



An unkempt thatch of blond hair bobbed in and out of the Victoria Road shops, its owner glad-handing anyone in reach. BoJo draws crowds like royalty. The sun beat down (Surbiton was two degrees warmer than the south of France) as London Mayor Boris Johnson popped by Simon Smith flowers, Wilder's deli, the Surbiton Flyer and the Allegro coffee shop, leaving bemused shoppers in his wake. He was backing a plan by electioneering Tories to allow 30 minutes of free parking across Surbiton. "You can do a lot of shopping in 30 minutes," he said, grabbing a copy of the Good Life to read on the train back to Waterloo.

● Meet the new barman p5



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The mighty magnolias

The brief, but glorious, magnolia season in Surbiton arrived and departed in the middle two weeks of March... a fortnight earlier than in 2013. On hand with her camera was photography student Jessica Kelly, who snapped this study of magnolia blooms at the height of their glory in Claremont Road. Another of her uplifting spring pictures on p2.

Station forecourt to be pedestrianised



The forecourt of tomorrow and, right, the forecourt of today



Surbiton's station forecourt is to be pedestrianised. Taxis will be banished, parking bays erased, trees planted and the area transformed into a haven for cyclists and strollers. Three million pounds will be spent on the scheme, with the money coming from London Mayor Boris Johnson's cash pot for encouraging cycling. The news has perturbed Surbiton's cabbies, who will have to queue in a service road between the backs of the Victoria Road shops and the railway line, rather than circling the forecourt or lining up down the St Mark's Hill slip road. Drivers will no longer be able to drop off or collect people in front of the station, and replacement buses will be banished to the Glenbuck Road side of the tracks. It follows Kingston Council's victory in a Londonwide competition for a share of £100million for capital projects

to improve cycle safety. The borough won £30m, putting neighbouring Richmond's nose out of joint. It asked for £30m... but only got £2.5m. Councillors talk of creating a 'mini Holland', but it isn't a vision shared by all. The Kingston Society – never backward in coming forward – put the issue at the top of its agenda at a heated March meeting, and collectively rubbished many of the suggested ways of spending the money, including a cycle pontoon along the river, linking Queen's Promenade with Kingston's John Lewis store. "Cyclists feel they have the upper hand... and all the money," said committee member Ann Brown, describing any cycle boardwalk as 'horrendous', spoiling the Thames views. She also condemned pedestrianising Surbiton's station forecourt "as it's on a

steep slope, like the Piazza del Campo in Siena" and unsuited to chairs and tables. "Cyclists have tunnel vision," she said. "We haven't got the room [for these projects] in Kingston." George Rome Innes said the 700-metre pontoon idea was "the most ridiculous thing I've heard in my life", as any track would soon be occupied by ducks, swans and pedestrians. Cllr David Cunningham called the pontoon "bonkers", but said £30m had to be spent now the borough had won it, and spoke in favour of cycle improvements at Surbiton and Kingston stations. So, Surbiton taxis will turn into the road to Sainsbury's car park (between Hawes and the Duke of York), then drive behind Starbucks, the 99p store and M&S Food, emerging by the Surbiton Flyer, and picking up passengers at a new taxi bay alongside the pub. ● Continued on p2

Neglected homes will be seized by council

Forced sales and compulsory purchase orders will be used to reclaim homes left empty in Surbiton. Across the borough, 300 lie empty – 86 per cent of them privately owned. Kingston Council is targeting homes left vacant for six months or more, to tackle homelessness. Every homeless family rehoused saves the council £8,000 a year in B&B costs, while empty homes attract squatters, vandals and rats. Cllr Patricia Bamford said: "We want to slash the number of long-term empty properties and increase the supply of decent, affordable homes for people who need them. We will take action against owners where informal approaches prove unsuccessful." The council is owed £128,000 council tax on long-term empty properties.

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Four Sainsburys

The annexation of Surbiton by Sainsbury's continues, with a fourth shop in a mile. As well as the Victoria Road supermarket and 'locals' at the station and the Red Lion pub site at the Ewell Road/Red Lion Road junction, another branch will open in the old Mad Hatter pub (below) near the Ewell Road/Langley Road junction, challenging Londis. It began as The Victoria, leading to confusion with the town centre pub of the same name, switched to the Mad Hatter, shut, reopened briefly in 2010 as the Victoria, then gave up.



In this issue

- Historic shop front goes Barbie pink, to Surbiton's distress p3
- A free pint of beer with Boris p5
- Taking a pride in your car p6
- Nine new plays to be staged in major festival p7



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Surbiton is blossoming

Blossom time in Surbiton is the loveliest season, and photographer Jessica Kelly, who lives by the Victoria rec, has been capturing the glory. This picture was taken in Victoria Avenue.

Jessica is studying digital photography at uni in Greenwich after finishing a two-year traineeship at the Tate Gallery.

“Over the next couple of years I will be shooting in the studio, on location and networking like crazy to achieve my goal of making a name for myself in the photography industry,” said the award-winning former Kingston College student. Visit www.jessicakellyphotography.com for more Surbiton springtime images.

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Gardening tips by Janice Cripps

Vegetables are things of beauty



If you've dismissed the idea of growing vegetables because your garden's too small, think again. Lurking behind that decision may be a belief that veg are ugly, boring and hard work. Not necessarily.

With the right choice of variety and growing conditions, vegetables can be a welcome addition to any garden, combining beauty and practicality and fitting in perfectly with existing flowers and foliage.

There is a deep satisfaction in growing edibles. Nothing beats the flavour of home-grown produce and it is inexpensive, especially when grown from seed or plug plants.

What better way to educate our children and encourage them to be more adventurous with food, not to mention saving the planet?

For the beginner with a small garden, adding herbs is an obvious start. There's a long list that offer pretty flowers (rosemary, sage, chives, marjoram, thyme) and scope to introduce edible blue and red salvias, purple violas, orange nasturtiums, and white Bellis perennis daisies.

Choose colours to fit in with an existing scheme, whether a riot of unashamedly clashing hues or something more subdued.

Many vegetables have colourful flowers. The flower buds are the edible part of purple sprouting broccoli and cauliflower, while some oriental greens, such as purple pak choi, are grown for their flowering shoots. Peas and beans come in a range of colourful dwarf varieties and have the added advantage of adding

height and structure to the garden as they climb tripods, wigwams or other supports. I once saw beans successfully growing up a giant yellow sunflower – very eye-catching!

Not only colour, but also the form and texture of different vegetables can enhance the look of the garden. Glossy Swiss chards, feathery fennels, and rosettes of crinkly leaved kales and lettuces all contribute to the beauty of the garden and, of course, can all end up on your plate at the end of the day.

If you've never lifted a trowel, here are some suggestions for crops easily



Beans add height and structure, as here, with a fringe of rosemary

grown in pots or containers:

- Cut-and-come-again salad leaves. Harvested young and don't need much space. Try oriental leaf mixes too; a variety of textures, flavours and colours, great for salads or stir fries;
- Radishes. A doddle to grow and ready to eat in three weeks;
- Garlic. Pop cloves in soil with the pointy bit just under the surface. Harvest from mid summer;
- A bumper crop from a few plants? Grow courgettes. Try the flavoursome Defender F1, which is disease-resistant and has excellent flowers;
- If you like peas but can't be bothered with staking, go for the 'half-pint' variety. They reach 20cms but produce full-sized pods. The flowers are edible and the young tips can be trimmed and added to salads;
- Even potatoes need not take up space. Anya has a delicious nutty flavour and if planted now will be ready to eat in July or August.

There is no need to confine vegetables to a separate area of the garden, hidden from view. Grow them in pots and value their ornamental qualities by incorporating them into summer borders and using them to clothe fences or climb arches as a decorative feature. April is just the right time to start.

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

Teamwork creates the Good Life

Surbiton counsellor Sarah Carter helps people help themselves. She believes in cognitive behavioural therapy ("it's the therapy of the moment in the NHS"), a forward-looking, problem-solving, collaborative method in which therapist and client team up to achieve results.

Sarah, now in her 50s and living at the top of Ditton Hill, works part-time counselling students at University College London. The rest of the time she works with clients in central London... and in Surbiton, where she tackles issues such as depression, anxiety, shyness, stress, sleep problems, isolation, low self-esteem, the consequences of unemployment and grief.

Sessions last 50 minutes (sometimes as few as six are needed), and fees are negotiable, with concessional rates for those on low income.

Therapy that is positive and teaches

effective life skills makes more traditional regimes of analysing the past and dissecting childhood sound passé.

"Cognitive behavioural therapy can give people the Good Life," said Sarah, who doesn't waste session time by making clients cuppas. "It's collaboration; it's not a café," she said.

Assisted by regular progress questionnaires, she works through problem lists compiled at the consultation stage.

Meetings are held in a room in a multi-purpose centre in the heart of Surbiton, guaranteeing discretion and anonymity for clients.

Sarah politely parries questions about her, as her focus is on the client and the issue. "I'm a human being; I'm friendly, I don't judge people, and we [client and therapist] are a team, and have a problem to solve together."

Sarah's website, www.sarahcartercounselling.co.uk, is a good start point.



Surbiton therapist Sarah Carter



Want to dance like Darcy?

If you want to snare your Mr Darcy, you'll have to learn the quadrille.

Fortunately, Regency dance classes are now being staged twice-monthly at St Mark's hall in Surbiton – the wood-floor extension to the church at the top of St Mark's Hill, organised by local Jane Austen enthusiast Libby Curzon, an active member of the Maple Village WI.

You can learn simple steps, or advance to something more ambitious... such as Lord Dalkeith's Reel. No need to worry about knee

breeches, waistcoats, gowns and gloves until you've mastered the basics. Flexible soft-soled shoes and lightweight clothing is the dress code.

Prospective Elizabeth Bennets or Fitzwilliam Darcys need only bowl up to the hall at 8pm. The cost is £5 per evening (tea included), and you can start any time.

Forthcoming dates: May 7 and 14, June 4 and 18, and July 2 and 16. A tea dance is also being staged on July 27. More at www.mrsbennet.co.uk

Surbiton station forecourt made 'bike-friendly'

● Continued from p1

Anyone dropping off or collecting passengers will have to use the same behind-the-shops one-way route, or pause for a few seconds in the St Mark's Hill slip road in front of Pizza Express.

The station forecourt will be paved, creating 'Surbiton Plaza', with new cycle racks covering the existing row of 20-minute car-parking bays.

The scheme, drawn up by Steer Davies Gleave of Southwark, aims to encourage more cycling following Bradley Wiggins' historic gold medal-winning ride along Portsmouth Road in the London 2012 Olympics.

Matthew Rees applauded the plans at the Kingston Society meeting, arguing it would improve safety for

cyclists and help reduce the high pollution levels which, he said, created an unhealthy hotspot in the area.

Initially there will be secure space for 300 bicycles at the Surbiton station 'cycle superhub', in a steel and glass shelter, rising to spaces for 1,500 bikes, with a small cycle repair shop eventually occupying one of the tiny shops in the Wilder's deli row. Trees will frame the famous art deco station frontage.

"This idea was discussed five years ago, but nothing came of it, and we thought it had gone away," said one disgruntled cabbie who opposes altering the status quo.

The timescale and small print has yet to be hammered out, with planning permission needed for the changes, but councillors are determined to encourage more Surbiton commuters to bike to the station.

Lambing season

A spring fair is being staged at The Lamb, Brighton Road, on Sunday April 13, 1-6pm, selling everything from crochet to metalwork, jewellery to chocs, bouquets to cordials... all made by small Surbiton enterprises. Children's fun includes an Easter egg hunt and cookie decorating, with Saucalicious hotdogs also on sale.

Tesco pulls out

Twelve years after the Toby Jug pub was demolished to make way for a proposed Tesco, the supermarket has pulled out. Now housing will fill the site by the Charrington Bowl. Fresh plans for homes and 12-storey blocks of flats are being drawn up, without a 89,000 sq ft superstore, once at the heart of plans.

Change of shoes

The shoe repair shop in Surbiton station has changed hands after the last cobbler went off to become a train driver. Michael Holding's dramatic career shift means Scott Radford, below, is in charge, commuting from Maidstone (and getting up at 5.30am to start the journey). The shop lease is owned by a Thai businessman.



Pothole spending

The council's pothole repair list is as long as your arm, with Lovelace Road so pitted that drivers have to slalom. A weary cyclist writes: "I read that potholes cost the council millions. May I suggest they stop buying them? We have enough."

Another Tarte

Maple Road's French Tarte cafe/bakery has opened a second branch, in Teddington High Street, in what was the posh Heel For Leather shoe shop. All food for the new patisserie will be baked in Surbiton and driven daily to the new six-day-a-week shop.

Rushing to start

The old Woodhouse furniture shop opposite Starbucks in Victoria Road is becoming a 12-chair Rush Hair salon. Managed by Caitlin O'Brien, it will have a 10-strong staff. Opening is scheduled for early next month. There are more than 60 Rush salons in London and the south of England.

Birthday bags

From The Ground Up customers were given canvas bags at Surbiton YMCA last week to mark the organic veg supplier's fourth birthday. The bags have coated interiors "to carry unwashed beetroot and potatoes with confidence". Visit www.fgu.ttkingston.org/shop to order.

Bog-standard tea

The old loos at the station end of Claremont Gardens will soon be the Clock Tower Café, serving teas, coffees and snacks (below). Outdoor tables will let customers gaze up at the 20m tower, built in 1908 and listed by English Heritage in 1983.



Poulet and see...

The first of the new season's poulet eggs are on sale at the Maple Road farmers' market on April 19, although Simon the Eggman won't be there. "I'll be on holiday, but my mother, Norma, will be in charge," he said. The poulet eggs are a bargain; £3 for a tray of 30.



Watch the birdie. Kristine Boudreau spots a shoveler

Overheard in The Antelope

I felt like my body was totally out of shape, so – with the doctor's blessing – I joined a fitness club and started exercising. I decided to take an aerobics class. I bent, twisted, gyrated, jumped up and down, and sweated for more than an hour. But, by the time I got my leotard on, the class was over.

The observant place to hide

She checks her mobile is on silent, then quietly opens the observation window before raising her binoculars. Five little grebes, tufted ducks, two shovelers, two shelduck, six coot, three moorhen, two Canada geese... all ticked off on her clipboard. Kristine Boudreau is nature reserve manager at the Hogsmill STW, overlooked by Berrylands' elevated platforms. Officially STW is sewage treatment works, but modern processing means the aroma that once blighted the area is largely a thing of the past, so 'supporting the wildlife' may be more apt. Kristine, originally from Colorado, lives in Surbiton and has worked for Thames Water for a decade. She's in the Mike Schickner hide, accessed via door code and named after a respected former bird recorder in the Surbiton & District Bird-Watching Society. It gives terrific views over Surbiton

Lagoon (no relation to the pool off Raeburn Avenue where summers were once splashed away). The former sludge lagoon is now a rain-fed lake with regulated levels; deep in winter for divers, shallower in summer for waders and nesters. "We had redshank here in the 90s," said Kristine. "We're getting their habitat back, and once redshanks find it, they'll tell their friends!" A 99-year lease guarantees continuity at this sanctuary. Anchored rafts provide nesting sites, and there is a sand martin bank. Other activities include bat walks and butterfly walks. "You often get the hide to yourself," said Kristine. "Sketchers are undisturbed, and bring their easels." To visit, join SDBWS by googling the initials, or become a friend of the reserve (£20 for three years, family discounts) by emailing Kristine. boudreau@thameswater.co.uk

From heritage to blancmange

The best-preserved Victorian shopfront in Surbiton has been painted shocking pink. Dismayed locals have condemned the transformation of Turner's 120-year-old frontage, which now looks like a blancmange. The old high street jeweller is being turned into a nail bar, with an exterior colour choice shoppers call 'monstrous'. New leaseholder Truong Van Bui was told that the elegant old frontage could not be altered... but on March 19 the building was given the Barbie treatment. "It's ridiculous-looking," trader Robert Helliwell told The Good Life. "It's absurd!" Resident Alan Jones of Lovelace Road agreed. "It has been painted garish pink and is totally out of place," he said, describing the paint job as 'a monstrous blot'. Another shopper, Dave Corner of Long Ditton, called the result 'horrible'. Councillors are taking up the issue with planning officers, but appear impotent. Cllr Malcolm Self called the new look 'hideous', but said: "The advice from planning is that although the shopfront must be retained there is nothing legally that can be done to stop it being painted any colour." Turner's, opposite Superdrug in Victoria Road, is becoming Five Star Nails, part of a family-owned chain which has been offering manicures, pedicures and nail extensions at other branches in London for 16 years. Workmen spent a month making changes to the 1,090sq ft premises after the old wooden fixtures and fittings were stripped out and sold to a firm in Wimbledon. The Barbie paint job has extended to glossing over the elegant black and gold finials either side of the famous glass Victorian name board. Local Lib Dems are petitioning the new owner to reconsider the colour, but Lib Dem-controlled Kingston Council says that under current planning law nothing can be done. The shopfront isn't listed, but has 'townscape merit'. As part of its change-of-use permission, the new owner pledged to ensure that there was 'no undue loss of character within this part of the conservation area'.



The Barbie-pink frontage of Turners and, inset right, how Surbiton's oldest shopfront looked before

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From left: Jocelyn Enfield, Libby Curzon, Lorraine Morris and Susan Corb. The ladies of Maple Village WI got into the swing for a vintage tea party at Rubicon, Maple Road... sporting fascinators and having retro hairdos. With 70 members, it's one of a new generation of women's institutes, boasting book, theatre, pudding, meditation and dining groups. President Kelly Woods said: "This club is younger, and does more radical things." Speaker meetings have tackled issues such as women prisoners and sex-trafficking, as well as more sedate topics including genealogy and wine-tasting. Visit www.maplevillagewi.ning.com

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It's veg that tastes of veg

Derek Hale is passionate about growing fruit and veg, and fervent about persuading others to do so. In 2012, he launched www.vegfromhome.com to encourage home cultivation.

It has evolved into a quirky, affordable home-delivery service, supplying fruit and veg, most grown in local soil, to anyone who loves flavoursome food, produced without pesticides or chemical fertilisers.

Do slugs and snails descend on the garden of the house in Bond Road where he has lived for 28 years? He chuckled. "My chickens eat the garden snails!"

The 62-year-old has seven chicks, a 12-tree orchard with apples, plums, pears, cherries, greengages and figs... and a girlfriend, Suzie, who is a high-flying, globe-trotting world authority on seeds at Kew.

Tiring of insurance, and offices in general, Derek threw it all in two years ago. In an echo of Tom and Barbara in the original Good Life, he declared: "I've had enough of financial services." Suzie told him to get out

and grow more. Veg From Home was born.

Now he manages a series of local allotments, advises others on maximising yields and experimenting with different varieties, and builds raised beds. He can supply seeds and plants ("Garden centres are too expensive and the quality can be very iffy")... and bagfuls of enthusiasm.

"It's a hobby; I don't do it to make lashings of money," he said. "I charge a fair price. The idea was to keep busy, and help people grow fruit and veg." The price dramatically undercuts organic supermarket produce.

Technically challenged (Suzie won't tell him the password to his own website!) but green-fingered, Derek boasts of growing 32 varieties of tomato. He has 120 regular customers, who love the home-spun wisdom they receive almost as much as the home-grown produce.

And with everyone now being urged to eat seven-a-day, not five, he's on a roll.

His top product? "Carrots are my biggest winner... because they taste of carrot!"



Derek Hale... the fruit and veg evangelist of Bond Road

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Spread over three floors at 73 Maple Road, with desks and meeting rooms for short-stay and round-the-clock members, there are virtual office and business services, and regular events for users.

The aim is to encourage Surbiton's small business to achieve more, without being tied into office contracts or working from home.

"The ethos is very much that of co-working," explained David Randall. "It has an atmosphere and a contemporary style of work environment that is collaborative and friendly. We think that this is a very refreshing change from most commercial office environments."

You can rent a hot desk for a fiver an hour, with longer-commitment discounts, free tea and coffee, and even cut-price lunch brought to your desk from next-door Gordon Bennett!

Stretch, bend & push

Here at The Good Life we're all doing the stretch, bend and push diet. It's the kind of activity doctors recommend.

You walk towards a door, stretch forward, bend down, then push The Good Life through the letterbox.

Join us in getting fit this summer with a burst of aerobic walking... enjoy the sun, accumulate ideas for improving your front garden, and support your community paper.

We welcome any offers of help to distribute The Good Life as it helps make this little project possible.

If you can spare a few hours every couple of months, email timharrison444@hotmail.com

We're always keen to hear of Surbiton news stories, odd local events, openings, closings, history, memories, photographs and gossip.

Where have you gone?

The search is on for former residents of Long Ditton who have moved away from the area.

A reunion buffet lunch is being held on Wednesday June 11 from noon at the British Legion building in Betts Way, with anyone who lived in the area between 1920 and 1970 invited.

Email Julie Chaddock on juliechaddock@btinternet.com

Black Lion unveils its new look

A major inside-and-out refurbishment at Surbiton's Black Lion pub has seen the garden seriously upgraded, and the interior smartened up.

The scaffolding has come down to reveal an elegant new exterior wall colour, smart canopies and restored paintwork.

But the real transformation is outside. Just as the weather starts to perk up, there are padded seats in a new covered area, revamped tables and chairs.

Landlord Mark Sheehy, at 14 years the longest-serving publican in Surbiton, said he was delighted with the look.

Inside the Brighton Road pub, apt quotations dot the walls, including a famous comment from footballer George Best,

who lived his last years in nearby St Andrew's Road. "I spent a lot of money on booze, birds and fast cars... the rest I just squandered."

The Black Lion does pub food, has live bands, shows sport (including all World Cup games) and has the area's biggest quiz on Tuesday nights.



Mark Sheehy surveys the new-look pub garden at the Black Lion

Chilling out at Hotel Bosco

Advertisement feature

Hotel Bosco is an unequivocally elegant and sophisticated venue. Softly lit, and with seriously chilled-out music during the day, it is hard to resist sitting back and watching the world go by. Join friends for lunch, or be uninterrupted with a book, but do take advantage of their 6 for 6 lunch menu where they offer 6 mouth-watering dishes, freshly prepared in their open kitchen, for only £6.

Enjoy a delectable and expertly mixed cocktail from the extensive cocktail list, complemented on Thursday nights with live music and a sublime £5 mojito offer. If food takes your fancy, graze with friends on one of the bountiful sharing boards or indulge in a succulent 28-day-aged, locally sourced, rib-eye steak with their exceptional 2 for the price of 1 steak offer on a

Wednesday night.

Weekends are special in the lounge at **Hotel Bosco**; every Friday and Saturday Bosco's resident + guest DJs play at the venue from 9pm till late. You can recover the morning after the night before with a healthy grilled Bosco Brunch served from 9am on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays.

For those away from home, **Hotel Bosco** is a contemporary 4-star boutique hotel offering a sanctuary for guests who desire that little bit extra. With 20 exquisitely and individually designed boutique bedrooms you can appreciate the finest beds and the softest goose down pillows and quilts; the emphasis is on luxury and comfort.

It is safe to say, both **Hotel Bosco** and **Bosco Lounge** are both glamorous and gorgeous with a great vibe and unique atmosphere.

Be your own interior designer

Elena Romanova launched interior design workshops in her home in one of the river roads a year ago. The concept won a Netmums award, and now she helps a growing list of people become their own interior designers, as well as giving advice to clients. Day workshops are restricted to a maximum of six, with Elena passing on trade secrets and inspirational ideas. “I love teaching and design,”

said the 47-year-old Russian, who came to England from her native Moscow on a three-month working visa... and fell in love with the place. Family commitments and mid-life crises prompted a switch from a corporate career with Disney and then Westfield. She spotted a gap in the market, and trial events confirmed the demand. Elena, who has three children, aged 19, five and three, has always

been fascinated by houses (hers is stunning). “I love houses, I love going into houses; it’s like going on a date for me!” she said. Workshops usually run on Wednesdays and Thursdays, but there is flexibility to do other days. “My target audience is girls interested in design; the ones who are forever buying interiors mags or watching programmes; people who have made mistakes already, or want pointers if they are lost in a sea of choices,” she said. To the 500 pages of information she has from her design degree course is added all the things she wishes she’d known when she was doing her first design project. “People have a good giggle,” she said of the workshops. “It’s a girls’ day out, rather than a spa day or going to a restaurant.” The introductory fee is £65 per head, which covers workshop, coffee, materials and a gourmet champagne lunch. She moved to Surbiton 13 years ago – meeting her partner, Jamie, when they worked together for the Disney Corporation. Surbiton’s mix of Victorian/Edwardian houses, between-the-wars semis and apartments fascinate her. “Old houses already have interest, but you need to inject character into more modern houses,” she said. “Design offers so many choices... which becomes a problem in itself.” Visit www.elenainteriors.co.uk



Elena Romanova at her Surbiton home

Pupils lead WW1 research project

The names of former Shrewsbury House pupils who fought in the First World War are recorded on the memorial of the Ditton Road prep school. But research by today’s schoolboys reveals that several names were missed from the elegant stone plaque when it was unveiled in 1919. A project co-ordinated by head of history Sean Smart has uncovered the backgrounds to the heroes’ names etched in stone, and found additional names, forgotten for a century. The school hopes the research, by 15 Year 8 pupils, will act as a springboard to the next task for the boys; compiling the names from the Second World War, and creating a long-overdue memorial to them. The school has appealed to Good Life readers for information about former pupils with connections to either world war. Listening to current pupils’ enthusiasm for research into alumni is deeply affecting. Just three years after leaving Shrewsbury House a century ago, many of the prep school lads found themselves immersed in the horror of trench warfare. “There are some very high-ranking people on the memorial,” said 13-year-old Luke Streeter. “But there were also a few missed off, including one who received the Military Cross.”

Fellow student William Reith, 12, has a younger brother at the school, underlining the poignancy of the fact that several pairs of Shrewsbury House brothers are etched on the stone. “Most private schools produced officers who were leading the men at the front,” he said. James Hodson, who starts at Eton later this year, added: “It’s interesting that six or seven names were missed off the memorial; maybe their bodies weren’t found.” The heroes include Henry Murphy, who lived in Ravenscar Road, and won the Distinguished Conduct Medal. He was killed in France in May 1918. Sean Smart prides himself on the school’s hands-on approach to history. There are (disarmed) grenades on display in the classroom... including a German example. “It’s a commemoration,” he said of the project. “A whole generation has gone, and deserves remembering.” Burial places of those on the memorial include nearby St Mary’s churchyard... and far-flung cemeteries in Russia and Iraq. The memorial will be cleaned and repainted ahead of a rededication service in November. The only thing the school’s Latin scholars can’t agree on is the precise translation of Altissima Adepti, which tops the school memorial. Ultimate service? Ultimate sacrifice? If you can help the Year 7 scholarship class research First or Second World War past pupils, email ss@shspost.co.uk



William Reith, Luke Streeter and James Hodson at the memorial



Food festival launches

The town’s second food festival is staged next month with the central event being a village fete on the weekend of May 10 and 11 in St Andrew’s Square. The two-week festival aims to introduce us to food providers in the town, and encourage support for local business. It opens with the sardine festival on May 4, and ends with the Maple Road farmers’ market, sports day (above) and picnic on Victoria rec on May 17. In between are cookery shows, talks, parties, promotions, discounts at pubs and restaurants, and shop offers. “We’re lucky to have such a supportive community who value their local businesses and clearly like to have a good time,” said Lamb landlady Liz Lewis. “There was a fantastic turnout last year.” Maple Village WI host the competition tent, and Jennings will cook Happy Jack sausages (named after Surbiton’s pioneering cyclist). The fortnight sees the full trial of an alternative currency, the Kingston pound. Co-founder Andrew Connolly, a Surbitonian for 25 years, wants to support independent businesses by keeping more of the area’s spending circulating in the local district. “If we commit to using Kingston pounds as part of our weekly spend, we’ll be taking control over what our money is doing and will be investing in our own town,” he said. Notes designed for festival use have a face value of £1 and, intriguingly, early adopters will have their names incorporated into the design. “It makes sense to trial it at an event like the food festival because we share a vision to make our community an even better place in which to live and work,” said Andrew. Event updates at www.surbitonfoodfestival.org



A free pint... on Boris!

Enterprising Surbiton Flyer landlord Richard Sealtiel invited mop-top London Mayor Boris Johnson to pull a pint at the station pub. Barmaid Madison Brooks, right, coached, while customer Chris Kuit benefited from a free pint of Pride. With sister pub Gordon Bennett!, the Flyer is run by James French, chef Kalin Stoykov and a 15-strong team. Speciality: duck-egg Scotch eggs. ● The Flyer is extending Boris’s free beer offer to any Good Life reader who snips out the advert below. You do not have to raise a glass to the London Mayor. Terms & conditions apply.



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This Sceptred isle

Never has there been a car so superbly equipped, with such performance at so modest a price, read the puff. The 1963 Humber Sceptre had a 'richly appointed interior, carpeted boot and immaculate styling'. No wonder 11-year-old Aubrey Pinchbeck fell in love.

When Clifford Fisher, headmaster of Beverley, New Malden, drove his £997 claret Mk1 into school as the Beatles enjoyed early chart success, Aubrey (pictured) vowed he'd get one too.

Today the 62-year-old, of King Charles Road, is the proud owner of a Mk1 Humber Sceptre (left), a Mk2 (right), a Mk3 estate, an immaculate green Mk3 saloon... and a Sunbeam Rapier Fastback. Of course, he has a more modern vehicle for everyday motoring... a 1984 Triumph Acclaim.

"Clifford had that car from new, and it was beautiful," said Aubrey. "It was stunning; the colour, everything. I thought 'One day I'll have one of those!'"

Aubrey was an engineering apprentice, then joined the police, serving as Berrylands beat officer for six years in the 80s.

But in his spare time he was always making, repairing or building something. "I used to build my own bicycles from scratch," he said, over a cup of Earl Grey.

His first car was a £50 Ford Popular, which he traded for a Singer Gazelle at Fullers ("I put a new gearbox in it... it kept jumping out of top"), then swapped for a Mk2 Sceptre in which he courted wife Lynn. The couple now have four daughters.

There were other vehicles... a Triumph 1300, a Ford Anglia, a Volvo estate, an Oporto-red Rover 3.5 Vanden Plas... but it was a blue Sunbeam Rapier which he bought in Raeburn Avenue which began his love affair with Rootes Group motors.



Robinson squashes rivals

Surbiton racing driver Mike Robinson has been topping the timesheets in testing at Rockingham – Europe's fastest racing circuit.

The 31-year-old, based just off Ewell Road, has been doing pre-season trials at the Northampton circuit for the Michelin Clio Cup race series after a three-year gap.

He was the only driver to dip below 90 seconds for a lap by recording a time of 1m 29.92s – an average speed of 77.6mph – in his 2-litre Renault.

"It's nice to come back and be quicker than I was three years ago," said the Total Control Racing racer. "We started the day with some pretty worn tyres; the aim was to use the newer rubber towards the end of the day. The Clio is a fun car to drive; you can really throw it around."

"I bought it and restored it, then got a Sceptre Mk2 for £50 and the rest is history."

Aubrey (the unusual moniker is from his father's best pal in the military) is one of the UK's Sceptre experts. Today he works as a physics technician at Kingston Grammar School, but spare moments are still spent tinkering with Humbers.

What is the appeal of this classic British marque? "As a teenager, I was impressed by the big, beautiful ministerial Humbers – the Imperials and the Super Snipes," he said. "The Royal family had them."

Sceptres were more delicate and ladylike; ideal for a gentle drive through Berrylands.

Tim Harrison

Buried and revived?

The word on the streets is that the old RJ Boorer financial services office in Brighton Road – close to the Black Lion pub and alongside the empty Blockbusters and Majestic shops – is to become an undertakers. It's beside a beauty centre, raising the possibility of a funeral parlour next door to a salon called... Revive!

Back to the future

The recorded station announcements at Surbiton are going haywire. Two weeks ago, the tannoy apologised for engineering work which 'will take place on January 25'. Or are they're giving nine months' notice?

Bletchley code talk

Surbiton Historical Society's membership is rising, the recent agm was told. On May 6 John Davis talks about Bletchley Park codebreakers, and on June 3 Julie Chandler speaks on livery companies. Meetings: 7.30pm, Surbiton Library hall, Ewell Road.

Keep on your toes

Recent warm weather means Surbiton toes are on display, boosting sales of Ilse Jacobsen flip-flops at Shoes At Last, Maple Road. "They're only £25 a pair, and come in eight vibrant colours," trilled Sarah Taylor. "Ideal for the summer holidays."

Easter butterflies

Lamb is a popular choice at Jennings the butcher's, Ewell Road, as Easter nears... but have you tried a butterfly cut; a deboned leg, ideal for barbecues? "It's the new-season salt-marsh lamb, and early batches should be in the shop for Easter," said Alan Jennings, who began work there in 1962. Other seasonal tips include free-range turkeys and home-made bangers. Watch for some interesting new sausages at the Surbiton Food Festival next month.



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Below-the-waves snaps

Aquatic snapper Terry Arpino is currently exhibiting 3D underwater prints at Court Farm garden centre cafe, opposite Tolworth station. He has been taking atmospheric below-the-waves pictures for 40 years. The one above, photographed in Montego Bay, Jamaica, is being raffled for the charity Kingston Arts. Terry, whose most exhilarating photographic dives have been in the Maldives, the Red Sea and Egypt's Gulf of Aqaba, sells works for up to £3,500.

Nostalgic slide show

Good Life editor Tim Harrison hosts a nostalgic slide show at this month's Surbiton Photo Circle in Gordon Bennett!, Maple Road, at 8pm on Monday April 14. Entry free, all welcome. In a return to the glory days of whirring projectors, clunking carousels and beams of light full of curious airborne particles, the evening features slides of the Kingston area that Tim took in 1983, plus slides from the 70s and 80s of one of the district's historic houses. Bring a handful of old slides along to pop in to the projector, to view in their original glory! Projectionist John Kelly will create a digital-free zone for the evening.

Antiques roadshow

Acorn Antiques, The Musical is being performed by Hinchley Manor Operatic Society, which draws many members from Surbiton. Based on Victoria Wood's TV soap parody, it is at Hampton Hill Playhouse, May 20-24. Tickets £15 via www.hmos.org.uk

Ray makes comeback

Singer Ray Lowe returns to the Duke of York pub in Victoria Road, Surbiton, on Friday May 9. He's proved a popular crooner on past visits, some even likening him to Sinatra.

Choir sets June date

Byrd, Bach, Mozart and Haydn are on the bill when the Thames Philharmonic Choir performs at St Andrew's church, Maple Road, on Saturday June 7, 7.30pm. John Bate wields the baton, with Max Barley at the organ, tickets £16 from www.thamesphilchoir.org.uk, or call 07522 524081. Vocal solos will be by postgrad students of the Royal College of Music.

Paperback giveaway

St Matthew's church, in St Matthew's Avenue, is taking part in World Book Night on Saturday April 26, from 11am-2pm, giving away copies of brand new paperbacks, selected from a list which includes Andy McNab, Agatha Christie, Roald Dahl, Adele Parks and John Grisham. There will also be an exchange table of second-hand books, and readings from this year's World Book volumes. Refreshments will be served.

Painting the town

Surbiton artist Rod Pearson exhibits watercolours, some of local scenes, at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, until May 3. First drink free at a gala night from 7pm on Tuesday April 22.

New dance craze

An original dance club for children operates at Douglas Road's cornerHOUSE on Saturdays. Aurora Dance is for enthusiastic movers aged five to 11, and meets 11am-noon. Email kira.alice@yahoo.com to check dates.

Girl power conquers play festival

Surbiton's 10th festival of new playwriting strikes a blow for girl power, with five of the nine plays written by women, and six of the nine directed by women.

The plays are staged in two batches at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, on alternate nights from May 12-17, 7.45pm.

This year topics include the morning after the night before, a troublesome mouse, packing for a funeral and stalking. Each play's running time is between 15 and 30 minutes.

"The plays are a mix of comedy and drama," said selection chairman Jon Constant. "There's something for everyone to enjoy and some great roles for the many actors who auditioned for this year's crop of original shows."

Mon/Wed/Fri: Aunt Julie's Funeral by Tim Harrison (dir: Denise Rocard), **Morning** by Jane James (dir: Graham Large), **Stalkers** by Madeleine Mason (dir: Nick Tamila),



Getting dramatic. Chloe Parsons, left, and Rhiannon Lewis rehearse Sir Gwaine Colombelles

When You're A Boy by Imelda Topping (dir: Colin Goodger) and **Sir Gwaine Colombelles** by Tim Harrison (dir: Dina Yates).

Tue/Thu/Sat: The Temp by Josephine McDermott (dir: Miriam Zendle),

Changes by Ian Davies (dir: Josephine McDermott), **The Visit** by Graham Large (dir: Katrin Feldhus) and **Windmills** by Julie Birkett (dir: Lucy Hanneghan).

Tickets £8 (£6 concs) on the door, or at www.ticketsource.co.uk/event/51406



Mark Leigh runs some ideas past his sternest critic, Maxwell Woofington III

If you thought Dame Barbara Cartland was prolific (700+ books), meet Surbiton wordsmith Mark Leigh. This autumn sees the publication of his 50th book – an amazing achievement as he only writes at weekends.

His 'office' is Starbucks in Victoria Road. His genre? Trivia, gift books... or bog reading.

"Between October and Christmas, two-thirds of this type of book are sold," said Mark, who has lived at the top of Ditton Hill for 16 years.

Married with two children and a dog, Maxwell Woofington III, Mark's biggest success was a collaboration with former Young One Ade Edmondson. How To Be A Complete Bastard filled 500,000 Christmas stockings in 1986.

By day Mark works in a marketing agency in Soho, but at weekends he turns into the area's most prolific author, tapping away on his laptop in coffee shops and local libraries.

"Basically, weekends are my writing time," he said. "I write in Starbucks on Saturdays and Sundays. I actually started over the road in Costa, but then Starbucks got wi-fi!"

Published works include Celebrities Behaving Badly, animal books with Rolf Harris, and other 'celeb' stocking-fillers co-written with the likes of Jeremy Beadle, Pamela Stephenson, Chris Tarrant and Roy Chubby Brown.

"It's hard to predict which books will do well; some I thought would do well have got nowhere at all, there's no rhyme or reason," said Mark, 48, who sometimes pitches his own ideas, and sometimes is commissioned.

His first publication, The Complete Revenge

Kit, was a series of wind-up letters, written in his early 20s. It led to an appearance on Esther Rantzen's That's Life show, when he ended up a wind-up victim.

Recent hits include Weird Sh!t, a trivia compendium, and Epic Fail, the ultimate book of blunders.

He is currently working on How To Chat Someone Up at a Funeral, and Other Awkward Situations, a tongue-in-cheek

exploration of social etiquette.

An example of bizarre trivia from one recent tome? At the height of his notoriety, Colombian drugs baron Pablo Escobar spent \$2,500 a month on rubber bands to wrap cash wads.

"The books are the kind of thing you have in your loo," admitted Mark, who despite having a Kindle app on his iPad is still very much a book person at heart.

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KCUpdate

I've said goodbye to many old pals...

We've all noticed Surbiton's new bright pink lipstick, and it's a shock to our suburban system after gazing at the Victorian splendour of the FP Turner & Sons facade; the latest in a long line of facial work the town has undergone in my 29-year lifetime.

Where I can now buy duck eggs and a splendid bottle of Malbec (Oooh, get me), I was once subjected to shower heads and socket sets. Many childhood Saturday mornings were spent being dragged by my dad to the B&Q that is now Waitrose. I remember dim aisles filled with items of unfathomable pointlessness, the checkouts by the front window, but most of all I remember the kiddie ride in the shape of a peacock outside the front.

Being moved slowly back and forth by a large, creaking tin bird was thin compensation for the psychological distress of a morning in B&Q, but it was better than an extra five minutes with a socket wrench.

I've said goodbye to great pals in Surbiton: Blockbuster in Brighton Road, known to my childhood self simply as 'the video shop', which back in the days of yore (circa 1990) used to have an entire section of children's videos built into a giant Wendy house at the far left; and Woolworths – yes Woolworths, my Surbitonian chums – our dear departed friend, which stood proudly and rather shabbily where the 99p Store is now ('There goes the neighbourhood,' we muttered – and don't pretend you didn't).

Oh, the thrill of purchasing a whole school term's worth of stationery in one

fell swoop. The immeasurable delight of sneaking my hand into tubes of pick 'n' mix and munching on a tenner's worth of sugary treats before reaching the CD aisle.

The tremendous smugness felt after purchasing my entire family's Christmas presents in one shop for under a fiver! You don't get that sort of pleasure from two packets of Polish biscuits and tuppence change.

As for the restaurants, I gorge on pasta in Zizzi where once I queued for stamps and passport photos in the old post office, and I don't now rush down to the basement toilets to be sick in Pizza Express, which I may or may not have done in my teens, in St Mark's Tavern/Rat and Parrot. I say 'T'; I mean it happened to a friend...

Surbiton is evolving, like everywhere else – perhaps more garishly and suddenly than we'd like – but we'll get used to it. Change takes some swallowing. Imagine my father's confusion when he came home one Saturday morning with an oak-smoked salmon instead of an orbital sander.

Becky Mayhew



Victoria Road in 1910, when Zizzi sold stamps

Annie shares her kitchen skills

She's not yet a household name, but Annie Morris, left, aims to join Delia Smith and Jamie Oliver among the ranks of TV chefs.

She has filmed an episode of Cooks to Market for Sky, has been mentored by the founder of Gü puds, and now has a professional kitchen from which to pass on her culinary skills and enthusiasm.

Annie, left, who has lived in Cottage Grove for 25 years, is using the kitchen at the Fox & Hounds, Portsmouth Road, to hold weekend cookery classes. "I'll start with the basics," said the bubbly 61-year-old. "Then move on to knife and pastry skills, filleting fish, preparing meat and making canapes, pates and pasta."

Later she plans to coach young people with learning difficulties in kitchen skills.

Annie was recruited for the TV show as a

result of working on the Taste of Sicily stall at the Maple Road farmers' market. "The producers had been scouting for cooks, and I was selected," she said.

After working in a city bank and paying off the mortgage, she switched to cookery, retraining at college. "I've always been keen on cooking; I got the school prize each year," she said. "I want to teach people that in the recession you can still make tasty meals with cheaper ingredients."

"A lot of older people live on M&S meals, which get very samey. I want people to get more variety... and gain another interest."

Annie's pork pies, pasties and Scotch eggs did famously in a Good Life home test.

Call her on 07964 466230 or email anne.morris10@btinternet.com



Bowls season begins



Plus-fours were in evidence at Alexandra rec on April 30 1930 as the bowls season opened with a match between Surbiton Bowling Club and a Surrey County team boasting three internationals. The club is seven years away from its centenary, and has a full programme until September, including two informal open days to let anyone take a look, on April 26 and 27, from 2.30pm. Inquiries to membership secretary Keith Moss on 020 8390 0638.



Floating plan defeated

The moorhens pattered about on the sunlit surface of Surbiton's river filter beds, blissfully unaware that their way of life had even been under discussion.

Thirty feet above them, by the peeling blue railings, MP Ed Davey (second right) celebrated with campaigners after plans for an ambitious floating housing development, able to rise and fall with the tide, were defeated at appeal.

Simon Tyrrell, guiding light of the Friends of Seething Wells, was as buoyant as the moorhens... but acknowledged that the question now is: 'What next?'

Inspector Lesley Coffey rejected the appeal from Hydro against the council's unanimous decision to turn down a bid to build on the Portsmouth Road filter beds.

"There have been 15 years of campaigning and three inquiries; I'm delighted with the outcome," the MP told The Good Life. "I hope the developer understands now the strength of feeling there is in the community."

In the inspector's judgement, plans for 64 floating homes on a pontoon, a 92-yacht marina and restaurant were outweighed by the loss of metropolitan open land and the effect on the area, including a bat colony.

She declared that Hydro's plans would "harm the character of the area" and erode the natural buffer which keeps Kingston and Surbiton from blurring together.

Hydro had planned to use Surbiton as a template for other floating development projects around the UK, and repeatedly referred to the site's dereliction. The Friends argued that years of neglect by successive owners merely meant that the area's potential had yet to be realised.

"We need a more fitting future for the filter beds," said Simon Tyrrell. "We're not about stopping things, we're about doing things. We need to talk."

Hydro has made conciliatory murmurings, and may place revised plans on the table in the coming months.

Tim Harrison



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Copy date for issue 17 – Monday, June 2 2014

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