



Spring is here, spring is here! Life is skittles, life is beer. I think the loveliest time of the year is the spring, I do, don't you? Course you do! Tom Lehrer was singing in the early 60s, but blossom time is as uplifting today. From left: The Ridge, Berrylands; Ashcombe Avenue, Southborough; Effingham Road wisteria; and Balaclava Road magnolia

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Save Tolworth's tower

Tell anyone that you're going to the apple store, and they'll think you're buying an iPad, but the real apple store is an extraordinary building on the Ewell edge of Tolworth, and it's under threat.

Campaigner and ecologist Alison Fure has launched a petition to force the issue of preserving the neglected publicly owned 1856 three-storey Gothic-style brick barn on to the council's agenda.

She says it has potential as a community asset and is a significant part of the area's agricultural story.

The tower, with pagoda roof, stored locally grown heritage varieties such as Mitchelson's seedling and Colonel Yate; types Alison hopes to reintroduce to borough schools and orchards.

If it gets to 500 signatures, the council is compelled to address the issue in the debating chamber. Sign electronically via www.tinyurl.com/19nhtxc



The model boy racers

Two Surbiton engineering students are off to Malaysia to race against the rest of the world in the finals of a Formula 1 model car contest.

Roommates Josh Schofield and Matthew Watkins of King Charles Road are part of a six-strong Kingston College apprentice team vying for glory in Kuala Lumpur in the world's largest science and technology competition.

It's a big feather in the cap of the college as 50 countries and 20 million students take part. But reaching the final is all the more amazing as the team – set up in September – have had to beat colleges which have their own racetracks. And the braking system is made of used coffee stirrers and gaffer tape!

"We were a bit nervous as



Josh Schofield (left) and Matthew Watson are off to Kuala Lumpur to race their F1 car against the rest of the world

we hadn't actually tested our car," admitted Josh with some understatement. "Kingston College does have a wind tunnel, but we're all engineering students so we've also had support from our sponsoring companies."

The futuristic model racing car is a team effort, with the six students performing different design, construction, marketing and promotion roles, mirroring real F1 outfits and sticking rigorously to a walloping 80-regulation rulebook.

The two Surbiton 19-year-olds, who went to the same school in Kent before linking up again at college, now have to raise the £25,000 to take part in the Malaysia final in September, staged to coincide with the Malaysian Grand Prix.

Turn to page 3

Will it stay or will it go?

What now for the council's controversial cash cow – sorry, barrier – at Surbiton Crescent?

The promised six-month 'study' which began last September is up, but Kingston Council is now deciding whether or not to make the red-and-white 'Checkpoint Charlie' permanent.

A council spokeswoman told the Good Life: "A traffic flow study has been undertaken and we are currently assessing outcomes of the trial, along with feedback from the public, to consider with TfL if there is a case for making the trial closure permanent."

So far the road restriction has yielded more than £2million in fines, with many of the motorists who have been caught using the previously free-to-drive-through stretch of road near Surbiton High School angry that while there

are clear No Entry signs at the Kingston end, there are less easily assimilated No Motor Vehicle signs at the Surbiton end.

Drivers will have another month or two to wait before a firm decision is reached, during which time the council could pull in a further £500,000 in penalty tickets.

"The council expects to make a decision on the scheme in the summer," added the spokeswoman.



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Martha readies herself for Great Bread Bake-Off

If you fancy your bread-making skills, you're going to have to outbake one of Surbiton's keenest young chefs, Martha McKenzie. She's 'crusting' that no one else rises to the occasion at the farmers' market on May 20 when the Great Surbiton Bread Bake-Off is staged as part of the Surbiton Food Festival. Use your loaf, and you could be the toast of the town. 'Topless baker' Matt Adlard is doing the judging. Entries must be in by 10.30am. Knead advice? Try surbitonfarmersmarket.co.uk

● Dinner and Roast didn't make the cut as Lady Grey won Grace Baxter an Easter egg in a market chicken-naming,



Brasserie's chefs launch world food nights

Foodie evenings celebrating different countries' cuisines have been launched at one of Surbiton's most popular eateries.

Langleys at the Ewell Road/ Langley Road corner set the ball rolling in March in the restored magnificence of the upstairs dining room.

Chefs Mandar Desai, 31, pictured right, and Jay Panchal, 30, chose India as the first themed night, with diners offered a cocktail choice to match the food.

Mandar and Jay know their way round Indian cookery;



Mandar is from Mumbai, Jay from Vapi, three hours north.

The last Friday of April – April 28 – sees Greece as the chosen theme country, while May's will either be Mexican or Spanish cookery (the chefs are still discussing the options as they chat over the cutting boards in the kitchen).

Langleys has also relaunched its regular menu; a seasonal shift as new fresh produce becomes available, putting the emphasis on springlike floral, fruity flavours.

The restaurant specialises in British brasserie dining, with a Surbitonian twist incorporating modern European cuisine in the menu options.

The chefs linked up several years ago when working at the Gore in Kensington.

"As the weather changes, the menu should change," said Mandar, now approaching his first anniversary at Langleys. "When it's warmer, people want lighter food and salads. Currently our best-seller is scallops served with curried cauliflower, pancetta crisp and a lemongrass and chilli sauce.

"We aim to do something different; something you don't find everywhere in Surbiton. You don't want to do something you could get in Sainsbury's," he added, glancing out of the restaurant windows at the mini supermarket over the road!

Jay concurs. "Changing the menu regularly is important for us too; to keep us on our toes," he said. "We change the set menu every two or three weeks, so it means there's something new when people come back."

The chefs work out the new dishes themselves, experimenting with flavours and constantly tasting and tweaking in the kitchen.

The pair share a house in Sunbury with their families, and their wives are their sternest critics, giving each proposed new dish marks out of 10!

Among the cocktails chosen for the inaugural Friday evening were mango lassi and masala chai made with rum ("The twist is that no one in India would have it like that," laughed Mandar).

With the upstairs function room booked solidly until December at weekends, the kitchen can be frantic on Saturdays and Sundays. Most wedding and birthday groups opt for a parade of trays of canapes, so guests can mingle, rather than have formal seated meals.

So what interesting twists can Surbiton look forward to on the Langleys menu in coming weeks? Keep an eye out for goat – treated and cooked in similar ways to lamb.

"In India people don't eat lamb, they eat the more lean meat of goat," said Mandar. "In a way, it's what goes with meat that's important. The side dishes – the vegetables – have to be right. Even if people aren't familiar with the meat, they'll recognise the vegetables and hopefully give it a try."

And beyond that? "Down the line, we'll try molecular cooking," said Jay, referring to a more scientific approach in the kitchen.

A chocolate bar from the land of geysers

It's been a while since The Good Life has reported on goings-on in Breiðafjörður Bay. So, to reassure our Icelandic readers that they haven't been forgotten, here's news of a new chocolate bar from the land of geysers, about to be launched in Surbiton.

Julia Jones of Iceland Traveller, pictured, a former geography teacher at Surbiton High, and Joanna Marshall of Kokoh Chocolate, have teamed up and will unveil their new bar made of Madagascan-origin cocoa and Icelandic sea salt flakes at the village fete in St Andrew's Square on May 14.

The handmade bar contains 70% cocoa solids and phenethylamine, a neurotransmitter found in the brain that acts as a mood elevator and natural antidepressant.

The sea salt flakes contained in the bar come from Breiðafjörður Bay, which has been producing salt since 1753.

Julia of the specialist travel company, said: "I'm thrilled to have been able to combine Joanna's superb chocolate with this special Icelandic ingredient."

"We are looking forward to launching our product at the Surbiton Food Festival."

And what does the chocolate actually taste like? One connoisseur explained: "Exotic woods predominate; sandalwood and cedar of Lebanon, then comes a positive bitterness, a fruity heart of blueberry, then hints of liquorice and roasted coffee beans."



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SURBITON FOOD FESTIVAL DATES, TIMES & HIGHLIGHTS

Surbiton's fifth Food Festival has a host of free events to attend.

May 7, 1-6pm: The Seething Sardine Festival and barbecue is at Claremont Gardens. **May 8, 6-9pm:** Wine, samples and artisan businesses at Made in Surbiton, Brighton Road. **May 13 & 14, noon-6pm:** Surbiton Village Fete, with real ale bar, Maple Village WI baking competitions and music, St Andrew's Square. **May 13, 10am-noon:** Coffee roasting and tasting, Wags n Tales. **May 14, 3-4pm:** Home coffee brewing guide by expert Jon Hamilton,

Wags n Tales. **May 15, 7-11pm:**

Lamb cookery plus blues music, The Lamb pub. **May 16, 7-9pm:** The future of suburban farming in Surbiton, open discussion, at the Museum of Futures.

May 16, 9-11pm: Foodie quiz night at the Black Lion. **May 18, 7.30-9.30pm:** Mac n Cheese competition, The Lamb pub. **May 18, 7-9pm:** Food-inspired poetry and prose pop-up, Museum of Futures. **May 20 9am-1pm:** Surbiton Farmer's Market, Maple Road, bread bake-off competition. **May 20 10.30-11am:** Teddy bear storytelling

and picnic. **May 20, noon-4pm:**

Community Sports Day & Dog Show with picnic and stalls, Victoria rec. **May 21, noon-6pm:** Orchard open day at Kingston Permaculture Reserve, Tolworth (see p6).

There are also many ticketed events at different venues, from a chef's table dinner at No97 to bubbles night at Gordon Bennett!, children's pizza workshops to a one-day food hygiene course.

Details of venue locations, organisers and ticket prices at: www.surbitonfoodfestival.org



● With names such as Hemp Nectar, Hibiscus Glow, Jasmine Jun, Wild Clove and Thai Island, the mind races. Milan Bharadia's kombucha drinks were the guest stall at the Easter farmers' market in Maple Road.

But what on earth is kombucha? "Fizzy, fermented tea, sweetened with local honey or cane sugar, and made in oak barrels," said

Milan, who began brewing the non-alcoholic bottled drink for an island yoga centre in Thailand five years ago.

Each batch (prepared in Teddington using honey from bees in Broom Road) is 70 bottles, using a 20kg consignment of kombucha culture brought to the UK in Milan's luggage... something that provoked interesting

discussions at customs.

Refreshing on ice, used a mixer or as an alternative to beer or bubbly, the kombucha drinks have a distinctive, adult flavour. Milan delivers by bicycle in the area, and there's a £1 discount if you return washed bottles.

Cost: £21 for six, £3.95 individual, details at www.kittyskombucha.co.uk



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Co-op opening

The Co-op opens mid-May at Ewell Road/Ditton Road, opposite the Royal Oak and below the Surbiton Point flats. Some of the 29 staff laid off when the Malden High Street branch shut a year ago have been offered jobs. Only three of the 23 apartments are unsold, one a two-bed £580,000 flat.

Anyone for tennis?

Ground passes are free for the opening and final weekends of the Aegon Surbiton Trophy at Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club, Berrylands, June 3-11. The pre-Wimbledon grass tournament lets Surbitonians watch top-class tennis with strawberries and cream and bubbly. Advance tickets for weekday play are available in from www.lta.org.uk/aegonsurbitontrophy or on the door from £11.

Play Tudor games

Fancy trying the indoor games the Tudors played? Tolworth Library in the Broadway hosts a free Tudor games event as part of Cityread London on Thursday April 20 from 2pm. Ancient board games such as Fox & Geese and Tables will be explained... and you can have a go.

Indulgence day

Indulge yourself with massages, reflexology, home-made cake, haircuts, yoga, meditation and wellbeing sessions, accompanied by live acoustic music, on Saturday June 24, 10.30am-6pm, at 31 Upper Brighton Road; proceeds to charity African Vision Malawi. Book via Lorraine.mole@africanvision.org.uk

Watch the birdy

Surbiton birdwatchers led guided walks round Bushy Park's woodland gardens in April, spotting warblers, ducks, thrushes, tits, finches and woodpeckers. The local society's website is www.surbitonbirds.org

Music at the Hut

The River Hut restaurant at the Portsmouth Road marina (opposite Prospect Road) has live music as the weather picks up, and the outside tables with their Thames views become even more inviting. Singer/guitarist Andy Robinson plays from 5pm on April 30, May 14 and June 18.

Visible benefits

One consequence of the landscaping of Queen's Prom is that the popular Riverside Café is now visible from Portsmouth Road... and is benefiting from increased trade. Take care using the zebra crossing, however. Because it's truncated by a cycle lane, motorists find it difficult to see pedestrians waiting to cross the road.

Free arts show

Entry is free to Surbiton Arts Group's spring show at Surbiton Library annexe, Ewell Road, May 27-June 3. It is open to the public May 27, 2-5pm, then Tue, Thur, Fri and Sat, 11am-4pm. Many pictures are for sale, and there will also be selections of hand-made greetings cards.

You can be heard

Are you mad as hell, and want to do something about it? Why not think of becoming a councillor? If you're interested in standing in 2018, turn up to the Guildhall, Kingston, on Saturday May 20, 11am-1pm, where councillors of all political persuasions, and support staff, will field questions over a cuppa. More at tinyurl.com/mb2kssw

Lunch reunion

The annual Long Ditton residents' reunion is being staged at the Royal British Legion in Betts Way from noon-3pm on Wednesday June 14. If you want to attend (buffet lunch £5) email juliehaddock@btinternet.com

Snappers gather

Surbiton Photo Circle, a convivial group sharing a love of photography (whether iPhones or posh cameras) meets on Wed, May 10 at Wags n Tales, Brighton Road, 7.30pm. Bowl up with a memory stick, and others will ooh and aah at your pictures, and offer advice.



Walk this way

Adventurer Fiona Quinn loved cycling round Britain so much last October that she's doing it again... on foot. "I'm walking from John O'Groats to Land's End, solo and unsupported, carrying everything on my back," said the Maple Road life coach. Two weeks in, aside from a few blisters, the only crisis has been lack of cake! "There are so few cafes in the Highlands," she laughed. "But I'm excited to go further than my legs have taken me before, camp out by myself in wild locations and meet new friends." Fiona aims to finish on May 28, and hopes to inspire others to spend more time "living adventurously".



Island glamour

Adding some spring chic to Raven's Ait, this bevy of Surbiton models are showing off the new season's ranges of clothing and shoes at Maple Road's friendly fashion destination Shoes At Last. Photographer David Jacobson picked a sunny day to pop across to the island with the ladies, to prove that even rusty old metal makes a creative backdrop.

When Honey met Nobby

Whoever says letter-writing is a lost art hasn't visited the Royal Star & Garter Home. A penpal project matching octogenarian residents and Hinchley Wood School pupils generated a flurry of exchanged postcards and letters, culminating in afternoon tea at which the correspondents met. One 12-year-old, writing despairingly of teachers checking skirt lengths, had a sympathetic reply from her 94-year-old penpal, assuring her it was just the same in her day! Residents at the Star & Garter, Upper Brighton Road, have chirruped with amusement at receiving letters written in glitter pen, while students have found the lost joy of receiving post. Army veteran Nobby Clarke, 91, discovered a shared love of the harmonica when he wrote to Honey Billing, 13. When the pair met, he performed Que Sera Sera for her. Surbiton MP James Berry joined the correspondents at their tea, revealing that he had stumbled on a cache of childhood letters he and his sister had written to his grandmother, and only then appreciated how older generations value handwritten correspondence in an age of Facebook and email. "There's something about a letter," he said. "You communicate differently. When my dad sat me down at the end of the holidays to write letters to older relatives, I'd whinge and moan, and there were a few smacks along the way. Now I regret how miserable I've been!" The Arts Council-funded project (It's not Your Birthday But) is the brainchild of Wendy Smithers, inspired by letters from her



Penpal Honey Billing is serenaded by Nobby Clarke

own gran. "Letters are exciting; I treasure them," she said. A by-product of the scheme is a poetry book, due out for Christmas. Advice and wordly wisdom abound, with the young learning of life as a wartime evacuee, or of washing clothes by hand in a pre-machine era. For Honey and Nobby, the pleasure of receiving letters has been key. "I do thank-you cards and Christmas cards, but I'd like to write letters more," said Honey. "When you have a penpal, you can share stories with them. There's something so special about a letter. It's an event!" And the harmonica? "I play it, sort-of," she admitted, as Nobby launched into Daisy, Daisy, Give Me Your Answer Do. **Tim Harrison**



Be bowled over by a sunny afternoon

Most sports cost a fortune to play – think of all the equipment you have to buy for a start. But if you join one of Surbiton's oldest clubs, all you need is a pair of trainers. "We're really relaxed about things here, there's no kit that people are required to wear, and we have all the equipment that they need," said Brian Eastwood, a sprightly 85-year-old, who has been president of Surbiton Bowling Club (founded 1921) since 1985. Brian says membership numbers have dwindled in recent years, but he hopes a taster day on Saturday, April 29 will boost numbers. "It's a chance for people to come along, see what we do, what the facilities are like, and have a go at bowling themselves," he said. The open event runs from noon to 5pm. Turn up at the club house in Alexandra Recreation Ground off Alexandra Drive, in flat soled shoes or trainers, and you'll be shown around the pavilion, meet the members, and get a chance to try your arm on the manicured green.

Model F1 duo gear up for finals in Kuala Lumpur

Continued from page 1

"We had a great pool of talent to choose from at the college, and we got through the London and South East regional final – one of the toughest in the UK – in February, coming second overall, but first for the best team identity," said Josh. Then the team (named Tiro, from the Latin for apprentice) continued to shine in the national finals at Silverstone, where the gas canister-powered model shot down a 20m course in 1.094 seconds, from a standing start. On the day, Matthew pressed the start button as his reactions were considered sharper as he'd had a better night's sleep the night before! "The holy grail is breaking one second,"

said Josh. Now the team will rebuild and re-engineer the car ahead of the world final – a task that will entail more 18-hour days – and may try to upgrade the Heath Robinson-style brake system! "The glue was still wet when it was running," said Josh. Would-be sponsors can learn more at www.tiroracing.co.uk



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Good old Doug, a hero

A new memorial is unveiled this week in central London to the only Surbitonian awarded the Victoria Cross, Doug Belcher.

In 2015 the First World War hero was honoured with a stone by the Ewell Road war memorial. Now Doug is being celebrated afresh at Freemasons' Hall, Covent Garden, on the 300th anniversary of freemasonry in England.

Doug was 25 when he won the VC, saving comrades under fire at Ypres on May 13 1915. The Times told the tale.

Only 278 men were left in the battalion, and during the day, 91 of these fell. In one trench, Sgt Belcher commanded four survivors of his regiment, and two Hussars he had picked up. His trench was blown to pieces and he had to face a German attack which, by accurate and rapid rifle fire, he succeeded in repulsing. No more heroic game of bluff has ever been played, and it saved the whole right of the 4th division.

On April 25 a new memorial is unveiled to the 64 freemason VCs, with

a parade of lifesize wooden models of Belcher (who served in the London Rifle Brigade) and his comrades. He was in the Arts & Crafts lodge.

Doug Belcher was born in Surbiton on July 15 1889, educated at Tiffin and sang in the St Mark's church choir.

Learning of the VC, scoutmaster and church curate the Rev JHS Taylor cried: "Good old Doug! May you return safe and sound. We shall be proud to shake hands with you. Well played, St Mark's!"

Doug's parents, Walter and Emily, ran a draper's at 101 Brighton Road (now a Thai massage parlour). Doug played for Surbiton United FC and Ditton Hill Cricket Club, and even volunteered, aged 50, at the start of the Second World War! He died in 1953 in Claygate, aged 63.

Between 1918 and 1921, 350 new masonic lodges were set up by servicemen who missed the trench camaraderie in the altered world to which they returned. **Tim Harrison**

NOTABLE SURBITONIANS Douglas Belcher



Picture: rgjmuseum.co.uk

The A3 Poet

One of busiest vehicle recovery drivers on Surbiton's A3 has died at 66, leaving a wife and four children.

Alan Poet joined National Rescue in 1975, working for the firm at its offices in Kingston, New Malden and Ewell Road, Surbiton, until his death on March 23.

"Not only was he a brilliant mechanic who could make any component you can no longer buy, but he was about the smartest recovery operator I have ever known," said National Rescue founder Andy Lambert. "He was always there for the difficult jobs, ranging from hiab lorries [the trucks with built-in cranes] jammed under bridges, through tankers off the road, to recovering aircraft for the Brooklands Museum including



Viscounts, Hunters and even a Concorde."

The coffin was carried to Kingston Crematorium from his Claygate home on a rescue truck (below) which will now bear his name for the rest of its working life.

Regulars at the Winning Horse, Claygate, raised a toast.



Forrest was a keen birder

Forrest Russell, who has died at the age of 87, trimmed the hair of many a Surbitonian.

The barber, who lived on the Sunray estate, ran a salon near Berrylands station.

A father, grandfather and great grandad, he has been one of Tolworth Broadway's best-known characters in recent years.

Forrest, whose wife Helen died several years ago, was ex-RAF and was a keen sportsman and athlete in his day. He was also a passionate birder, keeping his own aviary in Tolworth. He was an accomplished bowler at Surbiton Bowling Club for 30 years.



In peace and war

The history of local undertakers Fredk W Paine will be retold by Brian Parsons, from the firm, at the meeting of Surbiton & District Historical Society at Surbiton Library annexe, Ewell Road, on Tuesday May 2 at 7.45pm. The talk focuses on 'serving the community in peace and war'. Then, on June 6, the talk topic is the history of the John Lewis stores.

Chapel is dedicated

A short, simple dedication ceremony brought Surbiton faiths together as the chapel of Lodge Brothers in Brighton Road was formally opened.

Five members of the Lodge family joined civic dignitaries as the mayor, Cllr Geoff Austin – performing one of his last tasks as the borough's first citizen – unveiled a plaque.

Canon Edward Perera of Our Lady Immaculate spoke of the "peace and light" which can follow times of grief and sorrow, while Deacon Peter Sebastian of St Raphael's did a reading.

The dedication and blessing were performed by the Rev Robert Stanier of St Andrew's and St Mark's.

"We comfort people and give them a shoulder of support," said the vicar. "Get the practical things right, and we can offer them the spiritual support they need."

Mr Stanier said that the chapel was an important place where loved ones could spend last moments with the deceased, and that it was a haven of contemplation and reflection.

Director Beverley Lodge welcomed everyone to the event, on a sun-drenched spring day, after the Epsom & Ewell Silver Band had played the mayor in.

She stressed the firm's deep roots and family ties (the first Lodge funeral was conducted in 1780).

Chairman Robert Lodge had words of praise for Jane Day, the receptionist at Surbiton, and the all-important public face of the funeral business in the town.

Glancing at the photos of old Lodge family members on the wall, Cllr Austin said it reminded him of the formidable array of past incumbents framed in the Guildhall's mayoral office. "After 237 years in business you're doing something right," he said.



Robert Lodge, left, Lodge Bros chairman, with the mayor, Cllr Geoff Austin, after the plaque unveiling

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Parking penalties are ‘beyond a joke’

Over-zealous parking attendants are making independent traders' lives misery by issuing penalty tickets while goods are transferred from vehicle to shop.

Wardens claim that only vans with company names emblazoned on the side can use the loading bay in Claremont Road, and other central streets.

It results in fines for cars legitimately loading and unloading, even if vehicles are company-registered.

But it also lets White Van Man park with impunity and pop into the café for elevenens.

“It’s persecution,” stormed Robert Helliwell of Roberts the cleaners, who is urging councillors to take a sensible approach for small businesses which don’t own van fleets. He believes the loading bay signs should allow flexibility if, say, customers are unloading heavy consignments for a shop.

“I can’t believe other local authorities haven’t encountered this issue, and worked out a way round it,” he said.

But there is hope common sense may prevail. One motorist made an official complaint after discovering the council’s website states ‘you can load or unload a personal or commercial vehicle’ in a loading bay, then lists Claremont Road as a designated loading bay.

“There is also caselaw that clearly indicates commercial loading bays can be used by personal vehicles,” said Ian Berry. “This is getting beyond a joke; the dry cleaners are getting sick of customers being hit with parking tickets as they drop off the cleaning, and complain that it is damaging their business.”

He wants the council to change its parking contract if the current wardens don’t follow the rules.

So, imagine you’re in Rome or Vegas...

As Tolworth braces itself for the biggest population surge since the 1930s, a firm has been leading groups of residents on walking workshops, to gauge opinions about the area’s future direction.

We Made That has been tasked with drawing up a strategy paper for Tolworth as flats and houses for

3,000 newcomers are built on either side of the Toby Jug roundabout. The plan, to be completed by the end of 2017, is non-statutory, but will set the ground rules for the future, Mathieu Proctor told The Good Life.

I tagged along with 17 others on a stroll-the-streets morning, meeting at Tolworth station.

“Imagine you’re in Rome, or Vegas,” said Mathieu, in a bid to stimulate suggestions. The Tolworth workshopers looked sceptical. One hurrumphed.

Why is such massive building density proposed for the Toby Jug and Tolworth Tower sites? one Sunray resident demanded, adding that the dwelling density was 16 people per hectare along the A3, 36 in the Sunray estate, and 200 in the proposed new flats.

The group proposed a meeting hall for children’s parties; perhaps a swimming pool... anything to create community. It was noted that Surbiton led London for new start-up businesses, with one suggestion being providing small-scale units for embryonic companies in an area sliced and diced by the By-Pass, Broadway and railway line.

Tim Harrison



Design trends with Elena Romanova

Ways to rekindle lost love for your home

If you don’t have money for a complete renovation, don’t despair. Here are five ways to fall in love with your home again.

Start painting. Colour is the most powerful element of interior design and, in the case of paint, is inexpensive. A new coat will not only give your room a fresh feel, but can totally change its character. Consider the atmosphere you want to create and go from there. Do you want your room to feel fresh and breezy? Consider off-whites and soft pastels. Do you want a cocooning or dramatic feel? Go for a deep-toned colour. Dark blues, greys, greens and off-blacks are popular. For an on-trend look, paint woodwork and walls in the same colour.

Work magic in small spaces. Nothing says ‘wow’ like a tiny cloakroom in a dark colour or dramatic wallpaper. Consider

wrapping the whole room in one colour or pattern (including the ceiling) for greater effect. Ensure you have atmospheric lighting.

Upcycle. Upcycling furniture is a huge trend. If you have a family heirloom that looks tired and dated, get creative and do something with it. Re-upholster old chairs, repaint old pine furniture. If you buy chalk paint you don’t even need to sand furniture down. You will be amazed at the difference it can make to the look of a room. Get new cabinet knobs and enjoy your ‘new’ piece of furniture at a fraction of the cost.

Let there be light. Lighting is as important as colour, and nothing has a bigger impact on the overall atmosphere. And I don’t mean bright overhead light. I mean soft pools of light from a variety of sources in different parts of the room at

different levels. Put your ceiling light on a dimmer, get a couple of extra table lamps, a floor lamp, an upright in a dark corner, and get some beautifully scented candles to allow you to enjoy the new atmosphere of your room.

Flowers. They make a room look fresh and loved. You don’t have to spend a fortune. Get some pussy willow and eucalyptus, put them in coloured glass vases and you instantly have a more stylish-looking space. And they last forever.

For more advice email elena@elenainterior.co.uk or call 07990 560 264.



Becky Mayhew

Waiting in vain for comedy gold

A confession. I eavesdrop. I can’t help it. As someone who lives and works in this fair town, I enjoy daily insight into your personal lives, and I’d like to share with you what I have learnt about Surbiton’s values.



Surbiton observes mealtime conventions. I learnt this through the young woman who hissed angrily into her phone outside HSBC: ‘Raj, people do not eat burgers for breakfast. That is brunch, Raj. Brunch.’ Rest assured that our respect for culinary timings will ensure that our town does not descend into gastronomic chaos.

The group of young teenage girls in Claremont Gardens who exclaimed excitedly ‘Yesssss, our rocks are free!’ and bounded towards the rockery in the centre tells me that our teens are adventurous go-getters. Unbound by the insipid shackles of a bench or a tedious patch of grass, they choose the earthen brutishness of a rock on which to hang out. Go teens!

I learnt three things from the mother who chastised her daughter in Waitrose: ‘No, you’ve had quite enough prawns this week.’

- Surbiton clearly has an abundant supply of crustaceans.
- Our mothers are conscious of our seafood intake.
- Surbiton kids have never had it so good.

Surbiton likes things done efficiently, without procrastination, according to the middle-aged man who sighed ‘You’re dawdling, Sue’ to his wife outside M&Co. To be fair, Sue was dawdling, and if she wants to remain a crucial cog in the workings of this time-conscious town, she needs to buck her ideas up.

Surbiton doesn’t like change. A woman shot a desperate look at the façade of the station and exclaimed: ‘Oh, why can’t they just leave things alone?’ This also tells me that Surbiton occasionally may see things that aren’t there, as quite what has recently changed about the front of the station I have no notion.

Sometimes, Surbiton just likes to be quiet. I learnt this through following an elderly couple in Waitrose. My senses told me I’d get good material out of an elderly shopping trip, so I attached myself to them as they made their way along the aisles, waiting for comedy gold. Nothing. Not an utterance passed their lips. Not even in the biscuit aisle, where I felt sure that there would be a heated discussion about which treats they fancied this week.

The wife silently plucked a packet of Bourbons from the shelf and put it in the trolley, to silent approval from her husband, and on they went. By the dairy section I was starting to feel a bit creepy, imagining the conversation in the security room. ‘Um, Jeff, I think we need to go and have a word with the woman who’s been stalking that elderly couple for 10 minutes.’ So I left.

Sometimes Surbiton just speaks for itself.

Pledge to listen to your concerns

Delighted with the cycle lane network? Worried about traffic? Concerned about green space? Keen to see a new pool in Surbiton? Whatever you want to say – positive or negative – about life in Surbiton, council leader Kevin Davis and fellow councillors have promised to listen. A Question Time-style event is being staged at the cornerHOUSE in Douglas Road on Thursday April 27, with the aim of involving residents more directly in decision-making on topics of their choosing. The Kingston Conversation starts at 7pm. If you want to submit a question in advance, go to www.kingston.gov.uk/conversation, otherwise just turn up.



● A Surbiton student is representing London in a national badminton tournament against rivals from colleges across England and Wales.

Mikko Cruz, left, of St Mark’s Hill, who is studying for a diploma in travel and tourism at Kingston College, is in Nottingham with doubles partner Roshelle Reginaldo for the 39th AoC Sport National Championships.

Other Kingston College students are competing in squash and tennis.

The girls gained gold placings against other London colleges to represent the capital in the national finals staged at the University of Nottingham. At stake, the Wilkinson Sword trophy.

Johanna Shaw from Kingston College said she was proud five students had qualified. “They are fantastic role models to encourage others to get into sport and be more active while at Kingston College.”

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If trees were awarded Oscars...

All gardens, no matter how small, need trees: choosing the right one can even make your garden appear larger as it encourages you to look to the vertical space above and masks the confines of your plot.

Trees have more of a physical presence than any other kind of plant and can perform one or more functions – providing structure, creating a focal point, screening an ugly view and providing a haven for wildlife.

If trees were awarded Oscars, here is my list of winners.

Best tree for all year interest: Amelanchier lamarkii or Snowy mespilus comes in many guises – single-stemmed, multi-stemmed or large shrub. With its spring flowers, summer berries and autumn colour it will never outgrow its welcome in your garden.

Best cherry tree for a narrow space: Prunus ‘Amanogawa’ has pretty, fragrant shell pink flowers and brilliant autumn colour. It has a narrow columnar growth habit rather like a Lombardy poplar but much smaller of course – perfect where space is restricted

Best tree for ornamental bark: Acers fall into this category and there are lots to choose from. I particularly like Acer griseum with its shapely outline and cinnamon-coloured peeling bark.

The elegant silver birch with its striking white bark is also a contender, but many grow too big for a small garden.

Best conifer: Conifers are out of fashion now but if you’re looking for something elegant,

slow-growing with a hint of grandeur, look no further than the Korean fir or Abies koreana. It has stunning large violet-purple cones and its trunk is clothed almost to ground level making a strong impact in winter when most trees have lost their leaves.

Best flowering evergreen tree: I’m torn

between the magnolia grandiflora and the more uncommon Eucryphia ‘Nymansay’, both have large showy white flowers in summer. Eucryphia is fast-growing but needs a mild location.

Best graceful tree: Sorbus vilmorinii ticks a lot of boxes – loosely hanging clusters of berries, fabulous autumn colour and feathery foliage. Its graceful compact habit sets it apart from other small trees.

Best tree for wildlife: Malus ‘Evereste’ is an excellent pollution-tolerant, disease-resistant crab apple which provides a good source of early pollen and nectar for insects, particularly bees. Birds and small mammals enjoy its fruits.

Best unusual tree: After something special? The Cornus kousa has a delicate charming beauty with large white bracts in early summer that look like stunning, unusually shaped flowers, bound to stop you in your tracks. A slow grower, but patience will be rewarded.



Best tree for wildlife: the crab apple

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



Common? No, perfection

Spring! A time of colour and new life, blossom is blooming, bats are once again taking to our night skies, hedgehogs are stirring and starting to scuttle around our gardens and our summer migrant birds are returning to our hopefully sunny shores. Undeniably, some of the stars of our springtime show are our amphibians, who awaken from their winter slumber and hasten towards our ponds to give rise to future generations.

The first of our bulgy-eyed friends to make a splash in our local ponds is the common frog. Males will lazily make this journey while being given a

piggyback by a female frog. When they reach their destination they deposit rafts of frog spawn that can contain up to 2,000 eggs. By early summer, the surviving eggs will have undergone an incredible metamorphosis from egg to tadpole to miniature frog.

Common toads are not far behind frogs in their bid to reach a pond. These grumpy-looking amphibians’ prehistoric appearance is well deserved, as they predate the dinosaurs, suggesting that they have reached evolutionary perfection.

However, unlike common frogs, toads tend to return to their ancestral ponds each year following the same route, which can put these creatures at greater risk if roads now line their preferred route. To save these ancient amphibians, Richmond Council closes off roads in Ham for two weeks a year to allow toads to make their way safely to their favoured ponds.

Unfortunately, all of our amphibians are at risk due to a loss of habitat. We do have some very well used ponds across Surbiton, but we could always do with more. So if you are looking to liven up your garden, why not build a wildlife pond and see what incredible creatures appear?



Common frog at Fishponds
Picture: Linda Pryke

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

Open day for 25 years of bounty

Everyone’s invited to the 25th birthday celebration of Tolworth’s permaculture reserve, with an open day at the Knollmead allotments (behind Knollmead primary school) on Sunday May 21, noon-6pm, as part of the Surbiton Food Festival.

Permaculture, or permanent agriculture, creates sustainability for the future.

“Were The Good Life to be scripted today, Tom and Barbara would be followers of permaculture rather than slogging away raising annual vegetables from seed every year,” said Brian Shindler. “They would tend perennials, which need less maintenance and provide a yield every year, and mulching with waste matter to improve the soil, while chickens would scratch around the plot in rotation and clean up fallen fruit.”

Set up in 1992 by enthusiasts on an acre of unused allotments, Kingston Permaculture Reserve, follows these principles.

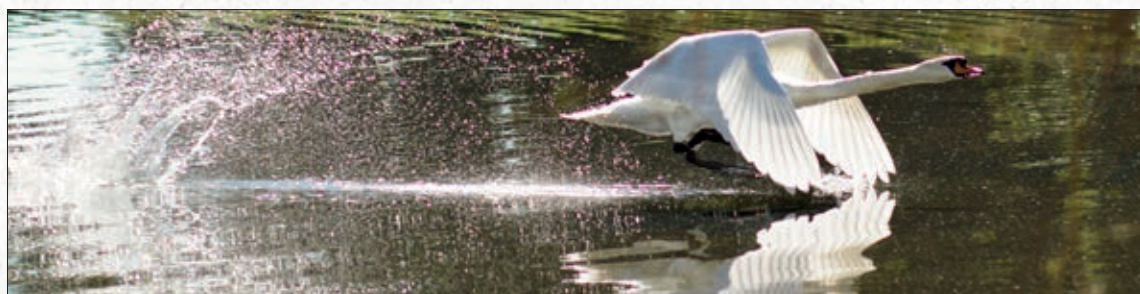
The trees planted then are now mature and yield heritage apples, pears, plums and gages, quince, medlar, walnuts and hazelnuts (squirrels permitting).

In recent years, a forest garden has been planted with mulberry, blueberry, chokeberry (I had to look it up too; it’s an antioxidant superfruit), damsons, rhubarb, almonds, white and red strawberries, Babington’s leek, asparagus and artichoke, hops and bamboo, for tasty shoots, as well as a pond and polytunnel for figs, and self-seeding salad leaves such as rocket and nasturtium.

It’s an oasis for people and wildlife, where tree-grafting produces surplus apple saplings to plant in local schools – one recently received a Worcester Pearmain and an unusual George Carpenter, created in 1902 by crossing Blenheim Orange and King of Pippins.

Visit www.kpr2016.wordpress.com for details of a free permaculture grow-your-own course, or chat to anyone at the open day.

Tom and Barbara Good would have ditched digging the veg garden and moved to a less arduous way to cultivate crops and achieve the Good Life, claims Brian Shindler of Kingston Permaculture Reserve. **Tim Harrison** reports



Hill’s giddy heights

The latest cycle lane to open in Surbiton scales the giddy heights of St Mark’s Hill – sandwiched between the pavement and a line of parked vehicles, and dodging around some of town’s oldest trees. “I couldn’t believe it when I arrived at work today,” said one trader. “There were 17 workmen building a cycle lane! No wonder this area has the worst roads in the country.” The new tarmac lane is uphill only. Cyclists often overtake cars and buses heading down to the station, so are not deemed to need any special treatment.



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The wild and the wacky

Journalist and photographer Jon Constant and graphic designer Meta Rocard have joined forces to mount an exhibition of their work at the cornerHOUSE in May.

Jon’s part of the show, Wild and Wonderful, depicts the stunning beauty of the natural world – inspired by landscapes and wildlife in Surrey and the West Country. It includes this swan.

“I like to capture a fleeting moment,” said Jon. “I’m not the kind of person who will sit for hours waiting for something to happen. Instead, I prefer to keep moving, and keep looking. There’s magic out there if you allow yourself to see it.”

Meta’s Fun with Photos takes us away from the wild and untamed, and plunges us into the world of computer artwork. The exhibition shows the depth of her imagination and skill in creating humorous, colourful, surreal and stand-out pieces.

The artists have exhibited at the Douglas Road arts centre on previous occasions. The exhibition runs from May 7-28. The gala night is on Tuesday, May 16 from 7-9pm. All welcome.



Vangelis coaches our star Evie

Singer Evie Burnett is heading for stardom... at the age of 12. The Berrylands songbird, who attends Tolworth Girls, has breezed through one set of finals, and now competes in the Teen Star heats in Hayes on May 28. To maximise her chances, she is having singing lessons with Vangelis, the half-Greek, half-Scottish self-confessed 'bedroom singer' who was a semi-finalist on the series The Voice

UK. Best of all, Evie has written her own competition song, so is also in the running for Teen Star best composer, in the pre-teen section. She was writing her own music at the age of three, and at four knew all the words to Bohemian Rhapsody. Nicola Law, her teacher at Christchurch primary, spotted the talent after setting the class a songwriting task. If she makes it to the national finals, at the O2, she'll even be on telly.

The Wallis connection

"I grew my new potatoes here!" said Dick Wallis, pointing to the polished wooden floor which now covers his vegetable patch. Dick, 89, and wife Sheila, 87, pictured, were guests at the opening of a community room, named in their honour, at the side of Long Ditton's village hall complex at Thorkhill Road/Ewell Road. Their association with the hall stretches back 70 years... Dick recalls, as a 12-year-old, playing in the building with his pals when it was announced that Britain was at war with Germany. Trustees' chair Garth Glentworth said it was the first new addition to the hall since 1890, adding: "We're delighted to be able to honour Dick and Sheila in such a fitting way."

He said the land at the side of the old hall had once been the Wallis' vegetable patch, known as Dick's Yard. "No, it was Dick's Garden," insisted Sheila, before agreeing on a compromise that it had probably been known as both down the years. Elmbridge mayor Tania Shipley was among those applauding as Dick and Sheila, of nearby Rectory Lane, cut the ribbon to formally open the new space; a compact, self-contained addition to the hireable halls, with kitchenette, loo and step-free access. "It's wonderful," said Dick, who was born in a house 100 yards away, moving to his current home when 10. He and Sheila ran the village hall



from 1976 until retirement in 2011. Grants from Elmbridge and Surrey helped finance the Wallis Room, and already youngsters, carers, dance and yoga groups use it. Booking fee from £10 an hour (via ldvht@hotmail.co.uk). Cllr Barry Fairbank, at the opening, said: "There's certainly a need for a meeting space like this." TH

Practice makes perfect for quiet, shy Lily

The winner of Tolworth's Got Talent 2017 was Lily Neale, 9, judges unanimously agreed. The singer from Hamilton Avenue performed Naughty from Matilda to parents and Tolworth School juniors. "I've seen Matilda; it's my favourite musical," she said. "I've really enjoyed doing this show." Considering her expressive, characterful stage presence, Lily is a quiet, shy girl who miraculously turns into a confident singer when the lights are on her. "She's practised it in front of us every day," confided one of Lily's classmates. "She

always stands in the same spot when she does it." In second place, quick-fire, stand-up comic Vigo McDonagh. "I ate a chess set, but I took it back. I said: 'It's stale, mate.' He said: 'Are you sure?' I said: 'Check, mate.'" In third, three-piece band Blue Fire (Arthur Russel, Sam Loots and James Waring) who played the Oasis hit Wonderwall. Other acts included singers, dancers... and Mattia Perini, who unjumbled three Rubik's cubes in under three minutes, then sat sipping tea as he'd done it all so quickly. TH



Pooling resources

A fetching, knitted, purple and baby-yellow bikini-buttoned swimsuit from the 1940s is one of the eye-catching swimming costumes featured in an exhibition at the cornerHOUSE. The vintage one-piece shows the change in swimwear worn by women who used to lap the 165ft (50m) x 90ft (27m) Surbiton lagoon from its opening in 1934 to its controversial closure in 1980. Artist and printmaker Louise Anderson's show Surbiton Lagoon – A Splash in Time, running at the Douglas Road arts centre until May 7, also features silk screen prints of divers using the springboards and platforms, a Ladybird book on How to Swim and Dive, huge photocopy transfers on canvas of figures at the immensely popular open-air pool in Raeburn Avenue, plus a video installation with oral histories. "The aim of this body of work is to convey a sense of community Surbiton Lagoon encompassed," said Louise. "The images act as a metaphor; fragments of time captured in a moment, holding lost memories and forgotten stories of an urban outdoor space." Louise is keen to hear from anyone who can share their memories, photographs and other memorabilia about the lagoon. Contact her at louiseandersonart@gmail.com Those interested in seeing the exhibition will also have a chance to chat to Louise about her work on Friday, May 28 after the cornerHOUSE AGM. Doors open 7pm.



Legal eagle musical

The Surbiton-based Hinchley Manor Operatic Society is performing the heartwarming romcom Legally Blonde, The Musical, at Epsom Playhouse, May 17-20. The Broadway and West End musical, based on the Reese Witherspoon film, tells the tale of Elle Woods who, dumped by her boyfriend for a more 'serious' girlfriend, gets a place at Harvard Law School to try to win him back. 7.30pm, with a 2.30pm Saturday matinee. Box office 020 8942 6867, or hmos.org.uk. Tickets £18. Hinchley Manor Operatic, whose president is Michael Aspel, was formed in 1949 by staff at the Milk Marketing Board, Giggs Hill Green, Thames Ditton, who were members of the firm's theatrical group. Over its 68 years, it has produced shows from Gilbert and Sullivan operettas to modern-day musicals – many of them at Surbiton Assembly Rooms, and runs a summer workshop for children.

A well-humoured soul

A Berrylands resident with a passion for am dram has died at 63. Peter Cooke, of Surbiton Hill Park, who recently became a grandad, was described by daughter Natalie as "a well-humoured Northern soul". He was married to Lynn for 42 years, and the pair invariably played roles together in local shows; many at the cornerHOUSE in Douglas Road. "He wasn't a complicated man; he worked hard, enjoyed his weekends which usually involved sport, a garden centre and a curry, and lived for a holiday or two every year," said Natalie. "While we lost my dad early at 63, he was fortunate enough to retire early at 60, to join my mum on her retirement journey. "He recently took up bridge, which he had really started to enjoy, and my daughter Francesca was the apple of his eye, and deeply enriched the last few months of his life." She described how close her parents were, and said that if Lynn had spent too long shopping in Kingston he would send her a 'Where are you?' text... but only once he'd finished monitoring the progress of Preston North End on the Saturday afternoon sports programme! He was a member of the Upstage theatre group, and sang with Hinchley Manor Operatic – particularly relishing launching into There Is Nothing Like A Dame during their production of South Pacific. "It's fair to say he wasn't a natural actor, but his enthusiasm and dedication more than made up for that," said Natalie. His last wish was that his granddaughter Francesca would never forget him. Natalie pledged to honour that.



Tim Harrison



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Helen Duffy, now studying Politics & Philosophy at LSE

Open Event, Friday 23 June 2017, 11 am - 2pm
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Marrying and moving in? New shops are for you!

If you plan to marry and settle in Surbiton, this retail news is for you. A discount bridal dress shop has opened in Victoria Road, opposite Sainsbury's, while 50 yards away in Brighton Road, a new estate agent can help find your first home.

Wed2B is an off-the-peg dress shop, with outfits under £600, no appointments, roomy fitting rooms and a regularly changing stock of British-designed (though Chinese-made) gowns.

Manager Nicola Frankland said that most bridal shops sell 10 dresses a week, while one of Wed2B's 21 branches had sold 50 on a single frantic Saturday.

If alterations are needed, local seamstresses are recommended, but most brides simply try and buy, with sizes 6-30 stocked.

Set up in 2009 by husband-and-wife team Todd and Jenny



Cassidy, Wed2B has been recruiting and training.

Brides seeking a new home can continue strolling to Seymours at 13 Brighton Road – on the opposite corner to KFC – where the town's newest estate agent has opened.

It's a business partnership of former Greenfields sales and rental experts John Flynn and Nick Johnson, who become the 18th independently owned branch of this award-winning Surrey brand.

"Being part of the Seymours

network gives us the best of both worlds," said John, who is married with two children, and lives a five-minute stroll from the office, in Westfield Road. "You have the support of the rest of the group, but you deal with the business's owners."

Between them, John (left) and Nick have 40 years' experience in Surbiton's property market.

The screens in Seymours' office carry a range of properties for sale, and the business partners stress a commitment to community involvement in addition to their sales and

rental expertise. The office at 13 Brighton Road (formerly occupied by Curchods, and before that Lords) is on 020 8390 3333.



Four hurt in Ewell Road accidents

Two people were injured when vehicles collided outside the Piano Warehouse, Ewell Road (above), at noon on March 14.

In another crash, at the Elgar Avenue junction on April 3, two drivers needed hospital care after an Audi mounted the kerb and embedded itself in the front

of Sutherland Education, on the corner with Princes Avenue.

Mercifully no one was using the busy stretch of pavement. It was the second incident in the same stretch of road in two months, at the point where Tolworth Broadway's 20mph limit ends and the 30mph zone begins.

...but Doddle has toddled

The idea of picking up parcels on the way home from work isn't such a doddle after all. After opening opposite Surbiton station a year and a half ago, as a 'convenient online shopping collection point', Doddle has toddled.

Launched in the old Phones4U in a puff of purple-themed optimism in August 2015, the shop offered parcel pick-ups to commuters unable to receive daytime deliveries.

Boss Tim Robinson aimed to end the hassle of packages being returned to depots, as well as giving a drop-off point to eBayers and Amazonians. As 4.5 million people travel through Surbiton station each year, he felt the location was a good bet. It had a changing room, so mail-order clothes could be tried on, and sent straight back if they didn't fit.

But in March, the shutters came down. Doddle planned 250 stores by the end of 2017, but there are now 74; many squeezed into shared premises. Two in Kingston are in a charity shop and a stationer's, while one in New Malden is in B&Q. Surbiton is Doddleless.

Anyone still waiting for a leopardskin onesie to arrive will have to collect it from an alternative local micro-branch.

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