



A taste of the Tyrol? Things could be wurst

Once Hans Neesan Boomsadaysee (left) had sent his Tyrolean greetings to the farmers' market on October 17, a beer 'n' bratwurst theme was inevitable.

Oktoberfest is being marked with German dark rye bread, Black

Forest brownies and spiced nuts, and Bavarian beer halls as the lederhosen set are let loose among the regular stalls in Maple Road.

Oom-pah music will be the soundtrack, the Giggly Pig is cooking bratwurst with authentic

curry sauce, and a pop-up photo booth will allow shoppers to post in dirndls and blonde plaits in front of a mountain landscape with an inflatable pretzel, while all proceeds go to the market's charity of the month. Wunderbar!

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The sardine service

Surbiton's commuter trains are the most overcrowded in the capital.

Department for Transport stats reveal that 1,180 people squeeze on to the 7.56 to Waterloo – a train meant for 738 at most.

The service half an hour earlier is no better, with 1,169 on board when it leaves Platform 1, having filled up between Woking and Esher.

With trains at 160% of capacity, the figures quantify the misery for the town's long-suffering travellers.

Those morning trains are among the 10 worst in the UK.

MP James Berry, who uses the

rush-hour trains and knows how bad it is, wants commuters to share their suggestions on improvements.

He has already called for longer trains, and is working with other MPs on alternative deals when the route is refranchised in 16 months.

"Two things are clear," he told The Good Life. "Peak-time services are already 20% over capacity, and there is no room for extra peak-time services into Waterloo."

Short-term, the old Waterloo Eurostar platforms are being extended to add more options.

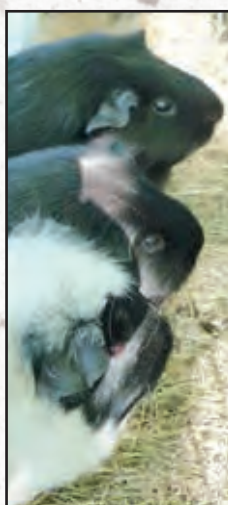
But longer term, the MP feels the

only credible answer is diverting trains away from Waterloo via Crossrail 2. Yet the earliest that could start is 2030, by which time many of today's 'sardines' will be past caring. Passenger numbers are tipped to rise 40% by 2045.

Currently one in five passengers has to stand, and it's just as bad on trains returning to Surbiton.

Mr Berry said he hoped recent Network Rail revelations about the service would be "the wake-up call for much-needed investment in our local rail services".

Tim Harrison



Jackie Wilson said...

Tracy Beaker creator Jacqueline Wilson strolled from home to Claremont Gardens on festival Saturday with Jackson, her black poodle/Patterdale terrier, and was snapped for a digital dog show by Surbiton Veterinary



Hospital. "It's a wonderful vets," said Dame Jacqueline, who is also a Battersea Dogs Home ambassador.

Festive fun in the heat

Not just sun, but autumn warmth made Surbiton's festival parade a success. Stalls filled pedestrianised Victoria and St Andrew's Roads, and organiser Bob Noble called it "a truly happy and amazing experience". With events spread across Claremont Gardens and St Andrew's Square, the peak town-centre congestion was less noticeable. Visitor numbers held up well, at around 19,000. A high point of this year's festive fortnight was the Raven's Ait open day with live singing, giving many residents their first chance to visit the Thames island.

From left: the parade; guinea pigs from Mill Cottage Farm in Claremont Gardens; St Andrew's as Montmartre

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Avocado brunch arrives

It's not often a restaurant dreams up a fresh, new brunch menu option... so respect to Bosco's amiable and inventive chef Adam Baines for devising a beautifully balanced and alluringly presented healthy choice at the St Mark's Hill boutique hotel and bar/restaurant. At £6, the avocado and poached egg combination, right, is not only different, but also very affordable. The granary toast, which adds texture, is 'buttered' with guacamole, then topped with ripe avocado slices. Perched on top, a poached free-range egg. Completing the colour balance on the triangular plate, a group of flavoursome roast vine tomatoes.

It's a light alternative to the £10 showstopper, the Full Bosco; Gloucester Old Spot sausage, bacon, eggs, beans, tomato, mushroom, sauteed potatoes and sourdough toast. But it's not the only new arrival on a reshaped, reinvigorated menu for Saturdays and Sundays. As well as eggs benedict, there's eggs florentine and eggs royale. Or a stack of buttermilk pancakes with bacon and maple syrup, or berry compote and creme fraiche.

There's a sunflower and poppyseed bagel with Severn and Wye smoked salmon and cream cheese, or dry-cured bacon and free-range egg (£7).

Bosco's chorizo hash (£9) is another good choice, with Brindisa chorizo from Catalunya, and mixed peppers. To accompany the weekend papers and a leisurely loll, a mango, pineapple and passionfruit smoothie. www.hotelbosco.co.uk/boscolounge/menus **TH**



Divine nectar

On the face of it, honey from bees which call the Hogsmill sewage treatment works home may not conjure up an instant yum-yum. But suspend your judgement and wipe that doubtful expression from your face; it's divine nectar!

Floral, with a fruity afternote, it's distinct from other Surbiton honeys. Beekeeper Keith McMahon of Westfield Road explained: "The lime trees mean local honey often has a citrus taste, but the very dry spring means that the water table is lower, and nectar levels are down, which affects the flavour."

The Hogsmill hives, once located off Sugden Road, Thames Ditton (and moved following the maxim that you can shift an active hive 3ft or three miles), thrive in the nature reserve that surrounds the Thames Water site at the back of Berrylands station.

It's secure and secluded, and seems to suit the bees, who forage for up to two miles

– the females doing all the work, and dancing to pass on news of good sources of pollen. Presumably the male bees are back home in the hive with their feet up, watching the rugby.

This season's honey has a more subtle flavour, altogether more delicate than last year.

Surbiton Festival visitors loved the Hogsmill honey, and with 16 different local varieties on the Kingston Beekeepers (est 1879) stall – including one specific to Addison Gardens – there was plenty of choice.



Tickety-boo

Ewell Road butcher Jennings has put up a notice on the counter alerting customers to the fact that even if they're taking advantage of the recently introduced free half-hour parking, they still need to get a ticket from the dispensing machine on the pavement. Not everyone has been clear on the mechanics of the new system.

Expanding menu

The popular Caffe Amici has expanded its food menu. The lively sliver of a coffee shop opposite Victoria Road's YMCA – a meeting place for discerning Surbitonians – offers varied breakfast options (croissants, pastries, panettone, loaf cake), then lunch alternatives of salads, soups, beef lasagna, parmigiana (layered aubergine), meatballs, insalatona (mixed salad with mozzarella), salumi misto (a generous sharing plate) and Italian bread sandwiches. Look for the special dishes of the day.

Recipes for a Good Life: Annie Morris

A humble crumble

After a roast, it has to be apple crumble. For the filling, 1kg apples, peeled, cored and sliced, 100g brown sugar, 4 dessert spoons of sultanas (optional), two pinches of ground cinnamon. For the crumble: 260g plain flour, sieved with a pinch of salt; 130g butter from the fridge, cubed.

Preheat oven to 180C/350F/ Gas 4. Place flour and butter in a bowl and mix well. Taking a few cubes of butter at a time, rub into the flour mix. Keep rubbing until it's like breadcrumbs.

Place the fruit in a large bowl and sprinkle over the sugar,

cinnamon and sultanas. Stir well, but don't break up the fruit. Butter a 24cm/9in ovenproof dish. Spoon the mix in, then sprinkle on the crumble. Bake for 40 mins until the crumble is browned and the fruit bubbles. Serve with thick cream or custard.



In Season by Fiona Quinn

Here's a bit, squashed in

October means British squash, and there's so much variety. Try roasting whole. Cut a lid, scrape out and discard the stringy innards and seeds. For a filling, gently sweat off two large sliced leeks with a dash of butter for 10 mins until soft but not browned. Season and add a tsp of English mustard, 4 tbsps creme fraiche and 100g of strong cheese such as Gruyere. Load your squash with the filling, finish with a sprig of thyme and replace the lid. Roast for an hour at 190C. Serve simply, scraping out flesh and filling. Serves 4. The squash are available at From the Ground Up, Surbiton's fruit and veg service. Order at www.fguorganic.co.uk



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Gym for children

Few gyms allow young people to join, but Surbiton YMCA lets 11-15s use its facilities for £3.50 pay-as-you-go, after the initial £15 joining fee.

Coffee success

A Macmillan coffee morning at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, raised £407 for the cancer charity. Organiser Becky Fowler, assisted by Emma Cole and Lauren Murphy, produced the accompanying cakes, with Dave Twiby winning the raffle first prize of tea for two at Richmond’s Bingham.



Kitchen closure

Brighton Road catering equipment firm Main Kitchen Supplies closed on September 19 after eight years’ trading. Owner Ann Bedford has also suspended the online arm of the business. A community-minded enterprise, the shop supplied the ice blocks for the Ski Sunday event in St Mark’s Hill, which will be staged this year at 11am on October 18.

Home grant aid

The council gives maintenance grants of up to £10,000 to homeowners and private tenants. Heating, insulation, damp and roof repairs qualify. The scheme helps older residents remain independent, and brings empty properties back into use. Call 020 8547 5003.

Festive gift night

Volunteers from Surbiton’s African Vision Malawi charity are collecting gifts to sell at a gala evening at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, on November 10 from 7pm. Kingston College art students have designed calendars and Christmas cards. Free entry plus complimentary drink.

Talking is cheap

Feeling peckish and talkative? The YMCA in Victoria Road has Thursday lunchtime ‘snack and chat’ sessions at 12.30pm in the residents’ lounge. Free sandwiches, drink and conversation.

Mums pour in

Now in their third year, Surbiton’s mum2mum nearly-new sales fill St Mark’s church hall. September’s attracted a record 240 buyers, with top sellers making £350. Next is on November 7, 2-4pm. Details at mum2mummarket.co.uk



Weary walkers

Six determined M&S staff from the Tolworth Tower store walked 100km to raise £2,000 to help build an autism-friendly centre on the site of Fairmead nursery. “The first 50km were fun but after that it was difficult,” said Joe Hewlett (back). Front, from left: Sharon Summers, Shannon Bennett, Jakki Poyntz, Jon Henbery and Cheryl Brown.

MP volunteering

Surbiton MP James Berry spent last week volunteering for charity, among them Yorda Adventures of Windmill Lane, which works with children with learning disabilities. He helped at a food bank, and spent time at Kingston Hospital, where he’s a regular volunteer dining companion.

Food lessons

If food is your passion, From The Ground Up’s food school starts on Oct 14, 7pm, with tips from experts at monthly events. Visit www.eventbrite.co.uk and search for FGU.

Proud pooch



Molly Guinan of The Ridings (right) with Kerry blue Murphy; Cole Bryan with Pippa; and, licking the lens, Otto

Curly-haired, long-haired, wet noses... and that was just the owners. The inaugural Millennium Green fun dog show was a triumph, with more than 70 pooches and 250 owners and families.

The aim of raising awareness of the open space behind the croquet greens in Alexandra Drive was achieved. “This is a tester, to invigorate. We’ll run a full calendar of events next year to bring the green back to life,” said one of the organisers, Sam Young.

The arena was packed as Cllr Hilary Gander presented rosettes. “It’s wonderful so many are out meeting each other, and their dogs,” she said.

Entries included Dalmatians, Alsatians, schnauzers, Chihuahuas, Scotties, poodles, Jack Russells, Pomeranians and Staffies.

At the start there was still a 50-yard queue to register! Organisers will be prepared for such unexpected numbers next time. The event was run by Sara Bridgeman of Wagtime dog walking. More pics at www.alexandramillenniumgreen.org.uk

- **Winners. Waggiest tail:** Max (a Staffy with a whiplash); **Prettiest bitch:** Petal; **Best trick:** Ruby (flicking a biscuit from the end of her nose into the air, then catching it in her mouth); **Best puppy:** Bumble the Pug; **Most appealing eyes:** Murphy (right); **Most handsome:** Chico the Chihuahua; **Scruffiest:** Zaza; **Leave the sausage:** Lola the Dachshund; **Fancy dress:** Pippa, left, Dogtor Who, with fez and bow tie; **Judge’s prize:** Maru (it means ‘spot’ in Japanese, as he has a big spot on his bottom)



Pictured at the Vet4Life opening are Gyles Brandreth (centre), daughter Aphra and son-in-law vet Ian Stroud

A positive vetting

Fifteen years ago, Gyles Brandreth’s cat Bruno fell ill, so the writer and ex-MP took him to the vet. “I went with my daughter Aphra,” he recalled. Bruno was treated by the newly qualified Ian Stroud.

“The service was wonderful; the vet made almost daily home visits... even after Bruno had fully recovered. Having a sick cat can change your life!” Ian and Aphra are now an item, and the surgery’s newest branch is Vet4Life in Brighton Road; the first in the world to use sight, sound, smell, taste and touch to create a relaxing environment for pets and owners, to help take the stress out of visits.

The facilities are so good that deputy mayor Cllr Mary Clark, who joined Gyles in counting down the seconds at the official opening, tried to get herself admitted.

Birdsong and a treetrunk desk create a natural reception in the old Majestic Wine store, while woodland scent replaces the usual Jeyes fluid.

Coming to Surbiton for the opening was nostalgic for Gyles. “Ah, land of the Good Life,” he said. “Surbiton has a double life; fantasy and real. I’m still great friends with Richard Briers’ widow Annie, and my teddy bear collection includes the one Richard had as a baby!”

Tim Harrison

Overheard on a K1

A boy went for an injection. All done, the doctor tried to bandage his arm. “Could you bandage the other arm?” asked the boy. “I’m supposed to bandage the arm I injected, so your friends know not to touch it.” “Doctor, you don’t know my friends!”

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The ultimate bug hotel, with co-creator Gary Gautier

Full hall for book's launch

Pat Ward and Bob Phillips, pictured, the co-authors of a new history book, *The Story of Tolworth*, signed copies at the official launch in a packed St George's hall, Hamilton Avenue.



On your marks, get set... Bike!

The annual tricyclingathon in Claremont Gardens was well supported during festival fortnight, with experienced riders following part of the Olympic route and 100 family riders leaving the clocktower to follow a gentler 10-mile riverside course. Bike experts were on hand to give advice, inflate tyres and adjust saddles.



Amelie Dinnin pumps her tyres, supervised by bike doctor Rob James

3G at 5-star bug hotel

The creepy-crawlies of Claremont Gardens have smiles on their faces. A five-star bug hotel – an insectile Hilton – has opened near the clocktower.

Under a sedum roof, the grand 9ft structure has dedicated rooms to appeal to bees and all minibests, while hedgehogs are directed to a well-appointed shelter in the basement.

It's one of the most visible projects of the Surbiton Wildlife Group, which has been co-ordinating efforts to return the gardens off Claremont Road to their original splendour.

Many hands created the bug palace, but the project was led by Tom Hooker, and the modest, self-effacing Canadian carpenter and sculptor Gary Gene Gautier, a man who was 3G long before mobile phones became a part of our lives.

"I found the front arches among rubbish at Hampton Court," he said. "Then Tom had the idea of a bug hotel and said we'd need a carpenter. So this old dummy put his hand up!"

Beyond its functional use, the new hotel is a work of art. Exquisite cut-outs of woodlice, mice, snails, hedgehogs and stag beetles enhance the cross beams, while a 'Seasonal Vacancies' inscription is another witty addition.

"I showed Tom how to use a saw, plane and jigsaw... I taught everyone, but it was a communal effort," said GGG.

It instantly proved its worth. While still under construction, several moths and bees moved in!

The mayor, Cllr Roy Arora, did the ribbon-cutting honours after the festival parade, and took time to chat to – and congratulate – the Surbiton Wildlife Group volunteers for their work.

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I'm a Berrylands babe! says Julian

Camp comic Julian Clary has proudly outed himself as a Berrylands babe. At a gathering to launch his new children's book there were murmurs of wonder from the audience when he revealed this precious nugget of information.

His parents, Peter and Brenda, met as teenagers in 1953, moving to newly built police housing off Berrylands Road, after Peter joined the Met and became PC Clary.

"I was born in Berrylands in a block of police flats," he told The Good Life. His autobiography adds it was "low-rise, red-brick, substantial lawns, proper brick sheds for bins, and no smell of wee on the stairs".

Conceived in Clacton, where Peter and Brenda were holidaying, Julian emerged on May 25 1959, at 1 Meadowbank, with help from GP Dr Pretzel and a midwife. He was named after the 6ft 6in Benedictine monk who had given his mother her first holy communion.

Julian was propelled round Berrylands in a top-of-

the-range £28 London Baby Coach pram... the type used by the Queen. To put it in context, Peter earned £6 a week as a beat bobby.

On one occasion, Brenda pushed Julian round to Jennings in Ewell Road to buy chops. It was only after she got home and saw the nappies on the line that she realised she'd forgotten him.

"She left me outside the butcher's in my pram," said Julian. "She raced back to find me still there, asleep."

He was the youngest of three. Sisters Frances and Beverley were three and one when he was born. He had the boxroom of the ground-floor flat and vividly remembers its wallpaper. "For some reason a design of climbing pink roses had been deemed suitable."

He also remembers playing with an Action Man, while his sisters had Cindy dolls. "Very soon my Action Man was Surbiton's first cross-dressing experiment." He jokingly blamed the wallpaper.

Other recollections include Frank's, the sweet shop in the parade in Berrylands Road, run by three brothers who were midgets, and who stood on boxes to reach the till; flowerbeds full of marigolds; the path made of fire cinders; and his father, in uniform, tucking him into bed before going on night duty.

Julian began school at four at Arundel House (now Surbiton Prep in Avenue Elmers), in a red and yellow striped uniform. He attended church on Sundays. He recalls his dad's Zephyr car, and Surbiton Lagoon off Raeburn Avenue. "We used to go to the lagoon," he said wistfully, "I know it's not there anymore."

He is fuzzy about other childhood details as the family moved to Teddington when he was seven, but he recalls Berrylands with affection.

NOTABLE SURBITONIANS Julian Clary



Julian Clary, photographed by Eddie Botsio and, below, Flat 1, Meadowbank, his birthplace

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"I'm not trying to hide anything," he insisted. "It's just difficult to remember, although I do remember it was lovely."

Julian went on to become a TV favourite and wicked wordplay artiste with a talent for outrageous double entendre.

He adores scandal, infamously causing a wave of it himself in 1993 by claiming on live television that he had been, er, imaginatively occupied backstage with former Kingston MP and ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont.

He became a household name in the 1980s for his lacerating wit, sashayed through Strictly, was crowned Celebrity Big Brother champ, and has many Radio 4 fans for his eloquence on Just a Minute.

Now he has reinvented himself as a children's writer with The Bolds, (Andersen



Press, £6.99, drawings by David Roberts) a humorous tale about a family of hyenas - dressed as humans - who set up home in Teddington.

Jane Grove

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‘Pass! Back to your place! Now your partner’s following.’ I tell you, there was more swapping than a Madison website. Regency dancing is the new Surbiton keep fit. Libby Curzon has run it for three years at St Mark’s church hall... and after two and a half hours, you certainly know you’ve been dancing. Stylish and refined, there’s a lot of elegant bowing and curtsying, but when the action starts, it whirls by. A 10-minute tea break is respite. Libby directs on her radio mic, adding historical notes about when dances were written or first performed. ‘Remember to promenade to the left, and you can’t really go wrong,’ advised one seasoned dancer. Ages range from 20 to 80. Come as a couple, or on your own. £5, comfy clothes, flat shoes. www.MrsBennet.co.uk **TH**



Libby and pals dress up for the Surbiton Festival

New concert season

The popular Thames Concert season at St Andrew’s, Maple Road, returns... with a twist. In addition to the main concerts (starting on Sat Nov 7 at 7.30pm with the wind quintet the Magnard Ensemble), there are free Saturday morning events on farmers’ market days, giving local musicians the chance to show off. No tickets; just bowl up at 10.30am on Sat Oct 17 to hear Surbiton High’s musicians.

Stringing it along

If you’re a bedroom strummer who wants to take guitar or ukulele to the next level, meet music teacher Chris Doney of Haycroft Road, who runs the Surbiton Guitar and Ukulele group. Next of the fortnightly sessions at Hook Library on Tue Oct 20, 8pm. “I help people with chords and strumming patterns, then we play and sing,” he said. “Anything from Elvis to Adele, but currently 60s and 70s classics. It’s not too difficult and we have fun. There’s a nice community spirit!”

● Winning images from the council’s annual photo contest are at Surbiton Library until Oct 24. Patrick Goodacre of Balaclava Road won the Les Kirkin prize for best remembrance picture.



Peter Saracen, left, and Edmund Dehn

Ideal Holmes show

The Entire Theatre Company performs The Adventure of the Crying Boy by Wally Sewell at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, 8pm, Oct 16 and 17. The play, pictured, is about a late-night Holmes/Watson meeting. Also, a performed reading of a Sherlock Holmes story. Anthony Shrubbsall directs. ● Beyond Therapy by Christopher Durang, directed by Dan Clinton for the Green Theatre Company, is a farcical comedy focusing on two Manhattanites seeking romance. Nov 12-14, cornerHOUSE. ● A stage production of Bram Stoker’s Gothic horror Dracula is on Nov 19-21 at the cornerHOUSE, revised from Hamilton Deane’s original stage version. A show with teeth, promises director Colin Goodger. ● Rediscovering Alice marks the 150th anniversary of Lewis Carroll’s adventure story, with Kingston Junior Drama Co presenting David Lawson Lean’s play, Nov 24 and 25. Details of all: www.thech.org

Sustaining comedy writing for a full-length play is a challenge; one that Surbiton playwright Sharon Wright has risen to magnificently with The Social Network. Performed at the Rada studios, off Tottenham Court Road, the show focuses on the efforts of three women to use their wits (and social media) to make ends meet following redundancy. As a concept, there are echoes of The Full Monty. But this is bang up to date. There’s an amusing scene, among multiple scenes, when the women, played by Debbie Bird, Charlotte Knowles and Natalie Layla, attend a motivational talk by Ken (Matt Slack). But the real thrust of this cleverly scripted, tenderly observed life-affirming comedy is the determination of the girls not to let the economic downturn defeat them.

Wright’s dialogue is well-crafted, and the depiction of Ken is masterful satire. Not all the comedy comes off (sometimes the humour

struggles in wordy build-up) but the overall gag hit rate is impressive, and director Adam Wollerton (who also took charge of Sharon’s

one-act play Full Fat at the cornerHOUSE in 2013) ensured there were no lulls. The writer, who lives just off Maple Road, has set the bar

high with a drama which would translate well to screen. We eagerly await the next offering by her Narky Knickers company. **TH**

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Surbiton's a screen star

Imagine my surprise, dear Surbitonians, when the other day, while idly watching *Still Life*, a quiet, small-budget 2013 film with Eddie Marsan, I heard a conversation between Eddie and a gravedigger about planning their own funerals.

The gravedigger said: 'My Uncle Fred ended up in Surbiton. I'm sure he wouldn't have liked that one bit.'

My first response was: 'What in the name of Gordon Bennett is wrong with Surbiton?' But my second response was: 'We're famous!'

What a thrill to be on the big screen! We are naturally used to the dazzling heat of fame as Tom and Barbara Good's stomping ground, but it never ceases to excite when our humble town sneaks on to our screens.

We're familiar with the glory of a scene in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* filmed at Surbiton station in 2007, but did you know exterior shots of *Men Behaving Badly* were filmed in Ellerton Road? The

houses at the corner of Ellerton and Ditton Roads were used as the exterior of Gary and Tony's flat in the 90s.

I had an English teacher who told me a charming story of her young son watching filming taking place and going up to Martin Clunes, saying 'I've got massive ears, just like you,' and Martin Clunes laughing and giving him a thumbs-up.

The outside of a house in King Charles Road was used in a scene from an episode of *Mr Bean* (this is serious recognition now, guys), as well as several scenes from the TV series being filmed in Kingston Market during a Christmas special in which he cuts down the centrepiece Christmas tree and takes it home, strapped to the roof of his car. I remember watching this episode as a child and being almost delirious with pride.

Better than that (I'm getting excited now), Surbiton was the focal point of a Monty Python's Flying Circus sketch in 1972, which

looked at the anthropological possibility that 'the inhabitants of Hounslow could have been descendants of the people of Surbiton' (an unlikely theory, but that's a different story). Yes, Eric Idle actually utters the word 'Surbiton' several times. He also says 'Esher', which is nice, but not quite as thrilling as saying 'Kingston Bypass'!

Surbiton also featured in John Sessions' mockumentary *Stella Street*, about a group of British and American celebs moving to our modest 'burbs in the late 90s. Like *The Good Life*, it wasn't actually filmed in Surbiton, which leads to an important question: Why the Duke of York not? We should perhaps question why our town was chosen for comic effect as the unlikeliest place a group of celebrities would end up, but that is entirely not the point. We are famous, Surbiton. Let's just hope it doesn't go to our collective suburban head.

Becky Mayhew



It's restoration restaurant

An impressive, sympathetic Victorian restoration has recaptured the original glory of a historic Surbiton building.

Langley's restaurant at the corner of Ewell and Langley Roads has revamped its upstairs room, creating a stunning space with 'cathedral' open-beam roof.

Miranda Hoogewerf, pictured, said: "I wanted it restored to authentic Victorian; I'm in love with the building and adore the history; it's been a fascinating project."

Walls are endearingly wonky and beams follow directions of their own in the 1886 building which started as Jamiesons grocery and store, became Waitrose's 13th UK branch, then Bell's guitar shop (where Eric Clapton bought his first instrument) then Liberty Bell, the restaurant.

Local stained glass supremos Simone Kay and Cliff Port restored the decorative glass panels. "The original stained glass is beautiful, and uses silverstain and kiln-fired paint," said Simone. "It's in good condition. I've collected textured glass for over 30 years, which comes in handy."

The changing light during the day and evening means that the colours in the windows alter – a remarkable effect.

Reclaimed Victorian doors and handles, salvaged from an old school, complete the look, while the staircase – boarded in for 60 years – is back to its original grandeur.

The kitchens have been expanded to cope with the extra room, available as separate hireable space, or as overspill for

downstairs on Fridays and Saturdays, when people regularly have to be turned away.

The new space can hold up to 160 people for canape gatherings, 100 seated at round tables, or 85 in a formal banqueting setting.

Waiters and waitresses, many Kingston Uni students, ferry food up and down stairs, and are nicknamed 'London buses' by the chefs.

The carpets are red wine spill-proof, being made from recycled plastic bottles!



Sunrise exercising

There's an appetite for fitness among Surbitonians. Some days it seems a rolled-up yoga mat is an essential accessory.

Tapping into the mood is Honorata Glowacki, a 38-year-old Pole from Cottage Grove who loves exercising.

She uses Victoria rec, training early mornings on her own before going to her city job as a compliance officer. She wants others to join her exercise sessions – 6amFit – led by personal trainers looking to develop freelance client bases.

No charge,



Honorata Glowacki

no commitment, no equipment, all abilities. "It's a challenge to get up, but seeing sunrise in the park is unbelievable," she said. "The open air is good; I love fresh air!"

Watch for the 6amFit website and signs on the railings.

We're going to miss you, Miss

After preparing Surbiton's youngest citizens for the big, bad world for a quarter of a century, Liz Robinson has retired from Maple Infants' School, Maple Road.

"It's a great school; a little gem," said the departing head, who arrived in 1989, and marvels at the changes.

"There were no mobile phones," she said. "There has been a big technological switch with computers. Hard copies are a thing of the past. It's been funny looking back at old handwritten notes as I cleared out my desk."

Now Liz and husband Keith, who also had a career as a teacher and retired five years ago, plan to travel.

The couple, who live in Westfield Road, aim to visit their son, a scientist in the Earthwatch project in Costa Rica. They also enjoy visiting France.

Liz was given a bicycle for a retirement gift, so you'll still spot her, cycling round Surbiton.

"Lots of people from the wider Surbiton community came to my retirement do, which was lovely. I'll miss it astonishingly." She has been succeeded by Claire Barwell.



Fred Perry makes £50

A Surbiton photo album with several snaps of tennis legend Fred Perry has been sold online. The album included pictures of the three times Wimbledon winner in 1951, when he visited the tennis club in Berrylands for the summer tournament. Also in the collection were pictures of other tennis stars performing at Surbiton in 1951 and 1952, among them Mo Connolly. A flurry of bids pushed the eBay price to £52.77.

Off with the fairies

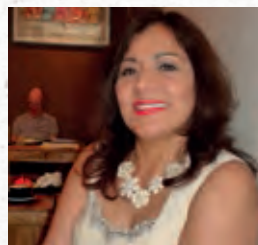
The galvanised box which sprang up in St Andrew's Square, to the dismay of admirers of the gardens' natural beauty, has gained an official sticker bearing the code FP1. What can it stand for? Frightful Post? Fearful Problem? Forbidding Pillar? Freestanding Pain? The mystery was solved by David Jacobson of the Surbiton Photo Circle (meetings, second Monday of the month, Maple Works, 73 Maple Road, 8pm), whose picture clearly demonstrates that the rogue object has to be a Fairy Point.

● Morris Thain is at the Druskinkai Poetic Fall event in Lithuania, but is busy composing fresh words for the next issue



The accent's on cookery

Martha Jesty arrived from Peru in 1990, planning to stay six months. But after four, she met and married Paul, an accountant. In 25 years she has helped women with trauma, designed alpaca knitwear... and now teaches Spanish in Surbiton. It takes, she reckons, three years to learn a language, by embracing a new culture. "Different ages have different objectives. With me you get a report and a course. If you want a cheap teacher, you get a cheap service," she warns. Martha, the youngest of seven, watched how food was cooked at home, and now also teaches Peruvian cookery. All conversation is in Spanish, with Latin music completing the mood.



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