



Market makes plastic bag-free pledge

Surbiton Farmers' Market is working to end plastic bag use.

It is urging its legion of shoppers to bring reusable bags, and will soon produce its own long-life versions.

"Almost 70% of stalls are already plastic-free and we're encouraging

more," said market manager Natalie Kontarsky. "We've had a good response to a call for environmentally friendly alternatives."

● Community club Inspire Sport, run by Maggie North, which trains special needs athletes, ran a charity

tombola at February's market (that's hubby Malcolm, left), raising £249. Its stars include Hannah Kemp from the Flipping Amazing crêpe stall who will be in Team GB at 2019's Abu Dhabi Special Olympics. Visit www.inspire-sport.co.uk

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New slip road for A3?

Could Tolworth roundabout's chronic gridlock be eased if cars were allowed to join the southbound A3 at the Ace of Spades, Hook?

Drivers can only reach Guildford-bound lanes via Tolworth Tower, Esher or Cobham... but talks are exploring relieving perpetual jams by constructing a new slip road.

Council leader Cllr Kevin Davis has told Surbiton residents: "The roundabout at Tolworth can't take many more cars. If the Toby Jug site is redeveloped,

we'll have to have changes, otherwise Tolworth roundabout will be clogged."

The favoured solution is to enable vehicles to join the southbound A3 at the Ace of Spades roundabout, instead of making drivers head north to Tolworth before doubling back

When massive housing schemes appear around Tolworth roundabout in coming years it will pile yet more pressure on the beleaguered intersection beneath Tolworth Tower.

Traffic already tails back along the

Broadway, Ewell Road and into Kingston town centre at peak times.

Discussions being held with agencies including Transport for London are assessing the feasibility of building a new slip road to feed cars directly on to the southern lanes of the A3 at Hook.

The space is tight, but part-time traffic lights could regulate the flow of vehicles which enter the Ace of Spades roundabout.



Keeping it clean

Why are (from left) firefighter Simon Jakeman, wildlife group chairman Tom Hooker and nature conservationist Elliot Newton clambering around together in the undergrowth? It's to keep one of Surbiton's main assets looking its best. Full story, [page 6](#)

Spire on 'at risk' register

It's one of Surbiton's most distinctive and visible landmarks... and it's in trouble.

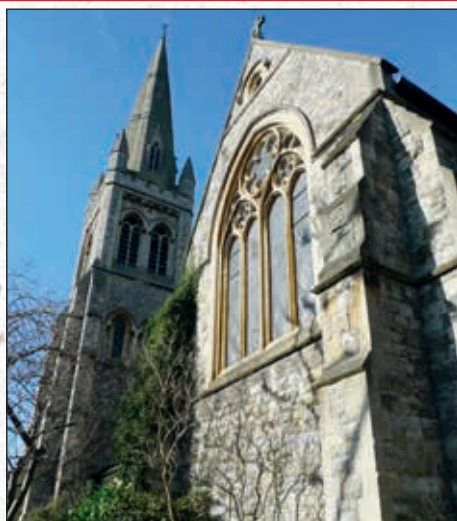
The spire and tower of the Grade II listed St Matthew's church, which stands the same height as Nelson's Column, have been placed on Historic England's 'at risk' register.

Nearly £750,000 will have to be spent on urgent repairs to the stonework and mortar, and a major fund-raising drive is being launched for the restoration.

It's a building with a fascinating history, constructed 140 years ago by a wealthy Surbitonian distraught with grief after the death of his sister.

News of the magnitude of the required repairs came out of the blue following a routine maintenance inspection.

Now the church plans to use an appeal for cash as a springboard to broaden the building's community appeal. Full story on [page 7](#).



SURBITON Farmers' Market 2018			
3rd Saturday of the month • 9am - 1pm			
January 20	February 17	March 17	April 21
May 19	June 16	July 21	August 18
September 15	October 20	November 17	December 15



Inflation rate

Say goodbye to flat-tyre misery! The mission to get everyone back on a bike means pumps are sprouting on pavements. This one appeared in Claremont Road, opposite the clocktower.

Surbiton town centre now also boasts two free-to-use mini repair stands.

Made by the firm Cyclepods, they allow cyclists to suspend a bike in the air to repair punctures or adjust brakes and gears.

All tools – screwdrivers, spanners, tyre levers, Allen keys – are attached with stainless steel cables.

But do they actually work? The Good Life has been putting one to the test, with the help of a local expert.

● Turn to [page 6](#) to see if the town's new pavement furniture does the business.

Would you like to know the value of your house or apartment?

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● It's not often something this big dominates the skyline. **Christopher Houghton** took this picture of a crane replacing antenna on the roof of Cleves Court, St Mark's Hill, on February 11. Traffic was diverted

Surbiton gin can only be named Good Life!

Surbiton has its own gin, naturally named The Good Life.

Produced for Sam Berry at No97 in Maple Road, it was distilled to his recipe by Union Distillers in Market Harborough, Leicestershire, in a copper still called Gerard.

"It's made with eight botanicals," said Sam. "We specialise in gin at 97, so we thought: Why not have our own gin too?"

It coincides with the opening of a second, 50-cover bar for Sam – One One Four in Teddington High Street.

"I've tasted countless gins on my travels," said Sam, who stocks 100 varieties. "I had a recipe idea, and we tried it."

What makes The Good Life distinctive? It is flavoured with Earl Grey tea. "I love tea, and I love gin," said Sam!

Though currently distilled in Leicestershire, the hope is to eventually create a distillery in Surbiton... providing Kingston Council allows it. It's been 200 years



since anyone asked, so it may involve blowing dust off old ledgers in the archives.

The Good Life has proved a popular gin at No97. Sam deliberately didn't tell people it was the bar's own product, to get honest feedback. "It's a good, all-round London-style gin that makes a good martini and a good G&T," he said.

The Good Life tasting panel concurs. "Grapefruit zest and allspice," was the conclusion, after uncorking one of the numbered 40 degree proof bottles.

Backing for scandal-hit charity

Surbiton has rallied round its long-established Oxfam shop, despite the charity being mired in scandal over the conduct of a few of its international staff.

"It's been unbelievable; donations and activity have actually increased," one volunteer told The Good Life, adding that Surbiton's shoppers had been incredibly supportive during the troubled weeks of February.

The Charity Commission has launched an inquiry into allegations that some of Oxfam's overseas staff had hired prostitutes while working in Chad and Haiti.

Last year, Oxfam shops such as the

one – pictured – in Victoria Road between Nationwide and Mailboxes Etc, raised £91million to help the charity's work around the world.

While public trust in Oxfam has been damaged nationally, the local volunteer said that Surbiton supporters had stuck by the charity shop and were showing their solidarity by actually increasing donations.

Many regular shoppers who use the Victoria Road charity shop have also made a point of calling in to offer their encouragement to staff behind the counter, and give their backing to the voluntary work that they do.



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Brace for the mace

"Don't worry," said the mayor's mace-bearer, brandishing a large, battered black leather box. "It's not a trombone."

Members of Surbiton Probus Club were given a talk on the origin of the council's civic impedimenta by Brian Sullivan, for 30 years a police officer, working mainly in surveillance.



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The great mace has just celebrated its 400th birthday, and is one of four in the Royal borough... two harking back to the days when Surbiton and Malden were boroughs.

Brian, mace-bearer for six mayors, has become an authority on maces. Made of silver gilt, the great mace had a lucky escape from Cromwell's clutches, he told Probus members at Glenmore House.

After the Lord Protector decreed its destruction, wily burghers switched its seals from regal to commonwealth, and it passed inspection! It is the oldest



Borough mace-bearer Brian Sullivan shoulders the great mace

ceremonial mace in use in Britain. Were a replacement ever needed, it would cost around £300,000 to make, although the original cost of a mace and a spare in 1617 totalled £25 13s 6d.

"I do get worried about it rolling around in the boot of RBK1," said Brian, who holds it ahead of council meetings and citizenship swearings. And when The Queen visits the borough, it has to be held head-down.

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Ale and hearty

It's one of the area's most popular events for real ale lovers. The 9th Hook Beer Festival takes place at the 1st Hook Scout HQ in Verona Drive, Surbiton, on Friday April 20 and Saturday April 21, with three sessions in all.

This year the event is supporting Prostate Cancer UK, and there will be 54 ales and 20 ciders available.

Tickets are £6, available online at www.hookbeerfest.org.uk or from behind the bar at The Antelope, the Prince of Wales, The Albion and the North Star.

The event is supported by Kingston & Leatherhead CAMRA, and is sponsored by Fuller's brewery.

Flat prices slide

The average price paid for a flat in Surbiton has dropped below £400,000. It stands at £399,768, says Zoopla, based on 267 sales in the past year. The average price paid for any property – flat or house – stands at £591,883; a drop of 4% in the past six months.

Shop relocates

The Princess Alice Hospice charity shop in Claremont Road is relocating to the vacant unit alongside the Wed2B bridal shop opposite Sainsbury’s in Victoria Road.

Come far, then?

A surreal exchange between a heckler and the council leader left many scratching their heads at a Tolworth meeting. “I’ve lived here my entire life,” asserted Cllr Kevin Davis. “No you haven’t,” came a shout. “You were born in New Malden!”

Weekend walk-in

The walk-in service at Surbiton health centre (the former hospital site in Ewell Road) now opens 8am-8pm on Saturdays and Sundays. “It’s absolutely brilliant; I was seen in 20 minutes and they couldn’t have been nicer,” reports one grateful treatment recipient.

Wildflower haven

Could a space near you in Surbiton be a wildflower haven? The council is backing Kew’s Royal Botanic Gardens in giving out wildflower seed to help community groups transform spaces. Visit www.lemosandcrane.co.uk

Lightning triumph

With bewildering speed, Thali Ho in Brighton Road was named best suburban casual dining restaurant in London in the Asian Curry awards... just 19 days after serving its first bhaji.

Steering recruits

Affected by cancer? The NHS wants you – patient, relative or carer – to join the primary care cancer follow-up steering group. Email clare.thomas@swlondon.nhs.uk (020 3458 5231).

Bird's-eye view

Wing it to the library annexe, Ewell Road, at 7.30pm on March 20. Andrew Cleave will address Surbiton & District Bird Watching Society on New Zealand’s Remote Islands and Rare Birds. More at www.surbitonbirds.org

Buzz for the bees

There’s a buzz around Surbiton Probus Club at present. The guest speaker at the meeting on Wednesday March 21 is Pam Hunter, and her topic is bee-keeping. The club meets on lunchtimes on the third Wednesday of the month at Glenmore House in The Crescent. For all membership inquiries, email Surbiton-probus@outlook.com

Arrest over tag

A man has been arrested for criminal damage after a team of Surbiton police worked with British Transport Police officers to track down the creator of a regularly repeated tag. If you see graffiti, you can report it to Kingston Council at www.kingston.gov.uk

Strictly ballroom

Ample time to polish your footwork ahead of a Northanger Abbey ball in May. Mrs Bennet’s Ballroom teaches Regency dancing, all abilities, in St Mark’s church hall. Details in ad, p11.

Burglaries rise

Burglaries in Long Ditton rose 16% in 2016, and went up by a further 22% in 2017, according to the latest Surrey police figures. Overall crime in the area has gone up 13% in the past year.

Officers on duty

Although Surbiton no longer has a fully staffed police station of its own, Millbank House – at the junction of Browns Road and Ewell Road – does have uniformed officers on duty from 7-8pm on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and 2-3pm on Saturdays, if you want to call by and actually speak to a real person.



There had been a newsagent at this address since 1895
Pic: David Jacobson



Du Cane dry cleaners, near Surbiton station is now empty

Gaps are appearing in Surbiton’s high street

Rising commercial rents have been blamed for more trading casualties. Victoria News has closed, Du Cane dry cleaners has gone from St Mark’s Hill and Epsom Skin Clinic has also vanished.

The newspaper shop shut on February 3, having become dependent on lottery ticket sales and Oystercard top-ups rather than cards or magazines.

It ends an illustrious history. George Errington welcomed customers to his stationery and news shop in 1895, when the monarch who lent her name to the road was still on the throne.

William Berry took over 75 Victoria Road at the start of the First World War. Berry’s was a high-street fixture until the 1960s when it was taken on by a Mr T Cooper who ran the newsagent’s until the Patels’ arrival 15 years ago.

Closure of Du Cane was blamed on economic factors. The chain has five other outlets, but Surbiton’s, between a bookies and Specsavers, was proving too expensive to maintain at an annual rent of £35,000, plus £10,000 rates.

A spokesman told the Good Life: “We’ve relocated the business to New Malden.”

Rival dry cleaner Roberts, in Claremont Road, is offering introductory discounts to former Du Cane customers, as supermarket giant Waitrose steps up its attempt to grab the town’s laundry business.

Despite assuring The Good Life it would not jeopardise the future of independent traders, Waitrose has redoubled its efforts to be both launderer and grocer, urging customers to drop off their shirts at customer service while buying their veg and cornflakes.

A mass email to local myWaitrose cardholders said that welcome-desk staff would now “look after your wardrobe”... although the accompanying discount offer actually expired in 2017.

“It doesn’t help Surbiton’s existing businesses,” said Robert Helliwell of Roberts, opposite the supermarket’s front door. We’re local, we’re specialists and we do the work on the premises rather than storing it and hoiking it away in vans.”

Surbiton’s Waitrose is undergoing refurbishment of the deli counters and alcohol sales area, and currently

lacks a manager following the sudden departure of Mark Stevens in December.

The supermarket chain’s Bayswater branch manager is in temporary charge, dashing between the two stores until a full-time appointment is made.

The latest Waitrose revamp includes introducing more self-scan checkout machines, updating service counters and redesigning wines and spirits.

If Surbitonians are looking slightly more wrinkly than usual, it may be because Epsom Skin Clinic has gone. Therapists in the treatment rooms in Victoria Road (between Boots opticians and Starbucks) offered waxing, laser treatments, lip enlarging and tattoo removal.

“Lease and landlord issues” are blamed for the decision to close. Staff have moved to the Epsom branch. **Tim Harrison**

SURBITON LIFE by David Cox



Hounded wherever she goes - The woman who once confessed to being not that keen on dogs

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Rupert Bear artist Alfred Edmeades Bestall (his middle name was his mother's maiden name) was born in Mandalay, Burma, to Methodist missionaries Arthur and Rebecca Bestall on December 14 1892... and spent his first five years there.

His talent for drawing was apparent at the succession of schools he attended in England and Wales, and he later studied art at college in Birmingham.

Ruled out of Great War service on medical grounds ("My chest was an inch short – you had to have a full-size chest before they'd allow you to go and get shot") he became a front-line troop transport driver in France in 1916.

When hostilities ended, the Bestalls moved to Guilford Avenue, Surbiton, and Fred began a 60-year association with Surbiton Hill Methodist Church in Ewell Road, a 10-minute stroll away. He was in the choir for 44 years.

After selling several cartoons – gently observational, rather than biting satirical – to Punch, Fred took on Rupert Bear.

The character had been created by Mary Tourtel for the Daily Express in 1920. When her eyesight began failing, the Express advertised for a new artist... and in 1935 Bestall got the gig. For the next 40 years he produced cartoon strips and annuals – the first Christmas book was in 1936.

Fred's father, Arthur, died in Surbiton at the end of 1936, and Fred moved in with his

Bear necessities

mother, in Cranes Park, where the commemorative blue plaque resides.

Every adventure involving the intrepid bear with the yellow check trousers, red jumper and yellow scarf began and ended at his home in Nutwood – at times a cosy, ruralised reimagining of Surbiton, but in fact a mythical composite of all the nice places Fred had ever visited. It was a dreamworld where everyone was safe and completely secure.

Rupert was a mirror of the young Fred; playing, dreaming, adventuring and attending church. He stumbled upon secret paths, chatted to scarecrows, visited magic lands... but was always home in time for tea. His pals included Algy Pug, Gregory Guinea Pig and Pong-Ping the Peke, all dressed like miniature Edwardian gentlemen.

The Express only dropped the Rupert column three times; to make way for a wartime speech by Churchill, and following the deaths of JFK and Pope John.

From 1938-1945 Fred was an air raid warden in Surbiton, frequently on all-night shifts. In the snowy winter of 1941 he painted his air-raid post, M4, at the Surbiton Hill Road/Avenue Elmers junction, and it was accepted for the Royal Academy – a source of huge pride.

Day after day he continued churning out Rupert cartoon strips for the paper, on top of all the extra work illustrating annuals.

The strips occasionally included members of the 10th Surbiton Guides – three of whom, drawn from life, became mini celebrities in the area.

Fred's mother died shortly after her 100th birthday in 1964, and the Cranes Park house was sold. Fred moved into a cramped flat in Ewell Road.

For 22 years he was a member of Surbiton Rotary Club, attending its Tuesday lunches at the Toby Jug pub, where for some reason everyone knew him as Bert.

Back in 1970, Fred told the Surrey Comet that his two great pleasures in life had been belonging to Surbiton Hill Methodist Church, and making so many children happy.

"Thinking up the Rupert plots was the hardest thing; the older I got the more difficult it became," he admitted.

In retirement in the late 1960s he still produced covers for the Christmas annual, with a fresh team of illustrators hired by the Express to continue the cartoon strips.

A lifelong bachelor, Fred was once asked if he regretted never having children of his own. "Not really," he replied. "I feel as if I've had thousands of them."

He spent his last years in retirement in a cottage in Wales. Bone cancer was diagnosed, and he died

on January 15 1986. Among those sending flowers to the funeral was lifelong Rupert fan Paul McCartney, who owns the film rights to the famous bear. Caroline Bott, Fred's goddaughter, inherited his drawings, and produced a fine biography. "You'll have to have a huge bonfire," he had told her, unassuming to the last.

Tim Harrison

● Fred Bestall, born in Burma, December 14 1892, died in Porthmadog, Wales, January 15 1986

NOTABLE SURBITONIANS Fred Bestall



Above, Alfred Bestall, at work in Surbiton. Inset, the blue plaque put up in 2006 by English Heritage at 58 Cranes Park, Surbiton. Rupert pictures courtesy of Daily Express



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Picture is a winner

If you're having a stressful day, take a deep breath and enjoy the tranquillity of this prize-winning image, taken by Surbiton photographer David Jacobson.

It features the riverside in Richmond, and it won David a £380 Nikon camera in a Daily Telegraph competition.

David, founder of the town's relaxed snappers' social club the Surbiton Photo Circle, explained: "I made the slightly unhinged decision to get up at an ungodly hour to photograph the rut in Richmond Bridge before heading home to bed.

"Uninspired by the view, I swung the camera around 180 degrees to see the magical sight of a line of small boats bobbing up and down, framed by mist dancing on the water.

"I was so intent on getting the shot at the optimum moment I hadn't noticed the tide swelling up and about to flood the towpath.

"I came away with a delightful shot, and completely waterlogged shoes."

The next gathering of this most laid-back, informal club – as popular with those who take occasional snaps on their phones as those with cameras – is on Monday March 12 at Wags n Tales, Brighton Road, at 7.30pm.

If you feel in a sharing mood, bring a handful of images on a memory stick, and enjoy everyone's ooohs and aaahs.



Surbiton to get an 80-bed dementia home

A new dementia home is being built in Surbiton to cope with rising demand from the town's older population.

A contract between the council and a 'design-and-build' partner was being signed this week.

It will be constructed on the current Newent House care home site in Browns Road – a building which has already had more incarnations than a time lord.

Council leader Cllr Kevin Davis confirmed, at one of the regular Kingston Conversations, that the dementia home would house 80 people.

It will be run jointly by the council and a nursing care provider, with £10.3million invested.

The new home will open in 2020, partly to meet the growing demand from elderly dementia sufferers who cannot afford private care, and partly to generate income for the council from those who can afford to pay.

"The council currently relies on the

private sector market to provide most bed-based care," said Cllr David Glasspool.

"The new purpose-built home will not only meet the specific needs of people with dementia, it will help the council save money in relation to caring for these elderly residents."

There are reckoned to be more than 1,500 residents with dementia in the borough, a figure predicted to rise to 2,100 by 2027.

Cllr Cathy Roberts added that the new home "moves Kingston closer to becoming a dementia-friendly community".

Newent House has in the past been everything from a day centre to an adult education centre, a clinic, a zumba dancehall, a training workshop hub, a 38-bed retirement home, a centre for adults with learning disabilities, a charity coffee morning fund-raising venue, a social services overspill office and even a stopgap storage facility for the borough's historical archives.



Newent House in Browns Road, site of the new 80-bed unit



Bike ride will help these Malawi orphans

Keen on a challenge? Saddle up for a 500km cycle ride in the heart of Africa. Intrepid cyclists will mount 21-gear hybrid trek bikes to pedal from Blantyre in the Shire Highlands of Malawi to a village north of the capital Lilongwe, to help one of the poorest countries in the world.

The trip includes six days of cycling interspersed by a day's safari, a day to chill by Lake Malawi, the ninth largest lake in the world, and time to assist with projects in Sam's Village, a hub of learning and job creation.

"We set off early before it gets too hot, typically cycling five hours a day, finishing mid-afternoon with a break for lunch and frequent stops for drinks and snacks," said Heather Palmer, founder of Surbiton-based African Vision Malawi which is organising the trip in May.

"A support vehicle is available for a rest at any time. The terrain is varied – a mix of good tar and dirt roads – but we'll follow minor roads as far as possible to avoid traffic. The average day temperature is 25 degrees, but it drops to around 11 at night.

"We encourage people to stay on to get involved with some of our projects at Sam's Village which are education, permaculture and health-based."

The charity in Upper Brighton Road was launched in 2005 and supports hundreds of orphans and vulnerable

people in a 400 km² area north of the capital.

For an information pack, email Heather Palmer (heather.palmer@africanvision.org.uk) before March 12, or visit the charity's website at www.africanvision.org.uk

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Monty Don Picture: BBC

Janice Cripps says sometimes even the best gardeners have to admit defeat

Not working? Time to make a change



If you're a regular viewer of BBC's Gardeners' World you'll be well acquainted with Monty Don's Herefordshire plot and shared in the glories of his jewel garden, dry garden, wildlife garden and the imposing yew topiary on the front lawn at Longmeadow.

Monty has two acres to play with and always has some new project on the go.

He is continually planting, dividing and replanting but sometimes in his quest for perfection, things don't work out according to plan.

Like me you probably cried when last year, Monty revealed that he had lost the battle with

box blight. A quarter of a mile of box hedging and 64 box balls, which had taken a quarter of a century to grow, were heading for the bonfire. It was devastating!

Everything changes. And that is never truer than when talking about gardens.

Plants are living organisms and, like small children, don't always behave how you want them to.

However, change can be good. The RHS Garden Wisley wasn't afraid to bite the bullet a few years ago when it decided to sweep away its much-loved rose garden in favour of a new exotic creation which was much more in tune with the times, and in design

terms, linked the formal gardens more effectively with the parkland beyond.

Of course, I feel your pain when the slugs have devoured the cabbage patch, or the flowering border looks miserable despite your best efforts to grow 'the right plant in the right place'.

But I don't think you should beat yourself up when things don't work out. Gardens are always a work in progress and after all, you can't tame nature.

So, if a plant isn't thriving or doing the job you want it to, don't agonise, take it out or give it to a friend: if your colour scheme doesn't please you, change it! Rest assured, it's what all the great gardeners do.

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

Bag it and bin it; that way we'll win it

It was a wet, miserable February morning, but it didn't deter 20 volunteers from sprucing up Queen's Prom.

Galvanised into action by Julian Meers of Chadwick Place, the group spent the best part of the day litter-picking, pruning back shrubs and grasses, and generally tidying up the newly renovated stretch of the Thames between The

Riverside Cafe and Raven's Ait.

"I use this riverside walk quite a lot," said the Surbiton TV producer. "It has always struck me that it could be a lot more beautiful than it already is. So I thought I would stop whingeing and get on and do something about it."

Spurred on by interest from Surbiton Farmers' Market-goers, Julian got together with key

environmental groups in the area, Kingston's parks and grounds maintenance group idverde, and the council's senior community ranger Garry Stark, and came up with a plan for a one-day blitz on Queen's Promenade.

By the end of the day the volunteers, fuelled by a lunch donated by Pizza Express in Kingston, had cleared enough litter and greenery to fill a large municipal truck.

"It couldn't take away another thing," said a tired but upbeat Julian. "Considering the number of litter bins on the prom it was incredible the amount of rubbish that had been strewn throughout the beds. One elderly volunteer excitedly told us – as a cause for celebration, I think – he had found his first condom lurking under the ground ivy! The seamier side of the prom was laid bare with some of our findings."

Julian explained that the idea was to give the community the opportunity to make a real difference to the area by making the environment a whole lot better, not only for the thousands who walk



A truckful of waste, loaded by, from left, Andy Robinson of idverde, Tom Hooker from Surbiton wildlife group and volunteer and enthusiastic beekeeper Keith McMahon

along the towpath each year, but also for the wildlife, in the water and out of it.

Elliot Newton, Environment Trust nature conservation manager, foraging in the undergrowth for rubbish, said: "This whole stretch is a brilliant wildlife corridor; we don't want the animals like hedgehogs eating litter, and we want to stop plastic getting into the water and being eaten by the fish and birds – only this morning we saw a beautiful pair of grey crested grebes."

Elliot said that, during the day, people were also able to find out more about the wildlife in the area too, as well as helping to improve their surroundings.

"They could drop by for 10 minutes, get a cup of tea and learn about the local environment. Something like this clean-up event can really help," he added.

Last word to Julian. "It goes to prove there is much goodwill locally which can be harnessed positively. Let's hope people give more thought to disposing of their litter to keep the prom looking loved."

Kingston Council's riverside public consultation aims to improve the area. It runs until March 18. Give your views at www.kingston.gov.uk/riverside

Jane Grove



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How do the cycle repair points perform?



It's all very well installing cycle repair points in Surbiton... but do they work? Ellerton Road cycle doctor Andrew Manning, who runs Cyclelink shop in Thames Ditton High Street, was sceptical – then impressed.

Being able to lift the bike off the ground helps, and the tools on cables are Park-made in Minnesota ("the kind I use all day long in the shop"). They are also the tools he teaches with in his regular monthly training sessions (Brakes and Cakes, Gears and Beers etc – details at www.cyclelink.bike), the next looming on March 8 at 7.30pm.

"Ah, a 15mm spanner," said Andrew, rifling through the chained tools. As well as a set of Allen keys and two tyre levers, the bike point has other screwdrivers and spanners.

"It seems to have everything, and it's good quality stuff," said Andrew, admiringly. "It's perfect for quick repairs, though anything longer you'd have to bring in to the shop."

We tried the stand behind the minicab office at the Glenbuck Road station exit. There's another behind M&S Food, with pump points at the Surbiton Hill Park/Raeburn Avenue/Elmbridge Avenue roundabout, Berrylands, and by the Co-op, at Ewell Road/Beaconsfield Road, Tolworth.

"Generally, I'm very impressed, especially by the fact there's room to do things," said Andrew.



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Fund to save the people's steeple

An urgent appeal has been launched to save the spire and tower of a Surbiton landmark.

The stonework of St Matthew's is starting to crumble, and the church – completed in 1875 in one of the town's 'field of dreams' moments – has been placed on the 'at risk' register by Historic England.

In all, around £750,000 is needed to replace masonry, reinstate rotted mortar and secure the fabric of the Grade II listed building for another century.

News of the extent of disrepair to spire and tower has come as a shock to the parish, which had no inkling anything was seriously wrong until publication of a routine five-yearly inspection report.

Stonework experts then abseiled down the spire from its pinnacle 173ft (53m) above the junction of St Matthew's Avenue and Kingsdowne Road, confirming the urgency.

An application to the Heritage Lottery Fund has ensured seed funding is in place, with £25,000 granted to cover initial fees... with a further £225,000 pledged in future.

St Matthew's vicar, the Rev Helen Hancock, expressed her thanks for the up-front money.

"The church has been an important focal point for the community for the past 140 years, and it's great to know that we are a step closer to preserving it for another century or more," she said.

A project committee is co-ordinating a full fund-raising drive in Surbiton, with an initial target of £330,000.

The church is seizing the opportunity provided by the major programme to compile a historical survey as work progresses, and to revamp the loos and install modern disabled facilities as part of an effort to widen the church's community role, and its day-to-day accessibility, in future.

I climbed the stone spiral and series of steep wooden steps last week to see the extent of the deterioration. The crumbling mortar and flaking stones are clearly visible – along with spectacular views in all directions.

St Matthew's was built in 1875 in a heroic leap of faith; a 'field of dreams' moment. The church was capable of

seating 800 people at a time when the total population of the newly formed parish was just 650.

Set in a hay meadow among a patchwork quilt of fields, with the only street worthy of a name being Ewell Road, it was funded by banker William Matthew Coulthurst.

He built it when still grieving the loss of his sister Hannah, and he pointed the building in a precise line to Streatham, where she is buried, rather than east, as convention usually dictates.

Coulthurst was the senior partner in Coutts Bank, which owned tracts of undeveloped land in and around the new settlement of Surbiton, although the money came from his personal account.

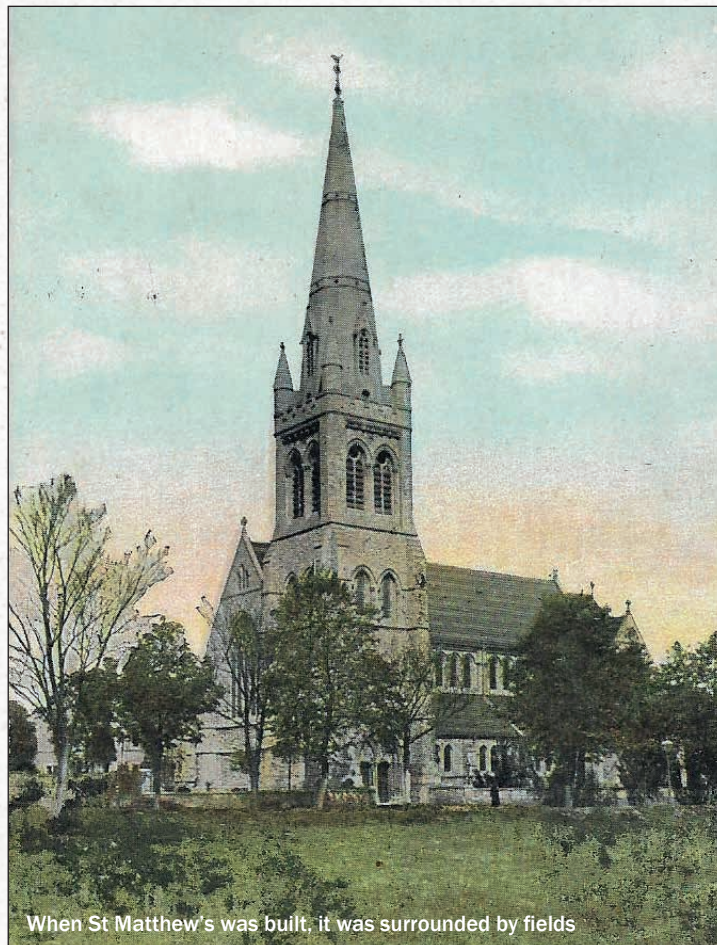
There were precious few substantial buildings in Tolworth. Aside from the house at 24 Kingsdowne Road and the Red Lion pub the area consisted of a scattering of farm buildings and agricultural workers' cottages.

Within five years, the population was on the rise, partly thanks to the brickmaking works in Red Lion Road, or as it was then known, Red Lion Lane.

Built into the wall behind the foundation stone of the church are a photograph of Hannah Coulthurst, a letter from William, a copy of The Times and some coins.

The total cost of building the church and the original vicarage (twice rebuilt since) was £26,500. The oak-beamed roof is 61ft high (18.6m), the building's length 131ft (40m) and the width 81ft (24.7m). It is made of Kent ragstone, with Portland limestone trim and yellow ochre bricks, trundled round from Red Lion Road in wheelbarrows.

The floor was patterned black and white marble throughout (only the raised chancel has the original stone today), and the church was gas-lit.



When St Matthew's was built, it was surrounded by fields

An old bell was acquired from Kidderminster in the Midlands to signal the start services, while eight chimes were also installed. The organ was added as soon as the church was completed.

The first vicar, the Rev Thomas Charles Griffith, had been lined up for the job by Mr Coulthurst before the building was finished. He was vicar for 27 years, eventually resigning "on account of feebleness and old age".

No such issues for the dynamic Helen Hancock and the project committee. One member, Ian Davies, told The Good Life: "This has forced us to look at the assets we've got here, and make them more available to a wider community in future."

Expect guided tours, fund-raising events and miniature handbell-ringing sessions for school parties as the church moves into overdrive to raise the money to comprehensively restore the building's fabric.

Volunteers with an interest in the church will be trained to communicate to others the history and heritage of the building, with workshops on the bells, stained glass and the war memorial forming part of the plans.

St Matthew's, like all Anglican churches, has sole responsibility for the maintenance and repair of its building. It receives no funding from the CofE. The church was granted Grade II listing in 1983. More at www.stmatthewskt6.org

Tim Harrison

Agents move to position of prominence

If local knowledge is a key to being an effective estate agent, business partners Lisa Brand and Laura Humphrey are streets ahead. Fifteen years ago the pair, who grew up in Surbiton, began working together. Eight years ago they set up Humphrey & Brand.

In early January they moved from their cramped old office in Brighton Road to larger premises at 17 Claremont Road, alongside Waitrose's front door in the former Gardenia shop.

"It's 100% more prominent," said Lisa. "When we began in Brighton Road it was a good place to start, but we didn't have the brand recognition this site gives us."

Laura added: "As we've grown, staff have increased, so we needed larger premises and more facilities, including a new meeting room and free parking at the next-door public car park."

The new office has a stylish grey interior, a bold glass front looking up the road to Surbiton station's deco facade and a staffed reception desk.

An eye-catching active wall displays properties on the books, from one-bed studios at £250,000 to six-bedroom mansions, with video tours which are also at www.humphreyandbrand.co.uk

A video-guided tour of Surbiton and the wider



area is also being produced. The firm's USP is that one of the two partners is always in the office.

"It means we provide a personal, tailored service to clients," said Lisa.

The agency has a strong partnership with Long Ditton St Mary's School, helping organise events including a spring ball at the Holiday Inn.

So how is Surbiton's market? "We've had a buoyant start to the year, with registrations up," said Laura. "Activity is up."

Lisa added: "The market is very busy – it's looking a lot more positive than last year."

Veg club was trailblazer

Surbiton's much-missed organic food collection service, From The Ground Up, must have been ahead of its time.

It closed in 2016 because it couldn't reach a critical tipping point of profitability, but now new food suppliers are springing up nearby, and it's only a matter of time before Surbiton is covered once again.

The new Food Assembly network focuses on reducing food miles and supplying fresh local produce, closing the gap between producers and consumers and eliminating needless packaging. The concept has swept continental Europe, and there are already 87 in the UK.

"It brings residents closer to producers and ensures producers receive a better price than supermarkets offer them," said organiser Lucy Hilbert. "It also reduces waste, and the distance food travels before it is on our plates."

Currently the closest branches are at Ham Common and in Worcester Park, but the network hopes to reach Surbiton and Tolworth. There's no commitment to buy, it is free to join, and the service also shares recipes and cooking tips.

Producers keep 80% of the sale price, compared to 15 or 20% from supermarkets.

From The Ground Up ran for six years in Surbiton, closing in April 2016 after food suppliers imposed 'minimum order' requirements which the local service couldn't fulfil. For further news about the expanding network, visit www.thefoodassembly.com

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Talk reveals the Unknown Warrior's tale

It was one of the most poignant, moving talks Surbiton Historical Society members can recall.

Andy Thompson's subject: The story of the Unknown Warrior, the tale of how the remains of a First World War soldier whose identity remains a mystery came to be buried in specially imported Passchendaele mud in Westminster Abbey.



The lecture was delivered in the library hall in Ewell Road, yards from Surbiton's war memorial, pictured, which bears 384 names.

The unknown soldier is buried in a coffin made from oak from Hampton Court. When the body travelled by train from Dover to Victoria in 1920, a million people lined the route, with the train pausing for two minutes at every station.

One of Andy's intriguing tales during the hour-long illustrated talk was of the bitter argument between Edwin Lutyens, the architect of the Cenotaph, and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The clergyman was furious that there was no cross on the memorial, while Lutyens insisted it be non-denominational.

Details on Surbiton & District Historical Society's talks at www.surbitonhistoricalsociety.wordpress.com

● **Trick question. When did the First World War end? 1918? 1919?** Surprisingly, the legal end to hostilities only came when the last Allied troops left Turkey on August 23 1923.

Cycling up by a fifth since launch of vexed bike lane

The number of people cycling in Surbiton has gone up 20% since the controversial two-way bike lane was built in Portsmouth Road.

It's a statistic that has relieved a local authority only too conscious of dark mutterings from motorists who use the riverside highway.

Cllr Terry Paton, deputy leader of the Conservative-run council, has stoutly defended the council's policy of encouraging bicycle use, saying it was helping to improve fitness and air quality in Surbiton.

Cllr Paton, a former police officer, said he was encouraged by early monitoring of the Portsmouth Road lanes' use, though admitting he was no cyclist himself.

He said that as the borough's population was projected to rise by 50,000 in the next 12 years, the £30million Go Cycle initiative was crucial to persuading people to switch to two-wheeled pedal power, thereby keeping the traffic flowing.

"At the moment, only one of the new cycle routes is complete – the one along Portsmouth Road – and it has led to a 20% increase in cycling," he told a residents' forum in Surbiton.

Several of those attending the gathering in Tolworth Tower were critical of the council's emphasis on cycle lanes, and of the 10 further new bike routes planned in the borough. The finishing

touches are currently being put to the latest dedicated tarmac route in Claremont Road.

"The climb up St Mark's Hill is a fiasco," said one. Another said: "We're trying to be a mini Holland, but we're nothing like Holland."

"It's actually causing more congestion and pollution," barked a third.

But Cllr Paton stuck to his guns, and insisted the long-term benefits of the Go Cycle policy would be felt. Of the St Mark's Hill cycle climb, he said that it would eventually link into a new Ewell Road bike route, for better continuity.

He was backed by council leader Cllr Kevin Davis who said: "We don't have a culture of cycling in this country; [pedestrians and cyclists] in Holland have learnt to live alongside each other, and we are miles from that."

Cllr Davis added that cyclists had to follow the rules of the road, and build a better relationship with motorists and pedestrians.

"It is ridiculous that cyclists can do what they like on the road, and there is no penalty," he said. "Some are incredibly aggressive... not all, but some."

"Kingston borough has had cycle lanes for a long time, but the lanes tend to go along a road and then stop. That's what we're trying to address."

Tim Harrison



Why is a pillar box red?

Because that's the colour Malcolm paints them. Here he is. The town's pillar box painter in a fetching pair of white, but red-speckled, trainers; the man who performs the necessary, but little-known, task for Royal Mail of keeping Surbiton's postboxes looking smart.

"I go here, and to Guildford and into London... all over the place, painting pillar boxes," he told The Good Life when we caught up with him primping up the box in Effingham Road.

"I get sent the postcodes for boxes that need to be painted," he said. "They are painted about every four years. It takes me about an hour to do each one, because I have to rub it down first."

Malcolm works efficiently and methodically in all seasons. "Obviously it's easier in the summer, because it dries quickly," he said.

The interruptions come from people asking if it's still safe to post letters while he's working, and genuinely intrigued passers-by who stop to chat. Er, such as your Good Life correspondent.

"The colour used to be pillar box red, before the Royal Mail was privatised, then they changed it to cherry, but now it's gone back to pillar box red again, and it looks lovely," said Malcolm.

Stranger corners the market in providing pavement seating

Another picture from our occasional series in which we pay tribute to the thoughtfulness of our discreet and anonymous fellow residents who choose to place comfortable seating in public settings.

This corner sofa unit, considerably left on the pavement near the Baptist church by the lights in Balaclava Road, can only have been intended to give the weary a place to pause, while doubtless murmuring brief thanks, during the wait for the little man to change to green.

How lucky we are to have such generous citizens in our midst, freely providing facilities for upholstered contemplation... yet selflessly leaving their gifts at night to spare them the embarrassment of publicity. We are in your debt.



Anne Lewis-Lloyd, left, Victoria Salem and David Cruden at the meeting

Diabetes cure 'moves closer'

We are moving closer to a cure for Type 2 diabetes, a leading scientist told members of the local branch of Diabetes UK.

Dr Victoria Salem of Imperial College, London, is in the first year of a five-year Diabetes UK-funded study, looking at achieving through medication the same dramatic effect that those with diabetes have found through stomach reduction surgery.

Those who have had bariatric surgery almost automatically lose their diabetic condition. If the effect could be replicated by taking a pill, millions around the world would be able to lead better lives.

Current work revolves around hormones in the gut, and identifying the correct combination to stimulate the pancreas to produce insulin.

Dr Salem said 10% of the British population had diabetes, whether they were aware of it or not, so the urgency in finding a cure to Type 2, the fastest expanding type of diabetes, was paramount.

The monthly meeting of the group, which covers Surbiton and Kingston, was held at Kingston Hospital, attracting many questions from the audience. Dr Salem accepted a £100 cheque towards research from branch secretary Anne Lewis-Lloyd and treasurer David Cruden.

There are estimated to be 8,000 people in the Royal Borough living with a diabetic condition.

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An open-air church service at St Mark’s, Surbiton, celebrated the planting of two trees in the front churchyard. The saplings were donated by Trees For Sacred Places, launched by the Mayor of London and the Bishops of Southwark and London.

The aim is to improve the environment in and around London churches, and help bees, pollinating insects and wildlife flourish.

The scheme is part of a wider environmental initiative to increase trees and green spaces in the capital. The arboricultural service was led by the Rev Robert Stanier, and was attended by many families with children, including local MP Ed Davey.



Doug hits his century

Second World War Army veteran Douglas Jakeman was the life and soul of the party as he celebrated his 100th anniversary dancing with his daughters and chatting to guests and fellow residents at The Royal Star & Garter Homes in Upper Brighton Road.

Douglas’ daughter Brenda said: “You are our hero and always have been.”

Douglas, a former Royal Fusilier, thanked everyone for coming and said he had had a

great time. As well as a qualified mortar gunner, Douglas was a tank driver in North Africa and Italy. In September 1943 he was captured and held at a Prisoner of War camp in Poland until liberation in April 1945.

● Another milestone was reached recently when the charity, which cares for disabled veterans and their partners, marked its 102nd anniversary with a visit from the Queen’s first cousin Princess Alexandra, the Homes’ president.



Candle power

A string of power cuts has left Tolworth residents shivering and digging through drawers for candles.

Two huge temporary generators were set up in Dennan Road after outages left homes without electricity in the Douglas Road and Ellerton Road area on February 9 and 10 after a sub-station failed.

“The sub-station at Dennan Road has been playing up,” said resident Ian Davies. “St Matthew’s church lost power to the organ, and couldn’t use the heating, which nearly scuppered an organ-accompanied showing of the old black and white Phantom of the Opera film.”

At the cornerHOUSE arts centre in Douglas Road, a Friday night performance of Suburbaret by cabaret star Gareth Edward had to be called off shortly before curtain-up. It has been rearranged for Saturday March 17.

UK Power Networks didn’t manage to reconnect the power supply until 1am on Saturday. In all there were three power outages in Surbiton, Berrylands and Tolworth.

“We sat at home at 10.30pm, and you could feel the cold as the candles flickered,” said Ian. “There was no proactive information; everyone kept each other updated via the bush telegraph.”

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Welcome to *our* WaterWorld



There are two long-gone landmarks in the Surbiton area that come up remarkably often in conversations with older friends. 1) the Milk Marketing Board, Thames Ditton (these conversations aren’t particularly interesting), 2) Surbiton Lagoon.

I am, of course, far too young to have been alive in the lagoon’s lifetime, but by all accounts it was the best place on Earth and sorely missed by those who aren’t young and who remember it well.

So, as spring is coming – which absolutely means that a long and glorious summer is hot on its heels – I have decided that it’s time we recreated one of these Surbiton legends. Yes, I give you WaterWorld Surbiton.

Let me tell you about my plans (NB, while planning permission hasn’t yet been granted for any of what follows, I don’t expect there to be any problems).

First of all, we dig up the high street. The road from KFC all the way up to the roundabout will be transformed into a turquoise pool. The pavements will be widened to allow for sunlounger space, and carpeted with AstroTurf. Pedestrians can cross using a few handy footbridges that will arch gracefully over the crystal water, and light up at night... obviously.

The pool climaxes in a majestic circular expanse of water that swoops around the roundabout, which will be turned into a swim-up bar. This will be manned by the crème de la crème of Surbiton’s bar staff – or hunks in trunks – I haven’t decided yet.

Unfortunately, sacrifices must be made to create this

oasis, and Wilders Deli, Simon Smith Flowers, the chicken takeaway, and Cash & Cheque Express will all have to go – but for a good cause, the wave pool. The station forecourt will become a man-made beach, against which aqua waves gently lap. This will be hugely popular with commuters who have endured a 740F journey from London in the summer months. Locker facilities will be provided in the peculiar little station outlet that was, all too briefly, the West Cornwall Pasty Co.

I’ve thought long and hard about St Mark’s Hill, and the only really feasible solution is to turn it into the foundations for four racing water chutes. Swimmers will be transported to the top of the hill in giant swans on a great carousel, like an impressive baggage reclaim conveyor belt. A few adrenalin-fuelled seconds later, they will burst from the chute into the circular pool at the roundabout (to be greeted by the pure white smiles of the bronzed and toned waiters).

It makes sense to turn the Coronation Hall into an enormous ice cream emporium with an underwater theme. The walls will be giant tanks full of tropical fish, while staff will wear grass skirts and coconut hats.

From the roundabout to Waitrose, there will lie a lush meadow of green, on which families will picnic and frolic – and watch revellers brave the six-storey diving boards erected on the side of HSBC.

It’s a work in progress, I grant you, but I think you’ll agree that WaterWorld Surbiton has legs, or at the very least, water wings.

Klosed For Chewing

The lights were on but no one was serving at KFC in Surbiton last week. It was one of two-thirds of the fast food chain’s 900 branches to close because of delivery issues.

Staff at the takeaway on the corner of Victoria Avenue and Brighton Road, usually open mid-morning until late with queues out of the door, waved customers away from behind locked doors.

The sign on the door (below) blamed ‘hiccups with delivery’.

KFC switched its delivery supplier from Bidvest to DHL to save costs, and ran into major restocking issues.

Indirectly, it may have helped the town eat more healthily. A single crispy chicken breast contains 41% of an adult’s daily recommended fat intake.



Workhouse remembered

Historian and author Richard Holmes, best known for his illustrated books about local pubs, is giving a talk on another of his areas of expertise, Kingston’s workhouse. Entry free.

Kingston Workhouse to Kingston Hospital is at Emmanuel church, Grand Avenue, Tolworth, on Saturday March 10 at 2pm.

Kingston’s workhouse once stood at the junction of Coombe Road and London Road, but in 1839 a new ‘palace for the poor’ opened opposite Norbiton station, with an infirmary later added.

It survives today (in the left of the picture) as the oldest working part of Kingston Hospital... Regent wing.



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The team which has been improving the integration of rail and cycle travel at Surbiton has been recognised in a national award ceremony.

South Western Railway's station development manager, Steve Smith, accepted the cycle champion gong at the National Cycle-Rail Awards, which recognise progress made by the rail industry towards encouraging bicycle use.

Steve has been working for the past decade at stations including Surbiton to improve facilities.

He led the team that in 2016 and 2017 improved cycle facilities at 36 stations in the South Western Railway network, including an additional 1,400 cycle spaces and eight new cycle hubs.

"I am very pleased to have won the award," he said. "But this was only possible by working with a great team of people."

His manager, head of station property Alistair Wright, said the award was richly deserved for Steve's pioneering cycle scheme work at Surbiton and elsewhere.

"He is passionate about design and the potential of our stations to be better places, and he has championed the development of our cycle schemes over the last two years."



Focus on birds

If programmes such as Springwatch have made you think you might like to get out in the fresh air and do some bird-watching, help is at hand.

Surbiton & District Bird Watching Society is holding a family day at the woodland gardens in Bushy Park on the morning of Sunday April 8.

No experience necessary, and binoculars will be provided.

It's an ideal place to identify the many birds that feed and breed in the park, including woodpeckers, finches, tits, thrushes, warblers and ducks.

Free guided walks will be led by members of the society.

Details at www.surbitonbirds.org or by calling Thelma Caine on 01372 468 432.

Wags turns 1

Surbiton's dog-friendly Wags n Tales coffee shop and bar has celebrated its first anniversary in Brighton Road with a weekend of events which raised £1,345.52 for the Children in Need appeal – far exceeding the £1,000 target.

"It was through the generosity of our fabulous customers that we did it, and we're delighted," said owner Parvin Tank. "We raised money selling anniversary cupcakes, cookies and raffle tickets with daily prizes."

Live music came from local band Travisty and Joe Hawkes, both performing free. Face painting was provided by Bells and Whistles Playtime and the weekend ended with a prosecco reception.



All smiles. From left, awards host Gyles Brandreth, entrepreneur in residence David Harkin, Silas Edmond, writer in residence Stuart Bird, Hannah Horwood, Jenny Pool and principal Rebecca Glover

Surbiton High celebrates its creativity

When it comes to stimulating the imagination, look no further than Surbiton High School.

It has scooped the creativity prize at the TES independent schools awards... an achievement which is partly down to the fact that it's one of the few centres of education to boast its own writer in residence and entrepreneur in residence.

Thrilled principal Rebecca Glover stepped on to the stage at a black-tie event at London's Grosvenor House Hotel in front of more than 400 people to accept the award.

She said: "We are delighted to have won, and I would like to thank the hard work of our entrepreneur in residence and writer in residence to ensure we stay at the forefront of creativity in learning and teaching."

Surbiton High School argues that the two unusual posts 'make children think differently,

beyond the strictures of the conventional curriculum'.

In its award submission, the school said its in-house entrepreneur 'puts creative thinking at the heart of all its enterprise activities', while the writer in residence role helped bring together creative instincts for original ideas, together with the art of fine writing.

The judges said that Surbiton High "enjoys very specific and explicit emphasis on creativity", backed by the school's parent trust, and that "it's clear that for the school, this entry is no one-off project but an ongoing and central theme".

David Harkin, entrepreneur in residence, said: "Surbiton High School embraces creativity every hour of every day. From reception until a pupil leaves, pupils have the opportunity to develop their creativity skills to help them in the ever-changing working environment."



The lost murals

I am writing to commend you on the fascinating and tragic article (*issue 38*) about the lost murals at Surbiton Station (pictured right).

I am a relatively new resident of the area, so I never got a chance to see them.

I think it's a travesty that SW Trains treated the public's property with such carelessness, and your article motivated me to contact my MP about it.

Surely SW Trains should have to compensate the public?

Thanks for writing such an eye-opening article.

Diana Valk

- Your feature on the murals in Surbiton Station was fascinating. That must have taken a lot of research.
- I remember the murals well.
- While the artwork was very clever, I must admit I didn't like them. I think the artist made a big mistake in making the clothing far too contemporary, and some of the characters were dressed in quite extreme early-

80s fashions. By the end of that decade some looked very dated, but not in an interesting way; more an embarrassing way.

As you know, Surbiton wasn't a fashionable area back then and, by the mid 90s, those murals appeared to echo the town – a bit old-fashioned and stuck in the past. Not its glorious Victorian past, but the mundane recent past of our lives.

When they were removed, I was delighted. The hall has its own beauty with its art deco design, its high ceiling and natural light, and those beautiful art-deco uplighters. All that had been over-powered or obscured by the murals.

I am not one of those who thinks that every bare wall needs covering – unless, of course, I was asked to cover one with my characters! An excellent edition.

David Cox

- Well done on the article in the Good Life on the murals, and hope your hint at the end of the article is realised.

John McCarthy

At the deep end

How can you lead with a front page story about a Conservative MP and councillors suggesting the need for a new lagoon (*issue 33*)?

It was an incumbent Conservative council that closed the original one down!

Most of your readers (and maybe you) will not be aware of that fact, and I think that should have been made clear in the article.

I would expect a better level of journalism from you.

Usually I am happy with The Good Life, but not on this occasion.

Colin Bayly

Part-time limit

When I was in continental Europe, I thought they had a very good idea. They have the equivalent of 20mph limits which, throughout villages and towns, are just valid from 6am to 6pm.

This covers the school run and busy pedestrian times,



then when motorists are travelling through at less busy times they don't waste hours crawling along at 20.

Going to the airport, ferry or a meeting between 1am and 5am, missing the rush hours, is so frustrating when there isn't a soul around and you are crawling at 20mph.

It wastes a lot of time on a long journey through towns and villages.

Felicity Leicester

A first class read

I've been enjoying The Good Life for a long time now, and thought it was about time I said so.

We all thrive a bit on

congratulation and applause, and you deserve it.

Some local magazines are just advertising vehicles, but The Good Life has a nice mix of anecdotes and local interest stories, and while I'm sure the advertising is critical, you manage to convey an air of journalism rather than commerciality.

The occasional jokes that you sprinkle in have largely been fresh and amusing to me, and articles such as the missing murals from Surbiton station are first class.

I do hope you carry on publishing with this quality for many years into the future – you actually enhance our suburban life.

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Gifted young musicians save the day

Stepping up to the plate for the last of this season's free Thames concerts at St Andrew's church, five young musicians created 45 minutes of magic; rich in variety, laced with quality.

And they had less than a week's notice after Kingston University's late withdrawal.

"This had been earmarked for the university; it's regrettable they felt unable to field any musicians," said artistic director Benjamin Costello.

It was their loss. Singer Elizabeth Robbins of Tiffin Girls', a BBC Young Chorister of the Year finalist, sent her voice soaring to the lofty ceiling with Britten's arrangement of Purcell's If Music be the Food of Love, then dazzled on violin with short works by Bach and Bloch.

Tiffin student Daniel Blaze showed his versatility with voice and French horn, singing Howells' King David then tooting Franz Strauss's Nocturno, while Waleed Alzarooni, who leads Epsom



Elizabeth Robbins sings while, from left, Sam O'Neal, Waleed Alzarooni and Daniel Blaze wait their turn

& Ewell Schools Symphony Orchestra, played part of a Haydn concerto on violin.

Edward Miller from Hinchley Wood School proved a confident flautist, while Tiffinian Sam O'Neal, 16, rounded the morning off with Brahms' Rhapsody No1 in B minor, his Boris Johnson-

style blond mop adding drama.

The Thames Concert series, both formal evenings and morning specials, have again proved their worth, showcasing talent and giving audiences in Surbiton music of genuine quality. Ben Costello is to be congratulated on his efforts. **TH**

Bad is good

Surbiton writer Stephen Harding's fifth novel is *Twice Bad*. The Elgar Avenue author, has a following after his Janus sci-fi trilogy and *Driven to Revenge*, taking readers everywhere from other universes to Tolworth Broadway. *Twice Bad* moves into crime, introducing DCI Liberty Rock. "I felt a powerful female cop was needed after reading how few film roles are currently available to older women," he explained. "I firmly believe that a good book remains an amazing gateway for the imagination. This story pitches DCI Rock up against two incredibly nasty serial killers."



Download *Twice Bad* on Amazon Books, or look up 'Novels by Stephen Harding' on Facebook.

Pulling out the stops for appeal

There is an organ recital by Michael Bacon at St Matthew's church, St Matthew's Avenue, on Saturday March 24 at 7.30pm to raise money for the tower and spire appeal. Michael is principal organist of King Charles the Martyr, Tunbridge Wells.

Entry is free, with a retiring collection. A graduate of Liverpool University, Michael studied organ with Terence Duffy of the Metropolitan Cathedral, Liverpool. He plays regularly at Westminster Abbey and is a sound engineer for Radio 3.

Bite-sized chunks of drama



Jacquie Slater gives a moving performance in the 2016 oneACT *Little Grains of Sand*

Eight new dramas will be performed over six nights in a festival of original playwriting at the cornerHOUSE, Surbiton.

Autumn Leaves, Bomb Proof, Invisibility and Baring All will be staged at the theatre in Douglas Road, on April 23, 25 and 27, while actors in Underhill, Saying Goodbye, A Scandal in Nova Alba, and Paws for Thought will tread the boards on April 24, 26 and 28.

The week-long showcase of original oneACT plays is now in its 13th year and will feature bite-sized chunks of drama, comedy, tragedy and whimsy from eight local playwrights.

"There's something for everyone," said oneACTS 2018 festival chairman Jon Constant whose team whittled down 50 entries to eight.

Shows start at 7.45pm; tickets for each night are £9 (£7 concessions). For information about the shows, and to book visit www.ticketsource.co.uk/the-cornerhouseevents

Mata Hari's tale told, 100 yrs on

A century after her death, Mata Hari's story is being related to Surbiton & District Historical Society on Tuesday April 3 at 7.30pm at the Ewell Road library annexe. The hat-maker's daughter was executed by the French in October 1917 for espionage. Dr Julie Wheelwright unpicks the myths around Mata Hari, a name which has become a by-word for female betrayal. After her execution, she was held responsible for the deaths of 50,000 Allied men and was portrayed as an immoral woman who traded sex for classified intelligence. Dr Wheelwright reveals she was a useful scapegoat at a time when French losses on the Western Front were high and morale low.



Keeping up her arty challenge

Stained glass artist Simone Kay is keeping up the challenge she has set herself for a third year - drawing and painting something she has seen every day. The result of 365 days worth of miniature-sized creativity was exhibited at the cornerHOUSE in Douglas Road, attracting 90 visitors to a gala event.

"I drew a shop assistant in a supermarket on the day of the gala while buying light refreshments for the show," said Simone, whose limited edition giclee print of Kingston's tumbling phonebox sculpture proved the most popular.

"In view of the success last year, I felt compelled to continue," said Sim, right.

"I like how this has inspired others to do their own one-a-day thing such as writing a poem, a diary or their own drawings."

Award-winning Surbiton artist Sue Monteath, whose oil paintings of birds (one is below), coastal scenes and still lifes have won plaudits, stages her latest exhibition, *Life and Landscapes*, at the cornerHOUSE in March. This will be her third solo show at the arts centre. The gala night is on Tuesday, March 6 from 7-9pm. All welcome.



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Youngsters will rehearse and perform a show in four days in an Easter holiday drama workshop. The course for eight to 15s is at the cornerHOUSE, April 3-6 with a show for invited guests. Apply via kingstonjdc@aol.com or call 01932 230273. Drama teacher David Lawson Lean also directs Kingston Junior Drama Company, who perform *Recreating Wilde*, a show based on Oscar Wilde's children's stories, the week before. www.thech.org

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Millie Bright, a defensive rock proving pivotal to Chelsea Ladies' success

Chelsea Ladies' defensive rock Millie Bright, currently in the States wearing her England shirt, has told The Good Life she dreams of times like these. "It's exciting; I always love a challenge," admitted the 24-year-old who is now at the heart of the Lionesses' defence with Chelsea teammates goalie Carly Telford and centre-back Anita Asante. Alongside them, making her debut after impressing England's new coach Phil Neville with league and cup form, is lightning-fast Blue Hannah Blundell. For Millie, the next few days are not just about performing well against France, Germany and USA in the SheBelieves Cup in the States, but also about reaching a peak ahead of Chelsea's Champions League double-header with Montpellier – the home leg coming at Kingsmeadow on Wednesday March 28. Three days ahead of that, on Sunday March 25, Chelsea Ladies have a 2pm home tie against Reading in the league. Manager Emma Hayes rested Millie for the Blues' recent 2-0 league victory at Yeovil, which moved Chelsea back to the

top of the Women's Super League table, but the defender was pivotal in shutting out her former team, Doncaster Belles, in a 6-0 home thrashing in the Women's FA Cup. "Keeping clean sheets is massive," said Millie. "It builds confidence and it sends a powerful message out to other teams." Millie says she is currently loving her football at Chelsea Ladies, and is undaunted by a flurry of matches; here, there and everywhere. "We like to have a lot of fixtures, and we have a big enough squad to keep everyone busy," she said as she playfully placed striker Ji-So Yun in a headlock as the girls joked around on the touchline following the FA cup win. Ji scored the first of Chelsea Ladies' goals in the FA Cup 5th Round tie after Belles keeper Bethan Davies had parried her initial shot. It sets up a tricky trip to Liverpool in the quarter-finals... but, as Millie puts it, it's the sort of challenge this journey's all about. **Tim Harrison** Ticket news at www.chelseafc.com/teams/chelsea-ladies

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Surbiton petrolhead Steve Sanders who, as neighbours in Alexandra Drive wearily agree, is Vauxhall-mad, is poised to take part in this year's Monte Carlo or Bust rally. An annual Top Gear-style challenge since 2013, raising £300,000 for UK charities, the May event involves buying an old banger for under £500, tarting it up with outlandish decoration, then driving it across Europe.

It's Monte Carlo or Bust for Astra Steve

First to Monte Carlo's casino wins, with more prizes on the way. "I'm a bit of a car nut, so this chance was irresistible," said Steve. "I'm going in a 1991 Vauxhall Astra which I picked up in Surbiton last week... it's actually fantastic for a 27-year-old car. Maybe we should start a Surbiton classic car club!" It's Europe's largest banger

challenge; a three-day crusade which sees 75 garish vehicles travel across Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Organiser Simon Johnston

said: "We're delighted Steve's joining us on the ultimate banger adventure; it's a brilliant opportunity to have an amazing driving experience in one of the worst cars from Surbiton!"



Steve's challenge: to make his Surbiton-bought Vauxhall Astra look as daft as this past entrant

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