

Nescot Students Celebrate Success at Epsom Downs Ceremony

28 February 2025



Ewell based **Nescot College** students marked the culmination of their hard work earlier this month at the institution's annual Higher Education (HE) Awards ceremony, held at Epsom Downs Racecourse on 7 February. Around 90 graduands, accompanied by 250 guests, gathered to celebrate their achievements.

The event had a distinct Nescot touch, with students from various disciplines contributing to the proceedings. Travel and Tourism students welcomed attendees, while Music Production students provided DJ sets and live music throughout. Two Performing Arts students delivered solo performances during the formal ceremony, adding a special touch to the occasion.

Principal Praises Student Achievements

Addressing the graduates, Nescot Principal and CEO, **Julie Kapsalis**, described the event as "a wonderfully uplifting and poignant occasion," bringing together students of all ages.

"Higher education at Nescot attracts learners from diverse backgrounds, whether school leavers or those returning to education later in life. Many of our students have taken an alternative route to university, using our courses to embark on a new career or reignite a passion for learning. What unites them all is their inspiring journeys of personal and professional transformation," she said.

Degrees Awarded Across a Range of Subjects

Awards were conferred by Nescot's university partners, including the University of Greenwich, Kingston University, London South Bank University, The Open University, and the University of West London. Courses spanned subjects such as teacher education, osteopathy, animal management, sports therapy, counselling, healthcare play specialism, business, creative media, public services, and sport and exercise science.

Inspiring Guest Speaker Shares Career Journey

Among the guests of honour was **Dee Mathieson**, Senior Vice President and Managing Director of Elekta, a global leader in medical technology. A former Nescot student, she shared her career journey in the science and medical sector, highlighting her contributions to cancer treatment. Encouraging graduates to seize opportunities, she advised: "Take a chance. If it isn't the right opportunity, look for another."

Also in attendance were Cllr **Steve Bridger**, (RA Stamford) Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, **Helen Maguire** MP for Epsom and Ewell, Julie Giles MBE, Chair of Phab, and representatives from the Rotary Clubs of Epsom and Ewell, along with business leaders and other guests.

Annual Awards Recognise Outstanding Students

A number of special awards were presented during the ceremony:

- **The Olatunde Idowu Memorial Prize**, awarded to Holly Stuart for outstanding business awareness.
- **The Richard Maryan Prize**, recognising excellence in osteopathy, awarded to Luke Tanner.
- **The Dr John Osborn Memorial Cup and Prize**, awarded to Michaela Joseph in honour of the late Dr Osborn, who played a key role in Nescot's HE provision.
- **The Rotary Club of Epsom Raj Amodia Trophy and Prize**, awarded to Spencer Holmes.
- **The Rotary Club of Ewell Cup and Prize**, awarded to pre-degree HE student Jackie O'Connor.
- **The Principal's Prize**, awarded to Sienna Campbell, selected by Principal Julie Kapsalis.

Honorary Fellowships Recognise Exceptional Contributions

Two Honorary Fellowships were awarded at this year's ceremony, an accolade introduced in 2023 to mark Nescot's 70th anniversary.

The first was presented to **Yvonne Spencer**, Director of Science Capability at the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA). A former Nescot student, Spencer has been instrumental in developing the college's Level 6 Degree Apprenticeship in Laboratory Science. Her work has strengthened the partnership between Nescot and APHA, providing career development opportunities for science professionals.

The second fellowship was awarded to **Val Neame**, a former Nescot staff member, in recognition of her 47 years of service to the college. Described as a mentor and friend to many, Neame was praised for her dedication and the lasting impact she has had on both staff and students.

A Student's Perspective

Delivering the student vote of thanks, Jackie O'Connor, who graduated with a Foundation Degree in Supporting Teaching and Learning, reflected on the encouragement she had received throughout her studies. Paying tribute to her tutor, Mark Warner, she said: "I believe that if you have someone who helps you rethink how you see yourself and how others see you, that is a truly special person."

A Silver-Rated Institution

Nescot's Higher Education provision has been recognised with a **Silver rating in the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)**, including Silver ratings in the new categories of Student Experience and Student Outcomes. The accolade highlights the college's commitment to high-quality teaching and student support.

For more information about Nescot's university-level courses, visit their website.

Photo: Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO with Nescot Class of 2024 graduates at the HE Graduation Ceremony held at Epsom Downs Racecourse

Local Labour view on Epsom and Ewell Council's future

28 February 2025



Epsom and Ewell Times has invited representatives of The Residents Association, Liberal Democrats, Labour and Conservative Party to share their policies on local government reorganisation. Here is the first from Cllr Kate Chinn (Court Ward) of the Labour Party.

The government has directed a total reorganisation for two-tier local authority areas across the whole country. This was planned by the previous government and outlined in the Labour manifesto. Surrey County Council will cease to exist and will be divided up into, what Surrey Labour Party hopes, will be three unitary authorities.

Labour in Surrey has long argued that twelve councils, twelve civic centres or town halls, with twelve chief executives and a top-heavy administration is not the most economical way to deliver essential services. Small boroughs all with their own legal teams, revenue teams, housing teams, procurement staff—all duplicating roles unnecessarily. On completing the process, unitary authorities will soon start making efficiency savings.

Surrey Labour has been discussing for years how unitary authorities could be most effectively organised to best serve the residents of Surrey. Unlike the Liberal Democrats, who are hardly engaging, or the independents, burying their heads in the sand and calling for elections to be held in 2025, as did some council ruling groups. How they can claim good financial management whilst wanting an unnecessary election to go ahead makes no sense. Wasting taxpayers' money on a soon-to-be irrelevance would be unforgivable.

Surrey Labour has embraced the process, made a case for three unitary authorities, and carefully examined how they could be organised, taking into account the guidance from the white paper:

- **Sensible economic geographies**
- **Travel to work areas**
- **The ability for local residents to engage and hold their devolved institutions to account**

The Case for Three Unitary Authorities

We believe that there is an overwhelming case for three councils based on existing geography, taking into account expected population growth and recognising the political, economic, and social challenges faced by the county.

Surrey is to be divided into unitary authorities (UAs), with the government suggesting a **population of 500,000 or more** as ideal but recognising that there *may be exceptions to ensure new structures make sense for an area*. The population of Surrey is **1.25 million**, which implies **two or three authorities**.

Dividing Surrey into two UAs would mean both would be oversized and geographically challenged in an area of anticipated population growth, whereas three would be initially undersized. The likely divisions would be:

- **Two UAs** - (East/West) - as proposed by the Conservatives
- **Three UAs** - (North/South-West/South-East) - as proposed by Labour and supported by all the boroughs and districts

Proposed Unitary Authorities

With service delivery to residents being the most important issue, we suggest the following councils:

Middlesex-Surrey Borders

- Elmbridge, Spelthorne & Runnymede
- **Population:** 334,000

Surrey Hills

- Guildford, Surrey Heath, Woking & Waverley
- **Population:** 478,000

North Downs

- Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead, and Tandridge
- **Population:** 416,000

These names and details are **provisional** and will be decided later. However, they best fit geographically and population-wise.

All these areas would have much stronger geographical links and community ties than the larger, two-unitary authority model. While all three are under the government's ideal **500,000 population** threshold, Surrey Hills is closer to that figure, and all are areas of **population growth**.

These three UAs could provide a more **local and focused** delivery of key services, ensuring better support for **adult social care and SEND needs**, both priorities for Surrey. It would give greater clarity for residents, with one authority being responsible for all local services. Service delivery would be **more efficient, more accountable**, and **free from disputes** over which council has responsibility in an area.

Local Voices Must Be Heard

It is essential to establish a close relationship between Surrey County and district councillors in shaping their new unitary authorities as they are formulated. The reorganisation process must not descend into factional disagreements but remain **focused on communities and democratic engagement** at a local level.

Other unitary councils, such as London boroughs, often have **local committees** to represent community views. Boroughs and districts in Surrey should now begin **engaging residents**, examining the options, and organising forums to ensure local voices are represented in the new UAs.

Conclusion

The devolution offer in the white paper suggests a **Surrey Mayor**, offering **priorities for funding that suit their areas** and providing **strategic leadership**. This could positively impact key Surrey priorities, including:

- **Skills and employment**
- **More housing**
- **Increased local investment**
- **Making Britain a clean energy superpower**

Surrey's approaches to neighbouring areas for a joint strategic mayor have not been successful.

A **Surrey Mayor** would automatically represent an area that aligns with the **current police and crime commissioner** and the **Surrey Fire and Rescue Service boundaries**, as envisaged by the white paper’s goal of “**reforming and joining up public services**”.

Overall, we believe that our **three-unitary authority model** will best serve the needs of Surrey residents going forward.

Much of this is based on previous contributions by **Robert Evans & Arran Neathey (2019)**, **Cllr Catherine Powell (2025)**, **Tony Rooth & Michael Moriarty**, with additional input from **Cllr Robert King**, but it does not necessarily represent all of their individual views.

Cllr Kate Chinn

Leader of the Labour Group

February 2025

Epsom and Ewell Leads South East in Small Business Growth

28 February 2025

| Region | % Growth in Small Businesses (2023 to 2024) in the Region | Top Authority | Small business number 2023 | Small business number 2024 | % Growth in Small Businesses (2023 to 2024) |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| East Midlands | -1 | Derby and Wigston | 2060 | 2155 | 4.63 |
| East of England | 8.4 | Harlow | 3215 | 3460 | 8.52 |
| West Midlands | -1.35 | Solihull | 7815 | 8145 | 4.22 |
| London | 0.55 | Camden | 33030 | 33290 | 4.01 |
| South East | -0.09 | Epsom and Ewell | 3470 | 3570 | 2.88 |
| North West | -0.53 | Fylde | 3250 | 3230 | 2.46 |
| South West | -0.24 | Tewkesbury | 4180 | 4280 | 2.39 |
| Scotland | 0.36 | Nairn-Gleann Star | 1170 | 1195 | 2.14 |
| Northern Ireland | 0.85 | Mid and East Antrim | 8960 | 9085 | 1.9 |
| Wales | -1.72 | Site of Anglesey | 2610 | 2650 | 1.53 |
| North East | -0.77 | Stockton-on-Tees | 5285 | 5350 | 1.23 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | -1.51 | Elkies | 15070 | 15070 | 0 |

Epsom and Ewell has emerged as the fastest-growing local authority in the South East of England for small businesses, according to new data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) analysed by BusinessFinancing.co.uk. The borough gained 100 new small businesses in 2024, representing a 2.88% increase—the highest growth rate in the region.

This growth is particularly significant given that the South East as a whole experienced a slight decline in the number of small businesses, with a recorded drop of -0.09%. Epsom and Ewell’s performance stands in contrast to this regional trend, highlighting the borough’s resilience and business-friendly environment.

The latest analysis was conducted by BusinessFinancing.co.uk, which examined data from the ONS to determine small business growth rates across local authorities in the UK. Their study identifies the areas where entrepreneurial activity is thriving, despite the economic challenges of recent years, including Brexit-related trading difficulties and the lingering impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The strong performance of Epsom and Ewell may be attributed to its strategic location, well-connected transport links, and the continued support for local enterprise initiatives. Business owners in the borough have also benefited from improved access to credit, as financial institutions report an increase in successful loan applications for small firms.

Local business leaders have welcomed the findings, seeing them as an encouraging sign that Epsom and Ewell remains an attractive destination for entrepreneurs. “It’s fantastic to see our borough leading the South East in small business growth,” said **Richard Excell** of Epsom based **Excell Design & Marketing** and the **Epsom Business Club**, “This reflects the hard work and resilience of our local entrepreneurs who continue to drive innovation and employment in our community.”

BusinessFinancing.co.uk has also created a nationwide map showcasing their findings across the UK, which illustrates the varying rates of small business growth. Their analysis highlights Aberdeen as the UK’s leading city for small business expansion, with a 1.95% increase.

With Epsom and Ewell bucking the regional trend and proving to be a hub for entrepreneurial activity, the future looks promising for small businesses in the borough. Continued investment in local infrastructure and support networks will be key to sustaining this momentum and ensuring long-term prosperity for the area’s business community.

Another Surrey Borough under financial strain

28 February 2025



“Hard” times are coming to Surrey Heath Borough Council residents as millions of pounds are being cut from services, with many reduced to minimum standards, as its bleak financial situation became clear. The borough is saddled with high debt repayments to cover the cost of loans it borrowed to finance and purchase Camberley Square and the House of Fraser. The costs of servicing the debt are said to be almost as much as the council brings in through tax.

Plans to sell the town hall for housing and move into the House of Fraser building have also been put on ice due to the imminent restructuring of local government and the likely abolition of borough and district councils. It leaves the council having to rely on rapidly depleting reserves while it guts services to residents – or face going bust.

At the February 19 full meeting of Surrey Heath Borough Council, members agreed to make cuts of £2.143 million in ‘transformation savings’ while drawing down £21.67 million from earmarked reserves. This comes after years of uncertainty over the council’s finances – which have finally been audited for the first time since 2019.

The budget papers read: “The council now has a greater understanding of its level of reserves, the figures contained within its base budget and the overall size of the deficit. This is not a palatable situation and requires some significant transformational savings, efficiencies and additional income generation just to remain solvent over the period covered by this Medium-Term Financial Strategy (the next four years). Over the previous budgets, the council has applied some of its reserve balances to support regeneration and continued delivery of services to the local residents and businesses; however...this is not sustainable in perpetuity. Previous years have seen an annual base budget review exercise which generated £2.1 million overall savings to the council. These have not been sufficient to bridge the budget gap and have only succeeded in ‘buying more time’ on reserve usage; the council is now embarking on a council-wide transformation programme.”

This includes a full review of all discretionary services and a restructuring of what it provides to residents. The report read: “The desired outcome of reducing the cost of delivery through reduction in the non-statutory element level of service, ensuring compliance with only the minimum statutory requirement and ensuring appropriate cost recovery in the discretionary chargeable services offered.” There will also be a full review of the staffing structure as this makes up the majority of controllable costs of services.

The council has also said it would look to sell off assets and has identified some that could be disposed of. However, its two largest assets, and the ones that are primarily the root cause of much of the council’s financial problems, are now worth significantly less than what Surrey Heath paid. Selling these would result in huge losses.

Councillor Shaun Macdonald, leader of Surrey Heath Borough Council, said: “As expected, the view is not pretty. We are now clear that the numbers we inherited were fundamentally misstated, with the reserves being confirmed as £16m lower. That’s about a third of a haircut versus the total. Therefore, our ability to provide the same services to residents that they’ve been used to is nonexistent.”

He told the meeting: “Putting the properties to one side, our core income is about £13m and our core cost of services is roughly £15.8m. It does not take an accountant to understand that’s a difference of £2.8m a year – and that is before net indirect costs of roughly £5.3m, which is predominantly made of interest and debt repayments – less property income – to pay for the reckless purchases made in 2016 and which will remain a significant number for future generations. So what are our choices to address this longer term? Well, there are only two options: reduce costs and increase income further.

“Our ability to increase income is extremely limited, therefore the budget increases council tax by the permitted maximum of 2.99 per cent.” He said the maximum contribution must come through cost-cutting, through efficiencies, and through transformational change.

He added: “This is easier said than done. Not least with the cost of change to factor in. We simply have to stop doing things that we do today if it can’t pay its way or it’s not a statutory service, and that is hard. It’s hard for us collectively in this chamber, it’s hard for the officers who work very hard to provide our services, to provide our residents with the best services they can. It’s hard for our residents who are used to having what they’ve had as a service or the support that they’ve been given through grants.”

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Will Epsom and Ewell be bailing out Woking?

Will Epsom and Ewell be bailing out Guildford?

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Surrey to get new recycling centre?

28 February 2025



Newspapers, cardboard, plastic bottles and tins of tuna could have a new home to go to in Surrey. Plans for a new recycling centre are on the cards on farmland in Chertsey as the existing infrastructure is “under strain”, a new report says.

Surrey County Council is proposing to build a dry material recycling centre on Trumps Farm, just off the M3. An outline planning application has been submitted and an outline business case has been developed, with a decision hopefully being made in May 2025.

Waste like metal, cardboard and plastic would be collected at the kerbside and then separated from mixed items like paper, card, plastic, metal and glass into single material streams. These streams are then sent on to reprocessors to turn into new products.

Trumps Farm, owned by the county council, was identified as the most suitable location for a recycling facility as it is North West Surrey, closest to where the highest levels of waste are produced, according to the council report. The size of the proposed facility will provide capacity for Surrey’s dry recycling now and into the future, the document said.

The county’s ability to recycle and get rid of waste is under “significant strain”, according to a council report. A report in 2023 highlighted a strain on the current recycling infrastructure and a lack of dry mixed recycling centres in the county.

“If we’re going to build and invest in a recycling centre, we need to up our recycling rates,” said the Leader of the council, Tim Oliver at a cabinet meeting on February 25. He urged members to “renew their energy” for recycling around the districts and boroughs.

The Conservative leader said recycling rates around Surrey had stagnated at around 50 per cent and perhaps residents were not sure what can and cannot be recycled. He added: “I have persuaded my wife to look at a package before she puts it in the bin because it does tell you whether it’s recyclable or not.”

Responsible for around 90,000 tonnes of recycling in Surrey, the council is hoping to find an operator to process all this material without changing the current district and borough collection regimes. These authorities are Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge, Guildford, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Tandridge, Waverley and Woking.

Use of third-party sites to manage recyclable materials collected by the District and Boroughs on the county’s behalf has been increasingly expensive and the service has no control over costs or the separation processes. “Surrey County Council will need greater control over its supply chain and associated infrastructure,” according to a new report.

Imminent waste legislative changes could put the county council at risk of not meeting its duty as the Waste Disposal Authority. The new legal rules include: collection packaging reforms and extended producer responsibility (meaning the need to collect and recycle a broader range of materials) and a new levy on fossil fuel waste which could cost the council up to £10m a year.

The report said: “The delivery of a Surrey material recycling facility will work to mitigate these financial pressures by increasing recycling, particularly with regard to plastics and provide revenue savings which can offset these costs.”

In the event that Surrey was split into a number of unitary authorities that were responsible for waste disposal, the county council said the continued use of strategic waste management facilities would be managed through agreements between local authorities.

Image: Surrey Recycling Centre. Credit Surrey County Council

An Epsom 17th century pub to become supermarket?

28 February 2025



A 17th century pub could be transformed into a Sainsbury's Local. Plans have been submitted to refurbish the Grade II-listed drinking establishment, on Dorking Road in Epsom, to a convenience store.

If approved, a Sainsbury's convenience store would take over the ground floor of the historic building and install an ATM machine outside. Plans also include resurfacing and reducing the car park to just 13 spaces, four of which will be reserved for delivery vehicles.

The former White Horse Public House was converted into Lava Lounge, a restaurant and cocktail bar, in 2020. Lava Lounge closed in January 2024, having been on the market for at least two years according to planning documents.

Used for centuries for drinking, the former purpose of the pub is no longer viable according to Sainsbury's. "Given the wealth of drinking establishments in Epsom, not just in the town centre, it is unlikely that the loss of a facility which has already been closed for a year could be considered a detriment," the application said.

Serving a specific catchment area, the proposed Sainsbury's is said to be conveniently located for nearby residents, visitors and employees at Epsom hospital as well as passing trade. The development will also create around 20 new jobs, a mixture of full and part-time.

"Very little appears to have survived" from the 17th-18th century on the ground floor, planning documents state, perhaps only the thick walls around the chimney breasts. The timber framed structure at first floor level appears to be correctly placed for a historic building but, the report says, the timbers appear to be modern.

Sainsbury's heritage statement states the proposals would have a "neutral effect" on the special interest of a listed building. The report says the vast majority of the building's internal heritage value has been lost from modern adaptations.

Planning documents read: "The core of the building has a hipped slate roof and is of timber framed construction, some of which is evidently modern, but which may form the altered remains of the 17th or 18th century building referred to in the Listing description. The pub has a parapeted brick frontage which likely dates from the middle of the 19th century."

The scheme proposes removing the replacement of the Victorian-style sash window, as well as reconfiguring and refurbishing the insides of the former pub. Demolishing the covered yard at the back of the site, Sainsbury's plans to build an extension to form a 'back of house' for the convenience store.

Minor modifications to the historic part of the building are needed to use the original pub building for the back office part of the shop. The application clarifies the historic part of the building is not being used for a sales area.

Neighbours can comment on the application on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's website. No decision date has been listed yet.

View outside the Lava Lounge, and former White Horse Pub, in Epsom. (Credit: Sainsbury's/ Epsom and Ewell Planning Documents)

What Epsom could do with Woking's £75 million bail out?

28 February 2025



Critical front-line services will be spared after a huge government 'bail out' was agreed, bankrupt Woking Borough Council has said. Officially referred to as Exceptional Financial Support for local authorities, Woking Borough Council has been given £74.9 million for the 2025/26 financial year on top of the £96.5million agreed for 24/25.

Woking declared itself effectively bust in 2023 with debts of about £2 billion. It forced the council to cut new spending, axe non-statutory services and increase tax by 10 per cent.

It used the money to build up what it hoped would be a significant investment portfolio but instead saddled itself with huge debt repayments costing tens of millions of pounds every year that it simply can not afford.

It has left the council relying on the Government to cover the cost of its heavy borrowing, known as minimum debt repayment. And this week came the news that it would receive all the money it has asked for - including a further £ 2.8million to cover the cost of providing services this year.

Had the Government refused completely the council would have ground to a halt. Councils also have to, by law, balance their books each year, and the £2.8m above and beyond debt repayment was agreed as it was viewed that Woking Borough Council has been doing what it can to reduce its spending.

This has included mass layoffs, the sale of assets, and finding partners to take over the running of others. Had any further cuts been made in such a short period of time, the results would have been 'catastrophic' to both the council and residents it had been said.

The government cash comes as part of 30 councils overall that have been given support to manage financial pressures - such is the widespread problem of local government finance.

Cllr Ann-Marie Barker, Leader of Woking Borough Council, said: "I welcome the Government's decision to provide exceptional financial support. Critically, this will ensure that the council can meet its financial obligations relating to its £2.1 billion legacy debt without impacting front-line services and will allow us to set a balanced budget at a meeting of Council on Monday 3 March.

"We continue to urgently address the council's legacy debt through work being undertaken as part of our Improvement and Recovery Plan on asset rationalisation, debt reduction and improved commercial governance.

"We remain committed to working alongside Commissions and Government to find a lasting resolution to our complex and challenging financial situation."

In January 2023, an external assurance review covering Woking Borough Council's governance, finance and commercial issues was carried out. It provided an external assessment of Woking Borough Council's governance arrangements, financial situation, commercial investments and its capacity and capability to manage these.

The Secretary of State was not satisfied that the pace or scale of the council's response was proportionate to the issues it faced and decided immediate urgent government action was required, - and On May 25, 2023, he decided to intervene and appointed the review team as commissioners.

By June that year the council declared itself bankrupt and by October, the Commissioners spoke of the gravity of the situation in Woking and the scale of the challenge the council faced.

Related reports:

[Will Epsom and Ewell be bailing out Woking?](#)

[Ex-Council Officers under investigation for Woking's £2 billion debt](#)

[No wonder Woking went bankrupt. Scandal of private school loans](#)

Poundland saving itself pennies in Elmbridge

28 February 2025



Poundland has been told to "show some local pride" and repair its broken shop front window and remove the graffiti from its East Molesey store.

The low-price chain, which serves up to seven million customers every week nationwide, has been issued with a community protection warning by Elmbridge Borough Council after ignoring multiple requests to address the eyesores.

Elmbridge Borough Council says it works with business groups and community volunteers to keep its high streets, villages and parades thriving and to bring that sense of civic pride.

One group, from Manor Road, takes care of the planters along Walton Road to "lift up the high street".

Initiatives in the last year have been designed to make a positive impact on the community, such as new bins, flower planters, deep cleans and pavement works.

It's part of a move to get businesses, volunteers and the council working together in support of the borough's high streets.

That work has been undermined for “almost a year” as Poundland left temporary wooden panelling and unsightly graffiti, in place.

A spokesman for Elmbridge Borough Council said: “Despite multiple requests to address the graffiti and damage at Poundland in East Molesey, sufficient action has not been taken.

“The store has tried to clean the windows professionally but could not get the graffiti removed.

“In support of local residents, we have issued this Community Protection Warning hoping that Poundland will now undertake the necessary repairs and support our high streets.”

Under Community Protection Warnings, £100 fines can be issued in the first instance. If no action is taken, prosecutions can begin. If convicted the maximum penalty is a fine up to £20,000.

Councillor Steve Bax (Conservative: Molesey East) said: “Almost a year has gone by without action and they are giving the impression they are not bothered as long as the money continues to roll in.

“When we have got Manor Road residents caring for the planters so brilliantly and doing their best to lift up the high street, we need this retailer to show some local pride too.

“The council has issued a community protection warning against Poundland which gives the company 28 days to fix the shop front or face a fine.

“Hopefully this formal action will now mean the company move forward and deal with shopfront issues.”

Poundland was approached for comment.

Epsom’s Horton Cemetery gets attention of two kinds

28 February 2025



Just as **The Epsom and Ewell Times** was about to publish a letter concerning Council efforts to tidy and make safer the boundaries of Horton Cemetery (Hook Road / Horton Lane) a motor car struck railings near the roundabout and knocked over the Memorial to the near 9000 patients buried and neglected in the privately owned 5 acre cemetery.

Surrey Police issued a statement: “We were called to Horton Lane, Ewell at around 7:10pm on Wednesday 19 February after reports of a single vehicle collision at the location. Officers responded and found that the collision had resulted in damage to a fence and cemetery stone. The driver was not arrested and did not require medical treatment.”



It is understood that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is responsible for the Memorial after former Labour Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, **Alan Carlson**, raised the money for its installation through a public appeal in 2004.

The charity The Friends of Horton Cemetery continues its campaign to restore the Cemetery to community ownership following the bizarre NHS transfer of the asset to a property speculator in 1983. **Michael Heighes** of Marque Securities has taken away the tombstones and all the crosses on each grave have gone. The cemetery is barely recognisable as a cemetery and relatives cannot enter without trespassing.

Recently, the Charity has made a submission to the Law Commission, which is considering reforms to cemetery law. It has submitted that the opportunity to update the laws should include a duty to maintain and allow access to cemeteries in private hands.

The charity has also sent a letter to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council in connection with the current Local Plan arguing any development of neighbouring **Horton Farm** for housing should seek developer's funds for the restoration of the Cemetery as an amenity of peace and remembrance open to the public.

Mr **Lionel Blackman**, Secretary of the Charity, said "The existence of the largest asylum cemetery in Europe is not going to disappear. With relatives coming forward every week and our research team publishing the lives of over 600 patients so far, it is only a matter of time and whichever local government takes over, that action will redress this historic outrage."

Sam Jones - Reporter

Letter from Matthew Walters, Epsom.

Dear Sir,

I would like to draw attention to recent developments concerning Horton Cemetery in West Ewell, Epsom.

For many years, concerns have been raised about the lack of respect shown to the 9,000 individuals buried there, whose graves are no longer marked. More recently, attention has also turned to the safety risks for road users on the busy Hook Road.

Until yesterday, the grass verge alongside the cemetery was largely inaccessible due to overgrown brambles and tree branches extending from the cemetery, as well as significant fly-tipping, including building waste.

It is therefore welcome news that Surrey County Council and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council have worked together to clear the area, improving both its appearance and safety, as evidenced in the accompanying photographs.

While the decision to classify Horton Cemetery and its 9,000 graves as an "amenity woodland" remains a point of contention, the recent clearance has ensured that the surroundings are now more in keeping with a cemetery. However, the public should be aware that sections of the perimeter railings remain unsafe, with some sharp railings protruding towards Hook Road at dangerous angles, none of which are currently marked with hazard tape.

Falling branches from trees inside the cemetery continue to pose a risk to road users, and it is hoped that Surrey County Council will monitor this issue and take necessary action, as indicated in previous communications.

In the meantime, cyclists, motorcyclists, and motorists should exercise caution when travelling along Hook Road near the cemetery. Furthermore, steps should be taken to ensure that the cost of maintaining overgrown vegetation from within the cemetery does not fall upon Council Tax payers.

Horton Cemetery remains in private ownership by a property developer, and the recent clearance now allows for greater visibility into the site. This presents an opportunity for the public to assess whether greater care and respect should be afforded to those buried there.

Out of sight should not mean out of mind.

Yours faithfully,

Matthew Walters

Epsom Stands in Solidarity with Ukraine on War's Third Anniversary

28 February 2025



Epsom's Market Place was a scene of unity and reflection today as residents, dignitaries, and members of the Ukrainian community gathered to mark the third anniversary (24th February) of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Organised by the Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network (EERN) and Epsom based Surrey Stands With Ukraine (SSWU), the event served as a powerful demonstration of the town's enduring support for those affected by the war.

The Worshipful The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor **Steve Bridger**, (RA Stamford) and the Mayoress, Carol Bridger, attended the commemoration, reaffirming the borough's commitment to standing in solidarity with Ukraine.

"Kindness Will Prevail"

The event opened with a speech from **Jo Sherring**, co-founder of EERN, who highlighted the strong bonds forged between the local and Ukrainian communities. "We are privileged to have met and worked with such wonderful people, and we will continue to support them as long as they need our help," she said. EERN supports as many as 80 or more families from Ukraine. Mainly women and children.

Roy Deadman, Chair of SSWU, praised the tireless efforts of volunteers who have dedicated time and resources to aid Ukraine. "The support for Ukraine we have seen today from this wonderful community still shows us that kindness will prevail in a world that feels very dark right now," he said. SSWU has sent a van of civilian aid nearly every week since the war began and thousands of pounds of aid for humanitarian projects in Ukraine.

The two charities work together in offices generously provided by the Ashley Centre and for which the Council has waived all business rates.

MP's Message of Support

Epsom & Ewell's MP, **Helen Maguire**, who was unable to attend in person, sent a statement which was read aloud to the assembled crowd. She paid tribute to Ukraine's resilience and urged continued support for its fight against Russian aggression.

"Three years ago, the world watched in horror as Putin launched his brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. I am proud that Epsom's community has gathered here today to say what we have said from the very beginning: We stand with Ukraine. We stand with its people. And we will not waver," she said.

Ms Maguire described Ukraine's battle as one for "democracy, sovereignty, and the right of nations to choose their own future." She praised the courage of the Ukrainian people, whether on the battlefield or in communities enduring relentless attacks, displacement, and loss.

"To our Ukrainian friends here today: you are not alone. We have not forgotten you, and we will continue to support you, in both word and action, for as long as it takes," she added.

The MP also called for the UK to take a leadership role in supporting Ukraine's victory, advocating for military assistance and the seizure of Russian assets to aid in reconstruction. "The future of Ukraine must be decided by Ukrainians," she said.

Emotional Tributes

The gathering featured a powerful performance by **Helin Konyar**, a third-year student at Laine Theatre Arts and a Ukrainian national, who sang Ukraine's spiritual anthem *God Save Ukraine*. Her performance deeply moved those in attendance.

A particularly poignant moment came from **Constantin Ryzhikov**, a blind Ukrainian refugee, who shared his heartfelt gratitude for Britain's support. He spoke about the difficulties faced by Ukrainians both in their homeland and those who have sought refuge abroad, moving many in the audience to tears.

The event also included a prayer led by Deacon **Gary Carter** of St Joseph's Church in Epsom, calling for peace and strength for those suffering in Ukraine.

A Show of Unity

The commemoration ended with the Ukrainian national anthem, once again performed by Helin Konyar. The assembled crowd joined in a moment of solemn reflection, standing in solidarity with Ukraine.

As the war enters its fourth year, the event served as a poignant reminder of Epsom's unwavering support for Ukraine and the power of community in times of crisis.

Ukrainian Culture

Since the war talented Ukrainian musicians and a local Ukraine Choir come together for the 11th Ukraine Music Evening since the war began. Held at 6pm on Saturday 22nd March in the Worship Area of the Epsom Methodist Church in Ashley Road. Entry is free and a leaving collection is dedicated to support the musicians whose livelihoods have been cut in their homeland.

For more information on how to support Ukraine locally, visit:

- **Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network:** www.epsomrefugeenetwork.org
- **Surrey Stands With Ukraine:** www.surreystandswithukraine.org

Image: Roy Deadman of SSWU addresses the crowd alongside Jo Sherring of EERN and Deacon Gary Carter (Credit Nina Kaye)

Related reports:

Sir Ed supporting Epsom based Ukraine charities

Fire Assembly for Ukraine

2 years on Epsom to gather in solidarity with Ukraine

Epsom Man's 56-Mile Walk to Raise Mental Health Awareness

28 February 2025



A local Epsom resident, Nicholas Mark Dulake, is set to complete an extraordinary challenge this Sunday, 23rd February 2025, as he concludes a 56-mile walk in aid of the mental health charity, Mind. Nicholas embarked on this challenge in January, aiming to raise funds and awareness about mental health issues and the stigma that surrounds them.

His journey is deeply personal. On 20th February 2024, Nicholas attempted to take his own life. His survival led to five weeks in a coma, multiple hospital transfers, and several life-saving operations, during which he was resuscitated four times. As a result of his ordeal, he now lives with a tracheostomy, which presents daily challenges with his breathing. However, rather than allowing his experience to define him negatively, he has chosen to channel his energy into raising

awareness and supporting others struggling with their mental health.

To date, Nicholas has raised an incredible £3,705 in sponsorship for Mind. To mark the completion of his challenge, he has arranged a final walk around Epsom Downs and is inviting the local community to join him in showing solidarity for mental health awareness.

“I’ve had an overwhelming response from people who have read my story and reached out to tell me how much it has helped them,” Nicholas shared. Through his personal blog, *Start Again Monday* (www.startagainmonday.co.uk), he continues to share his journey and offer support to others facing similar struggles.

His mission is clear: to break down the stigma surrounding mental health and ensure that those who are suffering know they are not alone.

Local residents are encouraged to take part in the walk on Sunday to show their support for this important cause. For those who wish to donate, details can be found on Nicholas’s blog.

Nicholas is also keen to share his experiences in greater detail following the completion of his challenge. If you would like to learn more, follow his blog or reach out to him directly.

For those struggling with mental health issues, charities like Mind provide crucial support and resources. Nicholas’s story serves as a powerful reminder that recovery is possible and that support is always available.

Surrey Uni Zebrafish Study Links Blood Pressure Drug to Potential ADHD Treatment

28 February 2025



A commonly prescribed blood pressure medication could offer a safer alternative for treating ADHD symptoms, according to a new study involving the University of Surrey. The findings suggest that amlodipine, a well-established drug for managing hypertension, may help reduce hyperactivity and impulsivity, key characteristics of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

From Fish to Humans: Genetic Links in ADHD Research

The study, published in *Neuropsychopharmacology*, tested five potential drugs in rats genetically bred to exhibit ADHD-like symptoms. Of these, only amlodipine significantly reduced hyperactivity. To validate the findings, researchers turned to zebrafish (*Danio rerio*), an important model organism in neurological studies, which shares approximately **70% of its genes** with humans. The zebrafish trials confirmed that amlodipine reduces hyperactivity and impulsivity, and for the first time, researchers confirmed that the drug crosses the blood-brain barrier, directly influencing brain function.

Further analysis of human genetic data reinforced the findings, showing that ADHD is linked to calcium channels in the brain—the same targets of amlodipine. A review of UK-wide patient records further strengthened the case, revealing that individuals taking amlodipine reported fewer mood swings and a lower tendency for risk-taking behaviour.

Dr Matthew Parker, co-author of the study from the University of Surrey, noted:

“Repurposing amlodipine, a well-established blood pressure medication, offers a promising and swift pathway to address ADHD symptoms. Our research indicates that, due to its existing approval and safety profile, amlodipine could be rapidly redeployed as a treatment option for ADHD, potentially providing relief to patients sooner than developing new medications.”

Why Zebrafish? The Genetic Overlap with Humans

Zebrafish have become an invaluable model in medical research due to their high genetic similarity with humans. In fact, they share a greater proportion of their genes with humans than many might expect. Some examples include:

- **Chimpanzees** (~98-99%) - our closest genetic relatives.
- **Mice** (~85%) - widely used in biomedical research.
- **Dogs** (~84%) - studied for genetic diseases and neurological conditions.
- **Zebrafish** (~70%) - a crucial model for studying brain function and drug effects.
- **Fruit flies** (~60%) - key for understanding genetics and neurobiology.

Because of this genetic overlap, zebrafish are often used in drug discovery, particularly for neurological disorders. Their transparent embryos and rapid development allow scientists to study the effects of medications in real-time.

A Safer Alternative to Existing ADHD Medications?

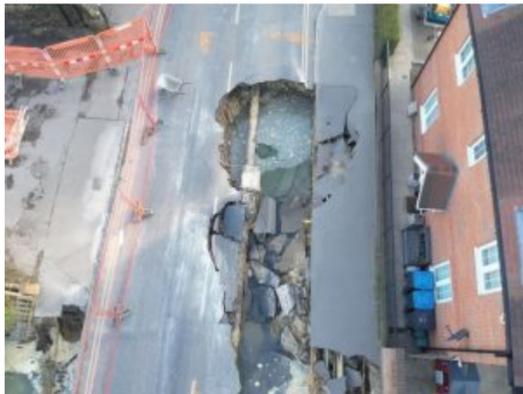
Current ADHD treatments, such as stimulant medications, are effective but often come with significant side effects, including appetite loss, high blood pressure, headaches, and sleep disturbances. Additionally, stimulant medications carry a risk of misuse. Amlodipine, already widely prescribed and well-tolerated, could offer a new alternative with a safer profile.

With approximately **25% of ADHD patients not responding well to existing treatments**, the need for new options is urgent. If further clinical trials confirm these findings, amlodipine could be repurposed as an ADHD treatment much faster than developing a brand-new drug, providing relief for patients sooner.

The study highlights the importance of genetic research in understanding brain disorders and demonstrates how unlikely connections—such as a heart medication treating a neurodevelopmental condition—can lead to breakthroughs in medical science.

Surrey sink-hole major incident

28 February 2025



A significant sinkhole has emerged on Godstone High Street in Surrey, leading to evacuations and widespread disruptions. The incident began on Monday night when a section of the road collapsed, revealing a hole filled with water. By Tuesday morning, the sinkhole had expanded to approximately 20 metres in length and 6 metres in width.

Surrey County Council has declared the situation a major incident, with the Surrey Local Resilience Forum overseeing the response. Assistant Director for Safer Communities, Carl Bussey, stated that efforts are underway in collaboration with emergency services, utility companies, and Tandridge District Council to ensure public safety and restore essential services.

The sinkhole's rapid expansion has led to the evacuation of around 30 properties within a 100-metre cordon. Residents have been advised to avoid the area while investigations and repairs are conducted. The incident has also resulted in the closure of Godstone High Street between Oxted Road and Bletchingley Road, with diversions in place for the foreseeable future.

The cause of the sinkhole is believed to be a burst water main. SES Water has confirmed that engineers are on-site working to repair the damaged pipe and restore water supplies to affected homes. In the interim, bottled water is being distributed to residents.

Local residents have expressed concerns over the incident. Some evacuees have reported hearing cracking sounds and witnessing the sinkhole's growth overnight. One resident described the scene as resembling the aftermath of an earthquake, with buckled roads and pavements.

Authorities are urging the public to follow updates from Surrey County Council, Surrey Highways, and Tandridge District Council on social media for the latest information regarding the situation.

Councillor thinks new Ewell homes refusal is batty

28 February 2025



Plans for four new homes in Ewell have been refused over bats potentially living in the two bungalows. Although one survey was done, councillors could not rule out there were definitely no bats in the buildings.

The scheme involved demolishing two semi-detached bungalows on Kirby Close, and erecting four, 3-bedroom homes in a residential Ewell suburb. The two-storey houses would have two car parking spaces per house with associated landscaping, according to the report.

However, the applicant had not carried out a phase 2 survey establishing if there were any bats in the bungalow. Officers “could not be satisfied” the demolition of the building did not pose a risk to protected species and its habitat. Members rejected the application at an Epsom and Ewell Borough Planning Committee meeting on February 13.

Cllr **Julian Freeman** (LibDem College) said: “This smacks of desperation to find some reason for turning down an application for housing that we desperately need in this borough.” An increasingly frustrated Cllr Freeman reminded the committee that the borough has a “housing crisis”.

The Liberal Democrat member argued that you would know if bats are on the site as “you would be sweeping up the mess on a fairly regular basis”. He said: “If [the council] is going to refuse an application because there *might* be bats then, surely you need some evidence of that.”

But Cllr **Steven McCormick**, (RA Woodcote and Langley) chairing the meeting, explained the plans have to be turned down because there is no evidence that bats are *not* in the two bungalows. Councils have a legal requirement for bat surveys to ensure the mammals are not harmed in the demolition or construction of buildings.

The potential harm to protected species is the only reason why the risks would outweigh the benefits of delivering two houses, planning officers told the committee as they recommended the application for refusal.

If the applicant was to appeal the decision, members asked whether the council would be “laughed at” for refusing on the grounds there was no evidence that bats are non-existent on the site. However, officers told the committee that an application on Reigate Road, which was refused for a lack of satisfactory bat survey, was dismissed at appeal by the Planning Inspector.

Councillors questioned whether they could approve the application with the condition of a further bat survey, but officers said National England guidance is it has to be known early on if bats are in the building before approval could go ahead. The bungalows cannot be demolished until the council knows whether or not bats are there.

Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) said he was happy to approve it once the second bat survey is done as he couldn’t see “any significant or demonstrable harm that outweighs the benefit of two additional dwellings”.

A previous similar application for the ‘principle of development’ was rejected in July 2024 on the basis the housing proposal was too dense to match the character of the street. This is currently at appeal.

Image: 9-10 Kirby Close in Ewell, where the proposed development would be built. (Credit: Google Street View)

Sutton and Epsom Soar in Nine-Try Extravaganza

28 February 2025



Sutton & Epsom RFC 59 Dartfordians 20. Saturday 15th February.

1988, the first league season, was when Dartfordians last visited Rugby Lane on the final day of the season. On that occasion, the visitors were safe in the knowledge that they had retained their league status, but this time around, the Kent club were looking for vital points in their struggle to avoid the drop. Considering that the Black & Whites had to come from 21-3 down to win the reverse fixture, having been aided by injuries that reduced Dartfordians to 14, the Bexley-

based club arrived with realistic hopes of success. By the final whistle, the visitors had endured another afternoon blighted by injuries and, despite a spirited performance, were overwhelmed 59-20.

On a chill and overcast afternoon, Sutton welcomed back not only the Stag weekend adventurers but also Matt Whitaker in his 199th league appearance. Dartfordians kicked off attacking the clubhouse end. No doubt responding to the need for a strong start, the visitors dominated the first 15 minutes of this encounter. Gareth O'Brien was soon scurrying to gather a ball rolling into the corner and was rewarded for his efforts by being bundled out of the in-goal area. Soon the Kent team were attacking from a 5-metre lineout. Though thwarted when held up in a maul, the visiting pack earned a reprieve as S&E fumbled at the first scrummage.

Under the baton of Jarlath Hetherington, the 10 orchestrated a telling attack from the subsequent set piece, switching the focus from the open side to the blindside. Resolute tackling was not enough to deny Dartfordians as lock William Tuffley did superbly to score in the corner. Hetherington's touchline conversion missed, but his side had a morale-boosting 5-0 advantage after ten minutes.

Moments later, a superb kick ahead by winger Elliot Soler-Gomez produced a 50/22 and had Dartfordians in prime position to extend their lead. Stoic defence denied Dartfordians as they were held up over the line. Sutton shunned the traditional drop-out option of clearing as far as possible for an attacking short ball they hoped would initiate a telling counter. It did not, and the packs were soon settling down for a Darts scrum in a most advantageous position.

With clinical efficiency, they exploited the blindside with a powerful carry from Number 8 Harry Wright that saw him touch down in the corner. The conversion from the flank failed, but the hosts trailed 10-0 and had yet to have the ball in the opposition half. The second try was not a moment to allude to Wildean wit as stentorian words urged Sutton to raise their game.

The response was instantaneous as Adam Bibby pursued the restart and charged down the clearance kick. He appeared to be second favourite to reach the ball, but the bounce favoured S&E, and the centre scored, putting Sutton 5-10 down.

The Bourne Road boys viewed this as an unfortunate and temporary aberration as their excellent defence neutered the Black & Whites, who attempted to spread the ball wide. Using the same successful formula as before, Dartfordians kicked for territory and were soon in the 22 looking for another score. The S&E defence matched each assault and, for the second time, held up the visitors over their line.

It was the hosts who scored next. A surging break by Freddy Bunting gained a penalty, and he advanced his side into the enemy half. The ball was carried into the 22, and Tom Lennard caught a pass aimed at his laces, straightened the line, and passed to Josh Glanville, and the lock gave Sam Lennie his first try of the afternoon. Lennie intelligently dummied the touchdown in the corner and sauntered round under the posts. An appreciative Freddy Bunting added the extras for the 12-10 lead on the half-hour.

Moments later, the Kiwi hooker scored a sublime solo effort. Collecting the ball in the middle of the field, he set off with not only 40 metres to go but numerous defenders to avoid or dismiss from his presence. Changing pace and direction, he relentlessly advanced until he reached out to score with two tacklers hanging off him. Captain Bunting made it 19-10, and Sutton were in the ascendancy.

Before the break, with echoes of the reverse fixture, Dartfordians suffered the cruellest of blows. Prop Stephen Garrett collided with lock Lewis Potter, and after a lengthy delay and excellent work from the physio teams, they were patched up. However, both had ended their afternoon's rugby and departed for A&E to tend to their wounds. The visitors had lost two of their pack, both players having over 100 appearances, and they were forced into significant changes.

Their cause was not aided when Sutton secured the bonus point before the break with their best rugby of the half. Excellent continuity and sweeping attacks resulted in winger Angus Findlay scoring in the corner, and the Bunting boot took the interval score to 26-10.

Dartfordians needed a reprise of their opening efforts of the match. To their great credit, they immediately put Sutton on the back foot. A wonderful break with beautifully timed passes saw the hosts desperately scrambling to cover in their 22. The initial thrust was parried, but eventually, sheer weight of numbers told, and the superb Jarlath Hetherington was rewarded for his efforts with a try. Though unable to add the conversion to his score, Dartfordians were back in the contest at 15-26.

Perhaps with Medway memories still resonating, the Black & Whites were in no mood to let a sizeable lead slip from their grasp again. Steve Munford took a quick tap penalty, and Rob Hegarty punished a retreating defence with a 30-metre break to the 22. The ball rapidly went to the flank, where Freddy Bunting stood his man up and strolled in for the try. The gluttonous points accumulator added the conversion for 33-15.

Hetherington tried to rally his troops with a wonderful kick and collect, but the visitors were superbly turned over in the Sutton 22. Replacement Matt Whitaker made a powerful break, ably supported by Adam Bibby, and yet again, Freddy Bunting was the man in the right place at the right time to collect his second try of the afternoon. The conversion failed, but the 38-15 lead appeared to be unassailable.

Approaching the final quarter, the Black & Whites cut loose, and Adam Bibby was at the centre of some of their best running rugby of the season so far. The NZ centre has won plaudits for his exceptional defensive qualities all campaign and has become an increasing attacking threat as each week goes by, but in this match, he was exceptional.

With a perfectly timed and angled run, he sliced through the defence, and a delightful dummy saw him cruise through to score his second. Freddy Bunting advanced his personal account, and Sutton led 45-15.

From the restart, Sutton attempted some champagne rugby from near their line. Sadly, the result was not a magnum of Dom Perignon White Gold but rather a flat spritzer. Some extremely speculative long passes culminated in an isolated Angus Findlay being put in a deep slurry pit of trouble. Ryan Chandler gratefully accepted the gift, and a joyous

Dartfordians had scored their fourth try, equating to a vital bonus point.

Though the conversion slipped narrowly wide as referee Stronge blew the final whistle, the visitors had a much-deserved consolation as Sutton & Epsom won a highly entertaining match 59-20.

Once again, there is no league action next week, and the programme returns on 1st March with the Black & Whites heading to Thurrock. Meanwhile, Dartfordians will host Gravesend in a pivotal match in their fight for survival.

Sutton & Epsom:

O'Brien, Scott, Bibby, Bunting (C), Lennard, Munford, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, Glanville, McTaggart, Jones, Tame & Hegarty.

Replacements: Howes, Whitaker and Rea.

Dartfordians:

Scott, Cappuccio, Taylor J, Nichols, Soler-Gomez, Hetherington, Chappell, Garrett, Sweeney, Chapman, Tuffley, Potter, Williams, Chandler & Wright.

Replacements: Hooban, Taylor M. & Ola.

Photo credit: Robin Kennedy

Epsom and Ewell FC win for correspondent's 2000th match

28 February 2025



Epsom and Ewell 2-1 Abbey Rangers. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 15th February.

Richard Lambert, both a dedicated fan of Epsom and Ewell FC, a club historian and match reporter, was awarded with a team victory on Saturday on the occasion of his 2000th match since 1981. We thank him for sharing his reports that feature on his website www.eefconline.co.uk

For the fourth time in as many contests, a match against Abbey Rangers finished 2-1 to the home team as we claimed the points at the KGF on Saturday afternoon in front of a crowd needlessly exaggerated from the 56 who were present to an official figure of 70.

At the start of the match, it looked like it might be a long day, as we took the field with just two named substitutes available, one of whom was Ethan Brazier, who had been out for some time, while the other was a new player from Fleet Town, Campbell Scott, who suffered the same initiation of many Epsom players by having his name spelt wrongly on the line-up board. Nothing else quite says "welcome" to a new player, does it!

The match started well for us. Carl Oblitey shrugged off a defender's challenge and got through on goal in the fifth minute, only for former Salt Shay Honey to deflect his shot onto the post and away, but the visitors didn't heed the warning and in the ninth minute Oblitey turned provider with a cute ball over the top of the defence that Ethan Nelson-Roberts latched onto and holding off a defender, he clipped a shot back across Honey and into his bottom left corner from around twelve yards to open the score. This was the earliest goal we had scored this season and the first in the League in the opening ten minutes.

The visitors responded almost immediately as their Captain Luke Roberts almost broke through, but Stefan Aiwone was back to cover and blocked the shot. Chances were few and far between in this match, although Kevin Kardel turned a fierce volley onto the post to preserve the lead and five minutes later with the clock showing the 40th minute we extended it. Oblitey provided another great pass through, this time for Ali Fofahan to compose himself before guiding his shot beyond Honey's right arm and into the net from ten yards.

Although there had not been a great deal between the teams at the half, I felt we deserved our lead for the quality of the two goals. Interestingly a tweet from one of the Abbey accounts stated that they had been "in control". Football is of course a game of opinion! One thing was clear though; in our last League meeting we had recovered a 2-0 half time deficit at Sheerwater, so it was important that we kept our focus to ensure that the visitors couldn't do the same to us.

The second half was a little scrappy to start with; not always a bad thing if you are two goals up, as we appeared happy enough to play on the counter attack and break up the opposition attacks, which we did fairly well. Nelson-Roberts picked up a yellow card for throwing the ball away, while Jack Torbett; making his first start, appeared to be badly fouled, although nothing was given by the referee. Later in the match he would limp off, still clearly feeling the effects, giving

Scott a debut at left back.

Jason Bloor sent a header just over the bar, but in the 59th minute Abbey pulled a goal back after a low shot was half stopped by Kardel, but no one reacted to the loose ball and it was knocked in from close range by Stuart Mortimer.

The match was still fairly even and extremely competitive; then Craig Dundas linked up well with Nelson-Roberts, leading to a cross from the latter that was then met by a strike from Oblitey and then Luke Miller, both of which were well blocked by defenders. The visitors tried to force an equaliser and sent a dangerous ball just beyond the far post before seeing another shot blocked wide by a defender. At the other end Fofahan nearly got through, but was flagged offside and picked up a yellow card for then sending a shot over the bar, well after the whistle had blown. It was hard to argue with the decision.

There was just time at the end for a ten minute cameo from substitute Brazier, during which he headed a dangerous ball away from the goal line. Kardel then punched another delivery away and Brazier then got forward on the right, although his ball in was just cut out by a defender. It was a promising return and it is hoped that he is now over his long-standing hamstring injuries.

Overall, this was a typically hard-working performance and although at times, the play was congested in midfield, which affected the quality of the match, I think we had the better chances and deserved the win for that alone.

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Anthony Nazareth, Jack Torbett, Adam Green (c), Stefan Aiwone, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Jason Bloor, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Campbell Scott for Torbett (64) Ethan Brazier for Bloor (83)