



Arias launch the festival

Hannah Kirk from Opera d'Amici serenaded the start of the Surbiton Festival from the French Table balcony at last month's farmers' market, accompanied (left) by the sonorous tones of tenor Richard Owen. La Donna e Mobile from Rigoletto echoed around Maple Road as Kingston mayor Penny Shelton declared it under way. Events included a comedy 'chaser', with stand-ups sprinting between the Antelope, Gordon Bennett! and the Surbiton Flyer, while foodie cinema scenes were re-enacted in Zizzi. Madrigals struck a more ethereal note at St Andrew's church.

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To live a long life, move to Tolworth

A public health survey reveals women in Tolworth live three years longer than women in Surbiton, while Berrylands men outlive those in Surbiton Hill (the ward south of the railway station).

Anomalies abound in the figures, published as part of a study into the nation's well-being.

The slimmest people live in Surbiton's river roads, the plumpest are in Tolworth... and most binge drinkers live in the town centre. Tolworth has the area's most moderate consumers of alcohol.

Surbiton's health has come under scrutiny like never before. No one has yet found the recipe for immortality, but if you live in Tolworth and you're female, you'll live longer than many.

Tolworth women live to 85 on average; in Berrylands 82.9; Surbiton Hill 82.6 years; and Surbiton town centre 81.9. The oldest men are in St Mark's ward (80.9 years), then Berrylands (80.8), Tolworth (80.3) and Surbiton Hill (79.6).

Obesity levels are highest in Tolworth, with 21.7% seriously overweight. The leanest folk are in the streets around Maple Road.

Jobless numbers are lowest in Berrylands, while the healthiest eaters live in Surbiton town centre. Junk food addicts mass in Tolworth.

Surbiton enjoys longer life than the national average, but if you really want to extend your twilight years, head for Hinchley Wood, where men live 83.8 years, women last to 86.6, and unemployment barely registers.

Surbiton's rate of sexually transmitted disease is below the London average... but is higher, puzzlingly, than the English average.

Dr Jonathan Hildebrand, borough director of public health, said: "In spite of its relative affluence, the borough has areas which are disadvantaged, and people living in these areas tend to have poorer health. We are working hard to reduce health inequalities and encourage healthier lifestyles."



The parade (above) was watched by huge crowds, the Morris Minors (right) lined up and (below) Maple Road witnessed some curious sights



22,000 crowd

A crowd of 22,000 ensured the 2013 Surbiton Festival broke all records.

Bands, acrobats and a classic car cavalcade joined the parade through town, Victoria Road and St Andrew's Road became street markets, and Claremont Gardens and St Andrew's Square filled with food and song.

"I'm delighted for the town; Surbiton deserves something like this," said organiser Bob Noble. "This moves it from a village fete to a town event with something for all ages."

The weather held, and with only a few tiny spots of rain, all outdoor activities were well-attended. Next year's event is already being planned.

Waitrose backtracks on its future vision

Rather than risk war with town-centre traders, Waitrose has abandoned plans to offer dry cleaning or gift-wrap flowers

as part of this month's revamp of its Claremont Road store. Shopkeepers had planned a petition to force the issue on to Kingston Council's planning agenda, claiming it flew in the face of a May 1998 agreement to 'predominantly use the shop for the sale of groceries and for no other purpose'.

Robert Helliwell of Roberts the dry cleaners, who led the protests, told the Good Life: "They've seen sense."

Waitrose, which told this paper it was going to offer dry-cleaning collection 'to create additional choice for customers', listened to concerns and changed its tune. "[Dry cleaning] will not be at Surbiton's new desk," said a spokesman, adding that the store prided itself on being part of the community.

Plans for fancy flower gift-wrapping at the welcome desk (being constructed on October 27) have also been ditched in the face of concerns by next-door neighbour Gardenia. "It's going to be a case of wrapping them in tissue rather than floral arranging in a pot of water," said Surbiton manager Mark Stevens.

The new welcome desk is modelled on the concept of a concierge at a high-class hotel. It is designed to add value, be a greeting point, sell gift cards and allow people to place orders. The aim is to set Waitrose apart from its rivals.

● Turn to pages 4 and 5 for Surbiton's intriguing Waitrose history

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A minor sensation

A centre dedicated to child development through fun and play is transforming lives in a quiet mews off Brighton Road.

Sensational Kids, spread over three floors, is run by Aniesa Blore, pictured, a South African occupational therapist who moved to Surbiton 13 years ago. The stories of her successes are heart-warming.

"Some children don't have a formal medical condition," she said. "Sometimes children are a little bit delayed, and parents are concerned. I enable and empower kids, using the skills they have, to function, play, go to school and be independent."

She said it is rewarding to watch a child who has never actually managed to swing finally triumph.

"You watch them progress, and activate their muscles. One boy has become so confident I have to say to myself 'Whoa! You're going a bit fast there!'" The reward is seeing families change; seeing parents understand their children and find comfort.

She recently had a jubilant text from a parent at

10pm saying that her 11-month-old child had let her hug him for the first time.

Stretched local authority resources mean centres such as Sensational Kids are often the only recourse for parents worried their children are not progressing well in mainstream schools. Parents often say that no one seems willing to listen to them.

There's a wheelchair-friendly toddler room for under-fours, and further rooms with more advanced play equipment for older children.

Aniesa screens and assesses children from 0-16, then devises programmes to improve writing skills and independence. She also trains teachers.

She has two boys of her own, aged 11 and 9, one with Asperger's, one with minor visual difficulties.

"Location-wise this is perfect," she said. "People come here from south-east London, even Sussex."

Treatments start at £60 a session, with discounts for blocks. More at www.sensationalkids.co.uk

Tim Harrison

Gardening tips by Janice Cripps

You'd be daff not to..



Now is the time to plant daffodils. If you've thumbed through a bulb catalogue you'll have found a bewildering choice. So here are my fail-safe favourites.

If you have space, plant daffodils en masse over a large area where they can naturalise, multiply and look better year-on-year. Like crocuses and snowdrops they look great under deciduous trees, in lawns or in longer grass left unmown.

I restrict them to containers where they provide a welcome splash of colour.

I can move them out of sight when they stop looking their best as leaves must be left for six weeks after flowering to provide the bulb the nutrition for next year's show.

My favourite is Thalia, the orchid narcissus, with pure white fragrant flowers on slim graceful stems. It ticks all the boxes: tough, reliable, long-lived, perfect for naturalising, perfect for cutting. It looks particularly good under cherry trees where its nodding heads look like gently falling blossom.

Narcissus Jenny is just as elegant and just as tough.

It has a soft lemon trumpet and creamy white petals which are dramatically swept back as if they are constantly fighting a strong wind.

I prefer tall daffodils but in early spring, short-stemmed varieties are better as they won't flop if hit by a sharp frost or spell of bad weather. Among early flowerers, the golden yellow Rijnveld's Early Sensation is one of the best.

In a sheltered spot it can bloom as early as Christmas, although to me that doesn't feel quite right. Other good varieties are Tete-a tete, Topolino, Jack Snipe and February Gold, which won spring bulb of 2011.

If you like 'show off' varieties try Cheerfulness with its rings of ruffled cream petals, Obdam with its pom-pom heads of iced white or the delectable Sorbet... the name says it all.

For purists who believe the only daffodil is a golden yellow trumpet, go for Dutch Master that creates a dazzling display in early April and is virtually weatherproof. Or try the not quite so showy Saint Victor.

Late flowering daffs are often prettier and softer in colour. I particularly like Ice Follies with its milky white flowers and soft yellow trumpets which look as though they've been fashioned from crêpe paper.



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Tips for planting daffodils:

- Carefully select bulbs that are fat, firm and mould free.
- Don't plant in rows. Scatter the bulbs on the ground in drifts and plant them where they fall.
- Plant at 2-3 times their depth
- If you are not sure which way is up, place them on their sides and their stems will find their own way up.
- On heavy soils, dig in horticultural grit to allow good drainage.
- For pots, put plenty of crocks in the bottom and use a well-drained compost or specialised bulb composts.
- Squirrels love nothing more than to dig up daffodils, so I place chicken mesh over the pot for protection.
- Don't stint. Even in small gardens, massed plantings of a limited number of varieties create instant impact.

Janice Cripps is a professional garden designer based in Surbiton. For advice, planting plans, or taking projects from concept to completion, visit www.janicecripps.co.uk

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Cupcake battle

Cupcake queen Joanne Lee is in the professional national cupcake finals. Joanne, whose coach house off Thornhill Road is her baking HQ, competes at the NEC in Birmingham on November 9. Her 'simply vanilla' is in the classic cupcake category, and she bakes off against 14 rivals. Mary Berry will present the prizes.

Right royal quiz

Know your kings and queens? The Fircroft Trust quiz on October 18 at 7.30pm at 96 Ditton Road is £7 to enter, with ploughman's supper. Teams are a maximum of six. Topics include crime fiction, kings and queens, geography and science. Fircroft supports adults with mental health problems. More at 020 8399 1772, email ann@thefircrofttrust.org

Ealing film talk

Paul Lang gives an illustrated talk on the history of Ealing film studios to the Surbiton Historical Society at Ewell Road library hall on November 5 at 7.45pm. Visitors welcome. On November 19, Andrea Cameron talks on the history of Pears soap.

Otters and sheep

Beer lovers' dreams have come true. The Black Lion's guest beer festival of traditional cask ales runs to Christmas, with ales from across the land in addition to the usual Young's and Bombadier. Try McMullen's, Harvey's Sussex Wild Hop, Otter Amber, Dartmoor IPA, Woodforde's Wherry Norfolk ale, Black Sheep or Twickenham Ales' Autumn Red.

Alcopop fine

A Surbiton shopkeeper has been fined £150, with £170 costs, for selling a vodka alcopop to a 16-year-old. Kuddithampy Kuganesan of Union Convenient, Villiers Avenue, pleaded guilty at Richmond Magistrates' Court after a trading standards sting operation. He said the employee responsible would be retrained.

Reading event

Claremont Fan Court School parents gather at Regency bookshop, Victoria Road, on November 12 to discuss children's reading, get pointers to new books and buy with discounts. "The teachers are really switched on when it comes to reading," said shop owner Pat Freestone-Bayes.

Zumba for Peru

Schools are being urged to stage a Latin American day to aid deprived Peruvian children. Youngsters can dress in flag colours or hold zumba classes. Martha Jesty, of Help Women and Children, says £300 buys a year's education for a Peruvian child. Call her on 07910 884 585.

Brownie meeting

Surbiton Photo Circle, the snapper club, meets next at Gordon Bennett! in Maple Road at 8pm on Monday October 14 to swap tips, plan shoots, and admire each other's pictures.

Popping up again

Surbiton mumtrepreneur Janine Turland's September pop-up market for toys and baby gear was sold out. "All stalls were sold a week before," said Janine of Grove Road. With 150 customers, big sellers were toys, games, books and baby equipment. The next is on December 7, 2-4pm, at Surbiton Library halls, Ewell Road. Visit www.mum2mummarket.co.uk

WIN your turkey!

The next Good Life has a chance to win a plump Christmas turkey, courtesy of Norfolk specialist Godwick Hall. Find out more about the farm at www.godwick.co.uk

Katrin exhibits

An artist who expresses herself in paintings and experimental poems has a show at the cornerHOUSE through November. Katrin Feldhus has called it Middle Axis. A gala night on November 19 is at 7pm.



Can you extend your lease?

You live in a Surbiton flat, and want to know if you can extend your lease. There are two new specialists in town. Roshan Sivapalan and Ron Gibbons have opened Blakes, a firm specialising in lease extensions while also offering expertise on all aspects of property. Sited at 62 Brighton Road, opposite The Lamb, Blakes joins the ranks of Surbiton's estate agents, offering sales, lettings and property management with eye-catching introductory rates. Everyone's situation is different, so Roshan, who named the firm after the area of New Malden in which he grew up, believes a chat over a cuppa is the best starting point. Both business partners have a property background. Roshan has worked for big-name estate agents, did a degree in estate management at Kingston Uni and is a qualified chartered surveyor. Ron's background is in corporate life with extensive experience in a chartered surveying and management practice. "We can handle lease extensions and compulsory freehold acquisition," said Roshan. "I've represented lessees and landlords, so I know the arguments from both sides. We see this as an opportunity to offer a broad range of services, including commercial property, buying the freehold and right to manage." Promotional sales rates of 0.95% are offered, with an introductory lettings rate of 5%. The firm is licensed, regulated and protected by the major professional bodies. Visit www.blakesproperty.com, call 020 8296 1234 or drop in.



Sarah's decade

A decade ago, Sarah Taylor opened Shoes at Last, the cute independent Maple Road boutique which now goes beyond footwear into designer clothes and accessories. "Ten years!" exclaimed Sarah (left). "Gordon Bennett! had just started doing food and the parking restrictions outside had just altered." Sarah, a farmers' market organiser, believes the time has seen the community grow closer and Maple Road get buzzier. "Now clothes are incredibly popular at the shop, as are handbags, scarves and accessories," she said. "I try to find something different for customers, and they tell me they come here before looking round Kingston."

Overheard in the Coronation Hall

A coach driver is taking a group of Surbiton OAPs down the A3 when he is tapped on the shoulder by an elderly lady. She offers him a handful of peanuts, which he gratefully eats. Ten minutes later, she taps him on the shoulder again and hands him another handful of peanuts. She repeats this several times. As she is about to hand him more, he asks why they don't eat the peanuts themselves. 'We can't chew them, because we haven't got teeth,' she replies. The puzzled driver asks: "So why do you buy them then?" The old lady replies: 'We just love the chocolate around them.'

A flexible hub

If your work space is fighting a losing battle with the ironing board, a flexible office hub may be for you. Interest is growing in Maple Works, a business centre beside Gordon Bennett! in Maple Road. Bar owner Richard Sealtiel (right) and David Randall are behind the venture, giving solo workers a reception and business address, meeting rooms, wi-fi, event space and lunch-at-your-desk deliveries. Richard and David visited similar centres for inspiration, including Google's shared Campus in east London. "We feel there's demand in Surbiton for a networking centre," said Richard. "A lot of people work from home and are not satisfied with the way life is working. They don't want an entire office, but do want a space." David runs the two floors of Maple Works day to day, creating a centre of creativity for the laptop brigade. Maple Works offers an official business address ("People always check out your address on Streetview," said Richard) and a staffed reception. "People network because they need to collaborate," said David. Equipped rooms give hub workers a professional space for client meetings. "The coffee shop has its place, but you don't know how noisy it's going to be," said David. It is also a community facility, with the farmers' market and Seething Wells groups given space to meet. "There will be a lot of interaction, creative space, business services and a virtual PA," said David. Services include package storage, onward delivery and a smart TV for presentations and training, lectures, strategy gatherings and social evenings. Having Gordon Bennett! next door helps. Morning coffee is free to workers, and box meals can be delivered to desks. Maple Works will encourage business start-ups, with accountant Nigel Gilroy giving support. The centre has forged links with Kingston University. Visit www.mapleworks.co.uk

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The Odeon, January 1972. Elsa Brown, the florist, is on the right, Bicknell, the stationer, on the left

Wallace, Arthur, Oscar, Eric

When Waitrose threw open its doors on the site of the old Odeon building in Claremont Road in October 1999, it wasn't arriving in Surbiton... it was returning.

The town's first Waitrose opened in 1919 at 158 Ewell Road – the corner site at the junction with Langley Road still fondly remembered by many as Bell's music store. It later became Liberty Bell restaurant, then Victoriana, then l'Esperance, and is now Langleys wine bar and eatery.

Today there are 300 Waitroses in the UK, but Ewell Road was the chain's 13th branch.

Wallace Wyndham Waite (a 'www' causing waves 70 years ahead of Tim Berners-Lee) set up his first grocery shop with Arthur Rose in Acton in 1904. The pair pooled their surnames four years later.

Expansion slowed in the First World War, as Rose was on military service, but in 1919 Surbiton was added to the branch list. The shop with the curved corner had been built in 1893 for Jamison Brothers,

family grocers. It cost old man Jamison £1,000, bankrupting the builder in the process.

Twenty-six years later, Waite marched in and offered Mr Jamison the same sum, £1,000.

Jamison laughed and said he doubted Waite had the money. Half an hour later, Waite returned from the bank and put the notes down on the counter.

It was a general grocery store, with orders delivered daily to the grand houses in the Southborough estate by boys on bicycles. Locals called it the 'midnight grocer' because the bicycles, and later vans, delivered until after 11pm.

Trading was tough. Waite feared branch 13 would indeed be unlucky. But by 1922 it was in profit.

That year, Waitrose was promising Surbiton customers 'prices so keen that 16s 8d would do the work of £1', partly thanks to cheap Danish bacon.

In 1937, Waite sold to the John Lewis Partnership.

At the time, Surbiton was one of only three Waitrose branches with a wine and spirits section,

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Bevan Hoogerwerf and the famous Waitrose mirror

Italian chef, South African owner, British menu, French accent. It's like the UN at 158 Ewell Road, and the combination has produced a restaurant so popular that on one Saturday in September, 45 people were turned away.

Langleys is a British brasserie with a joyously varied wine list which sails the high seas without an anchor. Old world, new world... owner Bevan Hoogerwerf has assembled bottles for different tastes and budgets, built around half a dozen top-notch Sauvignon Blancs and a mighty burnt-rum-'n'-raisin pudding wine, Mulderbosch.

Liberty Bell won a place in Surbiton's heart, even if later incarnations didn't scale those heights. Now Langleys ticks all the boxes.

The appeal? Keen pricing, Surrey-sourced food, welcoming front-of-house, switched-on staff and a wow-factor interior with restored features underlining the history of this special building. The Victorian painted-glass windows with delicate fruit and plant themes, dating from the 1890s, are glorious.

Part wine bar, part eatery, Langleys takes to a new level the popular business Bevan once ran at The Tryst, Weston Green.

He grew up in Somerset West in the Western Cape, near South Africa's wine capital, Stellenbosch. A degree in hotel management led him down the restaurant route.

He and his wife looked at a number of locations (including Maple Road) before settling on Ewell Road, with its cavernous subterranean storage areas. Now the couple and their three children have put down their roots in a house a stroll away in Berrylands.

Bookings are now being taken to Christmas, with a menu prepared jointly by Bevan and Dario, the Italian chef (a former sous chef at the Gore Hotel, Kensington).

Winter options include venison, calves' liver and braised ox cheek with blue cheese alongside steak, fish and burger mainstays.

I had superb haddock 'n' chips, preceded by goat's cheese with home-made fig chutney, washed down by Hooley Dooley from South Australia's McLaren Vale. 'Er indoors tucked into seared pollock with quail's egg on a spinach bed. Afterwards, the Langleys mess, containing chunks of meringue, proved sublime. As did the whisky tart with salted caramel ice cream.

"We're an English brasserie, cooked in a French way," said Bevan, looking round at the verdita-green dado, the cherubs supporting the ceiling beams and, of course, that glorious old Waitrose mirror.

Tim Harrison

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and by the 1940s was one of only nine to have refrigerated cabinets, selling frozen fruit and veg. In the Second World War, the shop's basement was an air raid shelter for Ewell Road and Browns Road families, the sandbagged entrance in Langley Road.

By the early 1950s, self-service was catching on and large stores were seen as the future. Mr AS Froude, manager of the Surbiton branch from 1934 to 1957, knew the days of the Ewell Road shop were numbered. In 1958, the lease expired, and Waitrose decided not to renew.

Paul May, Waitrose director of trading, told staff: "Recently the Partnership was approached with an offer to buy the lease. The lease will not be renewed as the rent is far too high, and Arthur Bell of Bell Accordians is determined to have the premises."

Bell Musical Instruments, to give the firm its full name, had three branches – one near Darlington, and, now, two in Ewell Road. Guitars were the speciality of the shop at the corner of Langley Road, while accordions (the biggest selection in Europe, and the official dealership of the Hohner brand), organs and keyboards were sold across the street.

In fact, Hohner cash had helped Arthur Bell set the music business up in Surbiton in 1947, with Arthur's surname proudly adorning the shopfront in the wake of the Second World War, rather than Hohner, which was thought to sound too Germanic.

Instrument repairs were big business, with damaged accordions fixed and renovated... in each case with a tiny Bell's repair label stuck inside.

Thanks to the publication of an annual catalogue, business boomed. Catalogue shopping was a forerunner of today's internet shopping, and orders



flooded in from all over the country for guitars, keyboards, amps, leads and speakers as skiffle, rock 'n' roll then beat music swept the land.

Today, guitar aficionados still drool over the highly collectable old catalogues of Bell's. One fan describes them as 'musical instrument porn'!

Acoustic guitars cost as little as £4 in the late 1950s, with Bell proclaiming itself 'by far the largest stockist of guitars in Great Britain'. The telephone number, 01 399 1166, was constantly ringing with orders which were then dispatched by the vanload from the Surbiton sorting office.

Arthur Bell died in 1961, and the company was taken over by Hohner, wisely keeping the well-known Bell name.

Eric Clapton, a student at the art school in Ewell Road sandwiched between the fire station and the Methodist church, got his first guitar there – a gift from his grandparents. Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Keith Richard and Bill Wyman were also customers.

While 'Jolly' Jack Larkin was in charge of accordions, the guitar shop was managed by Bernard Wilson, known to everyone as Willie.

Saturday mornings turned into impromptu guitar jamming sessions with customers, hangers-on, dreamers and staff trying out the latest models.

With guitars hanging from hooks around the walls, and suspended from the ceiling, there was barely room to swing a cat.

Hundreds of musicians made their first purchase at Bell's, often adding a copy of Bert Weedon's Play In A Day book to their shopping list, to help master chords.

In 1983, the lease on the guitar shop ran out, and everything switched to the Berrylands side of the street... the end of a golden era.

Surbiton resident David Cornell told the Good Life: "I have searched the web in vain for photos of the old shop, as the interior was beautiful; all mahogany, brass and etched glass." He believes a commemorative plaque should adorn the wall, to mark its illustrious place in British rock history.

The old Bell shop became Liberty Bell restaurant in 1984. During renovations, old mahogany wall panelling from the shop's early grocery days was

uncovered, including the mirror etched with the words 'Waitrose Ltd select the choicest provisions the world produces'. Nearly a century on, it still has pride of place.

Today, the cellar of Langley's restaurant – low-ceilinged, covering the full footprint of the building – contains the original meat safe from the Jamison/Waitrose era, with huge hooks sunk in the ceiling and an elaborate cantilever door bolt and hinges made in a foundry in Mitcham.

After a 40-year gap, Waitrose reopened in Surbiton on October 19 1999, on the site of the old Odeon at 15 Claremont Road. From 1975-1999 it was a B&Q DIY store, memorable for its peculiar upward sloping ceiling which had formerly been the floor of the cinema's circle.

The original cinema could seat 974 in the stalls



and 528 in the circle. There was an orchestra lift, capable of hydraulically raising a group of musicians to stage level.

The Surbiton building, on the site of several old houses, was an art deco masterpiece. It was Oscar Deutsch's 10th Odeon, and was opened on April 14 1934 by Anne Grey, star of Captain Blood, the first film shown there.

The frontage was created by Surbiton architect Joseph Hill, who based it on designs he'd sketched at the 1925 Paris Exhibition. It cost £28,000 to build. To put it in context, Tolworth's Odeon, built the same year and now covered by Tolworth Tower, cost £10,983.

Deutsch based the name Odeon on the Latin Odeum and Greek Odeion, meaning amphitheatre. Wags said it was an acronym for Oscar Deutsch Entertains Our Nation.

Waitrose's return to Surbiton in 1999 was welcomed. Planning permission was granted in November 1997, with the full details in a deed between Kingston Council and the supermarket dated May 5 1998. It said the 20,536sq ft of sales area, bigger than the Kingston Waitrose, 'shall be predominantly used for the sale of groceries and for no other purpose'.

When the store opened on October 19 1999, features included a three-minute ultrafast wine chilling service, customer loos and the 215-space car park. Below ground is an extraordinary turntable, allowing juggernauts to deliver, rotate and emerge from the tight exit next to the Surbiton Club in St James Road.

This month's store revamp follows a decree from Waitrose managing director Mark Price that new welcome desks should be installed in branches "as our supermarkets are increasingly used as a destination to collect online orders".

The new 'concierge' desk will have tablet computers to let customers order, while the store will continue to give away coffees and newspapers to My Waitrose cardholders.

Mark Stevens, Surbiton manager, told The Good Life: "Mark Price's vision is that, like in a business lounge at an airport, we'll give you coffees and newspapers."

Department manager Alan Bradley added: "We're a first-class retailer, and are making sure our service

matches that."

Neither would divulge how many coffees and teas Waitrose hands out, but admit it is 'hundreds'. Social responsibility involves clearing up discarded cups outside the store.

Waitrose has two electric car-powering points in its underground car park. "A few customers use it regularly," said Mark Stevens. "If demand increases, we'll consider how to go with that."

As well as splitting £1,000 between three local causes each month via the green token scheme, there will be food bank collections in coming weeks, with donated tins given to the needy.

Waitrose is again sponsoring the Christmas tree on the station roundabout.

Tim Harrison



Clockwise, from left: Bells Music, 1965; villas make way for the Odeon in 1933; Waitrose today, Liberty Bell in the 1980s; B&Q Claremont Road in 1998; a 1970s advert for Bells Music; Waitrose, Ewell Road, in 1930; Alan Bradley (left) and Mark Stevens enjoy the recent Surbiton Festival



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5



Charlotte Simmonds (left) and Jodie Ashborn

Enjoying life in the 6th form

We feel involved, we feel connected; it makes us feel important, and we get a lot of freedom. Life sounds positive at Tolworth Sixth Form.

When the teenagers tell you they really like the place, someone must be doing something right.

Jodie Ashborn and Charlotte Simmonds, both 17, feel at home in the commonroom. "We get a say in events, we have committees to talk things through, and we feel involved," said

Jodie. Charlotte added: "The teachers are more like friends; they help with anything."

Owen Rhead, sixth form director, said: "We nurture them, we stretch them, we challenge them and we help them get on the right courses."

It's nearing decision time for pupils looking for sixth-form places in September 2014.

Boys and girls flourish at the Tolworth Girls' School sixth form. Just ask them.

BOOKS++BOOKS++BOOKS++BOOKS++BOOKS++BOOKS++

Drifting Down Under

Globetrotter Dan Coxon may be home now, but he spent the last five years travelling around the Pacific.

The writer, who lives in St Matthew's Avenue, has encapsulated his adventures in *Ka Mate: Travels in New Zealand* (£8.99).

The title refers to the All Blacks' pre-match war dance, and the book tracks Dan's journeys over glaciers, across boiling mudfields and through the country's vineyards.

There's a serious side to the tale, which explores New Zealand's complex history of migration, settlement and colonisation.

● Dan shares his New Zealand experiences with the Good Life in the next issue, when you can win a signed copy of his book.



Action man Dan absails into a cave



Will Janus save us all?

Five years ago, Elgar Avenue writer Stephen Harding's short story *My Bench* was printed by the Kingston Readers' Festival. Now his debut novel, *Janus - The Arrival*, is published for Kindle on Amazon.

"It's a gritty sci-fi/fantasy, drifting between planets Earth and Pagos," said the author. "As the last hope for his race, Janus Storm is on a mission, and has no time for those who get in the way of his survival instinct."

Stephen (left) got the idea for the book, as you do, while driving to Leeds. "I wrote down an idea, it became a paragraph, then a chapter, and went from there," he said. If you enjoy it, the sequel is already written!

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Easier spelling

It's just not fair, says Celia from NumberWorks'nWords. For some children and adults, spelling is easy; look at a word and you can remember how to write it. For others, it's a minefield.

It depends on how you as an individual think and learn. If you learn visually, it tends to be easy, but if you are an auditory learner, you need to be able to hear the spellings.

Here is a tip that many auditory learners find useful.

When you learn the spelling, emphasise all the syllables. Maybe even clap out the word as you say it. As you say it, make sure you emphasise the vowel sounds. Diff - er - ent, Norm - al, En - ter, In - de - pen - dent.

Say it in a funny way to help you remember it. Pe - o - ple or pee - op - plee. List - en or lis - ten. Wanted, emphasising the a. Bu - ilding (buh - ilding).

Link it in a sentence with another word that is spelt the same way. I always believe my friend, or I always lie to my friend! You hear with your ear.

Our favourite: colour. Make a phrase to help you remember the hard bit. You guess (U guess), You have a biscuit (U), Big elephants are ugly (beautiful).

The committee was full (lots of double letters).

You can have fun making up silly ideas for how words are spelt. It sometimes seems that you need to learn lots of words individually, and in a different way. But many people can remember spellings better if they 'story' them than just by remembering them by sight.

Remember, just because you or your child learned to spell a word yesterday or last week, doesn't mean you can spell it correctly today! Practise the word again and again with the trick, to make sure it is secure every time.



Best of times, and wurst

Popular Surbiton farmers' market stallholder Tracy Mackness of Giggly Pig fame has not only been dispensing bangers, but also signing copies of a tell-all autobiography.

It's a shocking tale... but it's also a heartwarming story of redemption from someone who has not only turned her life 180 degrees, but now inspires others to mend their ways.

In Chelmsford Crown Court in 2001 Tracy was sentenced to 10 years in prison for conspiracy to supply cannabis with a street value of £4million. A long stretch was exactly what she needed, she now admits. It gave her the time to take stock of a life punctuated by casual drug-taking, living beyond her means, and relationships doomed to failure.

After Highpoint (where Myra Hindley was also being held), Tracy was sent to an open prison in Kent. It had a farm, and that introduced her to pigs... leading to a passion and fascination which has been her salvation.

Guided by an enthusiastic officer, Tracy (pictured above) started her own pig business on release, winning the national Trading Places award for turning her life around.

Now she, and a dedicated team, run a thriving farm in Romford and produce sausages which are, for many Surbitonians, a highlight of their month.

"It's been crazy. ITV have been round. I went to one market and they were queuing for the book... never mind the sausages. It has been an extraordinary reaction," said Tracy of her adventure. She even appeared on Newsnight.

● Jail Bird, the Life and Crimes of an Essex Bad Girl, by Tracy Mackness is published in paperback by Simon & Schuster at £6.99.

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A craftier use of time

If you're interested in exploring crafts, put Saturday October 19 in your diary, from 1-4pm.

It's the next meeting of the Crafty Afty group, an informal gathering of chatty, idea-sharing, skill-pooling enthusiasts, with a fondness for cake.

The venue is the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road. It's a chance to spend time in the company of like-minded creative grown-ups. Bring the project you're working on, or want to start, from papier-mache, teddy bear-making, patchwork and photography to drawing, jewellery-making, knitting and cards.

There is space to spread out, and home-made cake and tea too. "It's a child-free zone where we talk about escaping the drudgery of household chores," one regular revealed. "No topic is taboo!"

Further meetings are on November 23 and, for home-made Christmas gift ideas, December 14.



Cellist Jamie Walton tops the bill in the Thames Concert at St Andrew's, Maple Road, on October 12 (7.30pm), with artistic director Ben Costello giving a pre-performance talk at 6.45pm. Bach's Suite No2 in D minor, Leighton's haunting Elegy and Britten's Sonata in C are on the bill.

Jazz singer and pianist Liane Carroll (above) plays on November 16 at 7.30pm. Tickets £20, or discounted in advance via ticketweb.co.uk

That Mr Kipling does make exceedingly good sssnakes

Rudyard Kipling's animal stories have been brought to the stage, with Kaa the python, Shere Khan the tiger and Bagheera the leopard performing on the banks of the Limpopo. Surbiton director Bob Noble is at the helm of Just So, performed by Hinchley Manor Operatic Society at the Adrian Mann Theatre in Nescot college, Ewell.

It runs to October 12, with tickets from £15 via www.hmos.org.uk. Cast members publicised it at the Surbiton Festival, singing numbers on stage.

Drama while you enjoy a meal



travelling Surbiton drama group is carving out a niche staging performances in upmarket eateries. Restaurant Dramas, masterminded by actor/director Paul Hughes, next appears on Wednesday, October 16 in the upstairs function room at The French Table, Maple Road, transforming it into a pop-up theatre.

As well as enjoying their food, diners will be entertained by a cast which lists Skyfall and Holby City on its CV. The actors will perform three short plays between courses.

"It is theatre at its most intimate and relaxed," said Paul, whose company is performing Lo-Fi Café by Jason Fite; Proud Parents by Isaac Ssebandeke; and Get Me To the Geek by Jake Francis and Kat Morret.

In between shows, diners will enjoy a marmite of lobster, haddock, leek and vanilla sauce; beef with truffled dumplings, white onion puree and Madeira sauce; and rose crème brûlée with vanilla ice cream.

You can find out more about the touring entertainers at www.restaurantdramas.com

● Portrait of Paul Hughes by Jonathan Constant



Keep scribbling!

The deadline is looming for entries to the borough's top drama competition. Every year for the last decade, the cornerHOUSE has produced a series of lively locally written new plays in its annual festival.

Entries for this year's oneACTS close on October 31, with plays then judged (anonymously) for performance in May.

The event also encourages new directors and actors via fun open auditions.

Plays should be between 15 and 30 minutes. Email entries to oneacts@thecornerhouse.org



Emily Newton in one of this year's oneACT hits, Colin Pink's play Couple

Sue's fruity artworks

For such a proficient painter, it's a surprise Sue Monteath didn't pick up a brush in anger until she hit 40.

Evening classes in life drawing at the King Charles Centre led, in a decade, to a distinct style in oils and acrylics – with still life studies of fruit attracting praise from the perfectionists of the Molesey Art Society, of which she is a member.

Sue's second solo show runs all month at the cornerHOUSE, with most works for sale at £40 up.

"I wanted a new hobby," she said in the sun-drenched studio in her house near Victoria rec. "I'm not a neat-edge person. Knowing when to

stop a picture is important; you can overwork paintings. Watercolours are precise, but oils are forgiving – you can scrape off paint if you go wrong!"

Sue, left, runs the Association of Child Abuse Lawyers, giving practical help to those working for justice for children and adults who have been abused. It involves staffing a helpline, advising people who may have been abused as youngsters.

In a way, painting is a safety valve. Still lifes are her forte, but she has done portraits ("It's a miracle when it turns out looking like them!"), bird pictures and landscapes. For more, visit www.sue-monteath.com

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Settling in

Daphne Conway gets a reassuring hug from moving-in co-ordinator Colette Hammond

Residents of the recently completed Royal Star & Garter Home have moved in. Ex-servicemen and women left their historic home atop Richmond Hill five miles away for the new building that has been taking shape at the junction of Upper Brighton Road and Langley Avenue.

The 63-bedroom home is part of the charity's modernisation, equipped to offer care and meet the physical needs of its new occupants, including specialist support for dementia.

The home set up a task force to deliver a seamless move, ensuring it was as stress-free as possible for residents, relatives and staff. Every aspect was planned, from logistics to medical needs. Co-ordinator Colette Hammond liaised with residents and relatives, supporting them before, during and after the switch.

Pauline Shaw, director of care at Royal Star & Garter, said: "Moving house can be stressful and we recognised that leaving our Richmond home would be emotional and nostalgic. We are delighted to report that residents are settling in very well."

Neighbours who have watched the vernacular-style building rise over the past two years will have noted that builders finished off the project with new planting and turf-laying to help it blend into its leafy suburban surroundings.

Phil Cooper

Night wear on ELM street?

A Good Life article about an ELM phone number being uncovered by workmen installing a new Surbiton shopfront led Peter Daniels to send this evocative snap of Beswick's bed store in Tolworth Broadway – one of the last ELM numbers to be on public display. Beswick's ran from 1932-2003, with Ken Davey in charge of the shop for 24 years. ELM codes ended in March 1966, when the digits 399 arrived.



A salute to our admiral



Sandy Woodward on Queen's Prom, waiting for a boat to pass

The recent death at 81 of Admiral Sandy Woodward, commander of the flotilla which recaptured the Falklands in 1982, ends a long Surbiton connection.

For two decades he commuted from Platform 1... yet he liked nothing better than an afternoon on Queen's Promenade, idly planning battle formations among the ducks, followed by a curry at one of the town's many Indian restaurants.

Born John Forster Woodward in Penzance on May 1 1932, he joined the navy and served as a submariner.

Promoted to captain in 1972, he bought 68a Claremont Road with wife Charlotte (they had been married 12 years) and a young son and daughter. He took the 7.40 to Waterloo, working on the fifth floor at the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall.

After his first day he wished an RAF group captain good evening before strolling towards Hungerford Bridge. "Not Hungerford Bridge, old chap," the shocked airman told Sandy. "That's the other ranks' bridge. Officers use Westminster Bridge!"

It summed up Sandy's self-deprecating character, though others said he could be a bit prickly. "He was friendly and affable to me, possibly because I was from the local paper," said ex-Comet reporter Laura Marcus, who interviewed him in 1982.

In the mid 80s he retired, separated from his wife and left Surbiton (where he had regularly played bridge at weekends) to live in Bosham, near Chichester, where he loved to sail.

In the Falklands, he once used an extraordinary method to disguise his ship, HMS Glamorgan, which was in the UK-imposed 200-mile 'total exclusion zone' around the islands.

He ordered that every light be turned on. "I intended that from any distance we would look like a cruise liner," he said. "From the bridge we looked like a floating Christmas tree."

Challenged by an Argentine destroyer to identify himself, Sandy handed the radio mic to a junior officer (and Peter Sellers impersonator). "This is the liner Rawalpindi, bound from Bombay to the port of Dubai. Good night, and jolly good luck!" It worked. "He sounded like the head waiter at the Surbiton Tandoori," Sandy later recalled with a chuckle.

Tim Harrison

This is one pert yurt...

Surbiton may not be internationally known for yurt-making, but give it time. Sam Palmer of Brighton Road created this portable, multi-purpose structure from sustainable English ash, finished with white canvas. It's available to hire for parties or events, with profits supporting the African Vision Malawi charity.

Three-day hire, £299 excluding delivery. Sam brings, sets up, dismantles and removes. Email sampalmer80@hotmail.com



Flagging at Fishponds

Fishponds park in Ewell Road has won a green flag award from the Keep Britain Tidy group for the second year in a row.

The park, known as Fishponds Fields in Victorian times, covers 13.5 acres and has been an important location for community events for 120 years.

It is bordered by Ewell Road, Hollyfield Road and King Charles Road, and includes a nature conservation area, particularly popular with birds, and a pond, formed when earth was dug 150 years ago for the local brick-making industry.

Surbiton Council – then a separate entity – bought the estate in 1935 for £10,000. For the two centuries before that, the land had formed the gardens of an old house called Fishponds, owned by the Butler family, of Lambert & Butler tobacco fame.

"Everyone deserves to have an attractive park nearby," said Cllr Simon James, welcoming the award.

Ode to Litter

by Morris Thain

As I sit here and pen this verse
The streets outside are getting worse
Though mainly calm, and seldom bitter,
One thing gets my goat... the litter

Fag ends, bottles, milk shake straws,
Old cans propped up against shop doors,
Save us all, Captain! My Captain!
Packaging kebabs come wrapped in

Napkins from the coffee shops
Which someone used to wipe his chops
The debris strewn by life's sad dregs
All ends up swirling round my legs

Flowerbeds once shrieked civic pride,
Now rubbish-filled, the plants have died
What to do with litter tramps?
String them up from our new lamps!

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