



Epsom Author Spotlight: Roger Cox

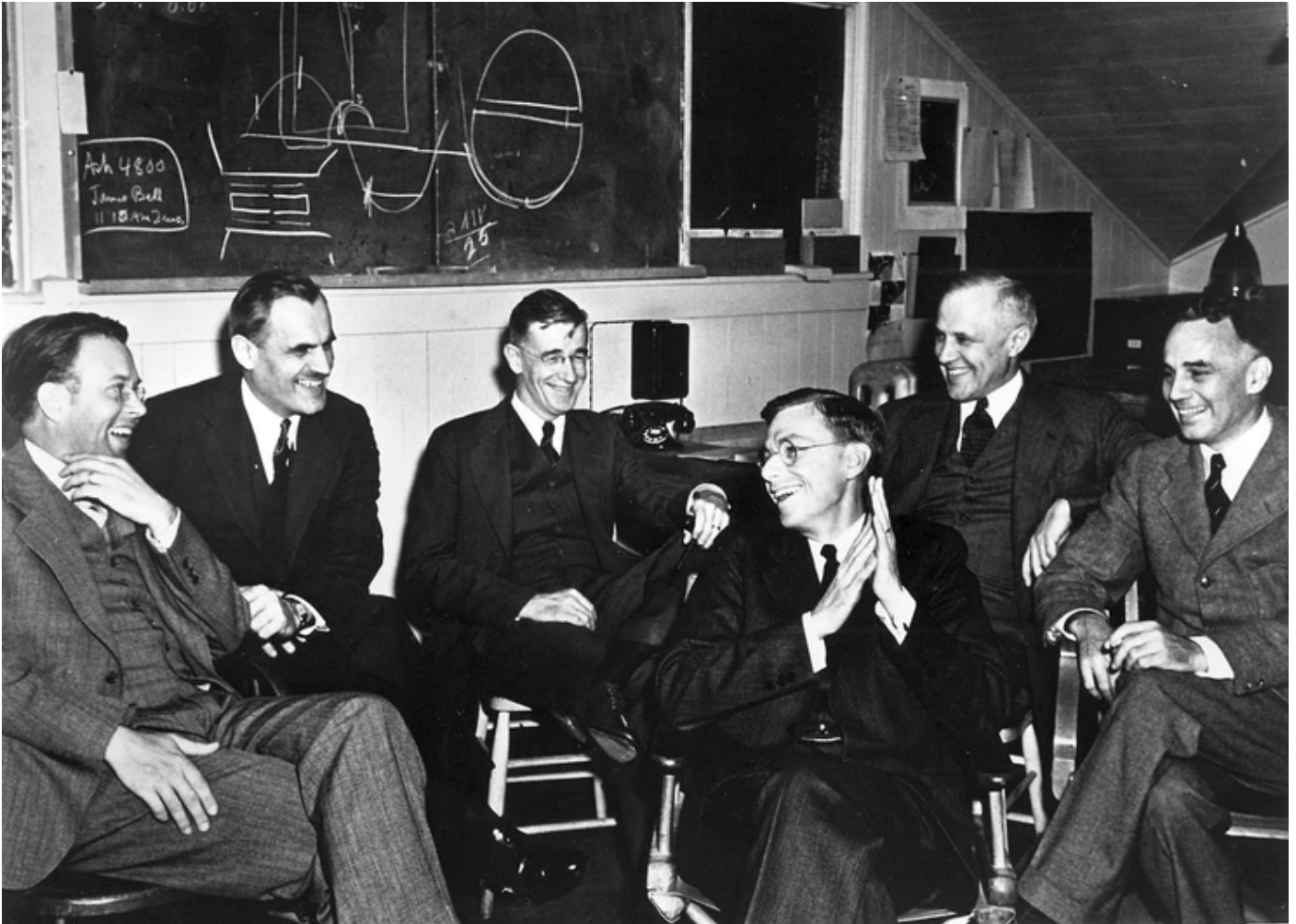
The Hanford Trilogy



Profile

I am a British writer living in the UK who recently completed his first novel, *Shadow on the Sun*. There was a follow-up, *Deep Earth* (published in 2015), with a third, much longer book set to be completed in 2019. The aim is for the three books to complete a trilogy and in its arc, the trilogy is aimed at telling a further story necessary to complete the saga. Since moving to London 40 years ago as a journo and PR consultant I have become a *'novel writer'*. Years of writing on various non-fiction matters such as North Sea Oil and industrial heating systems led me into novel writing. One has to bear in mind during this time I had to earn a earning so as to support two ex-wives and our various daughters.

The Manhattan Project

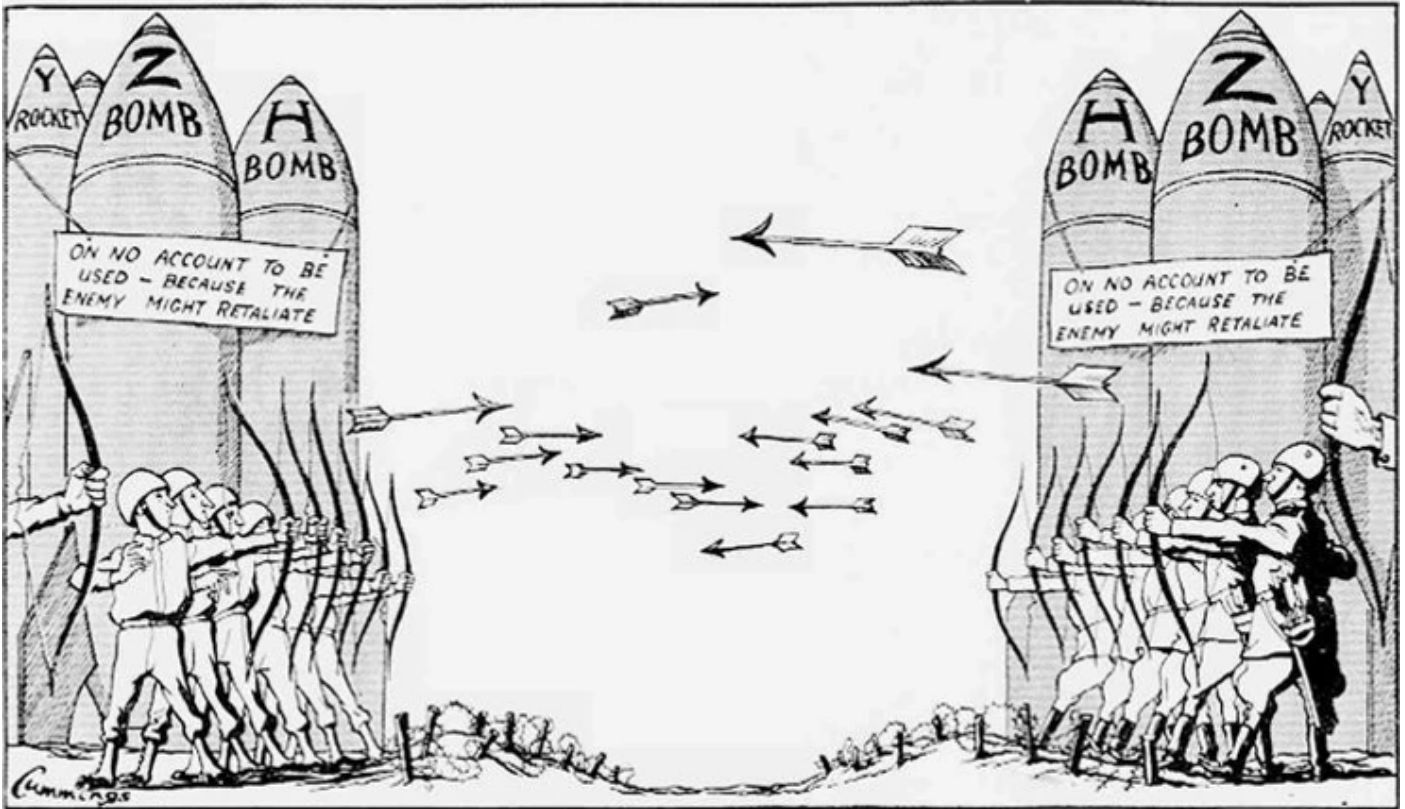


Picture: Manhattan Project members - March 1940 meeting at Berkeley, California: Ernest O. Lawrence, Arthur H. Compton, Vannevar Bush, James B. Conant, Karl T. Compton, and Alfred Loomis / By U.S. government - Public Domain

Much of *Shadow* takes place in the United States, for two reasons. The first is I had travelled extensively in this country. The second is I had always been fascinated by the American 'Manhattan Project', the Second World War project, named after the Manhattan Engineering District its founding location, aimed at beating the Germans' attempts to build an atomic bomb.

That the US was successful is evidenced by the abrupt ending of the war. But in the process a terrible legacy was created. Not only with the nigh on 200,000 Japanese people killed almost immediately with the atomic bomb droppings, but in the radioactive detritus that followed on for nearly seventy years affecting much of US, as well as obviously, Japanese land.

Part of the US legacy has been the awesome nuclear pollution affecting both the Columbia river, American's third largest and the plight of the Downwinders, and the land surrounding them. The Downwinders are the people who lived "downwind" of nuclear blasts, breathing the pollution it created, often dying early, and who spent years claiming compensation.



Picture: The Mutually Assured Destruction doctrine graphically illustrated / Schoolhistory.org.uk

But perhaps an even worse legacy is the 60,000 US Cold War atomic weapons the US built as part of the mistaken belief of forcing the Soviets to abandon either the MAD doctrine - Mutually Assured Destruction - if ever the Soviets attempted to reach nuclear stalemate with the US.

The worst polluted place in the US has been- and still is - the Hanford Indian Reservation in Washington State. It is 600 square miles of now badly polluted desert. This stems from Hanford eventually being the site of the eight nuclear reactors necessary for producing the bombmaking plutonium the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) believed it needed to meet US Government nuclear goals.

But making plutonium is no easy business. The clean-up bill to shutter eight nuclear reactors and the mess they have left behind was estimated at £130 billion in 2000. Since then figures of anywhere between \$700 billion and \$8 trillion have regularly been bandied about. The only accurate fact about these "costs" is every estimate far exceeds the preceding figures.

Becoming a Novelist

As a former journalist (amongst the many other hats I've worn) a combination of fact mixed with fiction seemed to me to be something I could try as a writer.

There was certainly plenty of material about Hanford. However, taking such a tack could be dangerous for it could mean any book would become out of date as events changed. But the issue at Hanford seemed likely to continue for several decades, more than enough to see me out! I like America and I like American writers, the latter covering the usual suspects. I like their style, the telling it like it is and not wasting words. How amazing it must have been in Hemingway's day to have been around during his time in Paris in the early nineteen twenties. To get a flavour of it like Woody Alan's loving movie pastiche, 'Midnight in Paris'.



Picture: *Paris in style: Ernest Hemingway and Martha Gellhorn, his third wife / frenchly.us*

Although there is much in today's age to keep writers occupied I hope I have found one subject for me and something' appeals to a wider audience. Not just for Californians who are pretty clued up about the environment they live in making them wary of people washing up on their shoreline with the aim of messing it all up. The debacle of the San Onofre nuclear power station just south of President Nixon's old home at San Clemente is but one giant sized example. So as we speak I'm plodding away on my next book in a small town close to London. How long is it going to take me? I reckon another year before it's all done. The world of books moves exceedingly slowly so it will probably take longer. Have you all the patience to wait?

N.B. This profile is taken from R Julian Cox's Amazon profile and was written some years ago before Brightstar was completed.

Environmental Backdrop



Picture: *The Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington state.* / PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

A key backdrop to the stories in these books is the aftermath of The Manhattan Project, the United States' race to develop and wield the power of nuclear weaponry towards the end of World War Two before the Germans could. Victory in this nuclear arms race and the expansion of nuclear testing and weaponry during the Cold War with the USSR led to major environmental pollution in multiple sites across the United States.

The books focus on one of largest of these polluted sites, Hanford Indian Reservation, Washington in the north west continental United States. From the end of nuclear activity in the 60s to the 80s several Federal agencies attempted to clean up the environmental damage, countering pollution of the surrounding land and nearby Columbia river. The river feeds into the Pacific North West where Seattle, a city of 7 million inhabitants, known for being the HQ of major global companies, Amazon, Microsoft and Boeing.

An additional ticking time bomb is the prospect of a more powerful series of eruptions from the volcanos underneath nearby Mount St Helens that last erupted in the 80s.

The Hub's Conversation with R Julian Cox - Spring, 2021

All That Jass

https://www.youtube.com/embed/M95UzNPfjE?autoplay=0&mute=0&controls=1&origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thehubcast.co.uk&playsinline=1&showinfo=0&rel=0&iv_load_policy=3&modestbranding=1&enablejsapi=1&widgetid=17

YouTube video: *Oscar Peterson Trio 1965*

R Julian Cox's first foray into writing was penning an article, '*All That Jass*', in 1965 for *The Yorkshire Evening Press* to drum up membership for The York Jazz Club. The club met at the York City Rowing Club and would occasionally host big bands on tour in the north of England. Founder member Cox mis-spelt *Jass* in the title as a nod to its use as 'sex' in American street slang. He was



fond of jazz greats like Oscar Peterson and lesser knowns, like coronet player Joe Harriott.

Fleet Street



Picture: The Bee Gees on the cover of a Sony Music Japan International CD / www.discogs.com

Shortly after, Cox secured a role as an editorial assistant on the paper and progressed to writing articles. He soon left his native York, without regret, for Fleet Street in the Swinging 60s and 70s with a business journos' job on *The Daily Telegraph*. His big business story was covering British Steel reporting the then largest loss in UK business history. Cox recalls attending the press conference and being invited with other journalists by chairman Sir Monty Finneston for a liquid lunch somewhere in Covent Garden. "Those days were a lot of fun!"

He moved along Fleet Street to work on *The Sunday Observer*. Characteristically, he readily admits his career moves were: "All about the money!" He was buying a "very nice" flat in Kew at the time and needed all the money he could get!

Cox's highlight at *The Observer* was interviewing The Bee Gees at the height of their 70s fame. CDs were the new thing and Sony lacked CD-Rom recording artists so signed big acts like The Bee Gees and Paul McCartney. Cox says he remembers "the boys" as straightforward and easy to deal with.



Public Relations



Picture: *Maggie, Maggie, Maggie!* – Margaret Thatcher at the Conservative Party conference in 1979. / Photograph: PA

Money too drew him from journalism to PR. Cox joined an agency called Good Relations as “the writer” . His Fleet Street baptism-by-fire years, where he was expected to churn out important copy to tight daily deadlines, meant he now felt able to write on anything.

He did well in PR, marching into No. 10 in 1979 to assist the newly-elected Margaret Thatcher with copy. She was: “*Pretty good, straight and easy to get on with.*” He was less impressed with some of her underlings. Successive defence secretaries Tom King and John Knox were less impressive, in his estimation.

The Hub asked if, in these high-octane London years, he ever stopped to wonder how far the boy from York had come. “*No, I was not star struck, I just did the job. It never crossed my mind to think about it. Maybe that makes me the Dumbo!*”

He left to be the day-to-day PR lead for Barrett PR, a new agency founded and fronted by BBC journalist Michael Barrett, well-known for presenting ratings-favourite Nationwide. True to the culture of the day Barrett would regularly invite Cox to the pub around 12 and soon sink a couple of double whiskeys.



Picture: *Nationwide presenting team* in 1974: Michael Barratt (left), Susan Stranks and Bob Wellings (right) / Getty Images

Big accounts included 20th Century Fox and Allied Medical Group, who were running a hospital in Saudi Arabia. Cox spent two months in Saudi where the working routine was “a little different” to the West End. The heat meant starting early, stopping mid-day and finishing off after sun-down.

Falling Out & Starting Again



Picture: Labour MP Reg Prentice during a left-wing campaign to deselect him as MP for Newham North East constituency in July 1975 / www.redpepper.org.uk

After two years the company was going well, but in a repeat theme in his later PR years, Cox left because he and Barrett fell out. *"Barrett had a big ego. When I arrived all the calls were for him, but after a while they were all for me. He didn't like that."*

This time Cox set up The Grayling Company on his own, with a partner. The company was successful, but Cox was caught in a classic husband and wife squeeze. He shared a 38.5% split with his partner, but says the business relationship failed because her husband was determined to push Cox out. *"Not a nice experience!"*

So, he set up PR agency Catalyst with two industry friends and it took off *"like a rocket!"* Labour MP Reg Prentice was a member of the board and his daughter also worked at the firm. But four years later Cox fell out with his partners and finally left the PR industry.

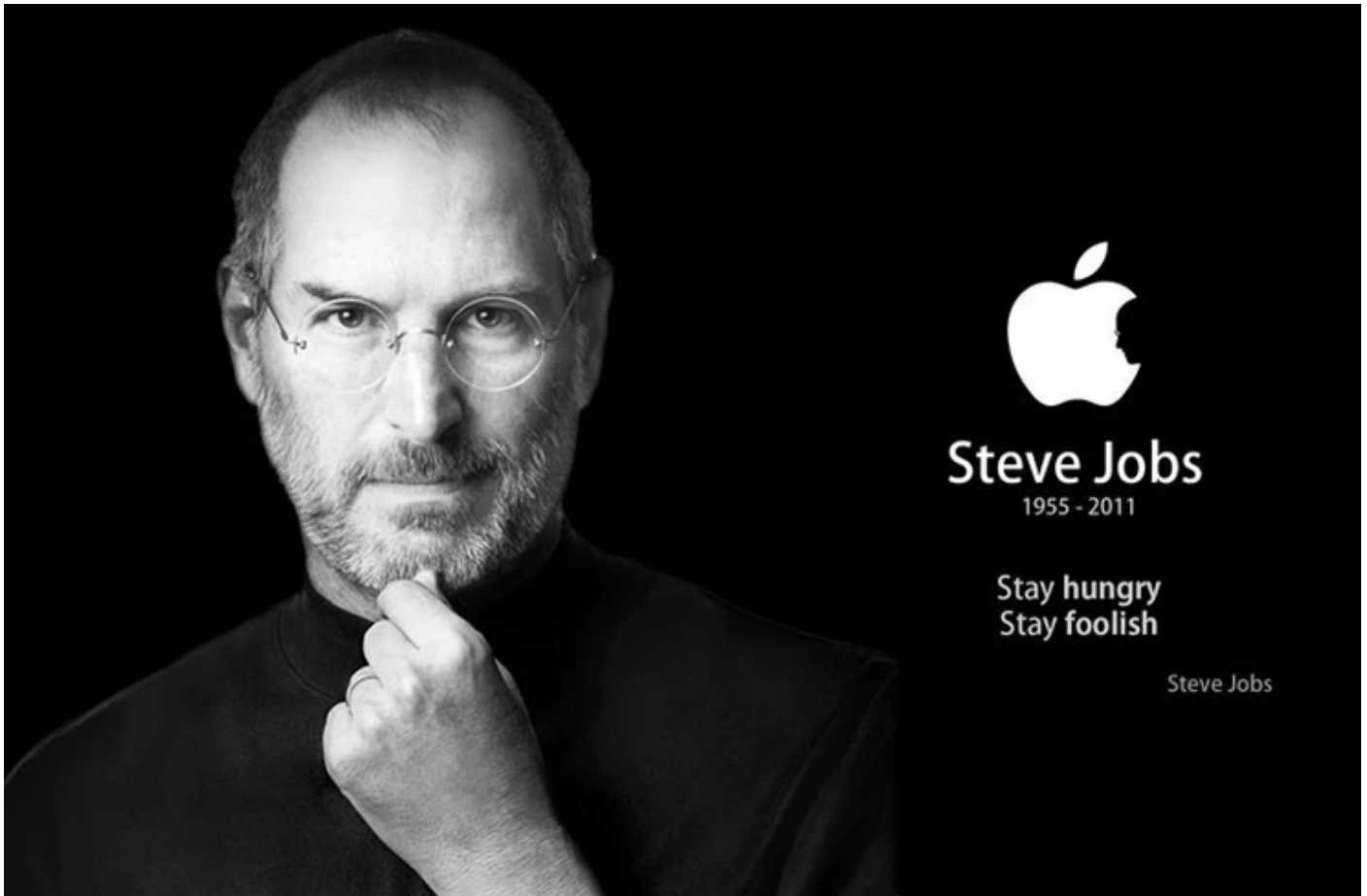
Company Fashion



Picture: Richard Branson and Virgin Airlines staff in an early corporate uniform / Virgin Atlantic

Three years later Cox moved on to snap up a company publishing a dry-cleaning business magazine. *“There was no money in dry cleaning, so I switched to a focus on companies, like banks, who wanted their staff to wear new corporate clothing.”* Cox admits he was lucky to catch the corporate clothing wave just as Richard Branson highlighted the value of jazzy corporate gear for Virgin Airline. He sold the business *“for a tidy sum”* three years later.

Computer Chips



Picture: Steve Jobs in classic black polo pose / [Medium.com](https://www.medium.com) - Marcus Svensson

Cox was executive chairman of computer company, Callhaven, at the time. So, he went full time and had *“a lot of fun!”* The company quickly grew to be the second largest Apple distributor in the UK, selling £25-30m annually. He got to know the Apple people well and met Steve Jobs who was, *“Not a very warm person”*.

People’s Capital

Cox’s last hurrah in business was to make money from *“picking up a lot of knowledge”* from raising money for his various companies. People’s Capital raised sub-£1 million for relatively small companies, typically £200k-300k, for company growth.

It was the late 90s/early 2000s and too often the company execs would use the money *“to have a good time”*. Cox made a good living from the business until 2006 when he says cryptically: *“I got out because it became increasingly difficult to raise money without going to jail!”*

Retiring to Write Those Books



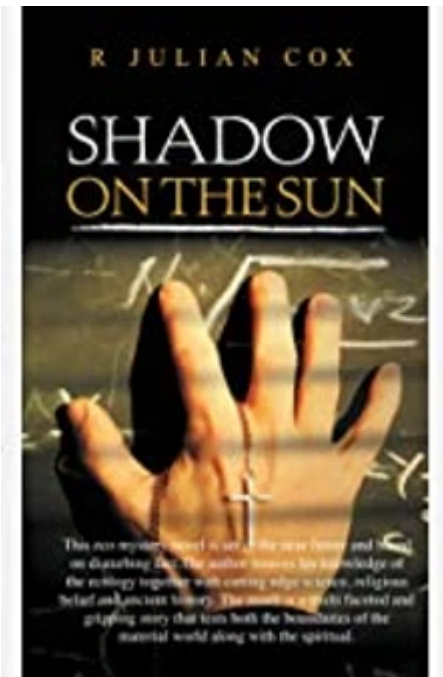
Picture: Beginning / Middle / End: Actors Peter Falk and William Shatner, of Star Trek fame, in a classic scene from Colombo, the long-running ordinary detective outfoxing rich criminal TV series / streamondemandathome.com

Having made his nest egg, Cox retired and returned to writing, his first love. But he admits he found the transition from writing short copy to tight daily deadlines to the lengthier, less tangible discipline of novel writing challenging at first.

He says: *"It takes a long time to write a book, to think of the idea, then get it down."* He declined to start with a structured plot. He just started writing, not knowing what he wanted to write. His editor at the time pulled him up and gave him the advice he needed.

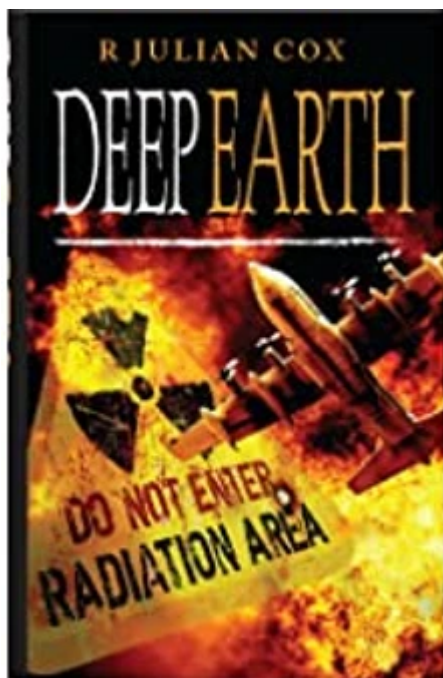
She said: *"A book needs a beginning, a middle and an end."* That made sense to him and made him realise why court room dramas are so enduringly popular, because they formulaically follow this structure.

The Hanford Trilogy



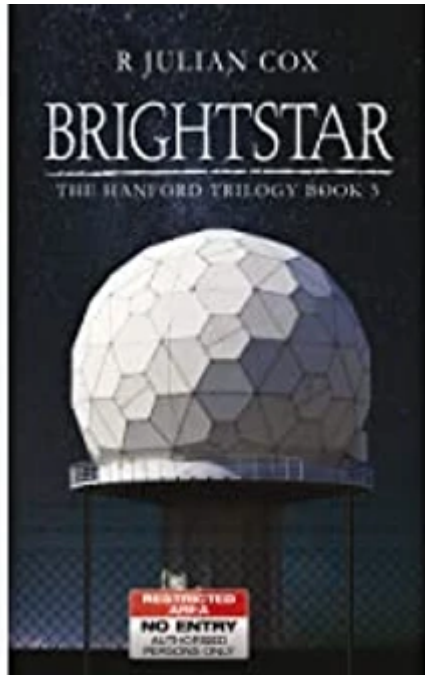
1. SHADOW OF THE SUN - published 2012

The Bright Star Defence System promises to offer mankind freedom from nuclear aggression. But we are in an uncertain time continuum as a plane crash in the 6th century attests.



2. DEEP EARTH - published 2015

This second book focuses on a new group of people uninterested in the past events covered in book one. For them, the BRIGHTSTAR system offers a chance to rebalance a military conflict that has previously pitted them as the weaker party.



3. BRIGHTSTAR - published in 2019

The three stories overlap in this final wrap-up book, inevitably with a final twist.

R Julian Cox's *The Hanford Trilogy* is available via [Amazon](#).

Poets Corner, Vol.1: Audrey Arden-Jones

By local poets, for local poets and everyone

In collaboration with Epsom Hospital Radio we present poets' corner.

We are indebted to celebrated Epsom poet Audrey Arden-Jones who has agreed to moderate this feature of our service.

You are invited to submit your poems for Audrey to read and publish those she selects. Every year we will have a readers' poems competition. The website will also carry audio files of the poems read by Audrey or the poet. If you wish to submit a poem please see our "Pitch an article" form under the "contact" tab.

Tattenham Corner (For Emily Wilding Davison)

We may cross over a well turned track
turn back more than a hundred years
on Derby Day

spot a young woman in her prime
who was imprisoned, force fed
who spoke out, broke out
shouted out

who on that day, slipped under the railings
into an incoming storm
of horses



galloping round the curve
into the long final straightness

a moment of history
she braved it
stood like a beacon – there for you
there for me

with her iconic message
Votes for Women
her last
to a King who should have listened
then she stumbled
under his horse

she never spoke again
never smiled again
never again smelt the freshness of rain
nor heard the June birdsong
outside her window at the Cottage Hospital

a much maligned heroine of her time
a heroine of our time
a voice that lives on

a voice not just for women

by Audrey Ardern-Jones

About Audrey

Audrey Ardern-Jones is a lifelong promoter and lover of poetry. She's lived in Epsom for fifty years and in 1984 founded The Poetry & Music Ensemble – a group of international musicians and herself a performer of poetry.

Audrey's poetry is widely published in anthologies and journals. Last year in June Audrey read her poem 'Tattenham Corner' at the special event unveiling the statue of Emily Wilding Davison in the Epsom Market Square. In October 2021 she read poetry and ran an art/poetry workshop for Epsom's 'Love me, Love my Mind' week. Audrey runs a regular 'Poets Corner' for the Hub – an online organisation linked with Epsom Hospital's radio – here she reads her favourite poets by famous poets.

A Matter of Faith: St. Barnabas Church

The world's largest religion, Christianity, is based on the life and teachings of Jesus. The origins of Christianity dates back to AD 30-33 in Jerusalem. The belief that God is one eternal and supreme being led billions of people to follow this religion. 53% of England's population in 2018 were identified as followers of Christianity. There are thousands of churches around England that follow different principles with some of them being, Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Church of England and the list goes on.

Epsom and Ewell alone accommodates 29 churches that observe worshippers on a regular basis. The diverse followers practice their religion wholeheartedly. St Barnabas Church in Epsom believes in one true God who lives eternally in three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The hundred-year-old building welcomes people from any age, race, gender and religion for worship and in their innovative sessions such as *Alpha* and *Barneys*. Alpha course is more focused on young people with curious minds who want to explore the



big questions of life, faith and meanings. This free session is open for all and helps people understand the Christian faith in a friendly, open, and relaxed environment. Barney's session targets babies, toddlers and their parents and carers. The session involves lots of toys, songs, bible stories and refreshments for all which is an innovative way to connect little ones with church and God.

According to Christians, Jesus Christ came in human form to teach people to love God and love their neighbour. Churches aim to spread this teaching through their Sunday prayers. Associating itself with Epsom primary schools, St Barnabas Church takes informal lessons either in schools or church itself where they educate young ones about the Christian faith and belief. Harry Lamaison, deacon of the church, says: "We're currently exploring the ways we can engage with the local community and its evolving process. We have links with charity organisations such as Love Me Love My Mind and Sunny Bank Trust which helps people with their mental health issues and offer solutions for the same." The church has linked itself to offer help and support from people who are dealing with mental health issues, breakdown of a relationship or a shock from death in a family.

St Barnabas follows one of the greatest messages of Jesus Christ "Don't forget to do good and to share what you have because God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices." Church extends its hands to people in the community who are going through financial hardships by providing advice on how they can plan their expenditure and savings. Advice is offered by a financial adviser and is often done by setting up a private meeting with the person. St Paul's Howell Hill and St Barnabas are working in partnership towards making the local community better by offering support to families in need. The local community is encouraged to take part in church activities that help in bringing the neighbourhood closer and stronger.

To support each other is what God has taught us all. How do we support each other is the big question. The church helps anyone in need and is looking forward to collaborating with local artists who are often unnoticed. Combining prayers with artists is a great way to promote local talent and to draw the attention of locals towards the church. With musicians, dancers and other artists, prayers can be more fun for youngsters as well. Moreover, the church also gives out space for weddings, birth or death. A nominal fee is charged for decorations and upkeep of the church. Artists can also take part in these functions as per people's choice.

Sunday prayers are the heart of any church, where worshippers gather and worship for the betterment of their lives. Any religious establishment is incomplete without people and followers. Growing westernisation has kept many apart from the creator of the world. Remembering that god even once a day gives no harm and helping others is an act of God. Every culture or religion tells us how humans should live in harmony and respect each other's decisions. Be it *Jesus Christ*, *Allah* or *Bhagwan*, all of them are with us, teaching the way of life and how to achieve peace in life.

Editorial 25/04/22

In February 2019 the Cairncross Review "A Sustainable Future For Journalism" was published. The Report stated the decline in public interest journalism was most acute at the local level. The Epsom and Ewell History Explorer website tracks the loss of our Borough's last dedicated local newspapers in the first decade of the 21st Century.

The Independent Community News Network states "Independent community and hyperlocal news outlets are fulfilling the traditional role of the fourth estate in local civic society, complementing the diverse range of news provision available."

In establishing the review former PM Theresa May said "Good quality journalism provides us with the information and analysis we need to inform our viewpoints and conduct a genuine discussion"

ICNN has 122 members from Armagh to Eastbourne. Most of these local news services are run as the Epsom and Ewell Times is: "For the community, by the community", though their organisation varies from one to another.

The Epsom and Ewell Times is politically neutral. As our values provide, *we seek to promote community cohesion and celebrate the positive activities, businesses, lives and events in the Borough while being fearless in reporting matters of controversy, ensuring opposing points of view are represented in a balanced and fair manner.*

Our news service is not run for profit and depends on local citizen journalists giving their time voluntarily. If you wish to join the team please contact us at admin@epsomandewelltimes.com

We hope you enjoy The Epsom and Ewell Times and will support us in the months and years to come. We rely on you and each other.



Borough History: Elizabeth Whitrod

Courtesy of the Friends of Horton Cemetery we republish researched stories of the 9000 patients of the cluster of psychiatric hospitals formerly located in the Borough who were buried in the neglected Horton Cemetery off Hook Road. The charity seeks to persuade Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to reclaim the five acre site from a property speculator to whom it was miss-sold by the NHS in 1983. This is the story of Elizabeth Whitrod.

Elizabeth was born in the March quarter of 1857 to William and Mary Vaughan (née Bratton/Brattan, in Wrotham, Kent. (Malling registration district).

William and Mary had married on 24th February 1846, at the Parish Church of St Marylebone. William's father was John, a Gardener and Mary's Father was George a labourer. On their marriage certificate, William was recorded as a servant.

By the 1861 Census, the family was living in Wrotham. William was a groom. Mary, his wife, was entered as a groom's wife. They had seven children, Elizabeth being the fifth child of the seven and is listed as a scholar. Her eldest brother Edgar is 14 years old and working as a gardener.

By the time of the 1871 Census, Mary Ann, Elizabeth's mother had died (in February 1870). A search on the GRO reveals the following sad story; Elizabeth's brother Edward had died on the 31st of January from a malignant sore throat of 6 days duration. Next, her mother Mary died on the 5th of February from typhus fever. Then, the youngest brother to Elizabeth, Ernest, died on the 20th March, aged 14 months from thrush and diarrhoea. Mary Ann, Elizabeth's older sister died on 29th March in the Union Workhouse at West Malling from typhoid. Finally, her younger brother, Albert aged 5, died on 7th April from diphtheria. It is hard to contemplate the family coping with such losses within the space of three months and one wonders what effect those deaths had on the remaining family.

The census of 1871, shows Elizabeth is acting as housekeeper for her father and her younger siblings Bertha, Clara and Frank, who were still at school. William, her father died in 1872 and on the 1881 census, Elizabeth is 27 years old, working as a housemaid to Hancilia E. Ionides, an Annuitant. On the 1891 Census, there is an Elizabeth Vaughan with a given age of 30, living as a housemaid / domestic servant. The head of the household is absent. The address is 2, High Street, West Malling. With her, is a Kate Vaughan some five years her junior and born in Malling, whilst Elizabeth is recorded as being born in Stratford upon Avon. I wonder if that was the birthplace of the absent head of the house. Perhaps Kate is what Clara, born in 1860, was known as.

In 1893, Elizabeth marries William John Whitrod, a 32-year-old labourer. His father, Roper, was a bootmaker but was deceased by the time of the marriage. William John Whitrod was born in 1861, in the Guiltcross registration district of Norfolk, the fourth of nine children. His parents, according to a family tree on Ancestry, were said to be married in 1852, but I can find no proof of this. The children were all born between 1855 and 1873. On the 1901 Census, William and Elizabeth are living at 7 Lansdowne Crescent, Kensington. William's occupation is that of a scavenger and Elizabeth is a caretaker. A scavenger would be what today we call a dustman, a refuse collector or street cleaner. There is no indication of Elizabeth's epilepsy.

Elizabeth was first admitted to Horton on 10th July 1906 and she stayed there for five years. On October 23rd 1911, she moved to the Epsom Colony. She was there for a further seven years or more and died on 12th January 1918. Elizabeth's death certificate shows that she suffered from epilepsy for many years. She is not described as a widow. I cannot locate her husband, William. A search in the GRO index shows the death of William John Whitrod, aged 45, in the March quarter of the Chelsea registration district. Could this be him? It is hoped that Elizabeth's medical notes will have survived and more information will become available.

A Visit to Stoneleigh's Hindu Temple

Scintillating festivals and folk songs that are sung in Hindu culture bring nothing but life to Surrey. With the houses adorned like a bride, and temples flocked by those who follow the religion, Hinduism is a way of life. Our country is a multicultural state, where people from different beliefs, cultures and backgrounds have settled. Spreading its idea amongst people, Hindu belief is now popular all over the world because of its festivals and traditions. To be more precise, there is no month without a festival.

Hindu belief has no specific founder, however, 95% of Hindus around the globe are known to live in India. Hinduism primarily has



two symbols, one of which is OM and the other one is Swastika. Many recognise swastika used by the Nazis, however, in Hindu culture, it's a symbol of divinity and spirituality in varied religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

Established in 1994, the Sri Raja Rajeswari Amman temple lies in the heart of Stoneleigh, Epsom. The presiding goddess of the temple is Sri Raja Rajeswary Amman who is known as the mother of love and grace and showers her blessings upon all and develops the goodness within humans. The temple is hailed as an eternal place of devotion, purity and peace. Timeless statues of Hindu deities such as Sri Ganapathy, Sri Murgun, Sri Venktaeshwarar, Sri Pathmavati adorned with jewels and embroidered clothes are kept inside the temple.

The architecture of the temple comprises two rooms one of which is the area where devotees pray and perform pooja and the other one is for functions such as marriages, festivals and childbirth. Vibrant and beautiful carvings are echoed in its art and architecture. The mandir (Temple) is a lively and peaceful place for worshippers who often come in for their evening prayers. The usual opening hours for the public are from 8:30 AM- 1:PM and 5:30 PM-10:30 PM. With just two Hindu temples in Surrey, this temple attracts devotees from across the county on Tuesdays and Fridays.

The temple witnesses thousands of devotees every day forming long queues outside the temple right from the early hours. "It's very good to see people follow their culture even after coming abroad. Festivals are celebrated with full enthusiasm and exuberance. Many worshippers even offer donations to the temple for better functioning " says the temple priest, Visvnathan Sarma, who has been working at the temple for 25 years now. He added, "I enjoy working for the god, it's always peaceful and soothing for me to spend my time here at the temple and I wish to devote my rest of the time here only".

Worship is considered an important part of daily life. The majority of Hindu families have their own shrines where offerings are made and prayers are said to the deities. Worshipping involves all five senses: touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. Washing hands, bathing before the prayer, removing shoes before entering the shrine or temple are a few of common rules which must be followed. During the prayer, some offerings such as sweets, flowers and money are made to gods and goddesses. It is important for some men to wear a sacred thread over their left shoulder and hang it to the right hip. This thread is known as *Janeu* which means shouldering the burdens of life with patience.

There are various cultures in Hindu tradition and rules, marriage rituals, separation rituals might differ from each other. North Indian marriage rituals differ from what South Indian or Sri Lankan weddings perform. But you can expect that marriages traditionally involve a great number of guests, are bright, and colourful. A Hindu wedding is usually a week-long festival consisting of different functions every day which has deep philosophical and spiritual significance. During the wedding, the groom and bride take seven rounds around the fire (*Agni*) which binds both the couple to the seven promises of their married lives. *Sindoor (Vermilion Powder)* on their forehead and *Mangalsutra* worn by Hindu brides symbolises a woman's marital status.

The caste system is one of the main reasons which divides Hindus according to their *karma* (work) and *Dharma* (duty). It is believed by many scholars that this system dates back more than 3000 years. The four main castes in Hindu belief are *Brahmin*(the intellectual leaders), *Kshatriya*(the protectors of the public), *Vaishyas* (the skilful producers) and *Shudras* (the unskilled labourers).The system forces individuals to follow the rule and only marry within a specific caste. Even though there are mandatory laws that protect so-called *low caste people* from violation and discrimination, there are only a few who treat everyone as equal.

Hinduism is enriched with wonders and shocks, it is widely followed and practised by people around the globe. The beauty of festivals, the joy of celebration, the taste of sweets and the bitterness of ancient customs are what constitutes Hinduism. Every belief comes with its rules and traditions, what matters is how it is passed on from generation to generation.

Epsom and Ewell stands with Ukraine

Epsom accountant Nataliya Irvine is among 350 volunteers working tirelessly to collect essential items at the Ashley Centre in the town to send to Ukraine where her family are currently living in the war zone.

They operate under the name Surrey Stands With Ukraine

"It's good to be doing something", Nataliya tells me as we sit down in a coffee shop to speak with each other about the incredible work that she and others are doing on behalf of Ukraine. Nataliya, since Sunday, has been organising local people in Epsom to collect donations of essential items, for those suffering from the current conflict. The vital and impassioned work she's doing is supported by a network of amazing volunteers, whose numbers have swollen from 4 to 350, in one month.

Nataliya, who is Ukrainian, approaches the task with an almost sombre necessity. Her mother, sisters, brother and step-father,



are all in Ukraine as we speak to each other, she worries about them day and night. I ask whether they're collecting as much as they expected and she tells me that it's more than they ever imagined. Nataliya emphasises just how supportive the local community has been, just how many locals have been willing to give up their possessions, and even their time, to help the people of Ukraine.

"It started independently", she says, when I ask about the genesis of the idea. Nataliya tells me that it was just her, speaking with her family on the phone and sending them money for vital medical supplies, that were then being given to hospitals in Lviv. Nataliya began to reach out to friends and organise couriers to deliver supplies directly to the Polish-Ukrainian border with assistance from her local gym, FitnessTheory, who provided a vital place to store the items before they were sent off. What started as 4 people looking to make a small difference to the humanitarian effort, has expanded to a 350-strong group, with a committee and community hub, generously given by the Ashley Centre in Epsom, organising donation efforts on a much larger scale. Locally based registered charity Harrop HR Missions Ltd was able to step up and provide the legal entity to facilitate the operation. To have achieved all this, while worrying about her family in Ukraine, all a person can do is admire the strength and bravery of Nataliya and the many other Ukrainians working with her.

The charity has raised over £80,000 and sent over £450,000 worth of supplies to Ukraine in 11 van runs.

At the Drop-Off point in the centre, boxes upon boxes of supplies are piled high, but the spirits of the volunteers are higher. I was lucky enough to be able to spend a little bit of time observing the operation during one of its few quiet moments, and I was blown away by the compassion, focus and drive that pushes these selfless volunteers to go above and beyond for a country that most of them have never been to. They're laughing together; they're supporting each other mentally, physically and spiritually, drawn together and emboldened by a shared sense of duty, to deliver the help that Ukrainians dearly need right now. The whole time I was there, one word kept going through my head: Community, and that's what I saw; a united community, together for a common purpose, selflessly working together to achieve it.

Many individuals have made what Nataliya and her fellow volunteers are doing possible. David Barnes, the lead volunteer, sits at the front desk all day greeting all those who wish to help with a smile. The volunteers I spoke with all told me that David's work is above and beyond, and his contributions are truly vital. David Meadows, the general manager of the Ashley Centre, has also enormously supported them, allowing the group to use an unused unit of the centre, as their operations hub and donation point. Other individuals that gave both resources and time to help this cause are numerous: Councillor Neil Dallen facilitated contacts, Steve Moore's guidance on marketing allowed them to tap into social media, James Brook, an architect also working out of the Ashley Centre, provided vital organisational support.

The team members I spoke to were full of appreciation for one another, people like Roy and Kim Deadman, Jess and Pinch Tarrant, Zoe, Ross and Luda, among many others. On top of each and every local Ukrainian who set aside time to help their country get the vital supplies it needs. This appreciation should also be applied to every single person who has donated food, money or any other item to this cause, their help is invaluable and is making a positive difference in the lives of people in need. Epsom should be truly proud of how it's come together in a time of great melancholy for Europe and the world, to provide hope and more crucially material aid, for the citizens of Ukraine who are unable, or unwilling, to leave their homes.

Downs right investment

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, The Jockey Club and Epsom & Walton Downs Conservators are pleased to announce that work will soon be starting on significant improvements to amenities and infrastructure which will greatly enhance the visitor experience of the famous Epsom & Walton Downs.

A grant of £132,000 secured by the Council from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development is boosted by funding of £18,000 from The Jockey Club and £20,000 from the Epsom & Walton Downs Conservators, and is specified for supporting the local economy by encouraging visitors.

Councillor Liz Frost, Chair of the Epsom & Walton Downs Conservators, stated "I'm delighted that we've managed to secure significant funding to enhance what is a jewel in the crown of Epsom and Ewell.

"Epsom and Walton Downs, a key and beautiful location in the Borough, is private land which is available to the public for 'air and exercise on foot', providing that this does not interfere with the racehorse training, which takes place in the mornings, before 12 noon Mondays to Saturdays and until 9.30am on Sundays.

"The funding can be used for new amenities and projects only. It will provide a range of new signage, display and information



boards with details of the wildlife, history and geography of this special area and some specially commissioned seating, picnic tables and bins. There will also be new markers guiding people on walking, cycling and riding routes, and a brass-rubbing activity trail”.

Councillor Frost added “Epsom & Walton Downs attracts huge numbers of visitors from near and far, especially during the last couple of years. It’s important that we maintain and protect the Downs in a way that allows people to discover the stunning views, wildlife and heritage while doing so safely and with due regard to other users”.

Work on the installation is due to start in April and there will be plenty of opportunities to see the project develop and follow events marking the completion of different parts of the programme – all in time for an official opening and to be in place for use and enjoyment over the Platinum Jubilee celebrations weekend and beyond.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, The Jockey Club and Epsom & Walton Downs Conservators are pleased to be working together to be able to ensure the Downs are accessed safely by the public with regard to racehorse training, are well maintained and continue to offer an unrivalled experience in nature.

Simon Durrant, General Manager at Epsom Downs Racecourse, said:

“The Epsom and Walton Downs are totally unique and as The Jockey Club we are committed both to the racehorse training community who use it as a place of work, as well as the local community for whom it is an important green space.

“I’d like to thank Epsom and Ewell Borough Council for their work in securing this important funding and we’re delighted to be contributing in our capacity as the landowner and a Conservator to continue to improve the Downs and make them a place which is safe and enjoyable for all.”

Care home residents get vaccine

Care home residents have celebrated getting their Covid-19 vaccinations with banners and some bubbly.

All Surrey care homes which support older people have now been visited by vaccination teams offering the first dose of the Covid-19 jab.

At Greys Residential Home, in Woking, residents enjoyed a glass of fizz and posed with placards after getting their jabs last month.

As older care home residents, they were the top priority group in the national roll-out of the vaccine, along with the staff who look after them.

Roving vaccination teams have worked intensively over the last few weeks to visit Surrey care homes administering the jabs, with high levels of take-up. The vast majority of homes had been visited by the end of January, and now even homes which couldn’t be called on previously due to cases of the virus have been visited.

The vaccine roll-out in Surrey is being spearheaded by the Surrey Heartlands Partnership and Frimley Health and Care which bring together partners including local NHS services and Surrey County Council.

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, said: “Celebrations like these are a joy to see after the difficult months we’ve had.

“Thanks to the diligence of vaccination teams on the ground, we’ve been able to visit every care home for older people in Surrey in the space of just a few weeks.

“We’re now working hard to vaccinate other vulnerable groups and frontline health and social care workers and I’d encourage everyone who is offered the jab to get it.

“I’d like to take this opportunity to thank care workers across Surrey for the incredible dedication and compassion they’ve shown throughout the pandemic.

“This vaccine milestone gives us hope but we can’t let our guard down. Care homes are continuing to follow the public health advice and we must all, even after we’ve received our vaccine, stick to the rules so we don’t let up on beating the virus.”

Erica Lockhart, chief executive of the Surrey Care Association, said: “This is such welcome news. Not only have older people in care settings been vaccinated, but care staff across all settings, who have been so heroic throughout the pandemic, are also



receiving their jobs.

“There’s a great sense of relief across the Surrey care sector and beyond. The vaccine has given us hope that the overall risks will be greatly reduced in the not-too-distant future and I’d like to thank all those involved in the vaccine rollout for their tireless work.”

Storm Eunice - Can the Epsom Common Ducks handle it?

Storm Eunice is battering the nation, delaying flights, cancelling trains and causing general tutting and annoyance from all prospective travellers, but there are unsung victims of these gale-force winds, the poor ducks who reside in the ponds of Epsom Common, will they be able to cope with the 90mph winds? If gazebos and golden apple trees alike can’t handle the winds, will our little winged friends manage?