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Epsom and Ewell's Technology College 70 years young

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The **North East Surrey College Of Technology** (NESCOT), situated in **Epsom and Ewel**l, Surrey, England, traces its roots back to the 1950s when it was known as Ewell Technical College. As NESCOT marks its 70th anniversary in 2023, it's worth delving into its intriguing history.

Originally christened as Ewell County Technical College, the institution welcomed its first cohort of students in September 1953, with an official inauguration following in March of the subsequent year. The college's establishment was notable not only for its academic pursuits but also for its geographical footprint, occupying what was purportedly the largest arable field in all of England. The construction of this educational institution came at a price tag of £250,000.



Ewell Technical College

Ewell County Technical College earned distinction as an early advocate of "liberal education." During the mid-1960s, students at the college devoted their Wednesday afternoons to an eclectic array of supplementary courses, ranging from sailing to folk dancing. Additionally, it made strides in student welfare, being among the pioneering technical colleges to appoint a dedicated staff member for this purpose. Today, this commitment to student well-being is upheld through various support services, encompassing Advice and Guidance, Student Finance, counseling, healthcare, childcare, security personnel, and specialized assistance for students with a history of being in care.

In its inaugural academic year, Ewell County Technical College enrolled 789 students, organized into three departments: Building, Science, and General Education. By the mid-1970s, this institution had burgeoned to accommodate a student body of 4,000. Tuition fees for students above the age of 19 ranged from £72 to £120 per academic year, while those under 18 were entitled to claim travel expenses amounting to 15p per return journey.

In 1973, a devastating fire swept through the newly-constructed extension, causing extensive damage estimated at £100,000. The fire, which originated in a science laboratory, left the exact cause shrouded in mystery.

The transformation into NESCOT occurred in 1975 when Ewell County Technical College underwent a name change. Subsequently, in 1988, the college acquired the former Epsom High School. Notably, NESCOT's theatre bears the name of Adrian Mann, who served as the college's inaugural chairman of governors. Mann's dedication to NESCOT extended even after his retirement as chairman in 1963, as he continued to serve as a governor for another decade before being conferred the title of Governor Emeritus.

Throughout its history, NESCOT has been a host to a diverse range of artists and events. Notable musical acts such as Queen, Genesis, Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, and Ralph McTell graced the college's premises. In 1977, Shepperton Studios chose NESCOT as a filming location for scenes in "The Revenge of the Pink Panther."

Among the illustrious alumni of NESCOT is the renowned naturalist David Bellamy, who both studied at and later worked as a laboratory technician at the college. Bellamy credited his teachers at NESCOT with kindling his passion for biology.

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Additionally, Frank Hampson, the celebrated cartoonist behind the Dan Dare comic strips and a recipient of the “best postwar comic illustrator in the world” title in 1975, served as a technician at the college. Dr. Guy Vine, father to the famous Vine brothers, Jeremy and Tim, imparted knowledge in civil and structural engineering at NESCOT.

Over the years, NESCOT has offered a diverse array of courses, reflecting its commitment to comprehensive education. These courses have spanned a wide spectrum, from Advanced Domestic Cookery and Air Conditioning Design to Bacteriology, Biblical and Religious Studies, Certificate in Home Economics, Flower Arrangement, Drug Toxicity, Law, Nursing, and Guest House Management. Additionally, NESCOT has provided classes and refresher courses in Shorthand and Typing.

Notable alumni from NESCOT include Anthoni Salim, a prominent businessman, investor, and money manager; Professor Peter Saville, distinguished psychologist; Joe Wicks, the renowned fitness coach; and Jane Wilson-Howarth, an accomplished author.

As NESCOT enters its seventh decade, its storied history stands as a testament to its commitment to education, innovation, and the cultivation of talent across a diverse range of fields.

Image: Courtesy NESCOT

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