

Ashtead Choral Society give a lesson in three Rs

25 March 2024



Jane Pickles reviews a concert given by the Ashtead Choral Society in Epsom's St Martin's Church on Saturday 16th March that included works from Rameau, Rossini and Rutter.

I don't know about you, but when I open my Spotify application to listen to music I am immediately drawn to the familiar where one finds comfort and pleasure. The glory of this programme was to take the audience on a spiritual journey from the less familiar Catholic Baroque to the well-known glory of the modern English church tradition.

You will find it difficult to find a recording of **Rameau's** Blow the Trumpet. One wonders why as this joyful opening set the scene invigoratingly for the evening, bringing together the full forces of choir, organ and soprano, Helen Pritchard. If you were at the last ACS concert, you will have enjoyed the rich, operatic dramaticism of **Rossini's** Petite Messe Solennelle. This time we were treated to three of his glorious motets in the same vein, with Musical Director Dr Andrew Storey making the most of the sacred setting and acoustic of St Martin of Tours and the powerful shifts in expression offered by Rossini.

Helen Pritchard's solo performance moved us firmly into the early 20th century with a rare opportunity to experience Vierne's Les Angelus song cycle in which John Carnelley's shimmering organ playing underpinned Pritchard's effortlessly lyrical appeals to the Virgin Mary. This set the scene for another rarely heard classic: the intense homophonic simplicity of Gorecki's incantation Totus Tuus. Storey created and sustained a mesmerising soundscape, still yet kinetic, and crowned with a resounding silence at the end of this evocative chant to the Virgin Mary.

Faure's Pavane and Cantique de Jean Racine brought us back to the familiar and foreshadowed the last stage in the evening's journey, **Rutter's** well-known Requiem. Rutter went to France to view the original manuscript of Faure's Requiem before he wrote his own, and Storey illustrated exactly why Rutter's offering is a modern classic.

The choir dealt purposefully with the anguished chromatic calls for eternal rest that open the work, before resolving into the simple, lyrical beauty of Rutter's requiem theme. In the psalm setting movements - Out of the Deep and The Lord is My Shepherd - the choir shifted seamlessly from simple lines shared between the parts, to glorious harmonies and well-delivered choral recitatives. Pritchard gave us grace and purity in Rutter's Pie Jesu, soaring to heaven and back again from the pulpit.

Storey gave a blazing Sanctus, an Angus Dei which tore at the heartstrings as he drove a crescendo of pleas to the Lamb of God from choir, and, finally, resolution and rest through the spare lines of the Lux Aeterna.

All in all, tour of Europe, a tour of musical epochs, and a tour for the soul. Storey must have tours on his mind as he mentioned that ACS will be taking much of this repertoire on tour to Italy later this year. Bravo!

Jane Pickles

Photo Credit: Sue Weeks.

Generous in defeat

25 March 2024



Epsom & Ewell FC 1-4 Horley Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 23rd March 2024

A strange contest took place at the Madgwick on Saturday as we hosted Horley Town in our latest League match. We created most of the chances over the ninety minutes, yet didn't take them and our opponents took full advantage of our generosity to win the match 4-1.

We fielded our sixth goalkeeper in just ten matches as Faebian Witter had been injured recently and with former keeper Shay Honey already departed for Staines & Lammas, Dan O'Donovan came in between the posts, although he was advertised as David! It never fails to amaze me how our club continues to get our player names wrong so often and

wonder what sort of message this sends out to them. In other changes it was good to see the return of Carl Oblitey up front, as he provides us with a greater attacking threat; something we were sorely lacking at Balham in our last match. At the back, we also saw the return of Reece Tierney and Callum Wilson, although the absence of Ayrán Kugathas meant that Nick Wilson had to play in the right back position, although he was restored to the Captain's position once again, while Matt McGillivray moved into midfield. Zach Ingham-Wright and Tijani Eshilokun moved to the bench, although the latter would join the action in the second half.

There was a minute's silence before the match for former Banstead Athletic Chairman Terry Molloy, who passed away this week. Our club had an awkward relationship in our time there as tenants from 1993-2010, so it was a little surprising to see us hold a tribute, particularly when our club elected not to do so for recently departed prolific strikers Gerry O'Rourke and Ben Forey. Not that anyone knew at the time exactly who the silence was for, as it wasn't announced by the club and I had to ask an official.

We opened up fairly brightly and an early Luke Miller ball into the danger area was just ahead of Thompson Adeyemi, before a similar cross from Ethan Nelson-Roberts also just missed the incoming strikers. McGillivray was the first to pull a decent save from George Hyde the long-serving Horley keeper, with a low shot from the edge of the area with Adam Green seeing his own shot deflected for a corner shortly afterwards.

It then came as a bit of a shock when Horley took the lead in the 15th minute with their first real attack. Adeyemi appeared to be brought down in midfield, but play was allowed to continue and a pass forward reached former Salt Lewis Pearch who cut inside Wilson and drilled a low shot beyond O'Donovan from 15 yards.

We almost responded immediately after Oblitey robbed Hyde out wide in the area, although he then chose to go for goal from an extremely narrow angle and was only able to hit the post. We were then denied by an excellent save after Wilson had made progress on the right, sending a shot in from about eight yards that took a wicked deflection off a defender, yet despite Hyde going to his right by this point, he somehow stuck out an arm in the opposite direction to claw the deflected ball away from the goal.

We continued to push forward and Nelson-Roberts sent in a left wing cross that Oblitey headed just wide from around twelve yards out. Moments later Horley midfielder Lewis Taylor found himself in the sin-bin for comments to the referee, but we weren't able to take advantage of the extra man. We had chances during that period though, with Adeyemi somehow getting a Miller delivery stuck under his feet just three yards out and Oblitey striking wide from 15 yards. Jaevon Dyer also struck at goal, but Hyde was equal to it, and to add insult to injury Horley went straight up the other end once they were back to eleven men and scored again with Scott Walker putting the hosts 2-0 up from close range in the 43rd minute.

Hyde tipped an Oblitey piledriver over the bar from twenty yards and the question at the break was how we had managed to go in with a two goal deficit after a decent enough attacking showing in that first half.

However, the second half was a very disappointing one and we appeared to be completely flat, as if we already knew we wouldn't be able to retrieve anything from the position we had found ourselves in. This became apparent to me as early as the 47th minute when Tierney got his foot to the ball before being brought down in the Horley area by Rylan John, yet there wasn't even an appeal for a penalty from an Epsom player. I was questioning my own eyes and even had to check with people around me that I had actually seen the incident correctly and was assured that I had, yet it wasn't until there was a break in play while Tierney received treatment before the question even asked of the referee, who understandably hadn't given anything! If we had appealed for this, maybe the game would have turned in our favour, but of course that is just conjecture on my part!

It was unclear how many matches O'Donovan has played recently, but of course he was a virtual stranger to our defenders, and maybe unimpressed with the standard of defending he had seen to this point, he chose to come out of goal to chase a clearance himself, yet found himself almost 40 yards out from his goal. Fortunately the long range attempt from the visitors went over the bar or it might have proved to be a rather embarrassing afternoon for him! Regrettably he would be picking the ball out of the net shortly anyway as a near post corner was headed past him from close range by Matt Rapson on the hour to make the score 0-3.

Dyer took advantage of John misjudging the bounce of the ball to break through, but drove his shot wide from 18 yards and he was replaced not long afterwards. Our flying winger was superb last season, but looks to be lacking confidence since he has returned to our club and there appeared to be a lack of belief across the playing ranks as this match petered out. Even when Green sent in a lovely flat free kick which was met by an Adeyemi bullet header just inside the far post from twelve yards to pull a goal back in the 83rd minute, there was little by way of celebration of any kind and the remainder of the match was equally disappointing with Green, Callum Wilson and then substitute Jerry Antwi all receiving yellow cards for lunges at Horley players. Fortunately, none of the challenges were severe enough for red cards, but we then conceded a fourth goal in the sixth minute of injury time despite O'Donovan standing up well to make a good save, but no one reacted to the loose ball that was then knocked in from close range. A 4-1 defeat was only marginally better than our 4-0 defeat there, exactly three months previously.

I believe that our players are good enough to get us out of trouble this season, but we really need to pick up a few more points before we can be assured of safety and aren't playing very well right now. On paper our fixtures are favourable, particularly when compared to those around us, but as we know football isn't played on paper and a home match against a team that started the day just three places above us, should have been enough motivation. Instead, we fell away in the second half again, and whilst we did make a lot of chances in this match, which was a notable improvement on the previous Saturday, we are going to need to take some of these if we are not to get caught by the clubs below us. We now have a ten day break before we reconvene at the Madgwick for the visit of Spelthorne Sports; one of the clubs in the bottom five. We absolutely cannot afford to be flat for that one.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Nick Wilson (c), Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Adam Green, Reece Tierney, Callum Wilson,

Luke Miller, Matt McGillivray, Carl Oblitey, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Tijani Eshilokun for Oblitey (63), Jerry Antwi for N.Wilson (77), Sirak Negassi for Dyer (77)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom squash team stand the squeeze

25 March 2024



When five girls from **Rosebery School, Epsom** formed the school's first ever squash team just six months ago with a view to entering the England Squash National Schools Championships 2023/24, little did they know how far they would go in this tough and prestigious tournament. Being a state school with no on-site squash facilities, they knew they would be competing against a lot of private schools around the country, many with their own squash courts and dedicated coaches. They were, however, all keen squash players and junior members of **Ebbisham Sports Club** in Epsom where they trained on a regular basis.

By dint of their considerable success in Stages 1 and 2 of the Championships, held respectively at Limpsfield Club in November 2023 and **Epsom College** in January 2024, the Rosebery School Girls Squash Team were delighted to learn that they had done enough to qualify for the Finals held in Birmingham on 14th March. One of the top eight teams from around the country to reach the Finals, the Rosebery Squash Team battled hard through three very tough matches during the course of a long day, with some excellent individual match wins and some very close losses. Whilst they came extremely close to beating one of the other schools, in the end the Rosebery team had to settle for final place, but did so with a smile on their faces and knowing they had given the Championships their all.

Gillian Mead

The Great Escape - New Unpublished Evidence

25 March 2024



A man from Ewell was involved in the Great Escape. He was caught and executed. 80 years to the day of the Great Escape The History Detectorist tells his story.

80 years ago today, on the night of 24 March 1944, more than 200 captured Allied aircrew attempted to escape from Stalag Luft III, a Prisoner of War camp located in an area of Nazi Germany that is now part of Poland.

The attempt was the culmination of many months of careful preparation, including the digging of a narrow tunnel more than 330 feet in length which formed the subject of the 1963 blockbuster movie, "The Great Escape" starring Steve McQueen, James Garner and Richard Attenborough.

Of the 76 Allied prisoners who escaped from Stalag Luft III, 3 managed to get home to the UK and 23 were returned to POW camps.

The other 50 men were murdered in cold blood by the Gestapo. One of those murdered was 106173 Ft/Lt John Francis Williams from Ewell, Surrey who lived with his parents in Stoneleigh Park Road.

John was only aged 26 years old when he was executed contrary to the Geneva Convention. Prior to the outbreak of World War 2 he had worked for the Milk Marketing Board. He belonged to the Lyric Players in Wimbledon and was keen on photography and driving his blue MG sports car (a photo he took of his girlfriend leaning against his MG sports car is

shown below). John volunteered for the RAF and was stationed at Dereham, Prestwick and Rainham.



John inside a WW2 aircraft

Disappointed that he did not become a pilot, he instead became an observer on Boston Bombers. He was with 107 Squadron when his Boston III was shot down on 27 April 1942 and upon being captured he was sent to Stalag Luft III.

John's family were made aware that he was missing on the 4 May 1942, but did not know if he was safe and well until the end of May 1942.

On the 10 June 1942 there was a knock on the door of his girlfriend's home by a lady looking for her.

The lady had heard a request from John on German radio for anyone listening to the broadcast to contact his girlfriend and to tell her where he could be contacted.

The subsequent correspondence exchanged between John and his girlfriend is not only historically significant, but it also tells the story of an enduring love between a young couple, which with the assistance of Bourne Hall Museum in Ewell, Surrey we would like to give people the opportunity to read about for the first time on this, the 80th anniversary of "The Great Escape".

In a letter to his girlfriend dated 11 June 1942 John revealed that boredom was an issue, but that he had started to learn German, Spanish and Italian, whilst sunbathing more than he had ever done previously.

John's letter to his girlfriend confirmed that he shared a hut with 5 other officers and that they all cooked their own food, some of which was supplemented by the contents of Red Cross food parcels.



John's girlfriend

John did not lose any of his sense of humour and wrote, "Some well-known people in this camp, Wing Commander Bader, Stamford-Tuck, Eyre and me!"

At the time of writing again, John had received 4 letters from his girlfriend and another 3 from family members, but he was only permitted to write 3 letters and 4 postcards in response each month.

In his correspondence, John provides details of camp life and the prisoners' daily routine. Breakfast was between 9 and 9.30 am, lunch was at 12.30 pm, they had a cup of tea between 1.30 pm and 2 pm, tea at 4 pm, dinner between 7 pm and 8.30 pm and another cup of tea at 11 pm. John added, however, that "It's not as much as it sounds" and went on to explain that there were a lot of classes and lectures for him to attend. John missed the everyday things that people often take for granted "like riding on a trolley bus and seeing a film".

On 7 September 1942, John wrote to his girlfriend and enclosed a photo of himself with one of the other officers he was sharing a hut with. John borrowed a camera from a German officer in order to take the photo.

In the same letter John complained that he had run out of hair oil and had been trying alternatives without success. "I have stopped parting my hair on the side so it now falls in soft waves PHEW!" he wrote.

In many of his letters John asked for photographs to be sent to him and he positioned these on the wall around his bed.

In his letter of 25 September 1942 John informed his girlfriend that the amount of mail he could send home each month had been reduced to 2 letters and 2 postcards. He also told his girlfriend that a fellow prisoner, Ft/O Zakazewski had drawn her using one of her photos. Drawing classes were held and many sketches and drawings exist of the camp.

In his letter of 2 November 1942 John wrote about around 500 officers going over to the sergeant's compound to see "French Without Tears", a show written and performed by POWs, which he found entertaining.

There had been quite a lot of snow and a white Christmas was anticipated, but despite only being early November, John

wished his girlfriend a happy Christmas in case she did not get to hear for him for a while.

On 13 December 1942, John wrote to his girlfriend telling her that he had received another 29 letters from her and therefore had 147 letters in total which she had sent him. A Red Cross parcel had arrived with a Christmas pudding inside it which they were all looking forward to eating. John was also attending church services and added, "This morning brought forth another of our usual good service and very good padre".

John confirmed that spirits were high and that they had flooded a football pitch to create an ice rink, on which the Canadian officers could play ice hockey in the afternoons. They had a merry time over Christmas and New Year as they were given 3.5 litres of beer at Christmas and another 1.75 litres for New Year. John had grown a moustache, but shaved it off when it developed twirly ends.

On 29 March 1943, John sent a postcard telling his girlfriend he was due to be moved to another compound within the camp. The camp was becoming overcrowded and had to be enlarged. As the weather was getting warmer and John did not have enough pairs of shorts to wear, he complained about not receiving the right clothes for the right seasons. He had taken up gardening and had planted seeds in order to grow onions, carrots, spinach, and lettuces. The soil in the new compound was much better than in the previous compound John had spent time in and John remarked that there he had only managed to grow one radish.

By June 1943, John was giving elementary German lessons and had grown nine tomato plants which he was very proud of.

John's girlfriend had been to the dentist so in his letter of 20 July 1943 he wrote that he hoped she "held his hand spiritually" and went on to recount a visit to the dentist in the camp who told him "That he had good teeth for an Englishman".

John went on to ask for a picture of his girlfriend wearing sunglasses and expressed concern over the fact that she might be called up to serve her country.

John had had an attack of appendicitis and was waiting to find out if he was going to be operated on.

John confirmed in his letter of 20th July 1943 that on 13th September 1942 he had been promoted to Ft/Lt Williams.



John and his MG sports car

On the 24th July 1943, John confirmed that he had had his appendix removed in a nearby French Prisoner of War Camp Hospital and that he was due to spend the next nine weeks recovering.

On 29th September 1943, John wrote in a communication to his girlfriend, "I am sure I shall be holding you in my arms again, looking into your eyes seeing that lovely smile of yours". His girlfriend had been to the Rembrandt cinema in Ewell, Surrey, which he had fond memories of, and he hoped that they would soon be able to visit the Rembrandt cinema together.

John had seen a production of "George and Margaret" at the camp, "You should have seen the leading ladies," he wrote. His girlfriend asked whether she should postpone the celebration of her 21st birthday on 13th March the following year until he got home. Initially, he told her not to, but by his next letter on the 24th October 1943, he had changed his mind and expressed a desire for her to do so if she did not mind.

During December 1943, John told his girlfriend about plays and classical concerts that had taken place at the camp and about how the prisoners had built their own theatre. "I wish you could see our theatre, all our own work; it has 350 armchair seats made from tea-type plywood chests in which the Canadian food parcels come," he wrote. There was also a fad among POWs to design their ideal homes, he explained.

In mid-February 1944, John lovingly wrote, "I'm sure it won't be long now, my love, before we are together again and then we must endeavour to make up for lost time, mustn't we? I'm sure you won't mind me telling you this, but recently I've felt a little lonely, my darling, I miss you so very, very much; your letters are a wonderful antidote for the gloom and I love

receiving them. I spent yesterday afternoon framing a couple of pictures of you, a very pleasant way to pass time which seems to bring you very close to me.”

John passed on news to his girlfriend from a family friend whose daughter’s husband had been killed in December 1943 while serving in the RAF. The couple had only been married since June 1943, and prior to that, the daughter had been engaged to a merchant shipping captain who was killed when his ship was torpedoed.



John’s final resting place

John’s final postcard to his girlfriend was written on the same day of the escape and contained the message “I hope to see you soon!”

Sadly, John would never be reunited with his girlfriend and was not able to find a way back home to celebrate her 21st birthday with her as he had planned.

John was last seen alive on the 6th April 1944 before being brutally murdered by the Gestapo under the direct orders of Adolf Hitler and cremated at Breslau.

John is remembered with Honour at Poznan Old Garrison Cemetery in the west of Poland and was mentioned in Despatches.

The notes John’s girlfriend kindly allowed the curators of Bourne Hall Museum in Ewell, Surrey, to make in 2015, when she lent John’s letters and postcards to the museum, also help to keep John’s memory alive because without them it would not have been possible to write this article.

Even with the considerable passage of time, John’s girlfriend never wanted to be parted from his correspondence, so it is a great privilege for us to be able to refer to the historically significant parts of the letters and postcards sent by John from Stalag Luft III.

80 years after The Great Escape, John and his girlfriend’s love story continues in the hearts and minds of the people who read about it, regardless of the country in which they live.

This article is therefore as much about an enduring love as it is about one of the most talked-about events of World War 2.

Top photo: John in his MG sports car.

NESCOT marks 70 years with a tree

25 March 2024



Nescot (North East Surrey College of Technology) in Ewell marked seven decades since its official opening with a commemorative tree planting in the college grounds today (22.03.24). The Mayor Epsom & Ewell, Councillor **Rob Geleit** (Labour Court Ward) planted a silver birch along with **Julie Kapsalis**, Principal and CEO of Nescot and **Chris Muller**, Chair of Nescot Corporation. They were joined by three students, Donna from our Supported Internship programme; Kirsty from Access to Nursing and Anna from Catering who have all had a successful term and made an impression.

Speaking at the tree planting, Julie Kapsalis, said: “It is wonderful to have students take part in this historic moment as without them and the many thousands who walked through these gates before them, we would not be here.

“As we reflect on 70 years of Nescot today, by planting this beautiful silver birch tree we are also looking to the future of education here, which we hope will be sustainable, ever-growing and long-lived. Maybe in 70 years’ time – 2094 – people here will be looking back on photos from today, admiring this tree in its full maturity, and be reflecting on education and what Nescot means to them.”

Marking the commemorative event with the tree planting, the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Cllr Rob Geleit, said: “It is an honour to be here today to plant this commemorative tree to mark Nescot’s 70th anniversary. I hope in 70 years’ time someone similar will be doing the same thing.”

Julie added, “When this site was formally opened on 22 March 1954, the world was very different and courses such as Home Economics, Flower Arrangement, Guest House Management and Typing were on the curriculum, along with a number of more scientific and technical subjects. Today, our curriculum includes learning opportunities in electric vehicles, artificial intelligence, robotics, gaming, sectors which could barely have been imagined in 1954.

“We can be proud of the role that Nescot plays, offering increased opportunities for people from all walks of life to gain the skills and qualifications they need for a successful career and continuing to provide learning for the local community in Epsom & Ewell and our surrounding region.”

Students and staff took part in a variety of events throughout the day and during the week organised by various curriculum areas that included activities, displays and even a 1950s lesson for some of our plumbing apprentices to mark Nescot’s 70 years.

Nescot began life as Ewell County Technical College, with the first students beginning courses in September 1953 and the establishment being formally opened the following March. Explore the college’s rich history, evolution of education and community engagement on our website [here](#).

Related reports:

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[Epsom and Ewell’s Technology College 70 years young](#)

Photo: (Centre) The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor Rob Geleit at the commemorative tree planting of a silver birch to mark Nescot’s 70th anniversary along with (left to right), Catering student Anna, Principal and CEO of Nescot, Julie Kapsalis, Access to Nursing student, Kirsty and Chair of Nescot Corporation, Chris Muller. Credit: Nescot

More than a Hollywood Moment for Surrey

25 March 2024



Amazon MGM Studios and Netflix have taken up residence in the completed expansion of Shepperton Studios. The development makes Shepperton Studios the second biggest film studio in the world with a total of 31 purpose-built sound stages alongside ancillary production accommodation, the whole site covers 1.5 million sq ft.

Chris Bird, Managing Director, Prime Video UK said, “It feels fitting that, ten years from the launch of Prime Video, we’re beginning our tenure in brand new facilities at Shepperton Studios. It’s so exciting that some of our most loved series and movies around the world will be made right here in the UK, including season three of our fantastic UK Original The Devil’s Hour. Shepperton Studios have long been synonymous with world class filmmaking, and we’re delighted to continue supporting and investing in the UK creative industries.”

Anna Mallett, Vice President Production EMEA/UK Netflix said, “The UK is our most important production hub outside North America. Today’s announcement reinforces our long-term commitment to Britain’s creative sector. Since 2020, we have invested over \$6 billion in the UK creating shows like Sex Education, The Crown and Bridgerton here. The completion of Shepperton will allow us to expand our footprint even further, creating incredible new shows, jobs and a boost for the economy.”

Paul Golding CBE, Chairman, Pinewood Group said, “We’re incredibly pleased to have opened our new state-of-the-art facilities at Shepperton Studios and to see Netflix and Amazon MGM Studios making this long-term commitment to the studios and to the UK.”

Commenting on the announcement, **Tim Oliver**, Leader of Surrey County Council, said: “This is fantastic news for Shepperton and for Surrey as a whole, cementing our reputation as a region for innovation, creativity and top class talent.

“The fact that two of the largest content producers in the world have chosen Shepperton and Surrey for a global base speaks volumes for the amazing offer the county provides to businesses, large and small.

“We look forward to deepening our relationships with Shepperton, Amazon and Netflix in the months and years to come, so we can ensure our residents and businesses benefit from the investment, jobs and opportunities this brings.”

Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak** said, “The decision by the two largest content producers in the world to choose their long-term home in the UK and base their global productions at Shepperton Studios backed by private sector investment is testament to the support the Government has given to the UK’s screen sector.

“I am thrilled that Amazon MGM Studios and Netflix have taken possession of 17 new state of the art sound stages at Shepperton Studios making Pinewood Group, the biggest studio complex in Europe.

“This support was further demonstrated by the recent £1billion package of measures for the creative industries announced in the recent Budget. The UK is now the second largest production hub, second only to Hollywood, in the world.”

Crime rising on Surrey farms

25 March 2024



Surrey farmers have called for police to take rural crime ‘seriously’ as it pledges to crackdown on rising incidents. The National Farmers’ Union (NFU) have welcomed **Surrey Police**’s commitment to tackle rural crime, but said the farming communities need to see results.

Harriet Henrick, NFU County Adviser for Surrey, said farmers need “better protection” from police. She said: “Our members need reassurance that when crimes are reported they will be taken seriously and investigated.”

Attacks on sheep, thefts, suspected arson on barns and fly-tipping are some of the many serious incidents Surrey farmers have been victim to in recent months.

Farmers say rural crimes are taking an expensive toll, costing individual businesses thousands of pounds, causing severe animal suffering, and impacting on their ability to feed the nation.

The cost of rural crime in the South East was estimated at £9.3m in 2022, an increase by nearly a quarter from 2021, the NFU said. The South East made up around 18.7 per cent of the total cost of rural crime in the UK in 2022, at £49.5m.

Members of the union want to see clear targets, priorities and objectives in preventing rural crime- with both long-term and short-term solutions.

Superintendent **Michael Hodder** of Surrey Police admitted rural crime is an area where “even more work can be done” to support farming communities. Key initiatives for cracking down on rural crime focus on collaborating and engaging with farmers and landowners to understand the challenges they are facing and how the force can support them in policing.

Meetings between the NFU and Surrey Police have taken place with the aim of giving farmers greater protection; Surrey Police have also promised to visit every NFU member in the county as part of its efforts to tackle rural crime. Superintendent Hodder added: “We will investigate every report of rural crime, and will work closely with victims so they know what they can expect from us, what we need from them, and how we can work together to reduce rural crime across the county.

“We want everyone to feel safe in Surrey, and so my main ask would be that anyone who is the victim of rural crime reports it to us, so that we can continue to build an accurate picture of this crime across the county.”

Photo: Credit: National Farmers' Union

A concert of English music in Epsom

25 March 2024



Peter Lutton reviews a concert given by Epsom Choral Society of English music conducted by their Musical Director, Julian Collings. The concert took place Saturday 9th March at St Martin's Church, Epsom.

The concert opened with Elgar's The Spirit of the Lord, the atmospheric opening to his oratorio The Apostles, contains several themes heard throughout the work. There are one or two tricky moments but it is very direct in its unison passages and with its majestically long melodic line. The choir ensemble throughout was good and the climax was very effective, Elgar's word setting allowing real clarity of text. Just occasionally I felt that a little more support in the choir's breathing would have lifted the line, but this was a strong start.

John Ireland's Greater Love Hath No Man again has a strong melodic line and clear presentation of the text. The opening tenor line was well projected with a good vocal blend and it was encouraging to see a choral society with a healthy number of men, some younger - one or two of the latter watching the conductor assiduously. Only once was the ensemble not quite together but the early climax was powerful and was particularly dramatic as it subsided. The Soprano solo was excellently projected and well balanced by the Baritone. The change of tempo was smooth and the build up to the choral climax suitably staged. The arrival at the final climax was very effective, followed by a well-supported soft closing section, though I would have liked to hear more bass in the final bars. The emotional circumstances of this work's early performances (during and after WW 1) resonate today as much as ever and this presentation was in the best English tradition.

Herbert Howells' Like as the Hart is one of four small-scale anthems written in war time when he directed the reduced forces of the chapel music at St John's College, Cambridge. The tenors and basses produced a warm sound at the start and the first tutti was suitably intense. A few more consonants from the sopranos would help in the acoustics of St Martin's but the Piu Animato went well as did the climax on 'Where is now thy God?' The Tenor and Bass were better supported than the Sopranos but the latter handled very well the demanding descant which accompanies the return of the opening material. Bliss indeed was the final tutti with its ecstatic solo Soprano, followed by the atmospheric ending. A memorable performance of a great piece, an all-time favourite of your scribe.

Gerald Finzi's Lo the Full and Final Sacrifice is a work on a much greater scale. After the organ introduction (full marks to the organist, Peter Jaekel, as this is a demanding piece on any instrument) the first choral entry was excellent despite a hint of flatness at the end of the section. Again, we have a piece where the words can be heard and understood - we heard them clearly. Though the next entries were exposed, they were confident and accurate, not least the altos with the low start. While the G flat section wobbled slightly, the Soprano entry with (another) big tune was very clear and confident as indeed were the following entries, though the unison on 'Help, Lord' was less

united. But these are small points; the performance conveyed the rhapsodic nature of a musical style very suited to the metaphysical poets, not least in the climax on 'Lo the Bread of Life'.

The final work, Stainer's 'The Crucifixion' of 1887 has, as the programme helpfully noted, had its ups and downs. Stainer had rebuilt the reputation of St Paul's Cathedral Choir; in 'The Crucifixion' he encouraged the grass roots of Anglican music.

This performance did full justice to this piece. The soloists gave us the lines with simple directness, as did the choir in its first entries outlining the drama of the scene in the Garden. John Findon sensitively sang the tender solo that provided relief before the final tutti section. The recitative which covered the crucifixion itself was clearly given – the soloists were consistently top-class and the solos which followed kept up the intensity, especially in 'King ever Glorious'. John Findon was very impressive at every level – I have not heard it sung better.

In the final chorus the pent-up tensions of the drama found release, in the brisk tempo and strong dynamic contrasts. There was some lack of clarity in the short 'Crucify!' shouts but we got the point. The final pages were well shaped, as well as being tender and dramatic in equal measure and having an effective ending, even though it was pianissimo.

Though we all know the end of the story, it still has the power to move, as this performance of the final recitative and semi-chorus proved. The well-known final hymn leaves us with the hope for the future even though Easter is not mentioned. It was clear that the choir had really enjoyed the whole dramatic progression; the audience certainly did.

Peter Lutton

'Crisis point' in local government funding

25 March 2024



Parties from across the spectrum called on the next government to change its funding model for local councils, claiming it is "not fit for purpose".

Councillor **Robert Evans** (Labour, Spelthorne) told Surrey County Council (SCC) it should call on the next government to bring in a "fairer and robust system to replace council tax". He put forward the motion at Surrey's full council meeting on Tuesday, March 19.

Introduced in 1993, council tax is based on 30-year-old property valuations (from 1991). This is not affected by changes in house prices or how much the property is worth today.

Average house prices in Surrey have risen over 400 per cent, from £103,569 in January 1995 to £525,897 in December 2023.

Leader of the County Council **Tim Oliver** (Conservative, Weybridge) said the issues are not party-political, but "local government vs central government". He added: "Everything should be put on the table. We are now at a crisis point within the local government and we need to do something different."

Wage inflation, general inflation and soaring demands in adult social care and child services have squeezed council budgets, exceeding the income received from central government. The Local Government Association (LGA) found councils have suffered a 27 per cent real-terms cut in core spending power since 2010.

Council tax for Surrey residents will increase a further 4.99 per cent from April, as the county leader claims £1.2bn net is needed for the council. Around 70 per cent of SCC's budget is spent on social care. With Surrey's older demographic and ageing population, the demands on care are likely to increase.

Deputy leader for bankrupt Woking Borough Council, Cllr **Will Forster** (Liberal Democrats) said: "When there is so much cross-party consensus, in and out of the political spectrum, I think something is up."

Cllr Forster said as a "ridiculous comparison", Buckingham Palace, valued at £1bn, sits in Band H and pays just over £1,800 council tax, which is equivalent to a Band B property in Surrey.

In the short-term, Cllr Evans suggested the government could introduce new council tax bands "so the wealthy in larger homes could contribute a fairer percentage of their income to Surrey".

He also suggested as a long-term proposal, to replace council tax, stamp duty and the bedroom tax with a "proportional property tax based on property values updated annually". Another "more radical" option would be a land tax as land or a

site itself- not the buildings or anything on it would be valued.

Discussions on local government funding were extended to include reforming business rates and highways funding. Speculative options also mentioned a local levy on fuel duty and petrol stations, airport tax, tourists charges, increased fines in breaches of highway rules.

The motion was resolved that SCC would lobby the next government, following the General Election, to overhaul local council funding.

Related reports:

Local Government monopoly board at play?

How far will £500m go for Surrey Councils?

Tory leader pleads with Tory Government

Worcester Park school celebrates

25 March 2024



Worcester Park's Linden Bridge School caters for 144 students with autism and complex social and communication needs from four to 19-years-old, including 20 in the sixth form and a residential facility which can accommodate 32 places, with pupils typically staying for two nights a week.

The school's pupils are exceptionally well-prepared for future life, and they feel valued and secure as a result of strong relationships with staff, says a recent Ofsted report, which judges pupils' personal development to be 'outstanding'.

The school was inspected in January and graded 'good' overall, recognising the ongoing improvements made since joining **The Howard Partnership Trust** in 2021, at which time it was judged as 'requires improvement.'

Principal, Mrs **Claire Gungah** said "We are absolutely delighted that the inspection report confirms that Linden Bridge School is a good school with an outstanding provision for the personal development of students.

"In highlighting the many strengths in our school, we are particularly pleased that the report recognises that we are delivering on our core mission, and acknowledges the hard work of staff, the Trust and support from our community in developing the school".

Noting that the report celebrated students being a credit to the school, and demonstrated their strong relationships with staff, she added

"A huge thank you needs to go to the students who were at the heart of the process and as always, made us proud throughout the inspection showcasing their maturity, friendships, communication skills and pride in their achievements."

The report says both the school and the Trust have 'rightly prioritised' improving the curriculum. Work had started at the last inspection, but it has 'gone from strength-to-strength.'

"The school's carefully designed curriculum is now well established in most subjects," notes the inspector.

"Learning to read is given a high priority. A new phonics programme has been introduced since the last inspection and is now securely established. Comprehensive training has ensured that staff are confident about teaching phonics," says the report.

"The school provides an extensive and ambitious range of events and activities. For instance, all pupils experience a sporting event and the oldest pupils are involved in organising events such as sports week."

Surrey's vulnerable without expert legal advice

25 March 2024



Surrey has become a ‘legal aid desert’, marked by a critical shortage of support services, leaving vulnerable individuals without expert advice on key issues such as, community care, education, and immigration.

The Access to Justice Report, by South West London Law Centres (SWLLC), was launched at the University of Surrey’s School of Law Access to Justice Clinic on Wednesday, 20 March, by His Honour Sir Robin Knowles CBE, Chair of the Commercial Bar Association of England & Wales. Sir Robin is a member of the Civil Justice Council and chairs its Standing Committee on access to justice for those without means.

The report highlights the need for accessible legal aid and representation and raises awareness of the challenges faced by vulnerable people in Surrey.

It catalogues the gaps in legal aid within Surrey; it highlights cases where people have had to rely on non-legal advice services instead of specialist legal services. The lack of specialist legal advice is particularly acute in employment, education and immigration.

The report shows that most social welfare advice is provided by voluntary or not-for-profit agencies, with Citizens Advice taking the leading role; however, there is a lack of specialist legal services.

People were left without expert legal advice on areas such as:

- School admissions and appeals
- School transport
- Special Education Needs
- Community care packages and complaints
- Immigration advice.

Stacey Edgar, Deputy CEO, South West London Law Centres, said:

“At the South West London Law Centres, we have directly observed the significant difficulties faced by individuals and families lacking proper guidance on matters such as immigration and education.

“Our findings now confirm that Surrey has limited mechanisms for accessing justice, signalling the urgency of leveraging insights from this new research to implement a strategy that addresses community needs.

“We’re pushing to fill these gaps because access to justice shouldn’t depend on where you live or what you can afford.”

The report proposes new initiatives to improve legal support, including a Family Law Court Help Desk, an Education Rights Advice Project, and Immigration and Asylum Caseworkers in Surrey.

Currently, the research proposals are transforming into a project to create these mechanisms in Surrey, and SWLLC is welcoming donations, volunteers, and partners to be involved in expanding access to justice to meet the needs of impacted community members.

Liz Williams, Associate Professor and Director of Clinical Legal Education at the University of Surrey, said:

“The Access to Justice Clinic at the School of Law understands that social transformation and legal impact is only possible through a collaborative approach. The Clinic has been a flourishing initiative since its launch four years ago and plans to expand in partnership with South West London Law Centres, local charities and legal professionals on a broad range of collaborations to help solve the access to justice crisis in Surrey.”

Professor Veronica Rodriguez-Blanco from the School of Law added:

“The School of Law is committed to placing access to justice at the centre of legal education in developing social sensitivity among the future lawyers that we are educating.”

Sutton and Epsom blow the Cobwebs away

25 March 2024



Sutton & Epsom RFC 49 Cobham 13. Saturday 16th March.

Having lost to the basement boys of London Cornish, the Exiles gaining their first win on the road for over a year, Sutton and Epsom supporters arrived at Rugby Lane with a sense of mild trepidation. Could the proverbial lightning revisit with the arrival of eleventh-placed Cobham who had lost their last eleven matches. For those fearing that the wheels had come off the Black & White charabanc it appears, on Saturday's evidence, to have passed its MOT and was in perfect working order as the team ran in a magnificent seven tries for an emphatic 49-13 triumph. The victory mathematically secured Sutton & Epsom's position in Level 6.

Freddy Bunting kicked off into the breeze and initiated a period of high tempo attacking rugby that saw his team living in the Cobham 22 for the majority of the opening 15 minutes. The visitors defended impressively none more so than when from a tapped 5-metre penalty Josh Glanville was held up over the line by a superb tackle. Having had all of the game Sutton & Epsom conceded the first points when, on their first sortie into the S&E half, Jonathan Holmes kicked a penalty for a 3-0 lead. A few minutes later and the Black & Whites received a second dose of unpalatable medicine as Holmes made it 6-0.

It was at this stage the classic debate of whether to kick for points or seek greater rewards was raging amongst the crowd. The hosts approach was to turn down every kick at goal and seek the higher tariff score. In the course of the first period they were to reject many kicks with several in front of the uprights. Finally on the half hour their bravery was rewarded. The ball went wide and Lawrence Elliott, running a superb line, broke through and using all of his strength powered over. Freddy Bunting splendidly bisected the uprights for a 7-6 lead. Cobham's attempt to regain the lead with a third penalty failed as the first period neared its conclusion.

Approaching time added on Cobham were reduced to 14 when Mr Priddle issued a yellow card to blindside Max Hales who departed as a result of the cumulative effect of infringements in the 22. Sutton & Epsom went for the tap penalty and it was the redoubtable Alex Mount who stretched out to secure the try. Freddy Bunting added the simple conversion for a 14-6 lead. The restart is often the most dangerous moment and the Black & Whites conceded a penalty but the visitors attempts to secure a platform to attack the Sutton line faltered and the referee blew for half-time. S&E had a vital 14-6 lead with a man advantage to take into the second period with the wind behind them.

The Rugby Lane team pressed hard to extend their lead in the opening exchanges of the second half attempting to benefit from their numerical and meteorological advantages. The Bunting boot put his team in the 22. Cobham survived for ten minutes before hooker Chris Farrell collected his sixth try of the campaign. Captain Bunting made it three out of three as Sutton led 21-6. The visitors then showed the fighting spirit one would expect from a team teetering on the brink of relegation. Awarded a penalty in the 22 they tapped and went. Sutton & Epsom had failed to retreat and they repeated the option with captain and scrum-half Ryan Saunders scoring. Jonathan Holmes converted to put Cobham back in the hunt trailing 13-21.

Barely had the inspiring words of encouragement of a comeback drifted on the wind and Cobham were standing behind their posts awaiting another Sutton & Epsom conversion. From the restart Dan Jones gathered the ball from a ruck outside the visitors' 22 and exploited a gap to streak away for the try. With the extras S&E led 28-13 and had secured their try bonus point. That score thoroughly demoralised the men from the Memorial Ground as it inspired the Rugby Lane XV. The game entered the final quarter and the hosts provided their faithful fans with their most exhilarating rugby seen at home this season.

Sensible tactical kicking by half-backs Munford and Lennard kept the hosts on the attack. A wonderful break from Tom Lennard at 10 looked certain to lead to a try but he was felled by a tap tackle close to glory. The crowd did not have to wait long for try Number 5. The ball went to the opposite flank and a training ground routine was executed to perfection from a lineout. The ball was secured, the line-break made and the overlap exploited as Ciaran Mohr strolled in at the corner. Freddy Bunting made light of the testing conversion for 35-13.

Try number six again owed its success to repetition on cold winter nights. A 5-metre lineout was secured and the pack advanced forward to provide Rob Hegarty with

his eighth try of the season. It was a fitting reward for the quality of the lineout from the triumvirate of McTaggart, Pulvirenti and Glanville who had given Sutton & Epsom an excellent platform all afternoon. With a degree of inevitably Freddy Bunting converted and it was 42-13. For the first time this season at Rugby Lane the home crowd could enjoy a relaxing conclusion to a match. Previous contests might have been thrilling for the neutral observer but had provided far too much anxiety. Cobham attempted to end on a high point and looked destined to secure an otiose try. However a wayward pass bounced into the grateful hands of Angus Findlay who sped away from his own 22 for his first 1 st XV league try. Freddy Bunting completed a perfect afternoon with the boot and the match concluded with Sutton & Epsom enjoying a resounding 49-13 win.

Apart from the security of success it was a red-letter day for two of the Sutton and Epsom side. Steve Munford in playing his 215th league match for the club surpassed Steve Warnham's total and lies second to the 251-game Sam Frost. Meanwhile, with his first successful kick of the afternoon, Freddy Bunting broke Sam Hurley's 2015-6 record of 208 points in a league season. It was a redemptive afternoon for the skipper after he had appeared to have supped at the river Lethe on his last outing. Sutton & Epsom may be breathing easier but carnivorous creatures circle the Cobham carrion as descent into the abyss of Level 7 seems probable after Gravesend's victory over Beckenham. With the 'Jersey Reprieve' there will be the incongruous site of Cobham supporters googling the results of Chosen Hill FP, Kirkby Lonsdale and Old Crossleyans in the weeks to come. Next Saturday S&E enjoy their last away day of the campaign with a first visit to Horn Park since January 2007 to take on Old Colfeians who they defeated 21-17 in December.

Sutton & Epsom

O'Brien, Huie, Elliott, Bunting ©, Findlay, Lennard, Munford, Mount, Farrell, Gibson, Glanville, McTaggart, Jones, Pulvirenti & Hegarty.

Replacements: Boaden, Tame & Mohr.

Cobham

Penfold, Springett, Boswell, Burnett, Yorke, Holmes, Saunders ©, Aujla, Muirhead, Bliss, Westgarth-Taylor, Farmer, Hales, Blackwood & Porter.

Replacements: Nunn, Keefe & O'Connor.

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

Surrey Uni taking lead on future network security

25 March 2024



A national effort is needed to train the next generation of the United Kingdom's workforce in intelligent and resilient telecom networks, says a world-leading 5G and 6G expert from the University of Surrey.

The comment comes as the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) announced that Surrey's 5G/6G Innovation Centre will lead a new £8 million Centre for Doctoral Training in Future Open Secure Networks (FORT).

Over the next eight years, FORT will train more than 50 post-graduate researchers, who will become leaders with unique expertise in wireless communications, cybersecurity, networking, and artificial intelligence (AI). Surrey's future cohort will influence the roadmaps of future open networking and security technologies and their applications.

In partnership with Queen's University Belfast's (QUB) Centre for Secure Information Technologies, FORT also enjoys support from more than 21 industry partners. These partners include: Amazon Web Services, Ampliphae, Angoka, AWTG, Catapult Satellite Applications, Cudasip, Ericsson, Hewlett Packard Enterprises, HP, Intel, Interdigital, Keysight Technologies, Kyndryl, National Physical Laboratory, Nvidia, OpenWeb, Qualcomm, Rolls Royce, Virgin Media O2, and Viavi Solutions.

Regius Professor Rahim Tafazolli, FREng, Director of the 5G/6G Innovation Centre at the University of Surrey and Principal Investigator of FORT, said:

"I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to EPSRC for backing the Future Open SecuRe NeTworks (FORT) initiative. I am equally thankful for the support of our 21 industry partners and look forward to working closely with colleagues from Queen's University Belfast. This powerful team has a unique vision, expertise, and mission of making the UK a

powerhouse for future telecommunications.

“In a world evolving at breakneck speed, our programme is designed with this dynamic future in mind. We’re committed to nurturing future visionaries and leaders with in-depth knowledge of advanced space and terrestrial networks, environmental considerations, and AI technology. The UK’s focus must now shift towards upskilling individuals capable of addressing the cyber security challenges posed by AI and take advantage of opportunities presented by societal shifts, environmental concerns, and industrial advancements.”

Along with providing a world-class education with access to industry, FORT will create an environment for students to research new and better ways to build communication networks that are safe, reliable, and ready for the future. FORT is committed to conducting responsible, ethical research in cybersecurity, AI technologies, and future networks, with a strong societal focus. This approach is designed to generate world-class academic contributions and establish a pipeline of talent for the future.

Dr Jesus Martinez del Rincon, Co-Director of FORT and Research Director of Secure Intelligence at CSIT at QUB, said:

“With the FORT programme, we aim to create a community of 50 PhDs who will become the future, industry-conscious thinkers and leaders on secure, trustworthy and autonomous future network communications.”

Along with Professor Tafazolli and Dr Martinez del Rincon, FORT will be led by: Dr Tim Brown from Surrey, who will serve as Director of FORT, and Professor Máire O’Neill from QUB, who is Co-Investigator of FORT.

Balham, gateway to the ... defeat

25 March 2024



Balham 2-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 16th March 2024.

On Saturday we made our second visit of the season to the Mayfields Stadium and received our second defeat. Five weeks ago we were unfortunate to lose there 5-2 to AFC Croydon Athletic, but this 2-0 loss to their tenants Balham, was far more disappointing. In fact the few supporters who were there will not remember this match for very long, not even the home ones, as this was a very uninteresting encounter, full of errors and scrappy play from both sides, and even when Balham finally did break through, there was an element of a defensive contribution towards both of the goals. I felt we were deserving of a point from a goalless draw, but could have no real complaints at the end of the match.

We made three changes from our encouraging draw at Redhill seven days previously. Carl Oblitey was injured, while Reece Tierney and Callum Wilson were unavailable, so Matt McGillivray came in for his first start at the back, while Club Captain Nick Wilson returned after his two match suspension, although it was interesting to note that Ethan Nelson-Roberts retained the armband for this match, maybe because we had done well in the previous two matches, or maybe due to Wilson’s excessive number of cards in recent matches. Further forward, Zach Ingham-Wright also had his first start for the club.

We kicked off slightly late after the referee took exception to Luke Miller’s blue long sleeved undershirt, even though our away colours are yellow and blue. Yes, you’ve guessed it, he was being assessed! Officially though, I was advised that the term is now “observed” as the previous term is now seen too much as a critique of the referee. Well, my observations were that it was fortunate that no major decisions were required on this occasion, although we had a confusing early incident after our keeper Faebian Witter was blocked as he tried to drop kick the ball, yet moments later Adam Green picked up a yellow card for us, for pulling his man back. Whilst you couldn’t complain about the card for our player, it was hard to see why one wasn’t given for the Balham offence.

The first half contained little to write home about. Witter rushed out to claim the ball and did well to keep it inside the penalty area, despite 95% of him being outside it, while at the other end Haydn Read was alert to leave his area to head clear after Ingham-Wright had threatened to reach a Thompson Adeyemi pass. However, these were not even half-chances really, and indeed the only event of note during the first forty-five minutes came when our Secretary Spencer Mitchell was stung by a bee on the sideline. No physio was required!

We went in at the half unsurprisingly goalless and the second half started off in a worryingly similar pattern. A Jaevon Dyer header was accidentally dropped over the goal line by Read for a corner after a few minutes, but our winger was having a quiet day and was replaced by Sirak Negassi in the 52nd minute. Balham’s defence had clearly done their homework and cancelled out the threat from our wings almost entirely. We were also missing the physical presence of Oblitey who had been really impressive in the last couple of matches and although Ingham-Wright was well involved in the match, he never looked likely to add to his goal from the previous week.

In fact, neither team looked like breaking through at any point, so when the home team actually opened the scoring in the 65th minute it came as a bit of a shock. A deep free kick was headed back out by Adeyemi, but he wasn’t able to get a decent purchase on the next delivery back in, and inadvertently flicked it to the back post where it was volleyed back into the danger area for Jack Banks to strike the ball into the net from close range.

We then had our best chance of the match in the 70th minute when Adeyemi was brought down right on the edge of the area in a central position. The ball was placed literally one foot from the penalty area, yet the referee seemed totally happy to allow the defensive wall to congregate along the penalty spot, no more than six and a half yards away. Even when the referee had this pointed out to him he paced eight small steps back and moved the wall back about a yard! Ironically, had the wall stayed where it was originally, Adam Green's free kick might have taken a slightly larger deflection to put it out of Read's reach, but instead he was able to dive to his left to parry the ball out for what became a fruitless Epsom corner.

At this point we changed our shape. Reggie Savage and Jerry Antwi came on and we switched to three at the back, but to be brutally honest, it didn't work. From this point the home side seemed to find more space and although an overhead kick was sent well over our bar, former Salt Ash Snadden was set up for a strike from just twelve yards that was headed off the line by Wilson with Witter beaten. Moments later Witter made a good save down to his right, but the ball was recycled and a long shot from James Anderson from a central position around twenty yards out took a heavy deflection off Nelson-Roberts and bounced into the other side of the net to where Witter had been standing in the 84th minute.

Anderson picked up a late booking for clattering into Wilson in injury time, but it made no difference and Balham gave their slim hopes of a playoff place a huge boost with this win, while many others around them floundered this week.

It is difficult right now to compose a report without reference to the two teams below us, as we still need to keep looking over our shoulder to see how they got on. This will clearly continue for a while yet as Colliers Wood United and Sheerwater both won, making things a lot tighter at the foot of the table. I still believe 30 points will be enough to see us to safety, but while we remain on just 24, concerns remain.

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Ayran Kugathas, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Adam Green, Nick Wilson, Matt McGillivray, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Zach Ingham-Wright, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Sirak Negassi for Dyer (52), Jerry Antwi for Eshilokun (73), Reggie Savage for Kugathas (73)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Work starts on Surrey's respite centre for autistic people

25 March 2024



Families set to benefit from new short breaks accommodation being built in Woking helped mark the official start of work at a milestone groundbreaking ceremony.

The purpose-built £5.7m facility will enable autistic people and those with learning disabilities to enjoy new experiences while their families take a break from caring. It's part of Surrey County Council's drive to create the right homes with the right support for people who need it and represents a major investment in specialist accommodation to help people achieve greater independence.

Enjoying some early spring sunshine, families were joined at the site in Goldsworth Park by representatives from the county council as well as architects AtkinsRealis and contractors Neilcott Construction. Also marking the occasion were Woking MP Jonathan Lord and representatives from Woking Borough Council and local community organisations.

The new accommodation on the site of the old Lakers Youth Centre will provide eight ensuite bedrooms as well as a sensory room, a communal lounge / dining room and landscaped gardens. It will provide the first such service in this part of the county and will ultimately add almost 2,500 nights of additional short breaks capacity per year for adults with additional and complex needs.

Guests will be able to enjoy new opportunities, make friends, gain new skills and connect with their communities during short stays without their family carers, who will be able to take some time away from their caring responsibilities to focus on their own wellbeing.

The event on March 14 marked the first 'spade in the ground' for an ambitious county council strategy which aims to deliver more than 1,400 units of specialist accommodation for adults with support needs across Surrey, including the redevelopment of another short breaks site in Banstead. Supported independent living accommodation for those with learning difficulties and mental health needs is also part of the plan, as well as extra care housing for older residents which will have support workers on hand if needed.

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council cabinet member for Adult Social Care, said: *"Unpaid carers across Surrey do an amazing job in ensuring that their loved ones can continue to live in their own homes, but it can take a toll on even*

the most dedicated partner or relative. The new accommodation will represent a state-of-the-art facility designed to provide the person being cared for with the support they need, while offering their carer the chance to recharge their batteries by taking a break themselves.

“We’re delighted to have broken ground and eagerly await the opening of the new accommodation next year. We want our residents to be able to live their best lives and our ambitious building programme to provide the right homes with the right support will help us achieve that.”

Natalie Bramhall, cabinet member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure said; *“We’re pleased to have broken ground on the site in Goldsworth Park. The site of this new short breaks service is one of many projects being delivered by our Land & Property Capital Programme team in partnership with Adult Social Care to help people stay independent, safe and well so they can live the lives they want.”*

The star of the day was Jodie, a potential future user of the centre who currently visits the council’s short breaks service in Banstead.

After watching an architectural ‘flythrough’ video of the new accommodation alongside assembled guests, **Jodie’s mum Jean**, voiced her approval: *“The one thing you want from a respite centre is to know that your children – young adults – are secure, safe & happy.” She further explained: “Having respite breaks is absolutely a ‘must’ for parents and to have a facility that’s been purpose built... is totally invaluable.”*

Andrea, mum to Brandan, who also currently attends the service in Banstead, added: *“Brandan needs 24-hour care seven days a week – it does not stop for us as parents – and this will be an invaluable service so near to our home. But it’s not only for us, it’s about Brandan. We want him to feel it’s like a holiday. We can be happy and relaxed knowing that he is happy.”*

Image: (left to right) Jonathan Lord MP, Jodie, Jodie’s Mum Jean, and Cllr Sinead Mooney

Surrey Borough running ahead on bio-fuel

25 March 2024



The first Surrey council to switch its entire vehicle fleet from diesel to waste fats and cooking oil said the move could cut emissions by about 90 per cent. **Runnymede Borough Council** said the decision, unanimously approved by its environment and sustainability committee last week, will stop about 650 tonnes of CO₂ from being released into the air each year.

The shift to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is expected to take place over the coming months as about 80 of the council’s refuse trucks, minibuses, vans, street sweepers and other vehicles make the switch.

It makes Runnymede Borough Council the first in Surrey to go all in on HVO with the change expected to make greater inroads into reducing the council’s operational carbon emissions than any other initiative explored to date.

Details on how much it will cost have been kept private and confidential but the day-to-day operating costs of moving over to HVO are expected to be higher than with diesel, the council confirmed, but said it had set aside an additional £100,000 to cover fuel costs.

A statement issued by the council said it demonstrated the desire “across all parties to make an effective and lasting positive impact on Runnymede’s climate and environment”.

Committee chair Councillor **David Coen**, said: “It is great to know that in the coming months our fleet, from our bin lorries to our road sweepers, will continue to provide the same high level of service whilst producing less harmful pollution into the environment and people’s lungs.

“We’ve committed that by 2030 all our council operations will be carbon net zero. Switching over to HVO has the potential of hugely reducing the council’s overall carbon emission.”

HVO can be used with the council’s existing fleet without the need for engine modifications or new machinery.

Cllr **Don Whyte**, leader of the Liberal Democrat group and member of the environment and sustainability committee added: “It’s a positive move. Runnymede is very late coming to the climate crisis declaration. This is a small step, but it’s an important thing.”