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Issue 43

The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3

October/November 2018

Have you heard about the festival?



An unfeasibly large ear (plugging hearing tests) was one odd sight at the Surbiton Festival parade on Sept 29, as was the perennial stilted waitress, right. But a question mark hangs over future festivals' viability after Kingston Council increased the fee that it charges organisers. "I'm not sure we can afford to run it next year," said one insider. Full story on **p7**



Market's ninth birthday

Surbiton's farmers' market marks its ninth birthday on October 20, having raised more than £60,000 for charity and being shortlisted in the community commitment section of the area's business awards. This month the market gave nearly £4,000 to five local charities, including Kingston's young carers, Kingston Association for the Blind, the TAG youth club and Fircroft Trust.

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Unblocking the riverside path

That infuriating blockage midway along Surbiton's picturesque riviera will finally disappear if a new planning policy succeeds.

Queen's Promenade strollers must currently abandon the Thames path when they reach the car parks near Raven's Ait.

Instead of continuing to enjoy swans and boats, they have to divert to Portsmouth Road because their route is blocked by Thames Sailing Club and Harts Boatyard pub/restaurant.

Then, beyond that, they can only wistfully glimpse the river through railings because the former filter beds at Seething Wells are closed off.

Now a council brief, snappily titled The Kingston Riverside Public Realm Supplementary Planning Document, charts a dream of how the river walk could change for the better in the coming 15 years.

"There are stretches of the riverside that, with the right investment, could offer more," said planning policy lead Cllr Malcolm Self, welcoming the new vision.

Shaped with input from a public consultation (70% back



Diversion: Where riverside path becomes roadside walk

the gist), the aim is to improve the 'natural riverine character' of the pathway, balancing the needs of people and wildlife.

The planning brief describes Queen's Prom as 'faded', although it boasts the largest Japanese pagoda tree outside Kew Gardens (it stands at the end of Anglesea Road).

While much of the 86-page document witters on about Kingston and how marvellous the area's history is, part looks at improving Surbiton and Seething Wells, whose old filter beds support a roost of Daubenton's bat.

Invasive vegetation such as Himalayan balsam is to be targeted in an effort to encourage native plant species.

Unnecessary signs are to be earmarked for removal, to declutter the walk, while more access points are

being proposed, to make it safer to use at night.

More cafes would be encouraged, along the lines of the popular Riverside Café, with a concerted effort also made to bring the boarded-up public loos back into use.

Long-term, the dream is for people to walk unimpeded along the riverside from Kingston to Hampton Court, as they've always done on the opposite bank.

Can it be achieved? One short-term proposal is to create a new ferry for foot passengers close to Harts Boatyard, to shuttle people over the river so they could then enjoy an 18-minute stroll to Hampton Court.

View the full plan at tinyurl.com/y7zzpppl

Tim Harrison



She's a class act

MasterChef judge Monica Galetti was so thrilled Tolworth School had called a Year 2 class after her that she called by. The Douglas Road school renamed its classes after inspirational women to mark the centenary of female suffrage. "We were delighted Monica came to visit," said teacher Louise Harrison, above. Other classes include Victoria Pendleton, Kylie Minogue and Delia Smith. Expect a parade of celebs turning up to pay a visit! The Galetti class made a food montage; each child pictured in a chef's hat. Said Monica: "The least I could do was drop in, say hello and admire the drawings of their favourite dishes! Galetti class is the coolest!"

They shall grow not old...

Surbiton will fall silent at the Ewell Road war memorial on Sunday Nov 11 as the centenary of the Armistice is marked at the town's remembrance event.

The parade arrives at 10.45am before the open-air wreath-laying service, led by the Rev Stan Brown. Then refreshments are served in the Methodist church.

As always, Laurence Binyon's moving words – written at the start of the First World War in the autumn of 1914 – will be read.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old; age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.

Among those remembered,



the three Sweet brothers of 102 Douglas Road, whose names are on the St Matthew's church war memorial, centrepiece of the church's recent open day.

In all, 2,200 young men from the borough died in the Great War. The Sweets (Fred, Henry and Sam) were not the only triple loss locally. Fred, Ernest and Albert Ralph of Surbiton Hill died within a year of each other – Ernest in September 1918, a month before the Armistice, while brothers Arthur and William Stannard of Lenelby Road died side by side on Sept 3 1916 – killed by the same shell.

When Helen circled Earth

Thirty years ago, a shy 25-year-old moved into a flat in Stratton Court, Adelaide Road. Three years later she was circling the planet. Astronaut Helen Sharman is the latest Notable Surbitonian, **p4**



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Nytt café visar sig vara en framgång*

In just two months, Surbiton station's new forecourt café is truly 'home to the cinnamon bun'.

"They're an essential part of a Swedish coffee break," said laid-back proprietor Fredrik Jonung, 40, as October's cinnamon bun day (Kanelbullens Dag) loomed. Now Surbitonians are getting a taste for the Scandinavian speciality.

To be accurate, the café in the former Cornish pasty shop should be Fika, which is 'coffee break' in Swedish. But as that name is trademarked, Fredrik went for a phonetic version, Fee-ka, to help locals pronounce it correctly.

The shop is open by 6am for

early-bird commuters, and also serves muffins, croissants and chocolate balls, some locally made, some imported from Scandinavia.

Fredrik sells Kimbo coffee, a Neapolitan blend ("it's a slightly lighter roast, which works better") of which his Italian wife Glenda thoroughly approves. The couple, who live in Twickenham, have a five-year-old daughter, with another child on the way.

It was Glenda who spotted the vacant café and alerted her Swedish ex-investment banker husband, who had tested the water with a year-long pop-up shop, Beans & Greens, in Castle Street, Kingston.

Fresh juices are a speciality at the café (try apple, carrot & orange, or spinach, avocado, ginger & mango). The La Marzocco coffee machine steams dawn-7pm, while compostable straws and recyclable cups feature.

"In Sweden people go on fika dates," said Fredrik. "Offices have fika rooms; it's part of the culture and I've always wanted to run something like this myself."

A heady cinnamon aroma now envelops the station. In the first two hours of trading, Fee-ka sold 48 cinnamon buns. See ad below for discount offer. **Tim Harrison**

* New café proves a success



Fredrik Jonung and staff at Fee-ka, the new home of the cinnamon bun

The dragon oven is an apt name for the fire-breathing stove in the Dough Shack mobile pizza van.

As Erin Hadfield stoked the flames of the wood oven, colleagues prepared toppings for our half Nduja (spiced Italian sausage, Shropshire blue and rocket), half Buffalo (tomatoes, pesto, mozzarella) pizza.

"Mix and match whatever you want," said Erin. Her brother Conor started the pizza business two years ago with Hinchley Wood school chum Aaron Alexander after they'd globetrotted together for six months. They now have two vans and a pop-up restaurant, and employ other school and college mates as staff. The Dough Shack is also available for events, weddings and corporate dos.

"It's been hard work but worth it," said Aaron, 26, who had previously worked in pizzerias. "All ingredients are fresh and prepared on the day in our

A quacking good pizza



Chef Erin Hadfield in the Dough Shack

kitchen in Hersham. We make fresh yeast dough each day too and prove for up to five days; a lot of man hours go into it."

Silver birch logs in their oven gives a rustic authentic flavour, while Surbiton's favourite pizza is (drum roll) duck, hoisin, onion, chillies and cucumber. "We're renowned for our duck; it's our most popular. Not a lot of pizza restaurants do it."

The day I rocked up, one special was spicy beetroot, goats cheese, spinach, rocket

and mozzarella. Pizzas are £7 to £9; extra toppings, 50p.

Join the queue on Tuesdays, 6.30-8.30pm outside St Andrew's and St Mark's Junior School, Maple Road; Thursdays, 5-9pm at Station Approach, Hinchley Wood; Fridays, 5-9pm outside Manny's newsagent and store, Fleece Road, Long Ditton; and Sundays, 5-8.30pm outside the Limping Fox pub, Rushett Road, Long Ditton.

www.thedoughshack.co.uk

Jane Grove

Market stall blossoms into a shop

Basking in the praise he regularly receives for his tasty deli offerings at Surbiton Farmers' Market, stallholder Ralph Wettach is taking the plunge and opening a shop.

Ralph's Kitchen opens this month at 77 Surbiton Road, giving the affable Viennese baker and boutique caterer (he's been a fixture at the market since April 2012) his first proper shop window.

The corner shop is close to the Kingston/Surbiton boundary, at the junction with Southsea Road, and is clocked daily by thousands going to and fro on buses as it's right opposite the turn into Surbiton Crescent.

The roll call of offerings is impressive. From bread to cakes, tarts to rolls, salads to sandwiches, tapenades to pies, coffees to pastries, he's selling it.

His signature special is a fig and almond log with wine crackers; the ultimate accompaniment to an inventive cheeseboard. He also does gluten-free and vegan deli options. "Everything I make will be at the shop, and I'm still doing the farmers' market and outside catering," he said.



Having a big kitchen on site will make a huge difference to the cramped premises he currently uses. Ralph said that the only thing preventing him opening a shop before now was prohibitive rents (think £60,000 a year for a good site in Victoria Road).

Until 2014 his premises were occupied by JR newsagents, but it has been vacant since then.

● Ralph's is the second Surbiton Farmers' Market stall to evolve into a shop. The first, Lallapolosa, features in the next Good Life.



A selection of Ralph's deli goodies and (below) the new shop with its temporary canvas sign nears completion



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Seating increase

They'll need more chairs for the public at Surbiton's next neighbourhood meeting. Forty people filled all available seats at September's gathering, to hear news of Tolworth's area plan. The next date is 7.30pm, Tues Nov 6 at Dysart School, 190 Ewell Road.

'M' spied in town

Spotted lunching at the French Table, Maple Road, on September's farmers' market day, national treasure and James Bond ex-boss Dame Judi Dench.

New fountains

Surbiton will eventually get drinking fountains to reduce plastic bottle use, but timing depends on talks with Thames Water. The first of a new generation of drinking fountains has sprung up in Kingston Market Place.

Bank set to close

Royal Bank of Scotland customers who hop on a bus to use the branch in Thames Street, Kingston, must now go further afield, to Sutton or Richmond. RBS is closing its Kingston branch (once Williams & Glyn) on Jan 16.

Concrete drains

Ellerton Road's drains haven't been cleaned in years, claimed resident Ernie Allen at a recent neighbourhood meeting. "Street cleaning is done on one side, not the other. They're like concrete!" he said. Action was pledged.

Traveller block

Council officials are applying to the High Court on Nov 8 for a three-year injunction on travellers occupying 150 open spaces in Elmbridge after summer disruption from 65 cars and caravans on Long Ditton rec.

Typical residents

Doormat in porch in Raeburn Avenue, Berrylands: Remember, as far as anyone knows we are a normal family.

Hearty support

Staff at the Victoria pub, Victoria Road, are being trained to use a defibrillator provided by resident Phil Harris, who raised £2,000 to fund it via sponsorship at this year's London Marathon.

Many hands...

The hunt is on for volunteers to help organise Surbiton's Christmas lights. "...even if you just want to be on the periphery of helping," said Surbiton's community manager. Email him at Richard.dean@kingston.gov.uk

A friendly lunch

Live in Long Ditton? Like to meet new friends? A friendship lunch is held on Fri Nov 2 at St Mary's community hall, by St Mary's church, at 1pm. A two-course meal plus tea or coffee is £5.

Young buzzards

If you live near the Raeburn Avenue/ Norton Avenue junction in Berrylands, look up. A trio of buzzards, two of them juveniles, have been spotted wheeling overhead, Surbiton's bird watching society heard as members shared interesting recent sightings.

A trunk call?

Surbiton is getting 500 new street saplings in a council-driven initiative to make the area greener.

Planting has already begun, said neighbourhood committee chair Cllr Sushila Abraham in response to a query from a resident in the public question section of last month's meeting.

John Tellick of Ellerton Road welcomed the news, but questioned if follow-up care for young trees was adequate.

"We have to start looking after trees," he said, pointing out that for two years he had taken responsibility for watering the three street trees closest to his home. "It's up to residents to look after trees in their road," he said. "The Tolworth Broadway trees are dying all over the place, and it looks terrible. I can't understand why the shopkeepers aren't looking after them."

Cllr Hilary Gander said that the problem with maintaining the Greenway trees was that the contractor tasked with looking after them was "based in the North". Now the council will adopt six of the Greenway trees, replacing with more appropriate types, and intensively watering (50 litres per month per tree) for three years.

Cllr Abraham reported that, following consultation with the borough's tree officer, the main 500-tree planting programme had got under way in September.

Tim Harrison



Siding with the war wounded

This year's Tolworth Showtrain model railway exhibition at Tolworth Recreation Centre coincides with the centenary of the Armistice, and includes a display marking the role played by trains on the western front during the First World War.

The model layout above shows the evacuation of wounded soldiers by ambulance train.

The show on November 10 and 11 has 25 working layouts and displays by clubs, societies and individuals from across the

land, while traders' stands will sell every conceivable model item.

Organised by the Hampton Court Model Railway Society, the exhibition has several layouts which can be operated by children. Model-making skills will also be demonstrated.

Tickets are £7 (£3 children), with £15 family tickets, and one child free on Sunday per paying adult. A free bus shuttles to the show on both days from Surbiton Station. Site parking is free.

www.tolworthshowtrain.co.uk

SURBITON LIFE by David Cox



Anxious moments as Surbiton commuters wonder how far they trust each other to do the right thing

Always use the zebra crossing



Feel adventurous? Sign up for a 500km cycle ride through Malawi's stunning countryside, from the heights of the Zomba Plateau to the shores of Lake Malawi, surrounded by other-worldly baobab trees.

The trip entails six days cycling and two days off - one a safari in Liwonde National Park, the other to chill by the ninth largest lake in the world.

Next April's ride is being organised by Surbiton charity African Vision Malawi whose Pedal Power cycle challenge was so successful this year.

"We raised £13,000 which, with match-funding will help finish Sam's Village, a learning and skills hub for apprentices," said Heather Palmer, founder of the charity which helps orphans and vulnerable people in a 400 km² area north of Lilongwe.

"The village trains 48 marginalised people from the community in vocational skills of carpentry, tailoring and basic electronics to empower them to start their own business and become independent."

The ride lets those who aren't seasoned cyclists take breathers for drinks and snacks,

and there's a back-up vehicle if anyone needs to take a break.

"The last ride began in the Shire Highlands; an amazing way to experience Malawi's countryside and people," said Heather. "We encourage cyclists to stay on to get involved with projects at Sam's Village which are education, permaculture and health-based."

The trip costs £950 plus flights. It starts on April 8. Email heather.palmer@africanvision.org.uk or get a flavour at www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCe_J7kFN3k Jane Grove

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The girl from Mars who saw the stars

The first Brit in space, Helen Sharman, was living in Adelaide Road, Surbiton, when she was chosen from 13,000 applicants to be the UK astronaut on the British-Soviet Project Juno mission.

The Sheffield-born chemistry graduate already knew Mars... well, Mars Confectionery in Slough, where she was testing recipes for the ice cream version of the famous 'work, rest and play' chocolate bar.

In June 1989, stuck in traffic while driving home to the flat she'd bought the previous year in Stratton Court, fate intervened.

"I flicked through the radio stations," she recalls in her autobiography. "My attention was grabbed by a male voice. It said:

'Astronaut wanted. No experience necessary.' With hindsight, the minute or so I spent listening to the advert was the crucial, pivotal moment in my life."

Applicants had to be British, fit, under 40 (she'd just turned 26), with a science background and ability to learn a foreign language. She scribbled the phone number on the back of a petrol receipt, sent off the application and found herself on a 150-name shortlist.

After exhaustive physical and psychological tests, she was chosen.

The day after news broke, she scurried down St Mark's Hill to the newsagent to buy copies of the papers to show her boyfriend, Kevin. She'd made every front page.

As a local lass, she was given Kingston borough's flag and badge by the mayor. Meanwhile colleagues at work took to answering the phone: "Mission control!"

Helen spent 18 months training at Moscow's Yuri Gagarin Centre, learning to fly rockets, speak Russian and cope with suddenly being treated as public property.

One medical test illustrated the issue. "While being prepared for an endoscope to be inserted into my rectum, an area of my body I usually keep fairly private, a salesman for the company that made the fibre-optic probe walked in," she recalls. "He wanted to see how it performed. I was asked if I minded. My first reaction was 'Yes I bloody well do mind', but it was going to be a lot like this in the future, so I said 'No, of course, go ahead!'"

Seventy-two separate measurements of her body were taken to make her space suit, now displayed at the National Space Centre, Leicester.

She became, at 27, the sixth youngest person to go into space, orbiting Earth for eight days on



the Mir space station in May 1991, and conducting scientific experiments.

"Neither of my parents was an astronaut," she jokes. In fact her mother was a nurse, her father a college lecturer. Both were present at blast-off.

The rosy-cheeked cosmonaut carried a photo of the Queen, a butterfly brooch from dad, and a 'space passport' in case she had to land outside the Soviet Union on re-entry. She was allowed to take some UK

food, choosing Kendal mint cake – beloved of mountaineering Brits for 150 years.

She came back to Earth in the Soyuz TM11 capsule, parachuting into Kazakhstan. With her was Commander Musa Manarov, who held the record for the longest time in space at 541 days. When Helen emerged she said: "The air is very fresh. Smell the flowers, they're wonderful!"

The observation was apt. From Mir she made the first commercial delivery order

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Man's influence significantly affects wildlife, speaker Chris Ward told 60 members of Surbiton's bird-watching society in a recent illustrated talk.

Intensively managed agricultural land accounts for the biggest nationwide dip in wildlife numbers. "But while some species are in trouble, others are increasing," he said.

There are 200,000 seals in the UK, yet in 1900 (when limits on their slaughter came in) there were barely 500.

Great crested grebes were on the edge of extinction 150 years ago (in 1860 there were only 32 pairs), but now there are 12,000 pairs.

And red squirrels – despite conservation efforts – are still no match for the imported grey. Trials are taking place,

said Chris, on grey squirrel contraception... yet the answer might be nature itself. The pine marten, which predates grey squirrels, is on the rise.

Hedgehog decline is serious. There are fewer than a million, with 50,000 a year perishing on the roads and habitat loss threatening their existence.

Chris urged everyone to cut hedgehog holes in fences to let them roam.

Turning to barn owls, Chris said that more now nest in nesting boxes than in barns.

● On Oct 16 at Surbiton library hall (7.30pm), local conservationist Elliot Newton talks to the society about Tolworth Brook. On Nov 20, John Buckingham talks on How Birds Work.

www.surbitonbirds.org

Damp basement? Sunny penthouse? Janice Cripps accommodates insects

Build a home for our creepy-crawlies

I was admiring the ritzy bug hotel in Claremont Gardens, by the Clocktower Cafe, while out and about at the Surbiton Festival.

Rated four stars on TripAdvisor, it's the perfect getaway for a myriad of creepy-crawlies seeking home comforts and a safe refuge from their natural predators, the forces of nature and the warfare tactics of chemical-wielding gardeners.

Bug hotels are not only good for the planet but can be impressive works of art, adding valuable interest in the dingiest and most neglected area of the garden.

And now is the right time to build one. There are no strict rules, apart from ensuring the basic structure is sturdy and there is a roof to provide shelter from the rain.

Choosing the right spot is crucial; most insects like cool, moist conditions so a shady spot under a tree or by a hedge works well.

Probably the simplest method is to create the main structure using old



The Claremont Gardens bug hotel

wooden pallets and filling the gaps with recycled stuff and a variety of natural materials, such as straw, moss, dry leaves, hollow bamboo canes, logs and bricks.

Like all self-respecting homeowners, different insects have different requirements. Beetles and woodlice will opt for the lower ground floor where it is particularly cool and damp. Bees, on the other

hand, will go for the sunniest spot – the penthouse suite?

Cleaning and taking care of a bug hotel is just as important as building one, and regular maintenance cannot be overlooked to ensure the optimum nurturing environment.

For those new to the property market I suggest starting off small and having multiple units housing one species in each rather than a single large unit hosting an entire zoo, thereby creating a number of potentially conflicting environments.

To that end there are a large number of ready-made homes out there, such as ladybird towers, butterfly biomes and bumblebee nests – all very desirable residences and aesthetically pleasing in the garden.

What better reward to give a home to nature and see it flourish every day in your own suburban garden?

Janice Cripps is a professional Surbiton garden designer.

For advice, planting plans, or projects – from concept to completion – visit www.janicecripps.co.uk

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The house that Thomas Norris built

Fishponds House, situated behind the main pond in Fishponds Park off Ewell Road, dates back to 1739, when Thomas Norris, a brick maker, purchased land that was then part of Kingston Common.

Over the next three years he built the core of the house. The park reflects his profession, the landscaped depression opposite the house, known as The Dell, being the result of his clay extraction. Brick making was a major enterprise locally – the area now occupied by King Charles Crescent appears on old maps as the 'Brick Field'.

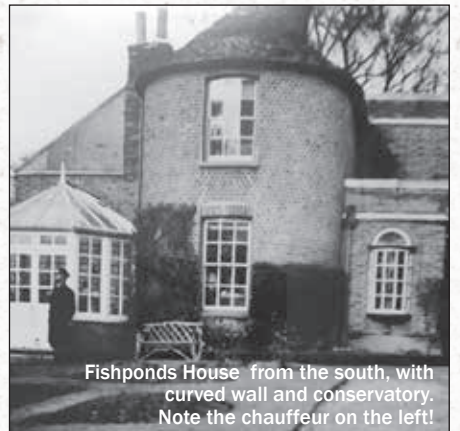
Over the next 150 years, the house was enlarged. In the Regency period (1820s) an extension at the south end with a curved wall created a 'music room' and a bedroom above.

In the Victorian period, a further two-storey extension, a brick and stone porch, a bay window and a conservatory were all added. This was now a fairly substantial property in 12 acres of grounds, the owners of which, in the early 1930s, were the Miss

Butlers of the Lambert & Butler cigarette company. As time went on, money ran short and the house and grounds were sold to Surbiton Council in 1935 for £10,000. The occupants leased back the house and a fence was erected to separate a garden from what became the public park.

Fast forward to the late 1940s and the death of the last Miss Butler, and the house reverted to the council which converted it into two properties, the ground floor and first floor, and let each out to tenants. With the Right to Buy legislation of the early 1980s, the tenants of the ground floor purchased a 125-year lease on their home, which my wife and I bought in 1997.

The park's ponds are linked by an underground pipe through which water can be pumped from the main pond to the furthest corner of the park among the trees. From there it can flow back through each of the top ponds, down the stream, through the Dell and under the drive to return.



Fishponds House from the south, with curved wall and conservatory. Note the chauffeur on the left!

This system operated for many years and watercress used to grow in the stream, which is currently dry. Lower water levels and problems with maintenance of the pump have prevented this operating in recent years.

The park received the Green Flag award for several years, as proudly displayed on signs. More recently, the council simply has not had the funds to maintain this standard.

With the help of the Environment Trust, local councillors, businesses and nearby residents, community action days are now being set up to provide the volunteer effort to clean up the park and stem the advance of brambles. The next of these is on Saturday October 27, from 10am to 2pm. To express an interest, contact fishpondssurb@gmail.com or just come along on the day. Subsequently, it is planned that a 'Friends of Fishponds' be established to harness the enthusiasm of local people for this little local gem.

Rob Eyre-Brook
Fishponds House



Sale day: Fishponds House in 1935 when it was sold to Surbiton Council



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Flats bid turned down

A bid to knock down a three-bedroom Surbiton home and replace it with a block of eight flats has been refused.

Developers wanted to demolish the two-storey house at 36 Villiers Avenue (pictured, right) and replace it with a three-storey block. Neighbours objected, saying flats would be out of character, too dense and would add to parking woes.

"Is this the new policy?" asked resident John Tellick at the neighbourhood committee. "Knock down houses and put up blobs where the density is way above what it should be?"

Officers had recommended approving the plan, but objector Ian Sedgley said it would set a precedent for replacing any Surbiton house which had a garden with a block of flats. He said it wasn't 'town planning' so much as 'town cramming'.

The developer's agent said building eight flats would ease the local housing crisis and, from the street, "it would appear to be like a modern house".

Cllr Liz Green disagreed. She said it was overdevelopment and didn't fit with the local character or history of the area, adding: "It's all houses down that side of Villiers. I don't think this looks like a house, and anything built on that site should look like a house."

She pointed out that one of the eight proposed flats was a three-bedroom apartment that was completely underground.

Officer Hannah Harris spoke of central government pressure to "optimise densities", but councillors sided with the objectors and turned down the plan by nine votes to one.



Tree is planted as memorial

An elm sapling has been planted in the Richard Jefferies bird sanctuary, near the back of Surbiton station, as a memorial to the Victorian nature writer after which the conservation park is named. It followed a talk at Surbiton library hall by Andrew Rossabi, president of the Richard Jefferies Society, about Jefferies' life. He lived at 296 Ewell Road (today Stack & Bonner estate agents) and documented wildlife in Tolworth. He died in 1887 at the age of 38.

House extension is approved

Plans for an extension at the back of a semi at 38 Warren Drive North, Tolworth, have been given the green light. An old conservatory is to be pulled down and replaced by a single-storey addition, 4m deep and 5.8m wide.

Law award winner

Surbiton solicitor Sushila Abraham was named winner of a prestigious prize at Surrey Law Society's gala evening.

Sushila, a councillor who chairs Surbiton neighbourhood committee, scooped 2018's client care award. After being presented with a trophy by legal commentator and former BBC journalist Joshua Rozenberg, she was quick to praise the work of her office team.

Established in 1999, and run from one of Surbiton's dinkiest shopfronts at 290a Ewell Road, S Abraham Solicitors has a reputation for staff stability. "Many have been with the firm since the day it started," said Sushila, who attended the event at Guildford's Mandolay Hotel with husband Mathew.

Services range from civil and matrimonial litigation to conveyancing, wills and probate. Most work stems from client recommendation.



Staff help fulfil Amelie's wish

Staff at Surbiton's Nationwide branch in Victoria Road raised £2,173 via a £1-a-ticket raffle for the Make a Wish charity to send a child with a critical illness on a trip to Disneyland Paris.

Manager Laura Baldwin was full of praise for the efforts of her staff, who raised enough to send Amelie – a young girl from Epsom who suffers from a serious medical condition – to the theme park.

"All the staff here are amazing,"

she said. "We had donations from shops and businesses, including a bottle of House of Commons wine donated by MP Ed Davey. In all we had 20 really good prizes for the raffle which raised £2,173.

"Then other branches joined in to make it up to £5,000. Amelie came in to see us here, which was lovely."

Staff at the Surbiton building society have also sent a boy tobogganing in Austria via the Make a Wish charity.

Road trip inspires Becky to make Surbiton as American as apple pie

Yeeha! All the way from Memphis

Hey Surbiton, how y'all doin'? I write this from a hotel in Memphis, on day 11 of an 18-day road trip in America's so-called Bible Belt. And now that I'm basically American, I'm going to strip Surbiton down to its bare bones and rebuild it, inspired by what I've seen through Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee.

Firstly, we're now Surbingtonville and on the billboard into town our slogan is The Town Teddington Wishes it Was, with a picture of a well-known figure (maybe the stilt-walking waitress who turns up at festivals) giving a thumbs-up.

All shops from The Victoria to ExCellar are knocked through to extend the bar of the Victoria, as it's frowned upon in the States to have bars less than three miles long. It is renamed Ol' Vicky's Bar and Grill, serving British-inspired fare like shepherds pie and fish 'n' chips. Short aside: I had fish and chips in Georgia to see how to ruin a good dish. The fish batter was basically KFC skin. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

All shops apart from McDonald's and Starbucks disappear and become The Surbingtonville Gun and Knife Outlet (Real Toys for Real Boys!), Mary-Sue's Peach Pie Emporium, and a huge antiques market (Precious lil' memories from bygone times).

Every fourth building is now a church (Baptist and Methodist only, maybe a Latter Day Saints for good measure) and each church has a billboard yelling "God is a real swell guy" or "Not

comin' in? Y'all goin' to hell?"

Up by the station, taxis must make way as the forecourt becomes a biker park where leathered dudes rev their engines, drink beer and listen to heavy metal day and night.

Wilders Deli to Cash & Cheque Express becomes Dirty Buck's Biker Bar where everyone must wear sunglasses inside despite it being darker than a whale's belly, and HSBC becomes Sonny's Saloon, with a sign on the door saying 'Shoot first, ask questions later' (actually seen in a bar in Tennessee).

Importantly, all toilet doors must be replaced by ones at least a foot too narrow, so while we're going about our business we can stare through the gap into the whites of the eyes of the person waiting (a feature of American toilets I neither enjoy nor understand).

Equally importantly, a huge Trump 2020 flag is draped on the station facade, with the proud slogan: 'Trump: Making Surbingtonville Great Again'.

The nicest thing will be that everyone will be mega polite and friendly and call each other Sir and Ma'am and ask how each other's day is going. And we'll all sit at the three-mile bar of Ol' Vicky's and drink tequila 'n' grapefruit slushies and Bud Light and become lifelong friends and end up stumbling to McDonald's, then stumbling home to binge watch episodes of The Golden Girls.

Becky Mayhew



Festival a success... but will there be one next year?

More than 20,000 people enjoyed a sunny, streamlined Surbiton Festival on the last Saturday of September.

The split-centre concept worked well, focusing music and activity in the hubs at St Andrew's Square, Claremont Gardens and the station forecourt.

The 88 stalls along Victoria Road and St Andrew's Road were busy, the parade was cheered by the crowds, and at the start and finish the throng enjoyed live bands, food and drink tents and children's entertainments.

But the fear is that after 26 years this may have been Surbiton's last festival. Escalating charges levied by cash-strapped Kingston Council threaten to price it out of existence.

In bygone years, the council charged the Surbiton Festival organisers around £2,000 to cover bus diversions, litter collection, signs etc, subsidising the fee with a £1,000

community grant. This year the council charged £6,500, with no grant, – so income from stall rent and sponsorship was instantly wiped out by overheads.

"I'm not sure we can afford to run it next year," an insider told The Good Life. "In fact it looks like we'll make a loss this year of £1,000."

The street stalls in Victoria Road and St Andrew's Road did a roaring trade in everything from honey to screen prints, hand-made cards to cakes, while charities and local groups made the most of the chance to promote themselves.

At the Flavours of Sicily stall, a visiting pastry chef helped Dani and Janet Signori make 300 Sicilian pastries, which sold out.

There was drama early in the day at the spit roast in St Andrew's Square when dry leaves beneath the barbecue caught it alight and set the hog ablaze. But prompt action by fellow stallholders put the flames out before the fire brigade arrived, with the result that there was simply more 'well done' pork than usual.

Town crier Mike Seigel added razzmatazz to the event by announcing the groups marching in the parade – from brownies to freemasons, Scottish dancers to brass bands.



● Clockwise from left, Scottish dancing at the station (www.surbitoncaledonian.co.uk); a Morris Minor police car; Poised to fling the frog; goats at the pet farm; a policeman poses with Cllr Yogan Yoganathan, MP Ed Davey and his son John, 10; deputy mayor Cllr Olivia Boulton grabs a coffee at a food stall



The marching band led the parade up St Andrew's Road

Lanterns light lake



Eight hundred people enjoyed picnics, drumming workshops, music and lantern-making at a Long Ditton Buddhist festival.

The event, in the grounds of a 19th century manor house-turned temple in Woodstock Lane North, culminated in the lake launch of 100 lanterns, carrying messages of hope and friendship as members of the Shinnyo community chanted and performed ancient Buddhist rites.

Head of Shinnyo-en UK Shohei Nishino said: "It is important to get to know our neighbours. Lantern floating, a special practice within Shinnyo-en, is a beautiful, peaceful and inclusive rite and we are happy the community and other faiths could share it with us. The lanterns shine together to create a bright light of hope for the future."

Shinnyo-en is a Buddhist community set up in Japan in 1936. It came to Long Ditton in 1994. Visit www.shinnyoenuk.org

Move to let 16-year-olds vote

Sixteen and 17-year-old Surbiton residents would get the vote if a united bid by the council and 31 other local authorities succeeds.

Sam Foulder-Hughes, one of a trio of councillors representing Alexandra ward in Surbiton, said: "I'm pleased the council is now committed to supporting the British Youth Council's campaign."

It followed a decision by Kingston Council's community engagement committee which voted to pledge its support for lowering the electoral age.

"I'm proud to be one of three councillors under the age of 25, and feel it is our duty to open up the council to everyone, no matter what their age. I hope young people in the borough take this as a symbol of our commitment to listen to them," said Cllr Foulder-Hughes.

There are currently 3,000 16 and 17-year-olds in Kingston borough.

We're listening

Every Friday, Surbiton charity the Fircroft Trust has launched a 'listening cafe' at its base at 96 Ditton Road to offer a safe, supportive space for anyone struggling to cope, or who needs to talk about someone else's mental health. It is open from 2-4pm; no appointment needed – just turn up.

The Trust is also holding a quiz night on Fri Nov 30 at 7pm. Tickets £8 (including light supper) from ann@thefircrofttrust.org

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It's the great pebble dash! Berrylands is a hot spot for rocks

Berrylands and Tolworth have become hot spots for painted rocks, with decorated pebbles appearing on garden walls and in hidey-holes. Delivering The Good Life, we have encountered many examples.

Susan Krouwel, who lives near Tolworth School, started the Surbiton Rocks Facebook group to celebrate finds.

People are urged to paint rocks with designs, discreetly place them, then celebrate their rediscovery and repositioning.



Then Facebook groups such as Berrylands Rocks allow unusual painted pebbles to reach a wider audience.

The longest trail of pebbles so far has been more than 500 stones with bug faces in Sterling Walk, off Raeburn Avenue.

“It’s a great way to connect the community and bring joy,” said Susan, who enlisted the help of her six-year-old daughter. She added: “We discourage use of sequins or other things which could come off and become litter.”



Bagfuls of rubbish collected in litter blitz

The Tarte in the Park café in Victoria rec was the meet-up point for the KT6 Litter Pickers’ recent foray, clearing rubbish from local target areas.

Co-ordinator Sian Headley, who wants to expand her team to run monthly litter lifts, said she had been supported by Elmbridge Cllr Nick Darby, the Dittons rep, who is pressing for official funding for long-arm litter-picking grabbers, and to arrange council collection of the bags of debris.

“At present I have to take them home with me,”

said Sian of Fleece Road, Long Ditton. “This is only our second meeting, so we’re still not very official!”

Volunteers spent an hour cleaning grass verges in Windmill Lane, the Victoria recreation ground, Effingham Road, St Mary’s Road and other streets.

“I like doing things in the community,” said Sian, when asked why she’d organised the group. With three sons of her own, aged six, four and one, she believes early involvement in such projects can help inspire them. The older pair seemed enthusiastic, especially with the lure of a slice of chocolate cake at the end.



The litter volunteers found small glass fragments on the rec; a concern when children and dogs regularly run about, and

when so much sport is played there. When she isn’t picking litter, Sian – a secondary school music teacher by training – runs a personalised

gift company from home, Robin’s Bobbins... named after her son (and first customer) who got her to create his own branded superhero cape.

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An area plan for Tolworth aims to “glue back together” the halves of the town split by the A3.

Planning officer Hannah Harris told the neighbourhood committee the plan was designed to deliver social and economic improvements. With many housing schemes in the pipeline, it aims to “harness growth sensibly”, making it a “healthier, happier place”.

Tolworth’s identity, she said, “is undefined and unclear”. There are 25 ‘opportunity sites’, but the big idea is “glueing Tolworth back together”.

Another target is to improve air quality, mindful that the roundabout is a pollution hotspot, and to “extend Tolworth Broadway south to Tolworth station”.

Ultimately, the hope is that a covered A3 underpass would make the air less toxic... but that is a long way off. One resident, addressing the committee, criticised the lack of “credible detail”, but Cllr Malcolm Self said it was a document for the long term, “setting the scene for what could come forward, and setting out aspirations and ideas”.

Bridget Walker, for 35 years a Ewell Road resident, said of the plan: “If I had my way, I’d rip it up and put it in the bin! It’s a developers’ blueprint.” She accused Kingston Council of rolling over to the London Mayor. “[Sadiq Khan] doesn’t

Glueing Tolworth together



for her fellow councillors enthusiasm. “It’s full of drivel. It’s all marketing speak,” she said reading an extract to make the point. “**Use empty premises for flexible and multi-use cafe and host space on the high street. Promote intergenerational and cross-cultural or neighbourhood skill-sharing. Importantly, allow and support positive activities to take place on the wide forecourts**”.

She drew breath. “It may be a personal failing, but I don’t understand what it means.”

Cllr Sam Foulder-Hughes argued for protecting the unique architecture of the Sunray estate. “I want Tolworth to feel proud of itself,” he said.

The draft plan goes to the council on Nov 8.

have to put up with traffic on Ewell Road – it’s bad enough now; 10 years of jams,” she said, adding that it would turn Tolworth from an area of homes and gardens to a thicket of tower blocks.

“You won’t be doing this in Oakhill and Southborough; they’ll still have big houses. It’s not fair that Tolworth’s stuck with all development. The Mayor wants every blade of grass built on.”

Remembering Ann



More than 150 people attended the funeral of Ann Lowes, who has died at the age of 75. Her devoted husband Ken described her as “the embodiment of love”.

Ann, who lived in Oakdene Drive, Tolworth, grew up in Worcester Park and attended Hinchley Wood School. She married in 1964 and emigrated to Australia, but returned after four years as the marriage didn’t work out. She later met Ken as both belonged to Kingston Gingerbread – a self-help group for single parents. Between them they raised four children.

A keen badminton player (she only gave up the game two years ago), she was active in the community supporting Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness and the cornerHOUSE.

In her working life she was a well-organised secretary at – among other places – Kingston Probation Service, Malden Golf Club and Kingston Social Services. Born on April 30 1943, Ann died while on holiday in Russia with Ken on August 8.

The funeral, at St George’s church, Tolworth, was conducted by the Rev Milly Broome, who had known Ann for 30 years.

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The first issue of Surbiton News in October 1959. The local history room in the Guildhall has all the back copies of this informative, but short-lived, local paper

A 60-year-old take on local news

A fascinating find by reader Keith McMahon... rummaging in a box he found an early ancestor of The Good Life. Slightly dog-eared (the paper, not Keith), it is the first issue of Surbiton News from October 1959, the cover dominated by an artist's impression of a proposed new tower.

Three blocks were on Shailer & Lavender's plan, the biggest 17 storeys; smaller than the 22 finally built, and lacking today's version's splayed legs.

Front-page ads included Puttock's tobacconists (25 panatellas in a drum for £1.50) and G&R Garage of 33 Victoria Road (today occupied by Cook). "My dad took his car there," recalls Keith, of Westfield Road.

So what was in the paper 59 years ago? The mayor (Surbiton had its own then) Cllr Charles Du Cann welcomed readers. "It is no disparagement to any other paper [clearly the Surrey Comet!] to say that a population of over 63,000 needs and deserves its own organ."

Turning the yellowed pages, we learn the idea came from the chamber of commerce, pledging to "stand guard on behalf of the men and women of Surbiton" and "challenge anything thought detrimental to the borough" as Surbiton "lives up to its

reputation as Queen of the Suburbs".

Helpfully, there are trolleybus times, and a guide to what was on at the flicks. You could watch Dirk Bogarde in Ill Met By Moonlight at Surbiton Odeon, I'm All Right Jack at Tolworth Odeon (soon to make way for Tolworth Tower) and Curt Jurgens in The Blue Angel at the Ritz, St Mark's Hill (now the Coronation pub).

A town band was proposed, while a family planning ad restricted advice to married women, women shortly to be married, and childless wives.

A shopping column by Barbara Moore recommended an ashtray as the perfect Christmas gift, and advised against going to central London as such journeys "are often fruitless and quite unnecessary as Surbiton shops offer a wide range of clothes at all prices".

Readers learnt that Mrs Drayson, widow of Col Drayson, had left Surbiton for Torquay, "the large house in Langley Avenue being too much for her". Surbiton MP Nigel Fisher, 15 years from a knighthood, wrote a mini manifesto ahead of October's general election, which the Conservatives comfortably won.

The People of Interest column, a version of our Notable Surbitonians,

highlighted poet Dorian Cooke of 68 Kings Drive who ran the BBC's Yugoslav service. Helpfully, the article said he "had a very attractive wife".

The Antelope pub had a display of paintings by Surbiton arts group, while the letters page had one from N Rayson lamenting the price of flats in Surbiton.

Apparently some are fetching £3,500, leading Mr Rayson to wonder "if a building society will advance to the ordinary £12 or £15-per-week man the mortgage necessary to buy it", adding "when flats reach this price, it would be better to build houses, which cost little more and are better for families".

Easy-assembly garages were being offered in one advert, with a big selling point being the asbestos roof!

Surbiton boasted 15 scout troops, while Tolworth Launderette at 92 Broadway (now Smokey's barbers) had the slogan: Never mind the weather, never mind the rain, bring along your washing, and you're sure to come again.

Published by De Luxe Publishing of 33 Brighton Road, it was printed by The Anchor Press of 119 Ewell Road (beside the Prince of Wales pub).

Tim Harrison



10th Surbiton Brownies visit Hampton Court, August 1990

Were you in the Brownies?

Is that you in uniform on a Hampton Court outing? Or playing the recorder? Past brownies and families are invited to the 80th birthday party of 10th Surbiton Brownies on Saturday November 17, 2.30-4pm at Surbiton Hill Methodist Church, 39 Ewell Road.

The pack is currently run by Brown Owl Val Reid and Grey Owl Debbie Stubbington. Val said: "We'd love to find out what our past brownies are doing now, and invite them to our party to see the current uniform and chat to the present brownies."

"It's a great way to show the current girls how girlguiding has contributed to young women's lives."

If you have any memorabilia, or are interested in coming to the party, email 10thsurbitonbrownies@gmail.com or visit www.surbiton-girlguiding.co.uk

The 10th Surbiton Brownies formed in 1938; the last pack to



The recorder group play at the 40th birthday bash in 1978

● Shortly before 6am on Friday September 14, the fast train from Woking thundered past platform 2 at Surbiton station. At the helm, Temi Awe on his first day as a newly qualified South Western Railway driver. Temi worked 11 years as a ticket inspector at Waterloo, and two as a guard before switching roles after a 14-month course. "It's been challenging, but enjoyable," he said. SWR has 150 drivers in training.



Temi, right, with SWR boss Andy Mellors

Residents defeat line plea

There are to be **NO** double yellow lines down a tiny side street off Ewell Road following a victory for people power.

The council's traffic officer, Younes Hamade, had tried to persuade Surbiton's area committee that tough parking restrictions were urgently needed in South Place, the narrow lane running down the side of the Sainsbury's Local, on the opposite side to Jennings the butcher.

He said that it was a safety issue, and he urged the committee to authorise the spending of £1,250 to paint double yellows and put up signs.

But locals objected, pointing out it would wipe out eight – perhaps as many as 10 – valued and well-used parking spaces down the narrow link (it's technically a footpath) between Ewell Road and Warwick Grove.

"Everyone parks there, and sat nav tells drivers to use it," one resident told the most recent meeting of Surbiton's neighbourhood committee. "There's never been an issue with accidents. Why has the council suddenly decided it's a problem?"

Mr Hamade responded by saying that it was a footway which had evolved into a car park, and that it was not wide enough for cars to exit safely on to Ewell Road.

Cllr Hilary Gander said she cycled through the narrow track regularly, and said that she had never experienced any problem. "I've never felt threatened," she said "Because it's narrow, it's calm... and that parking is very much needed."

The committee eventually voted against yellow lines.



South Place, the blink-and-you'd-miss-it side road, looking towards Ewell Road and (below, left) from the Ewell Road end



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Pressure mounts for crossing after tragedy

We truly believe Billie would still be alive if there'd been a proper crossing in Portsmouth Road. So said Danny Jones, pointing to the spot where his aunt Teresa McArdle, known as Billie, was hit by a Transit van last year.

Danny and his mum Cherry want a crossing between Winters Road and Windmill Lane, Long Ditton, to spare other families their ordeal.

They've lobbied Elmbridge Council, leafleted homes and urged residents to sign a petition. Firms have put up posters to back the cause.

It's not the first time pedestrian safety in this stretch of Portsmouth Road has been raised. In December 2014, neighbours in Ditton Reach petitioned the council to act. Two months later, Elmbridge Local Committee agreed to a detailed feasibility study. However, three years on, only a partial study has been conducted with the go-ahead given for a central island refuge between Windmill Lane and The City Arms.

"My preference would be a zebra

crossing by the Ford and Honda garages," said Danny, director of a Long Ditton consultancy. "This would provide the best solution. A refuge island doesn't give pedestrians priority and narrows the road for cyclists and cars. We need a proper

feasibility study, promised in 2015, to look at all options, not just the cheapest."

Danny's aunt Billie, a fit 86-year-old and regular church-goer known for her charity work, had gone to buy a paper – part of her morning routine – at the Shell garage yards from her Winters Road home at 8.30am on Wednesday, June 14, last year. Trying to cross the busy road on her return, she was hit by a van which had dropped parcels at a click and collect facility in the garage forecourt.

Ten months on, driver Hamza Lamnour, 32, of Horsham, West Sussex, pleaded guilty at Staines magistrates' court to causing death by careless driving. He was sentenced to 150 hours community service and banned from driving for 18 months.

"I had to observe the horrific scene of my aunt lying on the road," said Danny, who was staying at Billie's house and



had gone out to investigate the commotion. "I later found out this was the exact spot identified as a dangerous section of road in February 2015, but no action was taken by Surrey County Council," he said.

In contrast to Surrey County Council's perceived inaction, Kingston Council has installed seven zebra crossings in the stretch

of Portsmouth Road between Kingston and the Brighton Road traffic lights.

"We must get something positive out of this," said Danny. "We will keep campaigning; we won't give up. A pedestrian crossing should be built as soon as possible; I can't understand why it hasn't been."

Surrey County Council traffic engineer Peter Shimadry confirmed at an Elmbridge Local Committee meeting that the feasibility study had not considered a formal crossing. However funding for a pedestrian refuge had been secured, and a safety audit would be carried out after its construction to monitor its effectiveness.

Committee chair John O'Reilly said his thoughts were with Mrs McArdle's family.

"We listened with great respect to their concerns. The committee considered a number of options, and as funding has been agreed we're planning on putting in a pedestrian island to improve safety. We shall of course be keeping this under close review."

More on the campaign and petition at www.public-voice.co.uk **Jane Grove**



Saddled with success: cycle guru Andrew

Cycle repair guru Andrew Manning of Ellerton Road, Surbiton, who works out of a shop in Thames Ditton High Street, has been judged best speciality retailer in all Elmbridge.

At a ceremony, Andrew swapped overalls for a smart suit to receive the award for his shop, Cyclelink.

Four of the six independent retailer prizes – voted for by residents – went to Thames Ditton businesses.

The best restaurant was Café Noir on platform 1 at Thames Ditton railway station... with owner Alaa Habbooby also scooping the overall prize for best independent retailer in any category.

The best deli/grocer was Paul's Fruit & Veg of Thames Ditton village, with the family firm run by Katie, Jason and Connor Paull winning for the fifth year on the trot.

Cllr Tricia Bland, who helps organise Thames Ditton's farmers' market (staged on the fourth Saturday of the month... the week after Surbiton's Maple Road market), said: "We're thrilled that Thames Ditton shops continue to be recognised for their fantastic goods and services by the people that

matter – the residents who vote for them. The fact that Thames Ditton independents have performed spectacularly for the second year running is an incredible achievement."

At the voting stage, residents were asked to say why they felt particular businesses were the best. One said of overall victor Alaa Habbooby: "Al is a community champion. His coffee keeps me going every day. Nothing is too much trouble for him."



Award-winner Andrew Manning with Cllr Tricia Bland

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Mistaken for a fox

Thank you for featuring the new fox art work on the Clocktower Cafe (Page 1, issue 42). Here's Jason, our Portuguese Podengo, by his lookalike in Victoria recreation ground. Jason looked so like a fox as a puppy, before he grew into his ears, that people stopped us to ask if he was a fox on a lead!

Izabel Grindal

Irresponsible tip

I was horrified to read how Janice Cripps had been watering her lawn to keep a 'lush green sward' (To drip or sprinkle, that's the question, issue 42). It is wholly irresponsible for anyone, let alone a landscape gardener, to recommend wasting water in a very hot summer. I hope you will not allow her to repeat such damaging environmental suggestions, including irrigation systems wasting even more water, in future.

Rachael Reynolds

Think of my back

The lovely letter about community (issue 42) expresses very well why people greet a new Good Life with pleasure, but as a Good Life deliverer, I've developed a hatred of low-down letter boxes, at the bottom of front doors, especially if they are stiff or have little brushes inside. It's not good for backs like mine, or maybe anyone's!

I've also once had a Good Life literally snatched from my hand by a yapping dog when I had just



When he was younger (inset), Jason the Portuguese Podengo looked so vulpine that people asked if he was a fox on a lead

started to push it through the letter box. It was quite a yank and I was glad I had no fingers partially through the letter box!

Have others experienced similar? I've rented accommodation in France, Spain, Italy, Germany and Switzerland, and UK citizens should be grateful for having post delivered not only to their door, but through it. In most countries people have to go outside, or down the road, to collect post.

Jeannette James



Concert season opens with quartet

Thames Concerts start again at St Andrew's church, Maple Road, on Saturday October 20 with four gifted musicians, the Jubilee



String Quartet. The programme includes works by Beethoven and Panufnik, as well as Schubert's Death and the Maiden.

Launched in 1961, the concert series celebrates music's breadth and diversity.

Artistic director Benjamin Costello, who lives in Maple Road, promises plenty of treats to come.

"On Saturday November 10 we have the award-winning Vickers-Bovey guitar duo," he said. "The combination of two guitars in the St Andrew's acoustic is

particularly rewarding. Julian and Daniel present a rich tapestry of music from France and Spain."

Supporting the evening concerts at 7.30pm, are a parallel series of morning events on most farmers' market days.

The 50-minute concerts at 10.30am, are free, and begin on Saturday October 20 with a performance by young musicians from Coombe Girls' School. Then on December 15, Kingston Music Service entertains. Details at www.thamesconcerts.com



Magical double bill

If you hear gargling in Balaclava Road, it's Surbiton singer Luke Reader warming up for an operatic double bill. He joins Richmond Opera to perform Handel's Acis & Galatea and Boismortier's comical Don Quixote and the Duchess, with a baroque orchestra, at the restored Normansfield Theatre in Langdon Park, Teddington, from Nov 9-11.

"It combines magic, monsters, powerful women and deluded men, and it's all sung in English," said Luke. Details, and tickets (£15), at www.richmondopera.org.uk



No sleepers at train talk

The area's longest running independent evening class, Talking of Trains, is nudging its 60th anniversary.

Rail and transport enthusiasts gathered to learn about train topics, with meetings every Wednesday until March at 7pm in Surbiton's library hall, Ewell Road, compered by lecturer and raconteur Dick Crane, and featuring guest speakers – some currently employed on the railways. "I've been coming for 51 years," one regular said proudly.

The programme promises 'education, entertainment

and variety for all interested in railways and public transport', with a small fee covering costs. The first meeting is free, to encourage newcomers.

Chairman Simon Estall introduced Dick Crane, who spoke on the railways 50 years ago.

On August 4 1968, with the railways still reeling from the Beeching cuts, the last steam train plied a regular route.

Dick's passion for trains shines through his talk – a nostalgic illustrated wallow in a golden era.

Full details of all talk topics at www.talkingoftrains.co.uk

Explaining knobs

After the success of his first workshop, Surbiton photographer David Jacobson is holding more. The next is this weekend (Sat Oct 13). David demystifies cameras for beginners, and tells you what all the knobs do. Visit AndMakeltSnappy.com for more.

Vocalists are back

A night of a cappella singing sees KT6 take to the cornerHOUSE stage. After a sell-out debut gig at the Douglas Road venue in July, the 20-strong group, led by musical director Matt Burdynowski, is back on Sat, Nov 10 at 8pm to perform hits by Madonna, Radiohead, Chaka Khan, Van Morrison and Pharrell Williams. £5 adults, £2 U16 from www.kt6vocalgroup.org, or on the door on the night for £8 and £4.



Talking of the Toby

A full library hall greeted Good Life editor Tim Harrison's talk on the Toby Jug pub, Tolworth (inset) last week. A book on the pub's past – especially its music heritage – will appear in the spring. Last call for memories and memorabilia to thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com

Dancing workshop

Mrs Bennet's Regency dance workshop for beginners and improvers sees teacher and dance historian Anne Daye focusing on footwork on Sat Nov 3, 10.30am-4.30pm at St Mark's church hall. £15. Book in advance by visiting: www.mrsbennet.co.uk

Memories maketh the man

Graeme Armstrong's exhibition An Absent Howl challenged cornerHOUSE visitors, shining a light on how we create memories.

The digital artist uses photographic collages of stripped-back pictures from his 1980s travels to show how we impose one misremembered thought on another to create our past. When revisiting old photos and letters Graeme, who trained at ual: Chelsea, realised reality differed from memory.

"The images are about memory and imagination and how we make our own narrative. I thought I remembered things as an actual record, but some places in photos and events in letters are completely different to how I remembered them."

Many pieces in the show were in response to Graeme's recent decision to concentrate full-time on art and leave Tooting for Leeds.

"The absent howl phenomenon happens to wolves around absence or departure. The howl of the pack as a whole changes as well as individually. It's a metaphor for leaving London, and a bit of a joke. Will my absence have an effect?" See more at: www.greyswoodart.com



Stitchers' group thrives

The art of embroidery is enjoying a resurgence, with the local Embroiderers' Guild branch (which meets at St Mark's church hall on the fourth Friday of the month) just a few stitches away from its 50th anniversary.

As part of the Surbiton Festival, an exhibition was staged of altar cloths, designs, drawings and copes by seamstress and ex-Kingston Art College student Lilian Dring. The branch also has a young embroiderers group. www.kingstonanddistrictbranch.co.uk

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www.thamesconcerts.com



● Impressed by the display of Morris dancing at the Surbiton Festival? Free open evenings teach traditional dance. Kingston Morris & Spring Grove Morris Men demonstrate their moves on Mon, Oct 15 and Mon, Oct 22 at 8pm at St John the Evangelist, Grove Lane, Kingston. The events are in the church, which is currently undergoing restoration. Entrance to the transept, where the dancing takes place, is via Bloomfield Road. Wear comfortable shoes. New dancers and musicians welcome. www.kingstonmorris.org/see-us

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Can you beat Surbiton's Ski Sunday record?

Bring your cowbells, bobble hats and gloves to St Mark's Hill this Sunday (Oct 14) as Surbiton's charity skiing event returns for the 10th year. Fearless competitors will navigate the downhill slope opposite Bosco, with ice blocks on their feet. Over a decade hundreds have attempted to break the Ski Sunday course record... many coming to grief, legs splayed and dignity compromised. Robin Hutchinson, who dreamt it up, said

you either take shuffling steps, or go full pelt for glory. "Either way, it gives everyone a chance to experience the thrill and joy of the slopes," he said. The record is held by Jesper Hedlend from Sweden, who recorded a time of 9.97 seconds. The event, and the home-made soup and music apres-ski session which follows in Claremont Gardens, raises money for Shooting Star Chase and Creative Youth. The skiing starts at 11am.



Stretch a leg

Doctors always advise taking more exercise, so why not join this enthusiastic gaggle of senior strollers on their regular riverside walk from Kingston to Raven's Ait and back? A soon-to-be 93-year-old was the most venerable participant when The Good Life tagged along. "Everyone has a story to tell," said walk leader Joan Scriven (sixth from left in the striped top). The free Monday morning walk is offered by the 350-member 'active age centre' The Bradbury, by the Surbiton/Kingston boundary at 37b Grange Road. There is a cafe, a lively discussion group, oil painting lessons, a book club, computer training and line dancing. Details: www.staywellservices.org.uk But it's the walk, at a gentle but purposeful pace, that provides one of the most popular mixes of exercise, conversation and companionship. We saw a heron while crossing the Hogsmill on our route to the Thames, and learnt a lot of interesting things during enlivening chit-chat with a group which clearly takes great pleasure from a riverside amble. **TH**

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Erin reveals her Chelsea secret

Still on cloud nine after helping Scotland's debut qualification for the Women's World Cup finals, Chelsea's Erin Cuthbert says one of the secrets to her success this season is right alongside her on the pitch at Kingsmeadow. Erin, 20, has really hit top form, and attributes much to a striker seven years her senior, Swiss forward Ramona Bachmann. "We've a good partnership, on and off the pitch," she said. "In a team, chances come quickly, and we have quality players who can create and make something out of nothing. Ramona does that for me and I'm grateful to her." Bachmann teed up Cuthbert for Chelsea's second against Brighton which gave the Blues their first

league win after three blanks. Manager Emma Hayes called for an end to the "drought", and was delighted with the response against a physical side coached by former England manager Hope Powell. Yet barely a month ago team-mates Cuthbert and Bachmann faced each other as Scotland beat Switzerland 2-1, with Cuthbert scoring in the second minute. "We played out of our skin that day, and played like we were Scottish," laughed Cuthbert. With fierce competition for places in Chelsea's starting line-up, Hayes has to ring the changes. But she acknowledges that in Cuthbert, who signed a new three-year deal in the summer, she has a gem, praising her "drive to get to the top". Hayes repeatedly emphasises the change that an all-pro women's domestic league is achieving. "The closeness in matches surprises everybody, but it's a different league," she said. "The last thing you want is a Chelsea running away with the league year after year in 4 or 5-0 games every week." The fixtures don't come any harder than Chelsea

Women's next two home league ties, against league leaders Arsenal and Liverpool. But Erin Cuthbert is up for the challenge. "They are going to be tough games, but we need to treat them exactly how we treat all games just now. We are back to our winning ways; we've picked up a bit of momentum... and I don't think it is down to luck that we've had so many clean sheets consecutively," she said. When Cuthbert and Bachmann are playing with their current synchrony, everything is possible. **Tim Harrison**



The Blues face Italians in Europe

Chelsea's European adventure continues when Fiorentina visit Kingsmeadow in the Women's Champions League after the Italians defeated Danes Fortuna Hjørring 4-0, and the Blues beat Sarajevo 11-0 over two legs. Chelsea play 'the Viola' at home under the floodlights on Wed Oct 17, with the return leg

in Tuscany on Halloween. A disappointing 667 saw Chelsea beat the Bosnians 6-0 on Sept 26, including a brace from team totem Fran Kirby. Fiorentina will draw a bigger crowd. Last season, the Blues made it to the semi-finals. Up-to-date information at www.thegoodlifesurbiton.co.uk

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