



Phew, a close call...

'I was walking along Maple Road,' writes reader David Cox. 'I was carrying shopping and had a man-bag across my shoulder. I was just about to let go of all these items and leave them on the pavement when I saw this sign. I'm so glad it was there! Signs like this aren't, as some seem to think, pointless clutter, and I would like to thank the Met Police for being there for me.'



Who'll be jammy?

Chocolate cake? Strawberry mousse? The Surbiton farmers' market cookery contest on May 16 coincides with the Surbiton Food Festival. Create a dish using either ingredient, or both, and bring it to market by 10.30am. There are categories for amateurs, pros and children. "It's going to be amazing," predicts market chair David Jacobson. ● More food festival news on [p2](#)

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Read all about it

Surbiton's Regency Bookshop is about to learn if it's the best independent in the British Isles, and not merely the best in London.

The shop is top in the capital, says The Bookseller, beating map experts Stanfords and the London Review Bookshop, Bloomsbury.

It's a feather in the cap for the town, delighting owners Ray Mustoe and Pat Freestone-Bayes.

It was customers' 'favourite bookshop'; one that 'never lets us down'. Pat said: "We're very pleased with the recognition; it's unbelievable to beat the London Review and Stanfords."

Regency goes up against seven regional winners in the UK and Ireland, whittled down from 60, with Pat putting on a fancy frock to sashay up to the Hilton in Park Lane to hear the news on May 11.

Service is key to success, she believes, with judges also top-scoring the shop on expertise and its meet-the-author events.

Regency, in Victoria Road, is a keen backer of local writers. "We have a very loyal customer base," said Pat, when asked how Regency competes against Amazon's fearsome dominance.

The fact that Regency's interior feels as if it's been squeezed like a toothpaste tube is irrelevant. Other contenders for the top prize boast sofas, cafés and play areas, but what Regency lacks in elbow room it makes up for in friendliness, and a determination to encourage children to read.

"I told Ray we were going to enter the contest, and he just laughed," said Pat.

Ray started Regency 30 years ago, with Pat joining as a Saturday girl in 1998.

Her qualities? Ray had no hesitation. "Pat is exceptionally good at what she does; she clutters the place up... but she's bloody good at what she does!"

Tim Harrison



Pat awaits the award news

Bafta winner shouts 'Action!'

A Bafta winner wants to make the often overlooked Claremont Gardens the town's flagship green space.

BBC wildlife cameraman Tom Hooker, 33, won the artistic achievement Bafta this year for computer game Lumino City, partly filmed in his Adelaide Road flat.

Now Tom has started the Surbiton Wildlife Group, to encourage back hedgehogs, stag beetles, insects and sparrows.

The public response to his

launch at Glenmore House amazed him. "I laid out 12 chairs, and 60 turned up," he said. "The aim is to improve the gardens for wildlife. There are roles for everyone, whether planting, clearing or giving an hour or two here and there."



Tom Hooker

Kingston Council leader Kevin Davis gave his backing, adding that it's not the sort of thing the council should do itself "as we'd be rubbish at it".

Tom walks through the gardens most days, and says nature is his passion.

The group will be at the village fete on May 10 (see [p2](#)).

Empty nests

Surbiton's wildlife clubs are concerned about the severe embankment clearing undertaken by Network Rail at nesting time. Pictures on [p5](#)



Every little helps at, er, Tesos

Much merriment in Villiers Avenue, where a tiny convenience store in the parade of shops at the foot of the hill has been boldly branded Tesos Express... using lettering which looks oddly familiar. It is understood that m'learned friends, acting for a large UK retail chain, may even now be drafting a letter. See [p6](#) for more local retail news.

Reflect on this...

Surbiton traffic lights are sprouting wing mirrors to boost cycle safety.

Polished convex discs now adorn the Brighton Road/Maple Road junction to let motorists see if a cyclist is in their blind spot. The £60 'Trixi' mirrors were fitted at Transport for London's expense.

Road safety experts say they reduce the risk of cyclists being crushed by left-turning vehicles, but they also raise awareness that cyclists are sharing the street.

Cllr Hilary Gander, a regular cyclist, told The Good Life she welcomed the move, as drivers' 'left hooks' were a big safety hazard.

"I'm concerned we make our roads safe for everyone and I also hope that the new Ewell Road markings, with a dotted-line lane for cyclists at Kingsdowne Road and Red Lion Road will help make motorists more aware of people on bikes at these junctions," she said.



Trixi mirrors let drivers check the nearside



Lottie Michels and Amelie Dinnin (below) got a great reception when they sang Up at Tolworth Junior School's Tolworth's Got Talent, but first prize went to (top) Year 4's bubbly trio The Blondies (Sophie Hudson, Edith



Slow-Noble and Hannah Williams) singing I Know It's Today.

Nice knockers!

Stroll around Surbiton and you can't fail to admire the knockers you see. Some are pert, some are pendulous, but they all add to the jollity of local life. We've collected together a few of the finest specimens, and proudly present a selection. Where else would you look but... [p3](#)



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Food fest expands

... as will your waistline if you make the most of the third Surbiton Food Festival, which runs until May 17.

After the sardine festival at Claremont Gardens on May 3 from 1-6pm, there's a gadget display at Main Kitchen Supplies in Brighton Road at 5.30pm on May 8, while the Surbiton village fete and dry-hopped beer festival will be staged at St Andrew's Square on May 9 and 10, noon-6pm, with food demonstrations, barbecues and real ale, and cookery contests for pasties, cupcakes, cakes and bread.

There's a cheese and beer night at The Lamb, Brighton Road, from 8pm on May 11, a screening of Babette's Feast at The Surbiton Club, St James' Road, on May 12 at 7.30pm, and a food and drink quiz at The Black Lion the same night.

The May 16 farmers' market in Maple Road is followed on the Victoria rec by a sports day, picnic and dog show, with categories including dogs that most resemble their owners.

On Sunday May 17, The Grove pub stages a hog roast.

A £1 voucher booklet has offers and discounts, while full festival events are listed at www.surbitonfoodfestival.org

Start with a real Flyer

Surbitonians can now get the weekend off to a flyer after a revamped brunch menu was launched at the pub next to the station.

The Surbiton Flyer's brunch, from 9am-2pm, includes Cumberland sausage sandwiches with free-range egg, cheddar and red onion chutney (£6.50), and a 'pimped up BLT' with avocado. There are butties, French toast, eggs on 'breakfast potatoes', slow-cooked barbecued pork and a meaty English special for £7.50 with sausage, bacon, egg, beans, mushroom, black pudding and toasted artisan bloomer.

Other options include Eggs Benedict, Eggs Royale and Eggs Florentine (with wilted spinach), while the even healthier brunch alternatives include crispy granola, probiotic yogurt, fresh berries and drizzled honey for a fiver.



Recipes for a Good Life by Annie Morris

Welcome to Annie's kitchen, in the heart of Surbiton. Here's a novel combination. "Beetroot is hailed as a superfood," said Annie. "It may seem unusual, but it makes really lovely moist fudgy muffins."

Ingredients

- 75g/2½oz cocoa powder
- 180g/6½oz plain flour
- 2 tsp baking powder

Beetroot muffins

- 170g/6oz/caster sugar
- 250g/8½oz cooked beetroot (drained)
- 3 large eggs
- 200ml/7fl oz sunflower oil
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Icing sugar for dusting

Preparation

- Preheat oven to 180C/355F/Gas 4.
- Arrange paper muffin cases in a 12-mould muffin tin
- Sift cocoa powder, flour and baking powder into a bowl. Mix in the sugar, and set aside
- Purée beetroot in a food processor. Add eggs, one at a time, then add the vanilla and oil and blend until smooth
- Make a well in the dry ingredients, add the beetroot mixture and lightly mix. Pour into the muffin cases
- Bake for 25 minutes or until the top is firm when pressed with a finger
- Cool on a wire rack and dust with icing sugar to serve.



Chris Wilkinson poses with Rita at Surbiton's farmers' market

Try Rita's burritos

Bursting burritos and tangy tacos are being made in the borough and served at Surbiton's farmers' markets from a 40-year-old Citroën HY van which looks like a mauve corrugated iron hut on wheels.

'Rita' is operated by Chris Wilkinson, 47, who lives in the Groves area of Kingston and runs the mobile Mexican food business Margo & Rita.

Citroën HY vans, based on the bodywork of a German Junkers Ju52 aircraft, were built in Paris between 1947 and 1981 and are affectionately nicknamed Nez de Cochon (pig nose) by the French.

Rita had been owned from new by a Perpignon farmer, and – unusually – had been garaged, so had very sound bodywork. "It was originally a pick-up truck," said Chris. "It's a 1974 van with 1950s technology, it does 45mph top whack, and it has a three-speed gearbox that's back-to-front!"

He dispenses burritos, tacos, with a choice of meat fillings including pulled pork and brisket of beef, tortillas and nachos with prices typically between £4 and £6.

Breakfast options include lining burritos with an omelette topped with cheese.

"Add hot pepper sauce to make it as spicy as you like," said Chris, who keeps the basic sauce mix low-heat, but who also makes his own fierce chilli sauce.

"It's so nice to work in Surbiton," he said. "We're keen to work locally, and use local suppliers."

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To the bat cave

Would you know a pipistrelle from a noctule? A bat walk leaves Kingston Uni sports ground, Tolworth Court, Old Kingston Road, at 8pm on Friday May 29. Free tickets: Sivi Sivanesan at biodiversity@kingston.ac.uk

It ends in a tie

Charity shops in Victoria Road report a rise in tie sales. Coincidentally, the Surbiton Flyer was giving free weekday morning coffee to wearers.

Healthy children

Southborough School, Hook Road, has won a gong for pupil well-being. The healthy school certificate was presented by Rosie Boycott, who chairs London Food, the campaign supporting locally produced nosh.

House champs

Shrewsbury House's U9 rugby stars are national champions after the Ditton Road school beat Dulwich Prep in the final of the prep schools' premier tournament. Pupils were also runners-up at U10 and U13.

Bags go walkies

Donations of clothes have gone from outside the Fircroft Trust shop in St Andrew's Road, but police are powerless to act as items were on pavements. The charity urges donors to leave bags when the shop is open.

Youth elections

Hats off to Emily Jeans, Dave Byssoo, Tom Muxworthy, Adam Winstanley and Sameena Ganesalingam, elected to represent Surbiton and Tolworth on the Kingston Youth Council after 7,439 votes were counted. Top secondary school turnout was at Southborough school with 91%.

It suits you, sir

As another of its anniversary deals, two suits are being dry-cleaned at Roberts in Claremont Road for £18.

Screen grab

The silver surfers' club, on alternate Saturdays (10am-noon) at Surbiton Library, helps over 50s 'untangle the web'. Booking required. Cost: £3.

Homeless puss

Narla, 9, misses her separated sister Orca, and needs a stable Surbiton home, says concerned local cat care



service Mr Monty's. She's good-natured and purrs loudly. Visit www.haws-animals.org.uk/pets/cats-kittens/?show=o24

£6 is a trim rate

The cheap seven-day barber shop just got cheaper. Kami's at 48 Tolworth Broadway now does OAP and student trims on Mondays for £6.

Facing the lens

'Faces' is the theme at Surbiton Photo Circle's May 11 meeting in Maple Works, 73 Maple Road, at 8pm. Share tips, talk f-stops, or even ask what 'f-stop' means. All welcome.

Clothes sale day

Bargain baby clothes and toys at a sale in St Mark's church hall on Saturday May 16, 2pm. Visit www.mum2mummarket.co.uk



Flip-flops are here

Summer must be close. Shoes at Last, Maple Road, is stocking best-selling £25 Danish Ilse Jacobsen flip-flops, in 15 dramatic colour choices.

A majestic vet

A Vet4Life veterinary practice opens in the former Majestic wine store, Brighton Road, next month.



A winged cherub in Grove Road



Hefty veteran knocker, Ewell Road



A majestic lion in Brighton Road



Greek god in Cadogan Road



A sturdy specimen in Ewell Road



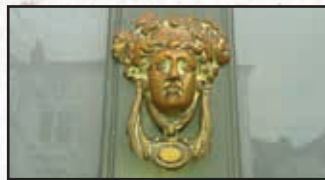
Bushy eyebrows in Cadogan Road



King Neptune in Cleveland Road



King of the jungle in The Mall



Golden deity in Cadogan Road



Knock, or ring? Cleveland Road

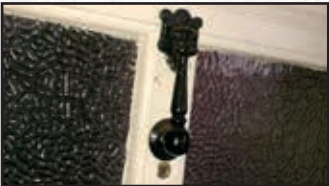
Who boasts the finest knockers in Surbiton?

Now, stop all that Sid James giggling at the back of class! We're talking door furniture here, and – as befitting a historic suburb – Surbiton does have many wonderful knockers; with some dating back to the 1850s. You'd think the internet would simplify research into impressive knockers... but you'd be surprised what appears when you do a search.

Lions' heads are a particular local favourite, while the earliest examples, long before electric bells were invented, made heftiness their virtue, so that they could be heard by servants in distant parts of grand houses.

What's most intriguing is the variety, and the fact that so few are duplicated. The door knockers of Surbiton are as quirky, whimsical and unique as its residents, and when you discover something as interesting as that, you shouldn't knock it.

Tim Harrison



A pendulous one, St Andrew's Square



Fleur-de-lys in Cadogan Road



The mane knocker in Ewell Road



Dolphin, Anglers Reach, Grove Road



Fantasy ironwork in Ewell Road



Equine knocker in Brighton Road



A silver lion guards Queens Drive



A hefty Victorian knocker in Maple Road



Spyhole in an urn, also Maple Road



Elephant trunk, fox and horse; Ewell Rd, Rectory Lane and St Mark's Hill



Antique specimen in Ewell Road



Ornate bird in Grand Avenue



Gothic glory in Ewell Road



A Maple Road combination



Grrrrrrr! This one's in Uxbridge Road



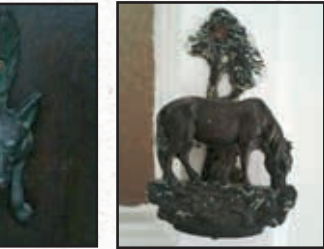
Cast iron design in Maple Road



Stylish kingfisher, Berrylands Road



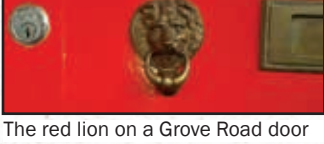
Elegance in Adelaide Road



Bronze lion in Ditton Road



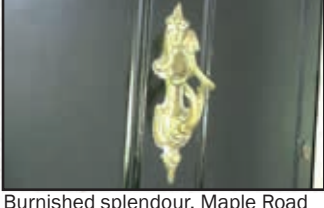
The red lion on a Grove Road door



Fierce look in Queens Drive



Burnished splendour, Maple Road



...if the Good Life was giving awards this elephantine beauty in Ditton Grange Close would get top prize

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Gardening tips by Janice Cripps



You feeling fruity?

There are few better ways of covering a bare garden wall or fence than with an ornamental fan or espaliered fruit tree. It is not only productive but decorative too, with blossom in spring, then eye-catching fruit and radiant colour in autumn.

Its history dates back to the 17th century when a French monk, who was given the onerous task of providing food for the monastery, discovered that trees grown flat against walls fruited more heavily and reliably than those grown in the open.

By the following century the practice had been taken up in the grand gardens of Europe such as Villandry in France, where teams of gardeners could spend hours skilfully crafting the trees into more and more interesting shapes.

Today we not only have fan espaliers but also diamond, goblet and candelabra shapes. There is an increasing interest in living sculpture too with a new breed of 'arborsculpture' artists producing people, tables, and chairs from trained fruit trees.

So from humble beginnings, training fruit trees has become an art form. Little wonder, then, that it is perceived as difficult and

beyond the scope of the average gardener. Indeed it represents the very essence of gardening – controlling nature. This is particularly true if you start from scratch with a one-year-old maiden tree that looks like nothing more than an old bendy stick, and you want to transform it into a life-size replica of the Titanic!

An easier route is to buy a ready-trained tree which comes with a couple of tiers of horizontal branches. Most types of fruit can be espaliered, although it is worth saying that, for the beginner, apple trees are probably easiest. All you need is a sunny wall or fence and a little patience.

This method of fruit growing adds structure and elegance to any garden and is perfectly suited to small gardens or where space is limited. The pattern of branches, the light and shadow created by the tree is especially attractive in winter when there may be little else of interest.

More elaborate espalier shapes can be used as show-stopping focal points, while the cordon with its horizontal tiers is very useful for creating divisions in the garden or screening views.

This art form can definitely be learned, and I for one think it's worth giving it a try.

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

On the trail of the lonesome pine...

One of Surbiton's sentinels, a pine which has stood since the middle of Queen Victoria's reign, is to be felled. Health and safety is cited by the council, which says the tree in Cotterill Road has shed several large branches in recent years, and 'is coming to the end of its safe useful life expectancy'.

It is also said that the tree 'has outgrown the location', though it's arguable the location has outgrown the tree. When it was in the first of the three centuries it spans, Cotterill Road was a track through the orchards which then covered the area.



How old is a tree?

Use a tape measure to work out a tree's circumference in inches, at chest height. Divide by pi, then multiply by the growth factor for the species calculated by the International Society of Arboriculture. The Cotterill Road pine is 146.5 years old (92in divided by 3.14, times a factor of five).

The tree was a mere seed in 1868 – the year Scott of the Antarctic was born – and was a sapling seven years later, when St Matthew's church was built nearby, in the middle of a patchwork of fields.

It has seen 37 prime ministers come and go, and it is nearly 147 years old (see inset box above).

The council will replace it with two flowering cherry trees (*Prunus Umineko*) outside Nos 53 and 55, whose occupants will no longer have to clean cars of vivid splodges from the pigeons that have shared the pine with generations of squirrels.

Residents have mixed feelings about losing a landmark three times the height of their houses.

At the time St Matthew's church was built in 1875, the parish population stood at 650. Few other buildings existed, although there was the Red Lion pub, where Ewell Road and Red Lion Road now meet, a few brickmaking works in Red Lion Road (or Red Lion Lane, as it was then known), and the house at 24 Kingsdowne Road.

The rest of Victorian Tolworth came galloping along in the following 20 years, and by 1895 the population of the parish had trebled to 2,000.

Pine trees are famously long-lived, and tall. The current record-holder for height is a specimen in Oregon which stands at 268ft, while the oldest is in California – a bristlecone pine which is calculated to be a staggering 4,600 years old.

Magnolia time in Surbiton

Surbiton's magnolia season, from mid-March to mid-April, was as spectacular as ever. This magnificent specimen, right, is in Effingham Road.



Meanwhile, the verges in St Matthew's Avenue are the talk of the town. Two years ago, the council said it planned to resurface the pavements. A resident suggested adding landscaping... citing the example of Cumberland Drive, Hinchley Wood. Kingston Council concurred, flowerbeds were dug (at residents' expense), and the results are impressive.



Overheard in Maple Dental Practice

'Open wider,' said the dentist. 'Good grief! You've got the biggest cavity I've ever seen; the biggest cavity I've ever seen.' 'OK!' replied the patient. 'I'm scared enough without you saying it twice.' 'I didn't!' said the dentist.

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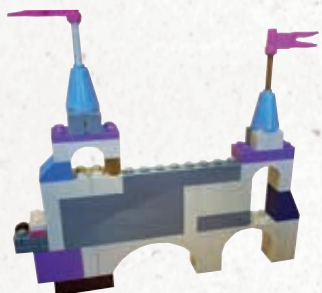
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All in all it's just another brick in the wall

When Surbiton graphic designer Kris Dolecki was dreaming up a new Legoland sign, the starting point was obvious. He cleared the table, and began experimenting with plastic bricks. Kris, who works for Fastsigns in Ewell Road, devised the 3.8m steel, aluminium and acrylic sign which now greets

visitors to the theme park in Windsor. "I spent hours trawling through hundreds of different bricks to find the right ones and meticulously measured them to ensure the scale was perfect for the full-size sign," he said. "The bricks on the sign are 25 times the size of actual Lego bricks."



Kris's Lego model (left), and how the full-size one looks

For three decades a resident of Copse Glade, one of Surbiton's smallest roads, David Rugman-Jones has died at 89.

After wartime service, he married youth club sweetheart Pam in 1952, was ordained and became a curate. But the marriage failed, and he fell out of love with the church. He turned to teaching, married Ann, and had a daughter Dilly. Life was crowded; Ann had five children from a previous marriage.

David Rugman-Jones dies at 89

In 1979, Ann and David split, and he met Rosemary, a Surbiton widow with 10 children. The couple lived in Copse Glade for 28 years, until her death five years ago. He spent his last years living in Kingston.

Mourners lifted a glass to them at The Ditton, Ditton Hill Road; a favourite lunch spot.



It looks like the onset of a nuclear winter, but Bruce Bovill's bleak black-and-white snap from the Ewell Road bridge contrasts with an earlier picture and shows the aftermath of Network Rail's recent chainsaw



clearance programme. The timing has shocked Surbiton & District Bird Watching Society and the Surbiton Wildlife Group, which are concerned about extensive cutting taking place during the bird-nesting season.

Both groups argue that the work could have been done later in the year, with less impact on birds, bats, butterflies, beetles and other insects. Network Rail says the work is essential for passenger safety.

Jackie celebrates winning an education Oscar

Trainee legal secretary Jackie O'Sullivan, right in the picture, from Long Ditton has won a rare City & Guilds gold medal for excellence, making it a record-breaking nine consecutive years that a Kingston College student has won the award.

Jackie, studying for her Level 2 Legal Secretarial Certificate, received her medal at the Lion Awards, nicknamed the 'education Oscars', at The Royal Festival Hall.



"I'm delighted," she said, paying tribute to the 'incredible support' of course tutor Jenny Hands (left).

Of two million students who complete City & Guilds training, there were just 69 medal winners. The awards have been made each year since 1879.

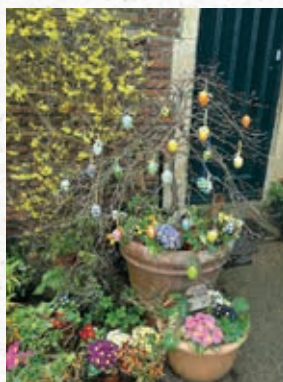
"Jackie completed her legal secretarial certificate with us in the evenings," said Jenny. "We are very proud of her."



The daffodil cross

Pic: John Kelly

On Easter day, the St Mark's congregation decorated a cross with daffodils, one for each person present. The cross was later placed in a corner of the churchyard, facing up St Mark's Hill. Meanwhile, over the river at Hampton Court, the door to the palace chaplain's house, right, was brightened up with these painted eggs, hung from a small tree.



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Is this the way to armadillo?

A divider known as an armadillo will shield cyclists from traffic along Portsmouth Road. Looking like half-buried rugby balls, they are evenly spaced, are made of recycled plastic and are bolted to the tarmac. There are already more than 100,000 ‘armadillos’ across continental Europe and the US.

These before-and-after snaps show how the dividers will look between The Mall and Laithwaite’s at Brighton Road. Cllr Richard Hudson said a consultation had called for improved segregation. “We have a vision where cyclists will feel safe and confident along Portsmouth Road,” he said.



Interiors with a Spanish accent

Contemporary furniture with clean lines and a Spanish accent. That’s the product range at Cadira at 157 Ewell Road in what was the discount shoe shop and, way back, Bells accordions. Exclusive supply deals with Spanish and Italian factories mean you won’t find Cadira’s range elsewhere. The business

is 13 years old, starting in Kew before moving to Weybridge and finally settling in Surbiton. Pedro and Yvonne Fernandez-Ortiz run the showroom, and have opened up the basement to create more display space. “It’s not DFS,” said Yvonne, right. “We specialise in sleek, elegant Spanish-looking items.”

Pedro, who is originally from Valencia, added: “Surbiton is a good base for us; we try to be distinctive, buying in things that you don’t find in other places.” Cadira delivers across the UK, and opens Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm. Most of the range is at www.cadira.co.uk, but you find the real interiors inspiration by looking round the showroom.



Gleaming kitchens

Spearheading the regeneration of a forlorn stretch of Brighton Road, Owais Ali (above) has opened a gleaming kitchen showroom in the former Blockbuster video shop. Acqua Kitchens uses German suppliers; the new branch complementing a showroom opened eight years ago in New Malden. “Surbiton is up-and-coming, but lacked a kitchen showroom,” said Owais, who aims for a quality level that surpasses competitors, backed by a 3D design service. “A lot of people are extending,” he added. “We try to give an alternative to standard designs.”

Musical gives Lisa her kicks

There is nothing like a dame, as Berrylands high-kicker Lisa Guerriero proves as she joins the cast in Hinchley Manor Operatic Society’s latest show, Rodgers & Hammerstein’s South Pacific, at Epsom Playhouse on some enchanted evenings from May 13-16. Book online at www.hmos.org.uk

Even babes can feel the benefit

If you thought chiropractic treatment was just for slipped discs, bad backs and strained shoulders, you need to keep up. Chiropractor Sean Sanders uses the moves on his son Soren... and the one-year-old is by no means the only young Surbitonian to benefit.

“I adjusted him on the second day after he was born,” said Sean, who trained at the founding school of chiropractic, Palmer College in Iowa. “I like treating babies; I can feel where something is out of alignment.”

He and wife Dymna have lived in Grove Road for five years, while Sean operates from The Cottage in Arlington Road, round the corner from the medical centre.

“Chiropractic is spinal health; communicating between the brain and nervous system via the spine,” said Sean, 43. “If something is out of whack, your body can’t heal itself.”

Although chiropractic is better recognised in the States and Australia, where it is seen as a cost-effective way to manage



Sean Sanders ensures son Soren is happy

back pain without drugs, it has a lot of supporters in the UK too. “I sometimes stay open until 9pm to help city workers,” said Sean, who has 17 years’ experience behind him. Dymna also benefits from Sean’s expert hands, after developing a disc bulge when pregnant. “Whether I have back pain or not, I have regular adjustments,” she said. “It makes me feel better; it’s not just about pain, it’s about well-being.” More at www.surbitonchiropractic.com

Simply bowl up

Flat shoes and enjoyment of fresh air are the only things you need to enjoy life at Surbiton Bowling Club, on the greens at Alexandra rec. A big ‘friends and family’ day is planned for July 4, from 2.30pm, meanwhile every Tuesday evening from 5.30pm there’s a chance to, ahem, bowl up and try out the sport. “It’s free, there are no obligations and everyone is most welcome,” said Keith Moss from the club which was founded in May 1921 by a group of friends who rented the green from Surbiton District Council. “Bowls equipment and coaching are provided.” Just turn up, or call Keith on 020 8390 0638 or email surbitonbowlingclub@yahoo.co.uk

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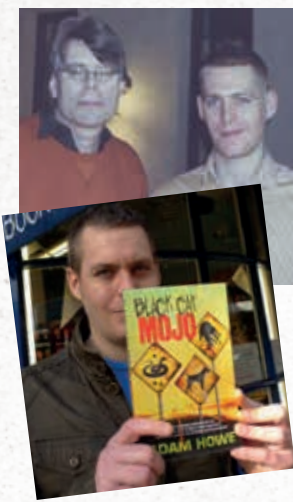
Spotting that the former Budgens store in Ewell Road, Tolworth, had reopened as B&M Bargains, after being boarded up for a year, Bob Phillips thought he’d give it a whirl

It’s a completely new fit-out; a clean, shiny and efficient-looking store. The aisles at B&M are a bit narrower than dear old Budgens, and the shelving units are built higher. The height exaggerates the sensation of being in a maze. When you start moving about in this supermarket you realise another thing. It is designed for one-way traffic. From the entrance (pictured, right) an aisle leads shoppers to the back, and from there they zig-zag to the tills. There’s no cutting across or chance to meander, and the lack of aisle width discourages back-tracking. On the whole, shoppers move as

intended, from entrance to exit. This is a store where shelves are filled with things that are good value rather than goods that will be replenished every week. And because of that, there’s uncertainty about finding a particular brand or item on every shopping trip. This is an unfamiliar experience for me. I’m used to going into a supermarket, list in hand, knowing the brand and size of the item I want and having the confidence that what I want will be there. The layout made me feel like a passive shopper on a conveyor belt. I don’t like the feeling that I am being led around by the supermarket – I found it a disempowering experience. However, not all shoppers may feel like me, and at least it’s good that the empty shop space has had a new lease of life.

6

Is there a new King on the throne?



Yes, that's the master of horror fiction Stephen King... but the guy beside him is Tolworth writer Adam Howe. They met after Adam was flown to New York having won a writing competition judged by King, who described the 36-year-old's literary style as 'raw, punky and genuinely surprising'. Adam's first book, *Black Cat Mojo*, is now out, published by horror specialist Comet Press. It contains three novellas, led by the disconcerting *Of Badgers and Porn Dwarfs*. Adam's characters are colourful Americans, while his plots are uncompromising and not for the squeamish. A ghoulish humour overlays everything.

Born in Kingston, Adam lives in Tolworth Park Road. His love of unsettling horror began with books trawled from charity shops, and he has fought his own demons, including a battle with the bottle. Praise from 'The King' has opened doors for Adam, who has also worked as a screenwriter. "Short stories are a way of finding your own voice," he says. "Sometimes the muse is there, sometimes not. But when I'm firing on all cylinders, nothing feels better." A morning writer (and afternoon reviser), Adam most admires Stephen King's early classics.



Simon (left) and Nick Hancock hear Miriam Harrison's theatre tale But I saw them in 1957!

Historic first-hand memories proved a surprise bonus for Surbiton entertainer Simon Hancock who, with brother Nick, performed a tribute to Flanders & Swann to a packed cornerHOUSE. For 89-year-old audience member Miriam Harrison is one of the last witnesses to the comedy song duo's hesitant early steps on the road to stardom, when the writers of the Gnu song and The Gasman Cometh gambled their savings on hiring a small performance hall. "When Edwin and I married, we had a flat at Sheffield Terrace, off Kensington Church Street. One day we saw a sign outside our local theatre, the New Lindsey," she told Simon. The sign said that a self-penned revue, *At the Drop of a Hat*, would be 'performed regardless' from New Year's Eve 1956. The hall was 300 yards from their flat, so Miriam – then six months pregnant – and Edwin bought 7s 6d tickets for the second night. Michael Flanders (34) and Donald Swann (33), inset below, had booked the building for the first three weeks of 1957. "Nobody we knew had heard of Flanders & Swann, but we decided that as we lived so close, we'd give it a go," she said. "It was about half full, I'd say – perhaps 80 people. We thoroughly enjoyed it." The two-hour show included *A Transport of Delight* (an ode to a London bus) and ended with a singalong of *Mud, Mud, Glorious Mud*; the *Hippopotamus* song. "As we went out each person was stopped at the door by one of the staff, asking: 'Did you like it?' We said we'd had a great time, and they looked relieved and said 'Please tell your friends!' They were very keen to whip up more business." The *Hippopotamus* song was one of Flanders and Swann's first collaborative writing projects in the late 1940s (Flanders the words, Swann the music). Michael had contracted polio during the Second World War after the destroyer on which he was serving was torpedoed, and spent the rest of his life in a wheelchair. After three weeks on the New Lindsey stage, the show moved to the 430-seat Fortune Theatre, where it ran for two years. The New Lindsey, by Notting Hill Gate tube station, had opened 10 years earlier. Both Kenneth More and Dirk Bogarde appeared there, and it was where Fenella Fielding made her stage debut. The building was demolished in 1959 to make way for a station extension. Simon and Nick Hancock grew up with Flanders and Swann songs at home, and as youngsters saw their heroes at the Theatre Royal, Brighton, in 1964... although they only have sketchy memories. Their tribute show at the cornerHOUSE delighted the audience, especially when Nick hung upside-down from a branch to perform *The Sloth*. Another particularly well-received song was *Pillar to Post*, a tribute to that neglected icon, the pillar box. **Tim Harrison**



A study of Betrayal

Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* is being performed by the Green Theatre Company. Told in reverse, it centres on a seven-year affair involving a couple, Emma and Robert, and Robert's 'close friend' Jerry... who is also married. Rod Henderson makes his directorial debut with the GTC. The show runs from June 11-13, 7.45pm, at the cornerHOUSE. Tickets £8, £6 concs, via thegreentheatrecompany@gmail.com

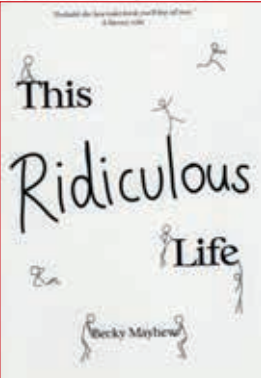


Please proceed to No Exit

The studio at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, hosts Instinct Theatre's version of Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist play *No Exit*. Performed in the round, the one-act play is the source of the line 'Hell is other people'. Tickets are £8, £6 (concs), Lily Driver-Thurston directs, and the show runs May 14-16, 7.30pm. More details at www.thech.org

It's Becky's Life work

If you enjoy Surbiton writer Becky Mayhew's observational thoughts (and you can confirm you do by reading her column on p8), you'll be joining the queue for her book, *This Ridiculous Life*. In typical self-deprecating style she bills the stickman-illustrated collection of jottings about life, the universe and everything as 'toilet reading', but while it's true that it sits neatly on the cistern, it's a lot more than that. Mind you, it lends itself to the kind of bite-sized chunks of entertainment which pass the time in the smallest room. And the French Table keeps a copy in its loo, for the use of diners. Becky studied Eng Lit at uni before doing an MA in creative writing at Kingston. "I've wanted to be a writer since I was tiny," she confesses. This book draws on her blog, beckysaysthings.com, which she began in 2011. ● Buy it at the Regency Bookshop or at Maple Works, next to Gordon Bennett!, Maple Road, priced £6.99.



Keep Focused

An art and photography show, *In Focus*, by Meta Rocard (that's one of hers above), Alistair Lark and Gale Davies lights up the cornerHOUSE walls from May 24-June 28. Entry free. There is a gala evening on Tuesday June 16 from 7pm. More at www.thech.org



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Art show to open

The spring exhibition of Surbiton Art Group, which is now in its 68th year, opens at Surbiton library hall, Ewell Road, on May 23. Writer Pat Thurbin, author of *The Dorich House Mystery*, will formally open the show at 2.30pm. The exhibition can then be viewed daily until May 30 (bar Wednesday), 10.30am-6pm. Entry is free and works are for sale. At the last show, Ann Emery's dramatic watercolour *Raging Sea*, detail above, was voted the best painting in a poll of visitors. Prints and cards will also be available. There is a free car park.

Paul's epic film success

In its week of release, Surbiton actor Paul Hughes' first full-length feature film, *David and Goliath*, was only pipped for box office takings by the action movie *Furious 7*. Paul, who lives just off Maple Road, plays King Saul in the one-and-a-half-hour Biblical epic, which was the second highest grossing film in the 25 US cities where it was shown, taking \$300,000. Meanwhile, Paul is now hard at work on his next projects; a new short film and a music video.

Some can spell; some find it hard. Teachers once said: 'If you read a lot you'll learn to spell.' Celia from Number Works'nWords says there's more to it. Schools teach phonics, but English spelling doesn't always follow the rules, or you have to know which rule to follow... and it's hard to remember! There are fun ways to learn. Try these to help your child when you are cooking or in the car.

Cood your speling be improoved?

Make up silly stories to remember word families: an insect got on a chair in a train which strained as it pulled a chain in the rain which went down the drain ('an insect' reminds us these are 'ai' words). Two children scribbled, scraped and scratched their itch! Say words in a funny way to help learn them: come becomes 'com-ee' (emphasising the o); was is 'wazz' and many is 'man why'. Later on special becomes 'spec-i-al' and people becomes 'pe-o-plee'. Teach your hand to spell as well as your brain. Most of us learn better when we do something too. Celia suggests children write words as they say them out loud (in whatever silly way helps). Make the paper look pretty! Change pen colour and write it again and again (but not mid-word as you must allow your hand to flow). The act of changing the pen, the few seconds it takes and the different feel of the new pen helps make the spelling more secure. Whatever you do, get some fun into it!

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A summery of the news

Spring appears to be here, which means – like a plume of bubbles in a lager glass – summer is looming. In case you have forgotten how to deal with this, here is my guide on how to do summer.

- Open a window (those glass things through which you normally watch conifers being lashed by rain). Do this correctly, and a pleasant breeze should flutter into the stagnant dustiness of your wintery house.
- Fish out your summer wardrobe. This is a joy. That box under your bed holds garments you'd forgotten you had. Replace these with jumpers and long johns, and shove the remains of a dark winter under your bed.
- Ladies, it is time for The Great Groom. Book a waxing appointment and rid yourself of the layer of protective insulation that you have cultivated over the last six months.
- Gents, take off your T-shirts. It is crucial menfolk sport bare torsos over the summer. Apart from gaining Vitamin D, those multitudinous shades of pink make the town look very pretty indeed.
- Get thee to a pub garden! Even if it's spitting slightly, it is summer law that you imbibe your alcohol against a patio'd backdrop of plant



pots, benches and a million sunglassed red faces. Do not trust those who remain in the gloomy caverns of the pub. These people are malevolent underlords and are plotting an eternal winter.

- Drink Pimm's. Constantly. Do not drink anything else. Drinking anything else means you are denying summer. Do not deny summer.
- The only food you should buy between now and September is meat, salad, meat, bread rolls and meat. Stop buying soup

and pasta. Can you put soup on a BBQ? No, you cannot. Stop buying it.

- If you own a convertible, put the top down, don cool shades and pump up Radio Jackie to audacious levels.
- Wear sunglasses. All the time. Never remove them before 9pm.
- Remain in a state of sun-kissed euphoria, even when your eyes are red and streaming and your sneezes frighten the birds from the trees. An allergic reaction to summer doesn't mean you shouldn't enjoy it. Blow your nose and have a Pimm's.
- Avoid roads. Summer makes people drive like lunatics, and that is a fact.
- Throw things. You've waited months to throw something at someone. Go to the nearest open space and lob plastic discs, balls and those weird plastic missiles that make a whistling sound.
- Don't throw those weird plastic missiles that make a whistling sound.
- Find a patch of grass and sit on it. It doesn't matter what you do on it. That is your patch of grass. That patch of grass is summer.
- Enjoy.

Becky Mayhew



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Elisa's dream

A Surbiton teacher is in the running for a £250,000 prize which would enable her to launch a national online tutoring business.

Elisa Lodato, who taught at Tiffin Girls', hopes to convince Virgin boss Richard Branson of the merits of ThinkTutor, if she makes the finals of the Pitch to Rich contest.

The 35-year-old from Douglas Road heard about the competition on Radio 4's Today programme. She had come up with the idea of an affordable tutoring scheme while raising her four-year-old daughter and 18-month-old son.

"Tutoring is big business. A home tutor typically charges £30-£50 an hour in Surbiton, but ThinkTutor would allow students to have an hour-long lesson for £2," she told The Good Life.

Elisa's idea is that a multi-media system would offer good-quality teaching to pupils and families who simply couldn't afford to pay for a one-on-one private tutor.

"There's a surge in demand for online video-led tutorials, and the 400,000 teachers in the UK have a wealth of knowledge," she said. "ThinkTutor gives teachers the flexibility to earn, and pupils to access the teaching online."

"Although it's not the same as one-on-one, tutors could run forums with students being invited to ask questions."

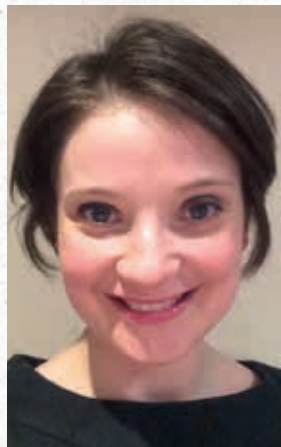
The concept lets inspirational teachers market lessons to students looking for flexibility.

"We want to empower teachers and students but also, crucially, parents who want to help their son or daughter get the right grade in their exams," said Elisa, pictured.

She needs votes to back her claim for a place in the final. You can vote at www.virginmediabusiness.co.uk/pitch-to-rich/new-things/thinktutor

"A student in inner London studying Jane Eyre should be able to sample a lesson from an inspirational teacher in Yorkshire," said Elisa, who worked for Google before going into teaching.

More than half a million students enrolled on exam courses last year. Elisa calculates that if three per cent bought a course in her first year, ThinkTutor could achieve a £400,000 turnover.



Fare's fair

Proofreaders need never want for work in Surbiton. This sign in a cab firm window in St Mark's Hill singles out 'Standstead', rather than Stansted, as a destination. For the cost-conscious, the signwriter offers a 'student discount'. OK, the odd error even creeps into something as scrupulous as The Good Life. But the biggest letters on this sign boast of a local 'fair' from £6. Mind you, a town-centre pub's blackboard recently said a band was 'preforming' in aid of 'leukaemia reserch'.

Coffee chats

Cllr Kevin Davis' meet-the-people tour of Surbiton proved so successful that it has established a new template for council/resident relations.

The red-trousered council leader chatted over cuppas at the YMCA, Sunray community centre, School Lane youth centre and Surbiton Library, explaining: "We have to have a new relationship with people, and look at things in a different way. We're going to do more of this, not just sit in stupid meetings inside that no one wants to go to."

Surbiton neighbourhood manager Gemma Gallant added: "We'd no idea how it would go, but we were delighted with the response."



The vital cup

by Morris Thain

We clutch our coffee cups to us
As if they hold our very soul,
We grasp them, grip them, cling to them
And cart them everywhere we stroll

We sip from them, we swig from them,
We carry them on bus and train,
And yet when we have emptied them
Our attitude is inhumane

We leave them on the carriage floor
We dump them on a windowsill
We prop them up against a door
Allowing all the dregs to spill

How brief, how fleeting is that bond
How short a step from all to naught.
How swift the transformation comes
From lifeblood core to afterthought

Discarded, unreuseable,
A single hit, then cast aside
Yet you try parting drink from man;
It's one thing man cannot abide

Spending grant aid

Surbiton's councillors are uneasy about giving their limited pot of grant money to large, borough-wide groups rather than specific local projects.

The town's neighbourhood committee has £6,800 to distribute to worthy causes in 2014/15, but some members asked if it was right to use the cash to pay for activities with a wider scope.

It followed a bid by Kingston Arts for £750 (11% of the grant budget) for staff overheads and refreshments at a gallery at Tolworth Court Farm.

Cllr Yogan Yoganathan said: "I have nothing against Kingston Arts, but neighbourhood grants are neighbourhood grants, and I have some reservations. I think £750 is too high."

Cllr Richard Hudson agreed, and suggested allocating half the requested figure.

The Surbiton committee eventually agreed to split the £750 half and half with its neighbouring area committee, although Cllr Hudson still dissented.

Grants of £345 to Surbiton Community Church (for an event in Alexandra rec) and £188 to Digital Drama for a VE Day commemoration event at Kingston's Rose Theatre were agreed unanimously.

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