One of Surbiton's green spaces is under threat. A funding crisis means the gates of Alexandra Millennium Green may be padlocked unless help is mobilised. The 12-acre park, with amphitheatre, observation mound and pond, is managed by a trust which relies on support from a dwindling number of friends.

It was formed in 1990 after an outcry over council plans to sell off Tolworth allotments. That was overturned, with the trust set up as a guardian of a space overlooked by that symbol of developers' ambition, Tolworth Tower.

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Meet the new boy

His name is James Berry, and he's just been elected MP for Surbiton, ousting Ed Davey, who has represented the area for the past 18 years. What are his priorities, is he pro-Europe and - most importantly - what does he make of us in Surbiton? All the answers on p6.

Open Morning

Whole School
Friday 12 June 9.30am - 11.30pm
Informal talk at 9.30am

Phlegmatic teachers are very welcome to attend. To reserve a place, please telephone 839298 or email info@claremont.surrey.sch.uk

Are you just dying for a coffee?

The notice on the door of the Clock tower Cafe may not have won any marketing awards, but it was certainly provocative. It simply read: Death Cafe.

Local Quakers used Kassem Al Naffah's Claremont Road cafe for an informal Saturday drop-in to chat about that usually taboo topic of our final moments on Earth.

Organiser Fred Ashmore said it let people "drink tea, eat cake and discuss death", adding: "It's a difficult subject for many people, but the idea is to provide a space where we can talk openly. People find it interesting and informative."

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Heroic baking

Entreprising bakers Gemma, India and Eloise sold cakes from an Ellerton Road front garden, raising a magnificent £731. The money goes to Help for Heroes, which India’s dad, film editor Larry Catford, supports on the Big Battlefield Bike Ride – a 350-mile challenge from Paris to Windsor. The Catfords’ oven glowed day and night in the build-up to the sale after eight-year-old India suggested baking to show support. Mum Jenny baked solidly for two days, and Larry was still churning out loaves at 4am. It’s the second year he has ridden for the charity, and he has been training by commuting to London by bike. Back Larry at www.bmycharity.com/LawrenceCatford1

food news

Surbiton’s farmers’ market helped raise £1,441 for the Nepal earthquake appeal, partly from the annual baking contest, this year judged by Mary Berrylands, right, who set about tasting entries with a reckless disregard for her figure. Gordon Bennett in Maple Road made donations from market-day breakfasts. Four of owner Richard Sealtiel’s staff are Nepalese. Farmers’ market chairman David Jacobson said: “We asked our community to dig deep, and the response has been amazing. Children’s competition winners were Lily Hinton, Anna and Imogen Banks and Minna Ellis, while Stephanie Morgan and Carmen Palmier won the amateur-baker category, and Bosco and the French Tarte (whose gold-topped creation is pictured left) were pronounced the top professionals. Next market: June 20, 9am-1pm.

Graffiti artistry

For some Mediterranean ingredients (never air-freighted, of course) to add sunshine to your dinner table. Graffiti aubergines are striking. Similar in shape to the more common black aubergine, they have bright mottled white and purple skin with firm white flesh. The meaty flesh stands up well to baking, and is lovely with tomatoes and basil in an Italian parmigiana.

Graffiti artistry

Fry off a crushed garlic clove in olive oil before adding 400g of chopped tomatoes to a shallow pan and simmering for 8 minutes. Follow with a tbsp of tomato purée. Cut the aubergine into 5mm slices, brush with olive oil and place on a hot griddle pan for 5 minutes, or until browned and cooked through, turning halfway. Once all slices are cooked, layer them in an ovenproof dish, spoon over the sauce and sprinkle with parmesan and basil leaves. Continue until the dish is full, top with parmesan and bake for 20 mins at 200C. Organic graffiti aubergines are available at From the Ground Up, Surbiton’s fortnightly fruit and veg service. Order at www.fguorganic.co.uk

Recipes for a Good Life by Annie Morris

Fab focaccia

You need: 500g/1lb 2oz strong white bread flour, 1 tsp salt, 1 tsp easy blend yeast, 1 tbsp olive oil, 350ml cold water, olive oil (for drizzling), cherry tomatoes, black olives, Maiton sea salt.

Place the flour, salt, yeast, olive oil and water into a large bowl. Gently stir with your hand or a wooden spoon to form a dough, then knead for 10 minutes. Return dough to the bowl, cover and leave to rise until doubled. Tip the dough out, and knead back into a round (this is called ‘knocking back’). Divide the dough into two loaf tins or a large baking tray, pushing to the corners. At this stage, the dough will be quite resistant. With a pastry brush, brush a little olive oil over the dough. Put the tray in a large bin liner, making a tent, and secure with a freezer clip. Leave to prove for a couple of hours depending on the ambient temperature (a conservatory is ideal). When it has risen again, and is level with the top of each tray, gently push into the dough your chosen topping. In my illustration I have used cherry tomatoes and black olives. Drizzle the leaves with olive oil and sprinkles with sea salt. This bread does not freeze well with toppings, but is OK if you leave them off. Preheat the oven to 200ºC, then bake for 20 minutes. When cooked, drizzle with a little more olive oil and serve hot or warm. It’s delicious with homemade tapenade and a glass of prosecco.

Graffiti artistry

Graffiti artistry

Mary, Mary, quite contrary

Mary, Mary, quite contrary

Waitrose Community Matters

Every month we give our time and money to local communities. We donate £1000 to be shared by three good causes that you choose.

Waitrose Surbiton
Supporting the community

Treating people fairly
The Waitrose way
The garage with va va voom

Six months ago it was a warehouse full of pallets. Today it’s a clean, cheerful, spacious IT tech garage.

Eight bays, showers, a recycling area, training rooms and a reception with decent coffee and organic tea give Community Motors va va voom.

Three friends, Justin Cooper, Mark Wield and Kevin Martin, got together to launch the not-for-profit community interest company as a way of giving something back to Surbiton.

Not only do they pledge “honest work at honest prices,” repairing, servicing, MOTing and running health checks on cars, but they will also be opening their huge rolling steel door at Unit 22 in the business park off Red Lion Road to youngsters from schools and colleges, to train as technicians.

“This is a proper social enterprise, we hope it covers its costs and fulfils a social purpose,” said general manager Justin Cooper, who has put his pension from IT business in the city into the business. “We want to be a very good independent garage.”

Focusng on the staff and student well-being is key. We’ve spent a lot of time setting this up and making sure we choose right from the start."

Justin said the company aimed to give 14 to 15-year-olds the opportunity to experience work in a garage, learning how to maintain a vehicle before going on to be apprentice technicians after leaving school.

“It’s real training on real cars,” he said. “It’s giving those who aren’t academically oriented the ability to develop a practical skill and a level 3 qualification on an accredited course.”

Four bays will teach up to 20 students on the company’s own cars, while the rest will be used by the garage’s qualified, seasoned technicians to repair and maintain customers’ vehicles.

“We aren’t about the hard sell,” said Justin. “We are about good prices and good service. We won’t pretend there’s a problem when there isn’t. Honesty and integrity are us.”

Justin brings management skills to the company while garage founders Mark and training manager Kevin

High street is healthy

Surbiton’s high street is one of the healthiest in the capital, reveals a study comparing 144 roads in London. In top place (in £100,000 to £300,000) is the healthiest street in Tolworth Broadway, North Cheam was 124th, Ewell Road 95th.

Surbiton has won top billing at 124th this year, better than last year’s top price. Tolworth Broadway, North Cheam was 124th, Ewell Road 95th.

The new development will contain a mix of one and two-bedroom flats, complete with underground car parking, plus 3,500 sq ft of shop space.

Towering crane dominates the skyline

The Ditton Road/Ewell Road junction is now overshadowed by a colossal red crane as 23 ‘stylish apartments’ rise on the site of the old police car pound.

The crane’s height rivals the nearby St Matthew’s church spire, which stands at 173ft.

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Breast Cancer garden, Chelsea

Sculpture at the Breakthrough gardens themselves. I was looking they were as decorative as the drives. In their summer finery, rain, the celebrities arrived in gold medal-winning show garden!

After one visit when I spent the gardening editor was a step up enough to park 500 London buses. It takes 800 people 33 days to build, with gardens costing on average £250,000 being built in 19 days and taken apart in just five.

Gazillions of plants are flown in from all over the world, with 500 exhibitors creating lavish displays in the Great Pavilion, which is big enough to park 500 London buses. Attending as The Good Life’s gardening editor was a step up from one visit when I spent the afternoon dusting rose petals in a gold medal-winning show garden!

Despite the cold, wind and rain, the celebrities arrived in droves. In their summer finery, they were as decorative as the gardens themselves. I was looking forward to mingling with royals, but guests, celebrities and most press were politely removed before the Queen’s 3.30pm arrival. ’There’s no pomp and ceremony,’ said one exhibitor who witnessed the Royal family struggling to get out of a minibus last year.

The show gardens did not disappoint. Dan Pearson was fantastic; no surprise he won best in show. Chelsea is the place to see inspirational gardens, cutting-edge design and emerging trends. Stylish, theatrical and exuberant, it’s the horticultural equivalent of London Fashion Week.

But how to translate it into your own back garden? More accessible are the gardens of quality, character and interest in the charity National Garden Scheme. Painshill Park and Claremont Gardens are in the scheme, as are many privately owned gardens. Entry fees are usually £5 or under, and there are plenty in Surbiton, especially over the summer.

It represents reality, and gardens are not endlessly primped and preened. I like to chat with the owners and buy cuttings for my own garden. Add a cup of tea and slice of homemade cake, and it is a good day out.

But if you love big shows, and missed Chelsea, Hampton Court is on our doorstep from June 30-July 5. Get your skates on. Tickets are selling fast…

VC hero honours Surbiton’s Doug

It’s not every day you meet a Victoria Cross holder (there are only six alive), so it was a special day when Johnson Beharry joined 100 at the war memorial to celebrate Surbiton’s bravest son, Doug Belcher.

Born in Surbiton on July 15 1889, educated at Tiffin, and a keen member of the St Mark’s choir, Doug’s heroics as a sergeant in the London Rifle Brigade in Belgium on May 13 1915 earned him the nation’s highest military honour. The Times, 11 days later, reported: ‘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.’

The St Mark’s curate and scoutmaster, the Rev JHS Hill Methodist church. She spoke of Doug as “one who knew these streets,” adding: “We too must stand up for freedom and justice.”

Another month, another accident at the junction of Windmill Lane and Effingham Road. This time a Chrysler and a BMW collided, with two female passengers treated for minor injuries. A garden wall was demolished. Had anyone been strolling by, it would have been curtains.

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The choristers were enthralled by Johnson Beharry’s account of his actions in Iraq in 2004, in which he saved the lives of 30 comrades, earning his VC, while the service led by the Rev Bonni-Belle Pickard of Surbiton Hill Methodist church.

Johnson Beharry joins Tiffin choir for VC VC hero honours Surbiton’s Doug

The St Mark’s curate and scoutmaster, the Rev JHS

Another lucky escape

Another month, another accident at the junction of Windmill Lane and Effingham Road. This time a Chrysler and a BMW collided, with two female passengers treated for minor injuries.

A garden wall was demolished. Had anyone been strolling by, it would have been curtains.

A bystander said: “The BMW ended up sandwiched between the wall and the lamppost. Thank goodness no one was waiting to cross.”

She said Windmill Lane had been resurfaced, but there were no road markings, so temporary warning signs were round the wrong way. In May last year, a van hit a K3 bus at the same spot. Again there was a resurfacing, and the no markings’ signs were facing the wrong way.

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news

Ahoy there, matey!

Arrrre! Surbitonians under fives are sporting hooks and eye patches for pirate-themed walks in aid of Barnardos. Last year's local 'big toddles' generated £1,000. It cemented a historic link between Barnardos and Surbiton, as 110 years ago Dr Thomas Barnardo died at his home in the town.

The man who dedicated his life to housing street children lived with wife Freda and two children at St Leonard's Lodge, on the site of the Embassy Court flats opposite Hart's Restaurant on Portsdown Road. Visit www.barnardos.org.uk/big-toddle for details on organizing half-mile walks. Nationally, they have raised £14 million.

He's a real card

Hollywood head boy Peter Harding may have eminently truthful looks, but he can confirm he’s 18 with a proof-of-age card being trialled in the borough. Peter, of Edgar Avenue, said: “I went to a pub quiz with my friends, and was able to use it. It’s a good idea.” The 400 council-issued cards will allow under-age customers to legitimately buy age-restricted items.

Remembering Ron Onions

Don’t Bring Lulu is an inspiring book which triangulates the memories of Surbitonian Sarah Onions (a past deputy head at Tiffin Girls), ruin Drums and dain Ron, launch editor of LBC in 1973. It gives their different takes on Ron’s career (he died in 2012) and the challenges, trials and triumphs of Sarah’s late sister Lulu, born without a thyroid gland. It’s a tale of the birth of commercial radio, an illuminating USA travelogue and a powerful account of a family raising a disabled daughter. It’s on sale at the Regency Bookshop.

Eileen Gray dismounts

Women’s cycling pioneer and long-time Surbiton resident Eileen Gray has died at 95. The Royal borough mayor in 1991, and an Olympic torch-bearer aged 92, she lived in Grand Avenue. She founded the Women’s Track Racing Association in 1949, three years after winning Britain’s first international women’s cycle tour race, and became national federation president and British Olympic Committee vice-chair.

As a Tory councillor from 1982-98, she was a free-thinking advocate of causes in the Guildhall chamber, particularly as they involved two wheels.

Langley’s is leading

Ewell Road eaterie Langley’s is leading the way when it comes to employing and supporting disabled staff. At a recent launch ceremony, the restaurant received a Making a Difference prize, proving that taking an active role in opening up employment to all is attracting recognition.

Pictureed below are Hannah Engals, Christy, Pooja and Miranda Hoogewerf from Langley’s, which opened with an ethos of supporting and engaging with the full community. Local special schools Dysart and St Philips struggle to find meaningful work experience to offer, so the restaurant stepped in to fill the gap.

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Glittering prizes

Bosco lounge has unveiled a new cocktail menu, from espresso martinis to wild berry juleps, with happy hours from 4-8pm. Accompany with caviar trays and online truffles.

The group fun is to be had with glitter balls, below: spectacular presentation cocktail drums sizzling four, and including gin 'n' maes, made with gin, absinthe and blackberry liqueur, and topped with rose petals.

The RVs stop off on Friday June 19, with RastaFou the next night, while on Thursdays juleps are £5 apiece.

Bake & brake class

Cyclist lover Andrew Manning, an Elstree Road resident for 25 years, collects, repairs and returns bikes... but is also spreading skills in DIY maintenance. A weekend-only ‘bike and brakes’ session at St Mark’s Church hall (right) proved popular, and is being closely pursued by a ‘gears and beers’ course aimed at men, and a two-hour hands-on mixed-gender ‘links and drinks’ class. “It’s giving people the knowledge to let them really enjoy their cycling,” he said, adding that there was a risk that basic bicycle maintenance was becoming a lost art. A full Cyclink bike service is £20, and is like a car MoT. “If you ride regularly, you should have it maintained as everything wears down,” he said.

The Good Life

This issue saw distribution rise to 9,000, all hand-delivered, so if you’re seeing it for the first time, welcome! It began in March 2012 with a 2,000 print run. If you like The Good Life, you can help by hugging our advertisers and telling them how much you value them. And if you can give up the odd hour to keep fit and deliver... we’ll hug you! Info on the back page.

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- All work quoted in advance
- Fully qualified and insured mechanic

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Ed insists he’ll be staying put

Ed Davey has no plans to leave the Surbiton river road where he and his family live.

Describing the experience of losing the seat he has held since 1997 as "devastating," he will now take time to think everything through before deciding whether or not to take on James Berry five days because of work commitments.

"Part of an MP’s job is to legislate, and I've got a head start in how law works," he said. "Most importantly, I've had a proper job rather than being a career politician; we saw where that left Ed Miliband."

"John Major kept calm and diplomatic force on television as I was growing up," he said. "Margaret Thatcher was a dominating presence on the screen, and now we’ve got Boris Johnson and theConstraints of work mean..."

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Surbiton artist Georgina Allan, left, has succeeded in getting a painting into the Royal Academy summer exhibition for the second time. Bridge near Glandwr is for sale, £480. “I’m delighted,” she said.}

**Seeking fresh blood**

Open auditions are being held on July 19 at 2pm and July 21 at 7pm to cast an in-house production of the 1927 Broadway version of Dracula at the cornerHOUSE on the last three nights of October. Director Colin Goodyer said chillingly: “It should be very atmospheric.”

**Numbers move adds up**

Number Works n’ Words, which inspires youngsters to learn to love maths and English, has moved round the corner to 152 Ewell Road – transforming a shop which had sat empty for four years into a vibrant new ground floor education centre.

The new learning base is opposite Sainsbury’s Local. Celia Osbourne, pictured assisting 14-year-old Jake with fractions, has nearly 25 years of teaching experience.

With better visibility and easy access for disabled children and parents with buggies, the new home has been given the thumbs-up by its young users, busy last week as exam season arrived.

**Art show judged success**

Surbiton Arts Group’s spring show in the library hall in Ewell Road was reckoned to be one of the society’s most successful as it marches towards its 70th year.

Works which caught the eye included Alan Williams’ Birthday Bouquet, Tony Walker’s Landscape with Poppies, Martine Daniels’ collage-and-oil Ben, and Elizabeth Morris’s Budapest cityscape collage.

Ann Emery’s Angry Water, a dramatic watercolour, conveyed real power, while Kinne Kelly’s Cat Among the Geraniums, Pamela Prothropo’s painting of Raven’s Ait and Pamela Joss’s pen and watercolour Suffolk Mill were all top quality.

**Elgar Avenue author Steve Harding has completed his trilogy of books about life on planet Pagos with the publication of Janus the Sandlings, finishing a tale which began in 2013 with Janus the Arrival, followed last year by Janus the Offspring. All are downloadable as e-books, with the original due out in hardback and paperback early next year. Steve is now working on the final edit of a ghost story, Driven to Revenge, covering his first draft in red ink to the amusement of fellow commuters heading to Waterloo, where he works as a quality manager. “The new book still contains plenty of twists and turns,” he promised his devoted readers.**
I have good bone structure, but that’s by the by. Perhaps, someone who writes for a local newspaper, or a local writer, picking ideas out of a hat.) A local writer, closing my eyes in pain at its grey monotony. As driver, pedestrian or bus passenger without a stain of visual tedium on our picturesque town centre planning? There has never been a more dull circular roundabout way of saying... And if you look at it, absorbing the non-spaceness and understanding this it should have something interesting on it to absorb the non-spaceness and understand this it should have something interesting on it to absorb the non-spaceness and understand this it should have something interesting on it to

Yawnning Island: Surbiton roundabout

The alternative is an elaborate Victorian fountain; the sort of aquatic splendour that gives a strong manoeuvre to visitors disembarking from the station, on the lines: We Surbitonians are patrons of 19th century architecture, but we also appreciate the natural beauty of anhome water; we are gentle folk with high standards and perhaps slightly aridish values, and we welcome you to our town. Or maybe it should be a single beam of light piercing the night sky, the sort seen from space, because about Surbiton joined the plethora of earthly structures that can be photographed by a satellite and then put on the BBC News website. Then there’s also always a giant square block on which Surbitonians can express the true colour of their town through the medium of graffiti, though this carries the risk of being: ‘Up yours, South West Towns. Other ideas include a windmill, a giant wooden clock from which a couple in lederhosen emerge every hour on the hour, waddle forward and bang a huge golden bell; or a fairground ride that shows you 2008 in the air. Or how about a marble sculpture of Marge and Jerry Leadbetter... which is clearly the best of the lot.

Whatever your preference, join me in rejecting bland aesthetically displeasing roundabouts, non-spaceness, and eventually the council’s roundabout Turfing-Up Squad (there must be one) will have to listen to our pleas for circular interactional beauty.

Becky Mayhew

It’s the ‘village feel’

Barry and Gina Rougham moved to Westfield Road from Clapham. What did newcomer Gina make of the place? ‘The secret is Surbiton,’ a work colleague advised in 2013. ‘Fast train to Waterloo and excellent pubs!’ I tried to find it on the tube map. Two years later, with the paint almost dry on our lovely Surbiton cottage, I’ve discovered so much more to this corner of London. Food! From bagel shops and macaronis at the farmers’ market to chargrilled fish at the sushi festival, from tied-to-the-curb YMCA (where are we, I can’t find ourse we off since we arrived.

The village feel extends to our road, where neighbours support each other and always show courtesy and patience.

A single, century-old cigarette card bearing a picture of Queen’s Promenade in Surbiton is on sale at £50 Full sets of Thames views, in good condition, can fetch £300 at auction. The card, priced in 1903 as part of a set of 25 by Taddy & Co, is the kind of thing that gets car booters – the pool noodle, the Soviet propaganda collectors – salivating. Taddy’s, it seems, and tobacco seller set up in London in 1760, printed what has become the holy grail of cigarette card collectors – a beautiful picture of, for instance, a streetlight, a wooden clock from which a couple in lederhosen emerge every hour on the hour, waddle forward and bang a huge golden bell; or a fairground ride that shows you 2008 in the air. Or how about a marble sculpture of Marge and Jerry Leadbetter... which is clearly the best of the lot.

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Becky Mayhew

Barry and Gina Rougham

The tale behind a card...

A cuppa, a biscuit, The Good Life... bliss

Book mark

Although Surbiton’s Regency Bookshop was pipped at the post for the Independent Bookshop of the Year, it can still be held high as a national finalist. Pat Freemont-Bayes, who plans to retire up to Park Lane to join the Bookseller Industry Awards, just had to settle for being the last bookshop in the whole of London. The accolade, top bookshop in the UK went to the Bookshop of the Decade, Friendly and reliable at home cat care

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Simple parking ‘soon’

The parade of shops in Alexandra Drive is one step closer to making parking easier for shoppers. More than 300 people joined last year calling on the council to make it simpler for people to park for a short time near their favourite businesses near the junction with Riseham Avenue, among them Berrylands Fish & Chips, Berrylands Tractor & Fleet Food, Berrylands Pet Food, Beauty on the Line, Berrylands Grasslands, Berrylands Pain & Gain, Berrylands Webster and Berrylands Nail Bar. But, you also another sought to that figure indeed, rate. Only 20 sets exist.

Kiosk lament

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