Virtue Patience looks well primed for a win here. Rab Havlin won on the gelding in March and rides again for Amanda Perrett, whose stable is doing very well at present.

Finally, a mile and a quarter three-year-olds' handicap rounds off the evening's racing (8.45). James Fanshawe's Inquisition comes here hoping to complete a hat-trick and might be able to do so, with rider Fred Daly's seven-pound claim counteracting the six-pound penalty the filly carries here. Pergola, Without Burlington and Marmalade Kid make their handicap debuts here, but this does look like quite an ask.

### Epsom selections - Thursday:

5.50 – Bosphorus Rose

6.25 – Court Of Stars

7.00 – G'Daay

7.35 – Muscika

8.10 – Virtue Patience

8.45 – Inquisitio

Image: Horses racing Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0



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# Why Does No One Care About Epsom & Ewell Football Club?

**By most measures, Epsom & Ewell Football Club should be one of the borough's proudest institutions.** Founded in 1918, steeped in history, and once a beacon of non-league ambition, it's a club that has worn its local colours with pride for over a century. And yet, in 2024, it plays its home matches outside the borough, in front of modest crowds, with little official support, and almost no recognition from those it nominally represents. How did it come to this?

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## From Wembley to Nowhere

The club's golden era came in the mid-1970s. Under manager Bob Smith, Epsom & Ewell reached the FA Vase final at Wembley in 1975, taking more than 10,000 fans to the twin towers. They lost narrowly to Hoddesdon Town, but the day cemented their status in the non-league elite. Just two years later, they were crowned Athenian League champions, playing stylish football and regularly attracting crowds of several hundred to West Street Ground in Ewell.

That ground, tucked between residential streets, was a symbol of grassroots football. A modest stand, small clubhouse, and rickety fence ringed the pitch — but it was home. Children ran the lines as ball boys, pensioners leaned on the barrier rails, and on Saturday afternoons, you could hear the cheers echo down Ewell High Street.

All that changed in 1993. Pressured by rising costs and development interest, the club sold the West Street Ground, and with it, lost its physical and emotional anchor in the borough. The land was sold for housing. Since then, Epsom & Ewell FC has led a nomadic existence, groundsharing with clubs like Banstead Athletic, Merstham, Leatherhead, Chipstead, and currently Corinthian-Casuals in Tolworth — nearly six miles from the borough boundary.

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## A Club Without a Borough

It is now 31 years since Epsom & Ewell FC played a competitive fixture in Epsom or Ewell. An entire generation has grown up without ever seeing their town represented in senior men's football. Few children wear the club's blue and gold; few adults even realise it still exists.

What happened? And more to the point — where was the borough council?

In the three decades since losing West Street, the club has repeatedly tried to secure land for a new stadium within the borough. Sites have been proposed, explored, and rejected. Discussions about Long Grove, Court Recreation Ground, and even sharing facilities with local colleges have all ended in failure. Most recently, informal talks about part of the Horton area being earmarked for community sports development went nowhere.

Supporters point to the contrasting support other councils give their clubs. Sutton United, for instance, receives backing from Sutton Council, which helped secure funding for facilities upgrades when the club was promoted to the Football League. In Epsom, the silence has been deafening. There has been no public plan, no council-led consultation, no transparent effort to bring the borough's only senior football club back home.

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## Struggling for Survival

The club is currently playing in the Combined Counties League Division One — the 10th tier of English football. It exists thanks to a dedicated band of volunteers, a threadbare budget, and the goodwill of its landlords. Crowds rarely exceed 60-70. With no clubhouse revenue, limited sponsorship, and minimal visibility, it's little wonder the club's financial situation is precarious.

In 2019, the club formally became a Community Interest Company (CIC), a status intended to attract grants and funding by aligning with social benefit goals. While that has helped underpin youth development and safeguarding policies, it hasn't solved the central issue: without a home, the club cannot grow.

Even now, Epsom & Ewell FC runs youth teams, junior girls' sessions, and has engaged in local community coaching schemes. But ask any parent at those sessions where the senior men's team plays, and many will shrug.





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## The Missed Potential

What's so frustrating is how easily this could be different. Epsom is one of the largest towns in the South East without a senior football club playing within its boundaries. The borough's population is over 80,000, and youth football is thriving — the likes of Epsom Eagles and Ewell Saxons run dozens of sides from U7s to U18s. Local talent is not in short supply. But with no flagship club, no clear pathway, and no local stadium to rally around, that energy is scattered.

The irony is that other non-league clubs across Surrey have built strong community models with much less historical pedigree. Why not Epsom?

Councillors have, over the years, said that land availability, planning complexity, and infrastructure costs make a return difficult. That may be true — but where is the political will? Where is the long-term strategic thinking about using sport to promote community health, pride, and youth engagement?

With millions spent on new housing, green infrastructure, and civic regeneration, a modest community stadium with a few hundred seats, changing rooms, and floodlights should not be an insurmountable dream. Yet for 30 years, it has been exactly that.

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## Do You Care?

This brings us to the title question: *Why does no one care about Epsom & Ewell FC?*

Maybe it's because we've forgotten how important sport can be to a town's identity. Maybe because the club's quiet survival hasn't shouted loudly enough. Or maybe we just assumed someone else would fix it.

But the truth is, without meaningful public interest — and without council support — Epsom & Ewell FC will remain a ghost club. It will still play fixtures in Tolworth or elsewhere, cheered on by a few die-hards who remember the old days, while the borough it bears in its name carries on, unaware.

It doesn't have to be this way.

A Special Correspondent

Image – an imagined modest stadium that could be Epsom and Ewell FC's.

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## Epsom race tips for Wednesday meet

Epsom Racecourse presents its latest Flat card on Wednesday evening, hosting six races; five handicaps and a maiden.

*Read on for a preview of Epsom's card, courtesy of Betano, who provide the latest **horse racing betting**.*

Up first is an Apprentice Handicap, run over a mile and a quarter (6.20). Ed Dunlop's Bobacious won last time out at Leicester under Mason Paetel, who rides again, giving five pounds. With the stable in good form, this gelding should make a decent showing of himself and is generally good at holding his form. Jim and Suzi Best's nine-year-old gelding Early Morning Dew looks a good option for the win, though, due to having winning course form, and will relish the conditions. His age and experience might counteract the inexperience of his nonetheless capable rider Ashley Lewis.

Next is a two-year-olds' maiden over seven furlongs (6.50). Only two of the six runners have been seen on the track before; Gary and Josh Moore's Eschweiler and Richard Hannon's filly Ibshara, whose twice placing form is the best of the two. A newcomer for Roger Varian, Starlight Time was inexpensive as a yearling, but does have a smart pedigree and might do well on debut for a yard whose juveniles are going well.

Race three is a six-furlong handicap (7.23). Jennie Candlish's Alzahir carries a five-pound penalty having won at Chester just four days ago, but the trainer may get around this by employing the very valuable five-pound claiming rider Warren Fentiman. He still shoulders a lot of weight in comparison to his rivals, though, which might leave Huscal with a good chance under Billy Loughnane.

A mile and a half handicap follows (7.58). Big Bear Hug won his first start for Jim Boyle just under a month ago and has good



course form, but would probably prefer the ground to be softer to show his best side. Graham has dipped to a career low Flat mark, but is out of form judged by his last appearance at Goodwood, ninth of nine, leaving Vaynor looking tempting down to a very workable mark for Charlie Hills. He ought to get on with conditions and could get back to winning ways here.

Our penultimate race is another handicap over a mile and half (8.30). With the biggest field of the day, made up of 11 runners, it's not an overly strong race, but there are plenty of horses here with a chance. Jack Langley and Rupert The Prince make their handicap debuts here having both run well in classified stakes last time out, so could improve in this class of race. Richard Hannon's Emily Rebecca should have a good chance having shown signs of improvement in her last couple of runs. With Sean Levey an asset in the saddle, she could be our winner.

The finale is a seven-furlong handicap (9.00). Made up of eight runners, it is one of the more competitive races on the card. Hodler, Dream Of Mischief and Marlay Park are all course and distance winners, with the latter looking to have the best chance on this occasion. He will like the conditions, ran well enough last time on ground which was softer than ideal for him, and is down to mark which ought to be more than workable for him.

### **Epsom selections - Wednesday:**

6.20 - Early Morning Dew

6.50 - Starlight Time

7.23 - Huscal

7.58 - Vaynor

8.30 - Emily Rebecca

9.00 - Marlay Park

Horses racing Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

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## **Epsom Derby's Speed and Spirit Captured in New Station Art Project**

A new art installation at Tattenham Corner Station is shining a light on Epsom's rich racing heritage while adding a burst of creativity to commuters' journeys. This initiative, part of the Art@thestation project launched at Epsom main station in October 2024, transforms everyday travel into a gallery experience, offering young artists a unique platform to share their work.

Led by The Art Society Epsom with support from Southern Railway and its London head office, the project celebrates the energy and excitement of Derby Day and the iconic Tattenham Corner bend. Local artists were invited to explore the theme of 'Speed'—a nod to both the daily rush of life and the fast-paced world of horse racing.

The project's success has been driven by collaboration between Angie Child, Head of Young Arts Volunteers at The Art Society Epsom, and Ben Robinson, Commercial Development Manager at the University for the Creative Arts Students' Union (UCASU). Their efforts have brought together a striking collection of images that celebrate local identity and creativity.

One of the contributors, Richa Elangovan, a Master's student in Graphic Design at UCA Farnham, shared:

"My artwork and style consists of messaging through my concept illustrations: topics I'm passionate about include environmentalism, climate change, feminism, and human and animal rights. I use art as my tool for expression on issues otherwise sidelined."

The installation is a testament to how art can enrich public spaces, spark meaningful conversations, and bring the community together. Ben Robinson said:

"We're proud to support young talent and bring this celebration of the Derby into the heart of the community. A massive thank you to The Art Society Epsom for partnering with us on this. We're always looking to showcase student work and can't wait to see how these pieces brighten the station this summer."

For local artists and residents keen to get involved, Angie and her team welcome new participants—contact her at [Volunteers.tase@gmail.com](mailto:Volunteers.tase@gmail.com) to be part of this dynamic project.



Meanwhile, the UCA Students' Union continues to seek out new venues for student art—anyone with a space that could use a creative spark can reach out to [ben.robinson@uca.ac.uk](mailto:ben.robinson@uca.ac.uk).

Photo L to R: Ben Robinson, Alistair McGeachy, Richa Elangovan and Angie Child

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