

# THE JOCKEY CLUB

## EPSOM & WALTON DOWNS NEWSLETTER

As the owner of Epsom and Walton Downs, The Jockey Club is communicating with local residents to explain more about them and to ask for your help in keeping the Downs safe and enjoyable for all.



## GETTING TO KNOW EPSOM AND WALTON DOWNS

### HISTORY

Epsom and Waltons Downs have been a key place to train horses as far back as 1640. The undefeated British racehorse Eclipse, who won 18 races and is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest horses ever, was trained and won his first race on Epsom Downs in 1769.

Ten years later saw the first running of The Oaks and a year later, in 1780, the first ever Derby, which remains the world's most famous and influential flat race.

It is not widely known that Epsom and Walton Downs is in fact private land, owned by The Jockey Club and governed by an Act of Parliament (Epsom & Walton Downs Act 1984). The land was originally purchased for training racehorses, and that remains its primary purpose today.

It is the fees paid by the racehorse trainers of Epsom to use the Downs that allow for their upkeep, ensuring they are well maintained for everyone to enjoy.

The Downs Act sets out that racehorses and those who train them have priority over the general public at certain times of day. It also gives the general public the right to enjoy the Downs for fresh air and exercise on foot, but at certain times of the day it is racehorses and those who train them who take precedence.

### SAFETY

Every morning, 365 days a year, Epsom and Walton Downs is a place of work for the racehorses of Epsom and those who train them. Between 6.15am and 12 noon Monday to Saturday and 8am to 9.30am on Sundays, we are asking other users of the Downs to avoid visiting during these times if at all possible. If this is not possible, users should be extremely careful and avoid training areas. It is during these hours that accidents are most likely to happen and we are very keen to ensure that we keep everyone safe.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

We are aware of the mental and physical benefits that having green, outdoor space for the local community to use can bring and we are keen to welcome all users of the Downs to continue enjoying them. However, with the increased popularity of the Downs there are concerns that this will increase the risk of an accident. Please only come and enjoy Epsom and Walton Downs after 12 noon (Monday – Saturday) and after 9.30am on Sunday if you possibly can. All dogs must be on a lead during these times.

The all-weather gallops should not be used at any time and we are asking cyclists to stick to the bridlepaths at all times.

◆◆◆ CONTACT THE JOCKEY CLUB FOR MORE INFORMATION ◆◆◆

[epsom.reception@thejockeyclub.co.uk](mailto:epsom.reception@thejockeyclub.co.uk) or visit [www.jockeyclubestates.co.uk/community](http://www.jockeyclubestates.co.uk/community)



# INTERVIEW WITH LIZ FROST

**CHAIR OF THE EPSOM AND WALTON  
DOWNS CONSERVATORS**

The Downs are managed by a group of Conservators, whose job it is uphold the regulations set out in the Downs Act. We spoke to Liz Frost, the current Chair, to find out more.

## **What is the role of a Conservator?**

Our role is to uphold the regulations in the Epsom & Walton Downs Regulation Act 1984, which includes preserving this private land, so far as possible, in a natural state of beauty. This includes caring for the flora, fauna, and geological or physiographical features of special interest.

There are ten Conservators, six are Borough Councillors from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council including myself, three members represent The Jockey Club and one represents The Horserace Betting Levy Board. In addition, the Clerk to the Conservators is the Chief Executive of the Borough Council. The Councillor Conservators are appointed after the Borough Council elections and serve a four-year term. They can be reappointed for further terms if they remain as Councillors.

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We are fortunate to have the Downs on our doorstep. As a Conservator representing the Council, I want to ensure that public access is maintained, however we have to remember that we only have this fantastic space because of the racehorse training industry, who, together with the racecourse and others, finance its ongoing upkeep, including the Downskeepers.



## **Why did you get involved in the role?**

I have been a Conservator since being elected as a Borough Councillor in 2011. As a local resident and regular user of Epsom Downs I have a strong vested interest in ensuring this fantastic green open space is well maintained and preserved for current and future generations.

## **How can we keep safe around racehorses?**

Horses, especially racehorses, can be unpredictable, and it is advisable to keep a safe distance at all times, including when they are crossing the roads, walking to or from the stables to the Downs and on the training grounds.

If you are driving a car, please slow down and respect the animals – they can't just put their brakes on and stop, so please don't try and get through the traffic lights at the horse crossings just before they go red. Stop in good time and well back from the crossings.

Many horses are afraid or unnerved by dogs, even if the dogs are used to horses and are well behaved. If you bring dogs to the Downs during training times, please keep a clear distance from the Gallops and horse walks, and remember you must keep all dogs on leads during the training period and under proper control at all times.

## **How can we help ensure the safety of other users?**

There are many ways to ensure the safety of all users. Most importantly I would strongly recommend and advise people to only use the Downs after noon, or 9.30 on Sundays, once the racehorse training has finished.

We should always respect all users of the Downs. This includes walkers, runners, cyclists and families enjoying their leisure time. Please only use the areas designated for public use. Do not go onto the racecourse track itself, apart from using the designated crossings, or use the artificial surface training gallops.

As a Conservator, I welcome you to visit the Downs in the afternoons and enjoy the lovely walks, views, flowers, trees, birds and other wildlife.

# A RACEHORSE TRAINER'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE DOWNS

## SIMON DOW

Simon Dow (60) has been training racehorses on Epsom Downs since 1986. An athlete at heart, Simon started in the industry as a boy and his career has spanned over 40 years, bringing with it over 750 winners and much recognition in the industry.



As a teenager, Simon was a middle-distance runner which has helped him understand the essential training required by racehorses to win.

“In the 80's it was thought that the more you run, the more you will win”, he says. “Today there is a very different approach to training athletes, horses and people. Diet, footwear, clothing and training intensity have been turned on their head and the industry is very different to the one I grew up with.”

There has been an increase in the focus on the mental attitude required to win too, something that Dow says is vital when caring for and training racehorses.

“A racehorse has a flight mentality, like many animals. It is inbred in them to run. Our job is to keep our animals calm, safe and well looked after.”

Clear Height stables trains roughly 35 horses, 28 of which are housed in the stables directly across the road from the Queen's Stand. Simon runs the stable with six full-time staff. As a team, they are out on the gallops at least five times a day, with Simon's day starting at 4am. First to arrive and set the day up, he creates a daily plan as to which rider will ride each horse to get the best out of the team.

Daily they log any incident that has occurred and the challenges that they face on the Downs are considerable.

“Epsom is the only training centre in the world that shares its training ground with the general public” he explains. “Back in 1920 when Stanley Wotton sold the Downs and gave permission through an act of parliament to allow the locals to use the downs for air and exercise, he couldn't have thought about the future. Fast cars, buses, mountain bikes and air pods hadn't been thought of then.”

“As we leave our stables to cross the road there will be many hazards that our riders and horses face; a bus spraying up water from the road or a car honking its horn, we are instantly and unwittingly at risk, and the effects of the pandemic have thrown up even more challenges.

“Our horses still needed to be trained daily – but all of a sudden the Downs saw a massive influx of users. Many of these were new dog owners, which has magnified through the pandemic, and they don't always know how to control their new pet.

“We have seen much greater numbers of runners, many of whom wear headphones and have no idea that a flighty horse is running at 40 miles per hour towards them, and there are mountain bikers who love the challenges of the dips but are often totally unaware of what is happening on the track just up from them.

“Most of the walkers that we come across in the mornings are extremely respectful of the fact that we are working and we really appreciate it. I would urge all users to be mindful of their surroundings and ideally come and enjoy everything it has to offer, after midday, if they can.

“The Downs would be a very different place if racehorse training did not take place here. The whole landscape would change very quickly. All that beautiful open space would become copse and scrub. Something none of us really want to happen!”

# WIN TWO TICKETS TO AN EPSOM SUMMER NIGHTS FIXTURE OF YOUR CHOICE

Epsom Downs Racecourse is offering an opportunity to win two tickets to one of their hugely popular Summer Nights Fixtures.

Taking place on 30th June and 7th, 14th and 28th July there will be great racing and music from across the decades.

To win two tickets to a fixture of your choice, all you need to do is to take a photo on Epsom and Walton Downs (observing racehorse training hours if at all possible) which shows what you love most about the Downs.

## Find us on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/EpsomDownsRacecourse](https://www.facebook.com/EpsomDownsRacecourse)

Like our page and share your photo using the hashtag: **#IloveEpsomDowns**

Entries must be posted by 31st January 2022 and the lucky winner will be announced on Facebook on 4th February 2022. Good luck!

\* T&C's: [www.thejockeyclub.co.uk/terms-and-conditions](http://www.thejockeyclub.co.uk/terms-and-conditions)



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