



Yellow fever

Zoe Cochrane's cut flowers and plants added spring zing to last month's farmers' market, with the next – on the 18th – likely to be brighter still. Daffodils led the way, but there were also snowdrops, hyacinths, cyclamen, mixed bulbs, orchids and hydrangeas to remind us that winter has almost gone. Turn to **p2** for news of a market newcomer.



Time for a new lagoon?

Surbiton could get a swimming pool – 40 years after the old lagoon closed – as calls grow for a new complex funded by the developers who are so eager to fill the area with high-rise homes.

Councillors believe they can force the issue up the agenda. Ian George pledged: "We will do everything we can. The petition can highlight demand, and encourage developers to see opportunities."

Richard Hudson added: "We are on a mission to ensure Tolworth gets a better deal. A new pool would be the icing on the cake."

MP James Berry called on the council to be inventive in looking at ways to fund the project.

"Our borough is crying out for a pool, particularly south of the A3. By using development gain I'm sure the council can deliver, if it's clear that residents support the idea."

The area near the bowling alley on the Toby Jug site is one possible location, providing a community amenity, a boost to public health and giving schools the chance to teach children to swim without everyone having to travel miles.

"Our brilliant local swimming team, the Kingston Royals, has a huge waiting list," the MP added, underlining potential demand.

Surbiton has lacked any swimming facilities since the lagoon in Raeburn Avenue closed

in 1979. Meldone Close was built on the site.

The open-air lagoon opened in 1934, operating daily, April-September. The main pool was 165ft by 90ft, containing half a million gallons of water. Banked seating could hold 1,000 spectators.

The record attendance was 5,600 people in one day during the summer of 1976, when the mercury hit 95 degrees in old money. There was barely room to stand, never mind swim.

At the end of the 1979 season Surbiton Lagoon 'closed for repairs', but never reopened. **Tim Harrison** ● Sign the petition electronically via www.tolworthpool.org



Tina Dezart and Andy Wood are in the festival mood

Poetry and motion

A grey and chilly Sunday afternoon in February did not put off the crowds who turned up at St Andrew's Square to take part in the general merriment that is the Seething Wells Festival.

The event was officially opened with a poetic address to rugby ball-sized pasty, followed by entertainment from the KT6 singers and the dancers of Kingston Morris.

Then everyone stretched their legs with a jolly procession through the streets, some donning masks and head dresses that they had just made.

"I'm genuinely pleased that so many people have come here ahead of the procession – it's fantastic," said organiser Robin Hutchinson. "And also it's great that new groups like KT6 have come to support us this year."



MP James Berry and Cllrs Chris Hayes, Richard Hudson and Ian George back the call. Above, the lagoon in its heyday



Turning pub grub into tapas

By combining the Brits' love of comfort food and their passion for tapas, chef Danny Wilson has developed a clever concept. Take fish 'n' chips. Beer-batter goujons sit astride twice-cooked fries, served with rough-cut homemade tartare and manicured half lemon. But this is no overpriced Islington eatery, it's a Surbiton pub. See **p5**



Chef Danny Wilson is putting a spin on pub classics

HELLO SPRING

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Recipes for a Good Life: Annie Morris

Proof of the pudding

A tasty, easy, aromatic dessert? Try Indian vermicelli pudding.

You'll need four nests of vermicelli, broken in half; 500ml of milk; 50g of butter; two dessertspoons of brown sugar; two or three crushed green cardamom pods; a handful of sultanas; and chopped apricots and pistachios for decoration.

Heat the butter in the pan, fry the cardamom pods until they release their aroma, add the



vermicelli and fry till they become golden brown.

Pour in the milk and sultanas and let it come to a simmer for 6 or 7 mins until the vermicelli is cooked and the milk thickens. Add the sugar.

Garnish with chopped apricots and pistachios and serve either hot or cold.



Design trends with Elena Romanova

Look at your home as if you were a buyer



Some buy with their head, some their heart, so cater to both when selling your home.

Think of the practical things buyers want, but present your property to appeal to those who buy with their heart. You win them the moment they step through the front door.

Look at your home with fresh eyes, from a buyer's perspective. Store accumulated stuff. Decluttering doesn't mean making a property impersonal.

People need to be able to visualise living there, so make it easy for them. Don't aim for generic or soulless. Leave some personality as it gives buyers ideas. People often buy into a lifestyle as much as a property.



Make any minor repairs, and clean everything like you have never cleaned before. Nothing puts people off like a dirty home. Get rid of limescale, clean tile grout, wax wooden floors, hang fresh towels, give walls a lick of paint - not builders' magnolia! Keep the canvas stylishly neutral and add splashes of colour.

Think about light in the house;

it's often neglected. Wall mirrors make rooms look bigger and lighter. Clean windows in and out, replace broken light bulbs. Leave lamps on in dark corners.

Bad smells are a turn-off, good smells subconsciously add appeal. Think plants, flowers, candles, fresh coffee. Tidy the front garden and paint your front door an attractive colour.

If your property has conversion or extension potential, consider getting planning permission.

If selling via an agent, brief on what to highlight and what to downplay. Prepare answers to questions about any downsides.

For advice, email elena@elenainteriors.co.uk or call 07990 560 264.



Chateau de Saumur

Holiday with grape expectations

Quaff a glass of Les Varennes du Grand Clos with an agreeable supper in a picturesque 14th century farmhouse in France, and you will be helping a Surbiton charity fund health, education and training projects in Africa.

Twenty per cent of the costs of a wine tasting holiday in the Loire Valley, with its stunning chateaux and medieval towns, will go towards improving the lives of people in rural Malawi.

During your stay at The Farm near the historic walled town of Richelieu, you will taste some of the finest wines from Chinon, Saumur and Bourgueil in the vineyards that produce them,

and meet the farmers who cultivate the grapes.

Accommodation and food is provided throughout the stay, and there is the opportunity for other excursions - as well as the chance to relax and enjoy The Farm's peaceful environs - or cool off in its private, 16m swimming pool.

For more about the wine-tasting holiday, which runs from June 12-17 and costs from £550 per person, visit www.retreattothefarm.co.uk

Other retreats available include art and yoga which will also fund projects run by the Brighton Road-based charity African Vision Malawi.



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● Farmers' market newcomer Liza Maswale tempts customers with raw energy bites. Liza, who runs Kanel London from her Rushett Close, Long Ditton base, makes healthy, home-cooked treats with a Scandinavian twist. With no added sugar, salt, palm oil or flavouring, honey is the natural sweetener, along with dates and figs. Triple chocolate, peanut butter and chia seed, and cranberry and nut balls are among the guilt-free, low-cal, high-energy goodies, suitable for vegetarians.



● Twenty-five years ago, Anila Vaghela set up a company in Surbiton marketing curry sauces, pickles and snacks. When the farmers' market launched in Maple Road in October 2009, she took one of the stalls, putting her colleague Phil in charge of running it. Now, seven years on, the founder of Anila's Authentic Sauces is back behind the counter, dispensing culinary wisdom and award-winning products, including Goan green curry sauce, voted best vegan product in 2011, and hot mango pickle, a gold winner in 2012. Anila, who also supplies Harrods, stocks eight curry cooking sauces, 15 chutneys, daals, samosas, sun dried tomato and paneer muffins, koftas and lentil slices. The full range will be at the market on March 18.

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Estate agent exit

Stack & Bonner has pulled out of central Surbiton, three months after Curchods shut, reversing a seemingly inexorable rise in estate agents. The Brighton Road office closed in January, lease issues being blamed. The Ewell Road branch is still open.



Popular cubism

Enterprising sixth-formers from Southborough High School sold reusable light-up ice cubes at the last farmers' market. The LED cubes are battery-powered or liquid activated, can cool drinks or be used as funky decorations. "Quite a few use them to brighten their bathrooms," said Sulaiman Rasool, 17, one of the young enterprise project members (above).

Parking warning

Overstay the maximum two hours at the Waitrose car park, Claremont Road, and the fine has now been hiked to an eye-watering £95. It is operated by Britannia Parking Group.

A handy little fact

How many hands has Big Ben? None! Tim Redmond told Surbiton & District Historical Society that Big Ben is the 13.5-ton bell. The clock's minute hand is a 14ft copper tube. At 7.45pm on April 4 at the library hall, Ewell Road, David Taylor talks about the influential Lushington family.

A room for hire

A new hireable room has opened at the parish hall in Ewell Road, Long Ditton, named after Dick and Sheila Wallis, who helped run the hall from 1976-2011. Dick was the hall's longest serving trustee. The room has meeting space, kitchen and disabled access.

Doorstep knives

Trading Standards say beware men selling knives door to door. They claim to have excess trade show stock, and use hand-held card readers for payment. Goods appear high-quality, but are anything but. If challenged, the men can become threatening. Call 101, or 999 in an emergency.

Dancing shoes

If you fancy Regency dancing, Mrs Bennet's next ballroom class is at 8pm in St Mark's church hall, Church Hill Road, on Wed March 22. Wear soft shoes. The fiver fee includes a cuppa.

Temporary lights

Resurfacing work means temporary lights will be in use in Portsmouth Road, between the Brighton Road junction and Simpson Way, 8pm-5am on three nights at the end of March.

Generation game

In a fascinating project which reaches across generations, senior residents at Surbiton's Royal Star & Garter Home have been forming penpal partnerships with local schoolchildren... culminating in a visit by the youngsters to meet their personal correspondents in the Upper Brighton Road building. Surbiton's MP, James Berry, was there to witness the letter writers' get-together.

The late Tommy Cooper was warned it was not the done thing to speak to the Queen after a Royal Variety Show. But he still asked: 'Excuse me, ma'am, are you interested in football?' 'Not particularly,' said the monarch. 'Well,' said Tommy. 'Can I have your tickets to the Cup Final?'

Play with a choo choo in the old loo loo

It's healthy for a man to have a hobby, and model trains fit the bill. But space for a layout can be tricky. Yet hidden away behind Tolworth Broadway is a haven where grown-up boys (and girls) can relieve stress and vanish into another world.

Financed by selling gearboxes to other enthusiasts, the oddly named Midland and Southern Counties Joint Railways Association (MSC for short) boasts an O gauge railway layout in an old public loo.

"We were offered the choice of three redundant public conveniences by the council," said John Arundel, vice-chair.

It's a TARDIS; nowt to look at outside but a magical, miniature model realm within. At its centre, Hartsbridge station, named after John Hart, who modelled it on the Brighton and South Coast line and ran it out of his house in Surbiton Hill Park into the back garden. He founded the club in the mid 60s.

Hart died in 1979, and a band of O gauge enthusiasts has run it ever since.

O gauge is bigger than tichy OO, so is ideal for those whose eyesight might not be what it was.

The O Gauge Guild was formed in the 1950s, when the gauge was petering out in the face of its competitor. Music mogul Peter Waterman is one of its most ardent supporters.

Tolworth's club is 17-strong, with



John Arundel with a steam train at Hartsbridge station, behind Tolworth Broadway

room for new members, to help make scenery, do maintenance or merely potter to good effect.

It is relaxed escapism. Unlike OO gauge, where anything can be bought, O gauge relies on home-made alternatives. "We come here to play trains," confessed John Arundel, who lives in Walton.

New blood arrives by word of mouth, and via a stand at a show at Tolworth Girls' School.

"Sadly it seems to be just men; model trains

don't seem to appeal to ladies of any age," said John, wistfully. "It's good therapy, and you learn social history, architecture, engineering and electronics. You lose your troubles; it's a world of escapism, creating things Blue Peter-style in a land where you are the Fat Controller and there are no strikes!"

Tuesday evenings are club nights, so email johnarundel@hotmail.com

Tim Harrison

Transported from us... gentle Peter

If there's a gentler, kindlier man in Surbiton, I've yet to meet him. Peter Daniels, whose encyclopedic knowledge of transport history was only matched by his happiness to share it, has died at the age of 92.

Peter adored trains, trams and trolleybuses, and knew chapter and verse on their construction, routes and quirks.

He also had a phenomenal knowledge of the history of Surbiton and Tolworth, and its shops and streets, and was an

expert on rights of way.

Peter grew up in Surbiton with his brother, Bob, doing wartime service in the RAF in France, Egypt and Algeria, then working for many years for Surrey County Council.

Widowed in the early 1980s, he met and married Audrey, who survives him. They settled in Hamilton Avenue, where Peter installed an extensive model train layout in the garden.

For two decades Peter volunteered as the librarian at

Surbiton & District Historical Society, where he always tried to persuade people to borrow books about buses and trains, and - with Audrey's unfailing assistance - helped organise quizzes. "He was one of the nicest, most unassuming men," said Linda Davies, society president.

At the funeral at St George's, Tolworth, the Rev Helen Hancock lamented the fact that she'd been unable to find a hymn that mentioned public transport.

TH

Switch off the lights

Surbiton firefighter Simon Jakeman, based at the Ewell Road station for a decade, urges everyone to turn off the lights during Earth Hour.

The energy-saving event on March 25 at 8.30pm is when those who care about the planet are asked to switch off for an hour. Some mark it by dining by candlelight, others see it as a useful prompt to make longer-term lifestyle changes.

Jakey, to his pals, grew up in Tolworth, and backs the Surbiton Wildlife Group as well as being an Earth Hour ambassador.

His work includes green talks to firefighters (he's done more than 400 in and around London already), and encouraging recycling.

"A changing climate is a concern for the fire service due to extreme weather, including flooding, as we are on the front line," he told the Good Life.

Surbiton was crowned London's greenest fire station in 2011, while Simon's campaigning was recognised in the new year honours with a British Empire Medal, for services to the environment.

More on Earth Hour, organised by the charity WWF, at www.wwf.org.uk/earthhour



Shred of evidence

Fed up feeding bills into a shredder, only to hear it jam, grind and surrender? Mail Boxes Etc in Victoria Road has invested £5,000 in an all-singing, all-dancing machine that hums with pleasure as it digests your paper.

The heavy-duty Rexel shredder, demonstrated here by manager Nikhil Jasani, can be security locked, and stops automatically if anyone attempts to open it during its cycle.

It can be loaded with 750 sheets of A4, and also shreds CDs and credit cards. "It only ever seems to jam if dad has stapled 10 or more sheets together, otherwise it clears itself," said Nikhil with a grin.

Password-protected for added security, it is also child tamper proof.

Supportive

If you have experienced a miscarriage, are infertile or involuntarily childless and would like to meet others in the same boat, Shannon Delwiche can help.

The Surbiton TV producer has set up an informal group for people experiencing the same challenges as her. It first met in November and word is spreading.

"Fertility challenges are quite common but not commonly shared," she said. "As someone living with these issues, I wish to create a place where we can share experiences and support each other on our journeys."

Shannon said speaking in a safe environment over a glass of wine or cup of coffee with others in similar situations can be therapeutic, cathartic and bring people closer. Next meeting is at Wags 'n' Tales, Brighton Road, on Tuesday March 28, 7-9pm.

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Cricket legend's nose for plants

If your back garden happens to boast non-native species such as eucalyptus, willow bottlebrush or even the stunning red-flowering Illawarra flame tree, the man you have to thank is the greatest Australian cricketer of the 19th century.

Though born in Sydney, Fred Spofforth was a Surbitonian for more than 35 years, with an excellent claim to being the town's greatest sporting personality of all time.

His legacy to the area is the unusual species of plants and trees that he took such a joy in cultivating in retirement, and which he generously shared with neighbours.

Born on September 9 1853, Frederick Robert Spofforth was the son of a bank clerk, following his father's profession and joining the Bank of New South Wales.

Attracted to cricket as a boy, he became a fast bowler after watching G Tarrant of the 1864 English touring team. By January 1874, he was playing for New South Wales against WG Grace's team, with his performance in Melbourne helping give the state side its first victory for seven years.

He toured England with the Australian teams of 1878, 1880, 1882, 1884 and 1886, leaping to

fame when he took 10 wickets for 20 runs in Australia's one-day victory over a strong MCC side at Lord's in May 1878.

In 1879, at Melbourne, Spofforth took the first hat-trick in a test match, as well as twice achieving three wickets in four balls.

In 18 tests Spofforth took 94 wickets at an average of 18.41 apiece. On three of his five tours of England he took over 100 wickets, and in 1884 he took 216, a feat only once bettered by any Aussie.

Wiry framed, he stood 6ft 3in and could make the ball whip from the pitch. The demon bowler's aquiline nose and 'Mephistophelian cast of countenance', combined with a right-handed Catherine-wheel action once described as 'all legs, arms and nose', generated an intense air of hostility towards batsmen.

Active and reliable in the field, he had a long throw and could run 100 yards in under 11 seconds. He could also bat, and in an 1885 test, going in last, top-scored with 50.

Spofforth played for New South Wales until 1885, when he moved to Melbourne for work. In September 1886, at the parish

church of Breadsall, Derbyshire, he married Phillis Cadman, daughter of a wealthy tea merchant. They returned to Melbourne, but in 1888 Spofforth settled in England as Midlands representative for the Star Tea Co, of which he later became managing director.

In 1889 and 1890 he played occasionally for Derbyshire, but the family then moved to Surbiton and he took to writing for cricketing books and periodicals.

Hospitable, genial and an entertaining raconteur, Spofforth had a detailed knowledge of horticulture and botany, competed in horticultural shows and planted many Australian trees in the grounds of his home, Ditton Hill Lodge off Ditton Road, which stood just below the crest, where the road takes a turn and plunges downhill.

He died in his Surbiton home on June 4 1926 of chronic colitis, survived by two sons and two daughters. His estate was valued for probate at £164,000 (the equivalent of £12million today).

He is buried at Brookwood Cemetery near Woking. Ditton Hill Lodge was demolished and replaced by several new houses in the early 1970s.

Edward Howard



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Cafe caters to man's best friend too

Surbiton's newest cafe, in a town where coffee is a religion, is Wags 'n' Tales in Brighton Road.

The concept was dreamt up by husband-and-wife team Parvin and Rajal Tank after struggling to find a dog-friendly (rather than dog-tolerant) venue. So, in a way, Cadbury, a long-haired, affectionate Pointer rescue dog, is behind it.

The transformation from Copper Kettle to Wags 'n' Tales began last autumn for the couple who lived in California and Zurich, and have been seven years in Lovelace Road.

"We found we were limited in the places we could take Cadbury, especially in winter," said Parvin. "I was looking out for premises, and was walking home past the Copper Kettle and thought 'Wouldn't that be great?'"

To cut a long story short, Madeleine at the Copper Kettle was ready to move on, and a handshake later the deal was done. After a soft launch, it has been building trade with different groups at different times; coffee by day, full-service bar by night, food made to order (including veggie, vegan and gluten-free), and cake and biscuits baked all day. Dog biscuits are made daily too!

Coffee is from Moonroast and Square Mile, hot chocolate from artisans Jaz and Juls. Milk is organic, juices are sourced with



Parvin, Cadbury and Rajal at Wags 'n' Tales

care and at £2 an espresso and £2.50 a cappuccino, it's also good value.

Breakfast is different (you don't get Tamale everywhere in Surbiton) – Mexican-based with black-eye beans, tomato, onion and gravy.

In the evening, it's more like a speakeasy. The music tones down and it's an atmosphere to relax and socialise in. Hours are 8am-midnight, but open until 2am on Friday and Saturday nights.

John Hamilton (ex-Fortnum & Mason and Somerset House) adds a touch of class and experience as general manager. But Parvin and

Rajal's personal touch is key; one or other is on the premises, meeting and greeting and spoiling any visiting hound.

"It's an evolving project," said Parvin. "We've only just started."

The key for me is, I'd love to come to a place like this as a customer."

Wags is fully wheelchair-accessible, there's free, superfast wi-fi, and plugs and USB connections near the tables.

And if you don't own a dog, it's almost worth thinking about getting one...

Tim Harrison

Speaker wins top accolade

Charity worker Dave Farris has won a national award for his work with the Children's Society. Dave, of Hamilton Avenue, has helped the charity for 30 years, recently as an inspirational speaker.

The citation speaks of his 'creative talks to make people aware of the charity's work'.

Since taking early retirement in 2009, Dave has helped train

new speakers. "It was a wonderful surprise to receive the award," he said. "I've always believed children should be able to have a good childhood, and if I can help that, who knows what a child might go on to achieve?"

Children's Society chief executive Matthew Reed called him "an exceptionally gifted speaker who talks from the heart."



Dave Farris, left, with Matthew Reed

English pub tapas – and a free pud for our readers!

● From page 1

There's been a mini revolution in the kitchen of the Black Lion, where a skilful, inventive chef has drawn inspiration from his globetrotting to turn run-of-the-mill pub cuisine on its head.

Danny Wilson, 36, is the new man at the stove of a hostelry which has been a landmark at the Brighton Road/Maple Road crossroads since the 1840s.

By fusing traditional bar meals with Spanish-style tapas he has transformed the regular menu... and customers are taking notice.

His English pub tapas are priced at £3.95 apiece, or four for £14. Another deal offers any two tapas plus soft drink for £6.95, or £7.95 if you add one of eight side dishes.

Examples? A home-baked Scotch steak pie with Stilton, chestnut mushrooms and puff pastry top. Bangers 'n' mash with onion jus and leeks. Smoked mackerel and spring onion fishcake with salad. Mussels with smoked lardons. There are also vegetarian options.

The first eatery where Danny worked, 20 years ago, was the Mediterranean El Picadero in Weybridge. He experimented with tapas fusion dishes after moving to the nearby Lavish Lounge, then went travelling, doing cookery courses in India, Mexico and Thailand, later becoming head chef of a Mexican restaurant... in Christchurch, New Zealand.

He draws on ideas he has gathered from everywhere he has visited. Danny, who used to live in Hook Road and is now flat-hunting in Surbiton, is

well-known to pub-goers in Claygate as he ran the kitchens in The Griffin and The Swan Inn.

Of the Black Lion, he said: "This is the last 'proper' pub in Surbiton, and although I'm not here to change that, I like giving a modern twist to old classics. I've kept the margins small. We're doing meals for less than the price of a pint now!"

The challenge is building the lunchtime trade, and word is spreading. The quality is exceptional, and

there are also daily specials, with everything cooked in double-quick time for those dashing back to work. It's also ideal for a leisurely lunch.

English tapas: noon-2.30pm and 5.30-9.30pm weekdays, and midday-9.30pm Saturdays, although on Sundays traditional roasts reign supreme.

Desserts in shot glasses or teacups are £1.95 each, and include a hot pear and apple crumble with honey

and oat topping and a blob of clotted cream. "Who'd have thought it; the Black Lion's gone gastro," joked landlord Mark Sheehy, but in truth the pub is simply providing food that people want at a price that suits the tightest budget.

Another nice touch; Danny has taken on a young trainee. "Connor was kicked out of school, but wants to be a chef, so he's done all the health and safety training and is now enrolling for day release to college," said Danny.

Tim Harrison

● As a special bonus for Good Life readers, anyone who buys a £7.95 tapas meal deal in March, and mentions the paper, will get a £1.95 pud for free.



Puds are £1.95 each. From left, Eton mess, crumble and clotted cream, banoffee pie

As the council weighs up whether to make the Surbiton Crescent barrier a permanent feature, the sum raised in fines has passed the £2million mark.

Drivers caught using the short stretch of road reserved for buses and taxis face £130 fines, despite most insisting they are law-abiding citizens, bamboozled by confusing signage.

The council could have chosen to put No Entry signs at the Surbiton end of the

Barrier bonanza tops £2m

street last September, to make the prohibition crystal clear, adding the rider 'except buses, taxis and bikes'.

Instead it opted for No Motor Vehicles signs, the ones apparently showing a motorbike flying over a car.

Successful appeals may force the council to modify signage if it does opt to retain the scheme (supposedly part of a wider cycle project).

Privately the council is uneasy about the anger the trial has generated, though glad of the cash windfall.

The most recent appeal success has been Roger Marlow, a 74-year-old who has used the road since taking his test after leaving Kingston Grammar School back in 1961! His appeal focused on the precise wording of the fine notice.

"It is clear many of the penalty charge notices are basically illegal and drivers have been conned out of hundreds of thousands of pounds on a specious argument about cycling," he said.

The controversial barrier has generated political heat. Lib

Dem Cllr Liz Green called Mr Marlow's appeal success "a win for common sense", adding: "I think the Tories will now have to pay everyone back who has been issued with a fine."

Unsurprisingly, the council disagrees.

● Kingston Council operates two of the UK's most lucrative bus lane cameras. The Eden Street and London Road cameras make £4,000 a day between them.

Wish you were here. No, really

Newsflash: Surbiton postcards exist. As in 'Greetings from Surbiton'. How nice is that? Something lovely to send your friends in Tolworth.

But why do they exist? Because, dear friends, people come here for their holidays.

According to Expedia, Surbiton is the perfect place to stay for no other reason than 'ease of access to the attractions of London'.

I wholeheartedly refute that the only reason to stay in Surbiton is for convenient trains to London. For a start, the trains are rarely convenient. And while London may have grand vistas, anyone who has seen the sun cast majestic shadows down the high street as it sinks behind the roof of KFC will know one doesn't have to travel to London for a photo opportunity. As for parks, if you walk extremely slowly round Claremont Gardens, you could easily imagine you're in Hyde Park... with less risk of being ploughed down by Boris bikes.

Big Ben? We have the clocktower by Waitrose. They're practically the same. Theatre? Try getting a coffee from 9-11am on Saturday and you'll see real drama. Historic pubs? The Black Lion has been a watering hole since the early 19th century, as many of my friends well remember. Retail therapy? Forget Selfridges! Surbiton Homewares caters to all life's needs.

Come to Surbiton for your hols; go home with a clothes horse and Tupperware. Want thrills? Drive down Portsmouth Road at rush hour to experience the nailbiting trauma of a theme park ride.

Expedia claims the sporting heart of Surbiton is 'iconic Twickenham stadium'. As you point out, Expedia,

that's in Twickenham. Haven't you heard of

Victoria Rec, and the world-class sporting feats on a Seething Community Sports Day, or even a Monday afternoon at the sandpit? On a trip to America in 2007, I found myself in an area I dubbed 'the New Malden of Los Angeles'. I'd expected a hotel in the centre of LA. What I'd done was the equivalent of looking at a map of London, settling on Croydon and expecting a view of St Paul's.

Safe to say, visitors to Surbiton who expect to wake up to views of the London Eye will not be disappointed by the snazzy glow of Foxton's estate agents brightening their day. Tell them to go straight to Victoria News and buy a postcard.

Becky Mayhew



Council leader Kevin Davis, right, chats to a resident at a 2015 event at the YMCA

Joining the conversation

Kingston's council leader Kevin Davis, and other councillors and officers, will field questions during a meet-the-electorate session at the cornerHOUSE in Douglas Road on April 27.

The Kingston Conversation runs from 7pm and is open to all. A string of similar chats back in 2015 at the YMCA, Sunray community centre, Surbiton Library and School Lane youth centre established the template.

Residents were encouraged to drop by and have a cuppa with Cllr Davis, with more than 100 taking advantage of the chance to tackle their elected representatives 'on home soil'.

At the time, Cllr Davis told The Good Life that he preferred such gatherings. "We're going to do more of this, not just sit in stupid meetings inside that no one wants to go to," he said.

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Be bold: borders need bulk

Ah, the joys of spring. Daffs are blooming, lambs gambolling and gardeners among us are itching to get down and get dirty.

Spring is an ideal time to plant a summer flowering border or overhaul an old one. The soil is warm and moist with bare earth asking to be filled with new and interesting plants.

It's daunting to plant an entire garden from scratch, so tackle a section at a time, to take particular account of aspect and soil conditions. For example, plants you might choose for a dry sunny area would probably not thrive in a shady spot, so match each plant to its growing conditions.

Given that there are hundreds you could grow, it's hard to come up with a shortlist. Start with the plants you already know and like and which you think will look good together.

What makes a successful planting scheme? Colour is important but so is the shape of the flowers (buttons, spires or daisies), leaf shape and texture. If you see an eye-catching border, analyse what makes it successful. Inspiration can be found by visiting



Echinacea and Sea Holly are strong border plants

one of the many beautiful gardens we have locally which are open to the public.

Successful planting schemes rely on repetition. Select two or three good planting partners and repeat them at various intervals.

A winning plant combination is lavender and alchemilla mollis (which looks stunning when used alternately to edge a path). The purple spike-like flowers of lavender and the acid-yellow frothy blooms of alchemilla contrast well in colour, form and foliage.

If you wanted to add another plant to the mix, the claret-coloured, egg-shaped blooms of allium would work well, as would roses or peonies. By adding to the scheme one plant at a time, the plant selection process can be very much simplified.

Borders need bulk to be successful. Real impact can be created with just a few well-chosen species. Keep the number of different plants you use to the minimum.

Depending on the size, plant in groups of three, five or more for a strong, bold look.

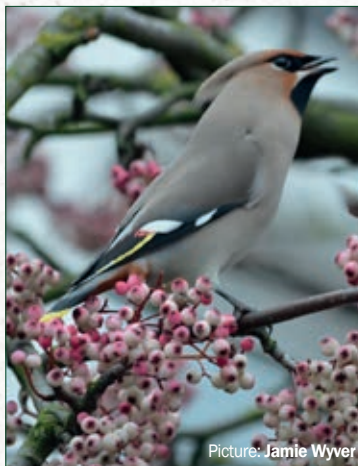
Janice Cripps is a professional Surbiton garden designer. For advice, planting plans, or projects – concept to completion – www.janicecripps.co.uk



Waxing lyrical this winter

On a cold wintery day, when trees look bare and skies grey, you might think it pointless to venture out into Surbiton in search of wildlife. Yet recent months can bring colourful and memorable wildlife encounters.

This is a time of year when many bird species migrate south to escape the harsher winters of Northern Europe and Scandinavia, in search for food; birds including redwings and



Picture: Jamie Wyver

fieldfares, both of which have been recorded locally this year.

The common blackbird also embarks on this journey, so the one in your garden may not be the same individual you see in the summer.

One star of the show is the alluring waxwing, pictured, with its auburn crest and vibrant yellow tipped tail.

Waxwings are named for the red spots on their wing feathers which resemble envelope sealing wax.

The RSPB has proclaimed this year a 'waxwing winter', with higher numbers than usual.

In January, 25 were spotted at the Thames Water Hogsmill nature reserve, feasting on their favourite winter food, the bright red rowan berry. Each bird can eat twice its weight each day, so berries are swiftly consumed before they move on to the next tree.

Keep your eyes peeled for these beautiful birds, and if you want to help them, plant a rowan in your garden, or a hawthorn in a hedgerow.

Email nature conservation officer Elliot Newton at: elliott.newton@environmenttrust.org

The landmark which rose from the ashes

When half the Victoria rec pavilion turned into the Tarte in the Park cafe, it stirred memories for neighbours **Margaret Palmer** and **Kate Harland**

It is wonderful to see the Tarte in the Park cafe breathing new life into Victoria recreation ground, but how many residents recall the original pavilion?

Margaret and I moved to Surbiton in 1973 and 1972 respectively, and both fondly remember the old building.

Constructed in 1893 for the sum of £240, the wooden pavilion was built to provide changing accommodation for the football and cricket teams that played there, and to complement its surroundings.

With its crenulated decoration around the roof, it was very reminiscent of an old railway station building to Margaret's two young boys, who would rush off after school to play steam trains round it.

For us girls, it was a stable full of imaginary horses, with plenty of room to gallop around, neighing frantically and re-enacting scenes

from Little House on the Prairie.

For others, it was a quiet place to read, play a game of hide and seek on a grand scale, a place for a picnic on a rainy day or somewhere to sit and watch the V-formations of Canada geese that would fly in huge numbers across the sky.

Margaret and I both remember Bernie the park keeper (that's him cutting the grass in the colour photo), who would unlock the gates at 7.30 every morning and close them again at 9pm in the summer, 4pm in the winter.

He and his part-time assistant Terry also took bookings for the tennis courts, and kept both male and female toilets checked and locked up at night.

Bernie would ban people from the park if he caught them swearing! After one particularly 'vocal' afternoon football match involving a local school, Bernie visited the



headmistress to report the language and let her know it wouldn't be tolerated.

In response, every pupil who was tracked down and found guilty was ordered to write a letter of apology to the park keeper!

Sadly, in early July 1995, the pavilion was destroyed in an arson attack. Shortly afterwards, all traces of this beautiful building were removed.

Then, in January 1997, a crane appeared in the middle of the park and construction of a new, vandal-resistant pavilion began.

Completed that April, for the sum of £85,000, it is the pavilion we have today – part changing rooms and, now, part cafe.

It may not be nearly as grand as the original, but it's still definitely a place to inspire adventures and memories.



Margaret Palmer's photo captures the old building in its heyday (right). Above, the black-and-white aftermath of the 1995 arson attack

Beachcombing and butterflies star in art show

Surbiton artist Georgina Allen's exhibition of windswept seascapes and wistful still lifes fills the walls of a Fulham gallery until March 25. Still Life & Pembrokeshire

Landscapes, at the Piers Feetham gallery in Fulham Road, opposite the main entrance to the Stamford Bridge stadium, is open Tues-Fri 10am-6pm and Sat 10am-1pm.

The 80 works on show are mainly oil on board or oil on linen, celebrating nature, and she has shuttled back and forwards to Wales for more than a decade

to create them. "I like the light of Pembrokeshire," she said. "It's wonderful there; a place I love."

Beachcombing of weatherbeaten wood, bones, eroded pebbles and shells – many found with the help of her exuberant assistant, a feisty black Pug called Maud – mingle with sumac cones, feathers, leaves, and butterfly wings to form the still-life subjects.

A carpet of potential choices covers the floor of her first-floor studio, each vying to catch her eye for the next painting.

She has also exhibited at the Royal Academy and Mall Galleries.



Artist Georgina Allen works on a still life in her studio

Spring into action!

Whatever the weather there's always something going on at Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club. Come and try! Indoor and Cardio Tennis, Squash, Racketball, Zumba, Pilates, Indoor Cycling, our Life Fitness Gym and much, much more. Drop in and look for yourself.

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Hockney inspires digital art

David Hockney's retrospective at Tate Britain is the fastest-selling show in the gallery's history, with 70 works created using iPad or iPhone. Inspired? Learn the techniques and skills from teacher Hilary Walker who runs an iPad art course at the cornerHOUSE next month. "We'll develop and practise our skills in a supportive environment, learning how to create art in a way that's not possible by any other means," said Hilary, left. The artist, who trained in printmaking and Photoshop, says it suits beginners and those with some experience. "All you need is your iPad, an (optional) stylus and the app Procreate, which costs £4.49 to download if you haven't got it already." Skills learned over the years have given her an insight into the multi-stage processes to create advanced iPad digital art. "I've come a long way since early experimenting, and now create most of my work on the iPad. The versatility of digital art is such that I find the more I learn, the more I see new ways of using my iPad. "Whatever your experience, drawing and painting on an iPad is tremendous fun, addictive and the sky's the limit!" she added, with these psychedelic zebras (left) a good example. The eight-week course runs on Tuesdays from April 25, 7.30-9.30pm at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road. For more details or to enrol, visit: www.createwithoutpaint.co.uk



It's all a communist plot...

When Karl Marx's body is stolen from Highgate Cemetery, it prompts a bidding war between rivals keen to acquire the gruesome remains. That's the bizarre plot of Berrylands writer John D'Arcy's debut novel – a frantic, bawdy black comedy which bears stylistic comparison to that great surrealist author JP Donleavy. Populated by larger-than-life characters, The Belles of Little Paris is written under John's literary pseudonym, OX O'Hony. The Dublin-born former engineer, who came to Surbiton 40 years ago, spent years in Germany after falling in love with the language on an exchange trip to Stuttgart. The bars, back streets and characters he found in the country provide the backdrop for many of the scenes. He and wife Helen stumbled on Berrylands in the late 1970s. "It seemed a good place to bring up kids," explained John. "I love it in Raeburn Avenue; it was the best move we ever made, and I want to live there until they cart me out, feet-first." Hopefully not before the 71-year-old has finished the sequel. "Yes, to complete my misery I'm working on No2," he admitted. John hopes his book (printed by New Generation Publishing at £14.99, sold via Amazon) will gather a cult following. "The genre is farcical satire with black humour," he said. "I hope people will brighten their day with something completely on the other side of sanity, to see if the two idiots who dig up Karl Marx outwit their nefarious opponents." To date, John's writing has involved translating dull, dry technical manuals. Safe to say there's nothing dull about The Belles.



The plot line was prompted by the odder-than-fiction 1978 theft of Charlie Chaplin's body, and a ransom attempt. Why else does this entertaining Irishman love Berrylands? "Verges!" he cried. "The grass between the footpaths and the kerb; a great safety feature if you're trying to look after children on tricycles!" **Tim Harrison**

An elementary lesson in mystery writing

Writing as Orlando Pearson, author Edward Howard is gaining a name as an authentic torch-bearer for Sherlock Holmes, 70 years after the death of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The 53-year-old of Langley Avenue fell under the spell of the fictional detective at 14. After doing literature at uni, Edward (by day a commuting accountant) reworked Macbeth as a Sherlock murder mystery. In May 2015, he published two new Sherlock stories. "There's a huge appetite for them," he said. He's not alone. After Conan Doyle went out of copyright, others created stories too. But Edward, who plots on the train to Waterloo, has faith in his. "I'd like to think a few people may have missed their stop on the tube while reading them," he said. Whether Sherlock is beating Don Bradman at cricket, mulling climate change or wrestling with Brexit, the same awesome powers of deduction never leave him. "I'm deliberately provocative," he said, adding that his forte was weaving real characters into the yarns. "Most who write Sherlock stories try to be as original as possible; I try to be as unoriginal!" Published online and in book form, Edward's stories can be found by searching for The Redacted Sherlock Holmes. He gives a percentage of profits to charity, enjoys the acclaim of the Sherlock Holmes Society, and has sold 1,000 copies in the last year. "I haven't accelerated my retirement plan," he said, adding that feedback from avid Sherlock-loving readers was a fine reward. Married with two daughters, Edward says his wife is "polite" about his stories. What, apart from the Benedict Cumberbatch cult, accounts for Sherlock's timeless appeal? "It offers an alternate lifestyle to people not in a relationship," he said, enigmatically. More on the books at www.orlandopearson.com **TH**



Edward Howard writes Sherlock tales as Orlando Pearson

Give us this day our daily art

Her show at the cornerHOUSE included neighbours' flowers, pub singers, back gardens, kitchen sink dramas, the Coronation Stone and Glastonbury. Simone Kay's distinctive postcard-sized watercolours are complemented by snapped photos of the actual scene she has painted or sketched, adding context and further interest. A gifted artist, she achieves with a few brush strokes or pencil marks a mood or moment in time. To enhance the gala launch, her pictures were beamed on a giant screen in the auditorium, so everyone could admire them in huge, projected detail. She created a 'memory' each day for a year, from Queen's Prom to a heron, a buddleia to Teddington Lock, Raven's Ait to the King Charles Centre, a tree at Knollmead, the station, Brighton Road... "Most people know her fabulous stained glass work," said curator Nicky Newberry, introducing the show. "You're known for a particular skill, but you're pushing the boundaries. You're an inspiration; you've shown that we can all take on new tasks." The mayor, Geoff Austin, called her "an amazing lady", adding: "Well done, Sim, and keep on painting." Simone (pictured) said that the recent exhibition had kept her focused on her task of painting a picture every day. The limited-edition prints are 'giclee'; a colour-fast inkjet process longer lasting than watercolour. "I think they look better than the originals," she laughed. Cliff Port, Simone's soulmate, admitted: "Sometimes she gets to a quarter to midnight and runs round screaming 'What can I paint, what can I paint?'" **TH**



A crafty gift for mother?

It was a tough choice – a plate, a coaster, maybe a mug? I decided on a pencil pot and I know my BFF will love it, decorated as it is in a froggy theme close to our (schoolgirl!) hearts. My 'work of art' was the result of a couple of tranquil hours in The Crafty Cafe in Ewell Road (www.crafty-cafe.co.uk); plenty of room to work, good lighting, all the materials and colours you could want, plus cake and a freshly-brewed cuppa. With a couple of weddings coming up, my eye was caught by a guest book platter; a rather different memento. Couples have worked on Valentine's pieces, designing and painting on separate visits to keep their romantic gestures under wraps. Fiona Kerr has welcomed children and adults through the doors for 13 years, and has hosted corporate events, hen parties, after-work gatherings and mums who call in for time to themselves after dropping off kids on the school run. I doubt my pencil pot (left) will be handed down through the generations, but families have produced objects worth keeping for sentimental reasons, such as wall plaques for mums, dads and grandparents, and hand-painted plates for special dinners. Finding a way to give a personalised gift that's fun is worth shouting about, and I'm dropping hints with Mothering Sunday on the horizon! **Christine Williams**



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Dogs reap rewards from training

Don't be surprised if you see loads of dogs wagging their tails in glee on March 12. They'll be marking the first anniversary party of Rewards Dog Training with birthday cake and other tempting doggie treats.

Party host Sara Ward (with Bedlington terriers Edie and Bertie) set up Rewards after training as an instructor and deciding to do something different – focusing on owners, not just pets.

"Each dog is an individual and so is each owner," said Surbiton-based Sara, who takes puppy classes at the Aspen vet surgery, Ewell Road. "Offering a personal approach to dog training, whether in groups or individually, can help gain skills to deal with any issues in a relaxed atmosphere, in the place you need help most."

Kennel Club-accredited, she uses reward-based

techniques for good behaviour and self-control.

"I've never had a dog I couldn't train," said Sara who teaches Kennel Club good citizen dog training after the basic course.

"I want to bring fun back into dog ownership for both human and canine clients!" she added.

Visit www.rewardsdogtraining.co.uk

Sara's Top Dog Tips

- Make sure collar and lead are right for your dog.
- Microchip, and keep your details up to date.
- Respect other owners and their dogs and don't let your dog approach them when on a lead.
- Not everyone likes dogs jumping up at them.
- Continual barking is a nuisance. Is it frustration, or a call for attention?
- Out all day? Use a dog walker or doggy creche.



Passion is staged

The last days of the life of Jesus are movingly portrayed in The Passion, being staged at the cornerHOUSE in April.

From his arrival in Jerusalem to his arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection, this second part of the Mysteries trilogy heralds Easter.

Created by playwright Tony Harrison, and first performed at the National in the 1980s, the show is based on medieval English mystery plays, performed by members of trade guilds, largely in the streets of Yorkshire cities.

Director Leo Ellmers put on the first part of the trilogy, The Nativity, at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, in 2006, and has been keen to do The Passion too. Local actors represent the craftsmen and women of the original mystery plays, bringing biblical characters to life, accompanied by music and song.

"Audience members will move around, guided by actors, in this 'promenade' performance," said Leo. "The script is poetic and gritty, with echoes of medieval English from the mystery plays. It should add up to a truly unforgettable production."

The Passion, April 5-8, 8pm. Tickets £9 (£7 concs) from www.ticketsource.co.uk/event/173351



Turan Duncan as Jesus

Run, Heather, run...

Funding training in tailoring and carpentry in poverty-stricken Malawi, is the motivation for Heather Palmer's latest challenge.

Heather, of Upper Brighton Road, aims to run 26km (16.2 miles) in the Lidl Kingston Breakfast Run on Sunday, March 26. Money from sponsorship will give marginalised people in rural areas a chance to become self-sufficient through vocational training run by Surbiton charity African Vision Malawi.

"I started running in 2015 for the 10th anniversary of the charity, and never thought I could manage the London 10k, but did!" said Heather, who grew up in the land-locked East African country, and who is one of the charity founders. "Last year, I entered a triathlon in Malawi and completed it. This year, my challenge to raise funds is to run 26km. The most I have ever run is 13km."

To back Heather's drive for lasting change in Malawi, visit mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/heatherpalmer26km



There once was a poet called Thain

**There was a young lady from Hook,
Who swallowed a very large book,
The literature spoiled,
All her innards recoiled,
And the pages flew out as she shook.** **Morris Thain**

Raise a glass to beer festival

Surbiton's two-day real ale festival attracts beer lovers from far and wide. The Hook Beer Fest, staged at the scout hut in Verona Drive, is on April 21 and 22, with Friday and Saturday evening sessions from 6pm, and a Saturday noon-4pm slot.

Tickets (£5) from The Prince of Wales, Ewell Road; The Antelope, Maple Road; and www.hookbeerfest.org.uk.

It's the eighth year of the festival, which has raised £25,000 for charity in that time.

Beers on tap include Blindmans' Golden Spring, Bank Top's Flat Cap, Surbiton-brewed Big Smoke's Medicine Man, Ballards' Midhurst Mild, Old School's Detention and Elland's terrifying 6.5-strength 1872 Porter. Nearly 20 ciders are also on draught.



A team of U10s celebrate winning a trophy at Tolworth

Nearing 40, the mates' league

Tolworth's primary boys' football league, reaching the season's climax next month, will recruit afresh at a fun day in June.

Run on enthusiasm, rather than cash from the rich end of the football spectrum, the league celebrates its 40th birthday next year. It doesn't select at trials, so gives all six to 16s, able-bodied and disabled, girls and boys, the chance to play.

Alumni include Wimbledon manager Neal Ardley, former Spurs Neil Sullivan and Jason Cundy, Swansea winger Wayne Routledge and ex-QPR midfielder Mikele Leigertwood.

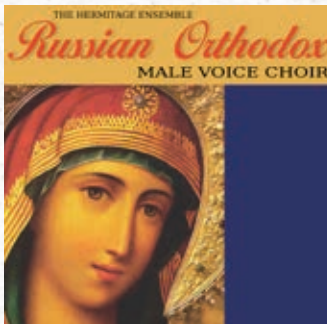
Every Saturday, 450 youngsters turn up to the King George playing fields, Jubilee Way, near Tolworth station. There are strict rules on conduct, and low membership fees.

Berrylands teenager Chris Banks, a former player who now helps run a team, said: "I've always enjoyed playing as it was a fun thing to do with my mates."

Players register, and are allocated to teams based on school year groups, with five-a-sides for six and seven-year-olds, U10s (seven-a-side), U12s (nine-a-side), U14s (11-a-side) to U16s.

Referees are often ex-players, or current ones officiating a younger age group. The next season runs from September. More at www.pbfl.co.uk

The Russians are coming



St Matthew's Church in St Matthew's Avenue will reverberate to the sonorous tones of the Hermitage Ensemble of St Petersburg on Monday, April 10 at 7.30pm. The acclaimed Russian Orthodox male voice choir marks the start of Holy Week with the final concert of a 2017 UK tour, singing traditional church and folk music. Free entry, retiring collection, refreshments.



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