

Richard gets the hump in car park

Surbiton drama therapist Richard Williams briefly thought he was in Las Vegas when the car park payment machine fired out 85 coins in change.

"This machine does not accept £5 notes, it said," recounted the 36-year-old from Maple Road.

"So I put in a tenner, and it began pumping out 10p pieces. They were flying out from all sides – they weren't just coming from one place."

He completely filled all his pockets and had to walk lop-sidedly back to his car in The Bittoms car park,

Kingston, juggling car keys, ticket and currency.

"I wrote to the council because it was ridiculous," said Richard, but all I got was a reply saying 'Thank you for your message'! It gave me the right hump!"



Parade and stalls

The 2017 Surbiton Festival lasts for a week and culminates in a parade and street stalls in Victoria Road on Saturday September 30, when traffic is banished from the main shopping area of town from 10am-5pm. Other events include a sailing day, teddy bears' picnic and comedy nights. Visit www.surbitonfestival.co.uk and turn to p5

Going, going, gone



It's been a turbulent summer for Surbiton's retailers, with a shoal of established businesses closing.

After a century selling papers, the shutters fell on the station newsagent (left), trading first as W Glass (inset), then R Glass, then Taylor News.

The town's greatly valued hardware store in Brighton Road has gone too. Then the florist next to Waitrose – a shop which has sold blooms since the early 1970s – wilted and died.

The town's oldest travel agent, in St James' Road, is on a permanent holiday.

One of Surbiton's most dependable curry houses, the Guru Express delivery service in Brighton Road, has transported its last chicken tikka masala, while the pasty shop in the station forecourt has closed after nine months,

because it couldn't make a living at one of the busiest train stops in the capital. So what is going on? See p2

What chaos?



Surbiton station's predicted bedlam didn't happen during the Waterloo upgrade. Crowd control staff outnumbered passengers as many worked from home or took time off. This was the barrier at the 6pm 'peak' on the first day! See p2

Beware!

A word meant to deter visitors, and to imply that the greeting you'll receive is a set of canine fangs sunk into your rear end.

For the full picture, see p5



MP reveals uncertainty

Ed Davey was unsure if he'd be returned as Surbiton's MP right up to polling day.

"It was the only time I became confident we'd win," he admitted, looking back at the election which suddenly ended James Berry's spell as the town's representative.

Yet, despite being one of the Liberal Democrats' most experienced MPs, he decided not to throw

his hat into the ring when leader Tim Farron quit.

In his first full interview since the dramatic poll that left Theresa May without an overall majority, Ed chats about his successful election tactics, why he opted not to fight Vince Cable to lead the party, the surprise issue at the top of his agenda... and how he's on the brink of moving home. See p9



Two very special octogenarians... The one on the left is a 1937 Leyland Metz which helped Surbiton firefighter Simon Jakeman win silver at Hampton Court (full story p3). The one on the right is a well-maintained 1929 vintage model who won gold, in Oscar shape, and brought it along to Tolworth to let admirers lift it (full story on p11)

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Passing on the baton

Popular pirate-bandanaed loaf maestro Jack Farruggia has retired from the Hinchley Wood bakery he has run for 24 years. Il Forno, the bread supplier of choice for hundreds of Surbiton and Long Ditton shoppers, is now a branch of Cavan Bakery.

The heat of the ovens didn't dim during the handover, and the rebranded shop in the parade by the station is now number 11 in a family-owned group headquartered in Molesey.

Jack held an open-air retirement party on the green by the parade (he is pictured here with neighbour and pal Kate Shaw).

Starting as a baker's apprentice in his native Sicily at just seven, Jack was a master of his trade when, in his 20s, he moved to the UK, fulfilling the dream of having his own shop with Il Forno ('oven-baked food').

With partner Anne, he will now split his time between his beloved Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand; travelling (India tops his list); playing golf, and caddying for several pros; and doing up properties in Sicily with his brothers.

Cavan began in 1929, selling bread, savouries, cakes and sandwiches, which it also supplies to cafes and restaurants.



Learn to do the flip

Carine Duneau has been offering some Flipping Amazing work experience to local under 25s, teaching them to make crepes and gallettes which were recently sold at the Surbiton farmers' market. The street food business is a not-for-profit company aiming to introduce young people to foodie careers. They sign up at www.flippingamazing.co.uk for a six-month placement to learn how to run a business.

She sells seashells...

Something's fishy in St Mark's Hill. Pisces Fish Kitchen has become Seashore Fish Kitchen under new manager Cihan Goksal, pictured with his hard-working team. The fish 'n' chip lunch is £5.99 (including drink and peas), the tables and chairs are new, loos have been upgraded and they fry, lunchtimes and evenings, all week, with a Sunday opening experiment also planned.



Co-op is already popular


Already proving a busy convenience store, the new Co-op in Ellerton Road is living up to its pledge to support local good causes.

Last month's 1% donation to community projects from own-brand products is helping build a disabled loo for 1st Hook scouts, preserve woodland at Tolworth Court Farm and set up an art group for mental health patients.



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Shops facing 'hard times'

From p1

Does anything link the rash of shop closures in Surbiton town centre this summer, or is it purely coincidence?

One retailer told The Good Life: "It's just hard times. Surbiton has slowed this year; there's no footfall, and it's all very quiet. I couldn't believe it when I popped into Waitrose last Saturday morning – it was deserted. Staff said they hadn't known a day like it."

The station forecourt newsagent was opened by William Glass at the end of the First World War. It was run for 60 years by his son Bob, then his son Keith, then Keith's son-in-law. "I've worked here 42 years, but Sainsbury's has done us in," said the last in that illustrious line.

Supermarket competition played a part in Gardenia's closure at 17 Claremont Road, ending 40 years of floristry dating back to Elsa Brown's shop on the site in the 1970s.

As well as Surbiton, Gardenia closed two of its other shops.

Within hours, Waitrose was selling flowers at its entrance. Gardenia's Serena Perkins told The Good Life it had been a business decision, adding of Waitrose: "Every supermarket is going to affect [trade]."

The Co-op travel agency at 8 St James' Road, part of the Thomas Cook group, has closed, steering all inquiries to its Worcester Park branch.

After nine months, West Cornwall Pasty Co is gone. It opened in the station shoe repair shop in August 2016, but a £3.99 pasty/coffee deal couldn't persuade Surbitonians to buy. "We just weren't selling enough pasties," said a server.

Surbiton Hardware Store, the seven-day ironmongers at 23 Brighton Road, has gone, robbing the town of a comprehensive stock of electrical and DIY products, and at No57, Guru Express, the curry deliverer, has made its last moped run.

Estate agent Dexters is moving to the ground floor of the 1820s Queensborough House, opposite the station.

No chaos

From p1

Surbiton commuters experienced delays and disruption following the derailment of a passenger train early on Tuesday August 15.

Instead of smoothly leaving platform 11 at Waterloo and chugging towards Vauxhall at 5.40am, the points jammed, diverting the carriages into wagons full of ballast for the platform upgrade work.

That aside, it was a placid August with many travellers working from home or timing holidays to avoid potential misery.

South West Trains took on 800 blue-bibbed extra staff to manage pinch points, hand out water bottles and answer questions as part of a major charm offensive.

Platforms 1-10 at Waterloo are being lengthened to cope with 12-carriage trains.



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Lemonade Joe

One of the stars of African Vision Malawi's recent fundraising day was 12-year-old Joe Tassell of Malvern Road, whose home-made lemonade ("We used more than 30 lemons") was a great success. "We got them from Kingston market; you can add mint, sugar or more lemon," said Joe.

Fewer and fewer

The council employed 9,000 people 25 years ago, says leader Kevin Davis. Today it's 1,300, and in three years' time, 250. "The old days of looking through a council directory for 'dog poo' and then telephoning the dog poo officer have gone," he said.

Relaxed mission

Feel chilled? Take pics on the theme of 'relaxing' for a photo contest and you could lift the Les Kirkin trophy. Extra prizes for U18s, and smart phone pics. Email local.history@kingston.gov.uk by October 31.

Traders refocus

Surbiton's business community plans a relaunch to be more responsive to retailers' needs. It organises the festive lights, meet-ups and network events. Visit www.surbitonbusiness.com

Birds of a feather

Ashley Grove addresses Surbiton bird-watchers at the library hall, Ewell Road, on Tuesday Sept 19 at 7.30pm, on Trinidad & Tobago. Or join an outing on Sunday Sept 3 to the RSPB Dungeness Nature Reserve. Details from Chris Turner on 020 8390 9572.

A new chapter

CornerHOUSE storyteller John Cannon ended a 14-year stint as governor of King Athelstan primary, on the Surbiton/Kingston boundary, by opening the new school extension. "He's been a fantastic link with the community," said head Emily Newton.

A snappy visit

Surbiton's photo circle paid an after-hours visit to Snappy Snaps as it marks 15 years in Victoria Road. Finishes from the hi-tech printers were compared, and the subterranean studio toured. Next meeting: Wags n Tales, Brighton Road, September 13, 7.30pm. Bring along a memory stick.

Creepy-crawlies

The Hogsmill Nature Reserve open day, near Berrylands station, has a bug theme on Sunday Sept 24. A new path and hide have been completed, with more enhancements planned. The event marks World Rivers Day at the Thames Water-run centre.

Let's all step out

Your wrist gizmo and your phone app tell you that 10,000 steps a day is the way to health, happiness and long life. We can help! Join the Good Life distribution army, and stride out for a couple of hours, six times a year. We couldn't produce this paper without our gallant helpers. Go on, make the editor's day! Email thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com

Town meeting

Have your say about what goes on in Surbiton. The town's neighbourhood committee next meets on Tuesday September 12 at 7.30pm at Dysart School, 190 Ewell Road. Time is always set aside for the public to raise, or comment on, issues of concern.

Sixty years wed

Cheers! Grove Road couple John and Pat McCarthy celebrate their diamond anniversary. It was 60 years ago that Mr McCarthy wed Miss Sheehan at St Christopher's, Cheam, and they have been Surbiton residents since 1959.



Alarming scrawl

Graffiti, fondly recalled by a former worker in Tolworth Tower. Under a sign that said: This door is alarmed, someone had scrawled: But the windows are only slightly perturbed.



Garden joy for fireman Simon

Surbiton firefighter Simon Jakeman was pleased as Punch with the silver he won at Hampton Court with his garden for pollinators and well-being. "It's in the shape of a trowel," he said. "And it's red, blue, white and green for the different fire brigade watches. It's also very bee-friendly." Simon is reviving the fire service's annual inter-station gardening competition, featuring green roofs, raised beds and window boxes. "It's such an honour to be here," he said of his Hampton Court debut. The garden looked especially stunning viewed from the top of the ladder of a 1937 Leyland Metz. The chassis is British, the ladder German. It served in Soho in the Second World War so, ironically, the fires of the Blitz were put out using a Teutonic extending ladder. When fully raised, it measures 101ft.



Mr Darcy would approve

Costumed dancers from Mrs Bennet's ballroom in Surbiton were part of the entertainment at a Jane Austen day at Painshill Park, Cobham, to mark England's favourite novelist's 200th anniversary. Twenty-four dancers graced the amphitheatre with a display

of Regency dancing, then encouraged the audience to join in. A picnic, a stroll to the Crystal Grotto and boating on the lake completed the day and helped bring the 18th century landscape to life with readings, performances, archery and a military encampment.



Meanwhile, a tea dance by Mrs Bennet's group (open to all at St Mark's church hall) raised £160 for Marie Curie. Dancing resumes on September 13 at a mere £5 a time, including refreshments. Full details in ad on p5.



Surbiton engineering students Matthew Watkins and Josh Schofield were wined and dined at the House of Lords. The Kingston College students, both 19 and roommates in a King Charles Road flat, fly to Malaysia this month to race their Formula 1 model car in the world's largest science and technology competition. Before leaving, the six-strong engineering team, Tiro Racing, received a 'best learner' award from college principals, receiving the prize at a House of Lords ceremony.

How was their outing to the ermine and leather palace? "Fantastic," said Josh. "An incredible experience; and we enjoyed hearing the other nominees' stories." Lecturer Dean Shearing added: "I'm so proud of them. I knew this was a special group when they formed last September, but they've even taught me a thing or two along the way." ● From left: Toby Thomson, Josh Schofield, Alisha Read, George Lawlor, Matthew Watkins, Hugh Barker

SURBITON LIFE

by David Cox



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'Mr Surbiton' dies at 96

The man many saw as 'Mr Surbiton' was born in, and named after, Douglas Road, on August 29 1920. Douglas George Reynolds, who died on June 25, two months short of his 97th birthday, had deep roots in the town.

His father Harry, a First World War conscientious objector who served in the Royal Army Medical Corps on the front lines in Mesopotamia, was a prominent Surbiton Labour councillor.

The eldest of three brothers, Dougie was one of the first pupils at Surbiton County Grammar School (now Hollyfield School) on Surbiton Hill.

He became a wolf cub in 1st Tolworth at eight, beginning a lifelong bond with scouting, culminating in gaining the movement's medal of merit in 1988.

On his 12th birthday, his dad gave him a choice: a new watch, or a flight from Croydon aerodrome. He chose the latter.

In the Second World War he joined the RAF Regiment as a ground-based electrician servicing Dakotas; wonky eyesight ending thoughts of being a pilot. While in Italy, he joined a penpal

scheme for lonely troops. Doris Eldridge answered an ad in the Evening News. After a courtship conducted by mail, they met in 1946 and married in 1947. She later worked at Surbiton Hospital casualty department. The pair often cycled round the area on a tandem.

They set up home at 30 Douglas Road, down a bit from 171, where Dougie was born. In 2007, they celebrated their diamond anniversary.

He failed to be elected for Labour in Portsmouth Langstone in 1959 where, to his annoyance, the sitting Tory MP increased his

majority in a two-horse race.

But Dougie was perhaps better suited to local politics, and was a Labour councillor on Surbiton and (after amalgamation) Kingston councils, serving on and off from 1950-1992. From 1955-1959 Surbiton had father-and-son councillors in the town hall.

Douglas had an infectious high-pitched laugh, like an old sewing machine starting up. He loved trains; his first job was as a railway bookings clerk, and his working life was on the railways.



He was a magistrate on Kingston bench for 30 years. On one occasion in the 1970s, held up in a town centre jam, he arrived late, in a filthy temper. He stormed into court No1 in the middle of a case, ordered a colleague to vacate the chairman's seat, was told that the man in the dock had admitted stealing £8 worth of scrap metal... and promptly jailed the bewildered defendant for a fortnight!

When Douglas retired in 1980, he became caretaker of Ellerton Hall, Ellerton Road – a popular public hall from 1959-94 as well as the local Labour HQ.

During his long town hall service, he and Doris were deputy mayor and mayoress (1968-69) and became the town's first Labour mayor and mayoress in 1974-75.

As the borough's first couple, they attended a garden party at Buckingham Palace. Prince Philip came up to admire their regalia. 'What does the R stand for?' he asked Doris, pointing to the RBK badge. 'Royal, of course,' she snapped back. 'Ask a silly question,' said Philip, walking away chuckling.

Doris, who was nine months older than Dougie, died in June 2011. Douglas was made an MBE in 2012, receiving the honour from The Queen at Windsor.

The list of groups to which he belonged reads like a directory. He was active in the Friends of Richmond Park (giving 485 talks and leading 250 walks, with a tree planted in his honour), Rotary, Probud, Surbiton Citizens' Advice Bureau, Kingston Pensioners' Forum and Surbiton Club for the Blind.

More than 150 attended a memorial service at All Saints', Kingston, which began with the playing of the Red Flag.

"He could be obstinate," admitted lifelong pal Keith Waller in one of the affectionate tributes. The congregation included former councillors of all political persuasions, and the MP Ed Davey.

Tim Harrison

NOTABLE SURBITONIANS

Douglas Reynolds



This negative equity

When 10,000 glass negatives were found in a shop basement, it sparked a conservation, restoration and research project involving 40 volunteers.

Surbiton & District Historical Society heard chapter and verse when Sutton borough archivist Kath Shawcross and volunteer Kevin McDonnell told the tale, at Surbiton library hall, of the cellar find in Sutton High Street. Pioneer snapper David Knights-Whittome (who struck whimsical poses such as this one up a stepladder) opened his shop in 1904, and took umpteen pictures of local soldiers heading to the front in the First World War.

Volunteers have taken up the sleuthing challenge to track down the names on the envelopes which contained the glass plates.

Knights-Whittome was a gifted photographer, using light to excellent effect and experimenting with backdrops. He gave up camerawork in 1918 and went into the rag trade. He died in 1943.

● The society next meets on Sept 5 at 7.30pm at the library hall, Ewell Road, Mel Harrison's talk: Shakespeare Debunked: What We Don't Know.



Bus stop pledge

Thousands of pounds was spent raising the kerbs in Effingham Road to make life easier for K3 passengers... only for the bus stops to end up as parking guide posts for motorists.

Without red 'clearway' zones, buses are forced to stop in the middle of the road, blocking traffic and making it impossible for anyone with mobility issues to get on and off.

Eight months on, Long Ditton MP Dominic Raab has intervened, winning a county council pledge to finish the job after repeated efforts by councillors were met with stony indifference.

"It is heartbreaking to see disabled people struggle to board buses because they can't get to the raised kerb," said one frustrated resident.

Elmbridge Council chief executive Robert Moran told the MP: "The county council confirms it plans to install bus stop clearway markings."

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Halt! Visitor beware!

Surbitonians guard their homes with a mixture of menace and humour, as we've discovered when wandering the streets, distributing The Good Life. Here are a few examples, ranging from the surreal to the

downright threatening. Some make you laugh, some make you sigh with relief when you reach the relative safety of the pavement again. Some make you stare (Beware of the Pigeon, left, in Parkside



Crescent, Berrylands, is a personal favourite), others – particularly photographs of hungry dogs staring from behind frosted glass – leave you feeling distinctly uncomfortable. Which is presumably the aim.

All illustrate the quirky pleasure of living in the Queen of the Suburbs, where mischievous fun and irony seem to outweigh any desire to actually terrify those beating a path to the front door.

Whether it's a claim that the dog is trained in martial arts, or an assertion that the cat has homicidal leanings, the town's signs are worthy of celebration. **Tim Harrison**



Boys v girls tug-of-war is festival hit

More than 3,000 people spent a sun-drenched afternoon at the Berrylands Festival, proving last year's inaugural event was no flash in the pan. Staged just off Elmbridge Avenue, on common land once occupied by the lagoon, it had bouncy castles, a giant dart board, dance displays and dozens of stalls. The high point was the community tug-of-war; a happy hark back to home-grown, low-tech entertainment of yesteryear. The girls beat the boys in the U8s tug, and also triumphed in the U14s in a best-of-three pulls. Dads out-tugged the mums... despite a burly police officer joining the mums' team to add extra ballast. Children beat parents in the final. All afternoon there was a 40-strong queue for ice creams, while food stalls including barbecue, Syrian and Nigerian, did well. Plant sales, crazy golf and a coconut shy were busy, while Elliot Newton of the Environment Trust helped youngsters make wildlife-supporting badges. Ballerinas from the Zara Handley school put on several displays. Stears the greengrocer did a brisk trade, especially

in fruit, while firefighters supervised children as they attempted to hose down the giant willow tree. A petition was signed, urging Kingston Council to speed up renewal of the lease on the Berrylands scout HQ, base for one of the most active units for miles. The festival raised money for building improvements.

Surbiton Festival times

The 2017 Surbiton Festival runs from Saturday Sept 23-Saturday Sept 30. Events: **23rd:** Sailing and paddleboarding, 11am-4.30pm, Thames Sailing Club. **25th:** Art show, St Mark's church. **25th:** Comedy, Trevor Lock, Vet4Life, Brighton Road, 7pm. **28th:** Magic & Comedy, Danny Buckler, cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, 7pm. **30th:** Parade and stalls, Surbiton town centre, 10am-5pm. **30th:** Dance music at Claremont Gardens, 1-5pm. **30th:** Teddy bears' picnic, Claremont Gardens. **30th:** Rock music, St Andrew's Square, 1-5pm. **30th:** Jazz, Station forecourt, 1-5pm. See www.surbitonfestival.co.uk



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Abundance Kingston is harvesting unwanted local fruit, and will pick and distribute to jam-makers and shelters. "We aim to reduce the high level of food waste at this time of year, sharing the harvest with residents and cutting our carbon footprint by avoiding the need for long-distance refrigerated transport to bring similar food from miles away," explained Toni Izard. Need help harvesting fruit and veg, or are you able to offer an hour or two in the fresh air as a volunteer picker? Alternatively, could you make use of a box of fruit? Google 'Abundance Kingston' to learn more, or call Toni on 07749 633973.



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Darren Roberts is on a mission to persuade men to pay attention to the signs of bladder cancer

Could I have a wee word?

A year ago, Darren Roberts cycled to work from his Grove Road home. Going for a wee on arriving at the office, he spotted a trace of blood in his urine. A colleague insisted he get it checked. At hospital, a Penelope Cruz lookalike asked: “Do you mind if I take a look behind?”

Darren, 49, quipped: “Not at all, but shouldn’t you be buying me dinner first?” It was the last time he joked about it. Tests established he had bladder cancer. Later, a tumour was found on a kidney.

The non-smoker, who ironically has run four London marathons for cancer charities, was in turmoil. “It’s like a circus; you get swept up in it all,” he said. He came home and took his dog Betsy for a walk. “I did all my crying while walking Betsy; she doesn’t judge or comment.”

In November, Darren had a kidney removed. Now he’s on a mission to persuade men to pay attention to signs. “Women go to the doctor, men look for reasons... like gallstones, or something. Men don’t like to talk about things that involve this area, and often leave it too late.”

Darren, a Sky Sports transmission controller who has lived in Surbiton for 12 years, returned to work after four months, and now has three-monthly checks. In November he runs the New York marathon.

“I’m nearly 50, and at hospital they asked me: ‘Do you take ketamine?’” said Darren, with disbelief. “Apparently it’s a major cause.”

If spotted early, treatment is relatively straightforward. “It says ‘Hi’ two or three times before it becomes a problem,” said Darren. “So check your pee. If something’s different, demand a scan. I did, and it saved my life. You have two lives; the second begins the day you realise you only have one.”

Worldwide, nearly 200,000 people a year die of bladder cancer; the seventh most common cancer in the UK.

TH

True goddess

Screen goddess is a term rather casually bandied about, but when it comes to Margaret Lockwood, it is as accurate as an atomic clock. The actress, who lived the last three decades of her life in Kingston (where, in 2015, a blue plaque was unveiled) is celebrated in a biography, *Queen of the Silver Screen*.

Written by Lyndsy Spence, it is a crisp, non-flannelly, non-judgemental, honest yet sympathetic portrait of a remarkable woman who happened to be my next-door neighbour in Upper Park Road right through my childhood and teenage years.

She was good to my parents (giving them tickets to her West End shows, with my late mother once nursing her stage wig on a wooden head in her lap on the drive home), and they, in turn, kept a close neighbourly eye on her in her fading years.

Margaret died in 1990, a month short of her 74th birthday. And one of her earliest stage roles, as a child actor, was... in *Surbiton*.

Margaret left conventional school at 14, determined to pursue a career performing, and with the blessing of her devoted mother (from whom she would later become estranged following a tug-of-love court case over custody of daughter Julia).

She learnt dance at stage school, at an early incarnation of today’s Arts Ed training colleges, performed for Queen Mary and the Prince of Wales at Westminster Hall, and appeared in cabarets, smoking concerts and at masonic ladies’ evenings, including one at Glenmore House in The Crescent, Surbiton, 15 years after the Georgian building



became the local centre for freemasonry in the town. She gained stardom in films such as *The Wicked Lady*, *The Man in Grey* and *The Lady Vanishes*, and was Britain’s No1 box office star during the Second World War, and a three-times winner of the Daily Mail film award.

● Margaret Lockwood, *Queen of the Silver Screen*, is published by Fantom at 19.99.

Tim Harrison

Still my heart, I’ve seen a train!

Anyone whose heart has ever quickened at the sight of a train sweeping down the tracks will be interested in a series of 20 evening talks on railway topics.

The first of the Wednesday nighters is at Ewell Road’s library hall on Sept 20 at 7pm, when lecturer Dick Crane looks back to Britain’s railways in 1967.

There’s a full programme (www.talkingoftrains.co.uk) via the Surbiton branch of the Workers’ Educational Association. The first meeting is free, after which there is a

small charge to cover costs.

“It’s a mix of current and historical topics, with guest speakers who are often in senior positions in the rail industry,” said David Blackmore. “Most presentations include slides or PowerPoint, and there is usually a question and answer session at the end.”

“Talks appeal to those who were train spotters in their youth, but also those who are daily rail commuters, men and women, who like to keep up-to-date with goings on in the rail industry.”

JLP junkies hear talk

Waitrose won’t go bust handing out free coffees; it’s more likely to go bust with the cost of the cups and lids!

That was one intriguing line from store historian Gavin Henderson, addressing John Lewis junkies at the historical society (www.surbitonhistoricalsociety.wordpress.com).

John Lewis opened in Oxford Street in 1864, taking 16s 4d (81p) on the first day. The first Waitrose appeared in 1908, formed from Acton shop Waite, Rose and Taylor. Surbiton’s was in the first 10 to open, in Ewell Road in 1919, long before the Claremont Road supermarket. There are now 352 Waitroses. The JLP logo is nicknamed ‘the tyre tracks’ in head office.



103 not out!

Royal Star & Garter resident Vi Butler turned 103 in August, and celebrated with a party. Vi wed Ben (right) in 1938. It was a tragically short marriage, though it produced sons Colin and Bruce. Ben took part in the D-Day landings, and was killed in Normandy in



June 1944. Vi worked at Marks & Sparks, and still keeps up with former colleagues at Surbiton. She had a birthday message from Dame Vera Lynn. Colin attributed his mother’s health to “care she gets at the Star & Garter”.

Printed... or digital?

We’re sometimes asked why we print the Good Life in this digital era.

By reading this, you’re proving the latest UK statistics right. Readers get 88.5% of news from newspapers, compared to 11.5% online.

The figures were compiled by British National Readership Survey, Audit Bureau of Circulation & comScore.

The most popular online newspaper is The Mail online, where an average two minutes a day is spent reading, compared to 43 minutes for the print version.

For The Guardian the comparison is 0.68 minutes compared to 39 minutes for print, while the Times and Telegraph are each 0.29 minutes online, and 47 minutes and 53 minutes respectively in print.

“Looking at newspaper consumption through the lens of reading time reveals a very different picture from that drawn by traditional measures such as print readership and online visitor numbers,” said report compiler Prof Neil Thurman. “Online visitor numbers disguise the relatively shallow engagement they inspire.”

What do you reckon? Share your thoughts.



Karen’s rowing challenge

Karen Levene’s arms were nearly coming out of their sockets... but she managed the 8.5-mile Meridian Pull row from Westminster to Greenwich.

The consultant, who grew up in Surbiton and moved back to Lovelace Road, three years ago, was one of 48 staff from UK Power

Networks – the people who keep London’s lights on – who took part, raising £15,830 for vulnerable children via the Ahoy Centre charity.

“We were aching, but had a great time and managed to row in rhythm together by the end of it,” said a breathless Karen.

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Janice Cripps on the Hampton Court Flower Show

Come on, really challenge me!

Every year, Hampton Court's flower show is bigger and bolder, but I've started to have doubts about whether it gets better. Last year, I felt there was a lack of imagination and innovative design, and this year I wondered: 'Where on earth are the gardens?'

The historic setting remains impressive, especially arriving by boat, and there isn't the crush of Chelsea, where you're squeezed like toothpaste to get a look at a show garden.

Stalls brim with every conceivable thing you could wish to buy, not just garden products. And if you need to refuel, you can drop by one of many eateries, picnic by the Long Water (taking in the splendid views) or enjoy fine dining at a stylish restaurant.

It's a brilliant day out, but I'm disappointed that the flower show is more like a county show with its cookery classes, scarecrow competitions and theatre performances, and less to do with excellence in landscaping and design. I expect Hampton Court to offer more than a mega shopping experience – I expect new ideas and inspiration!

The conceptual gardens are imaginative and challenge ideas on planting and design, but they're not so easy to relate to. The gold award-winning Miracle/Elements of Life garden featured a 2.5m glass tank with garden on top. The viewer was asked to explore the soil composition and the root system of plants and be mindful of our environment and the living/giving elements of the soil. It was a tremendous feat of technical engineering, and its message was important, but for many it was an installation and not a garden.

Unfortunately, both Chelsea and Hampton Court have been affected by Brexit uncertainty. Companies have scaled back sponsorship, which meant fewer show gardens. At anything up to £500,000 for one of the larger gardens, it is hardly surprising.

But having less to spend doesn't have to mean boring gardens. Andy Sturgeon's Watch This Space garden was, for me, the star of the show. He recycled materials and iconic pieces from past Chelseas, and put them into one garden.

Borne of concern for the



environment, sustainability, and, no doubt, lack of budget, he relied on others' goodwill to realise his vision. Contractors and designers gave their services and lent elements, and the build was carried out to a high standard by volunteers.

The garden was stuffed with super-sized features; sculpted bronze fins, ionic columns, statement rocks and benches.



Janice tests a boulder in Andy Sturgeon's Watch This Space garden (top)... the star of the show

But it was cleverly compartmentalised using tall hornbeam hedges, so it didn't feel like overload.

While you would never have so many features in a 'normal' garden, it provided a wealth of ideas:

- The importance of creating a journey
- Making views and attractive spaces
- Choosing interesting and unusual plant combinations.

This garden, at least, provided inspiration to visitors and enthusiastic gardeners.

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

Our 'Banksy' outfoxes the vandals



An admired graffiti art picture of an urban fox was destroyed when Victoria rec's equipment store was torched, but the vulpine pin-up is back.

Surbiton's 'Banksy', a camera-shy artist called Tom ("That's it, just Tom"), has created the new work on the opposite end of the pavilion from the Tarte in the Park cafe. "Yeah, the fox is back," he told the Good Life. "Loads of people asked for it."

Foxes are a speciality, but he's also proud of his red-eyed tree frog on the garage doors of The Lamb, Brighton Road.

- Tom finishes the new mural

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Wild about Surbiton, by Elliot Newton

Tolworth's medieval manor

When most people think of Tolworth, they think of Tolworth Tower. Few think about our moated manor.

This medieval site dates back to 1086, and was one of the earliest settlements in the area. It stood on today's Tolworth Court Farm. Nestled off Old Kingston Road, it is now a wildlife haven.

Though only 2.7 hectares, it hosts a mosaic of habitats including an area speckled with yellow meadow ant hills and a pond where the moat would have been; now home to a variety of species from amphibians to damselflies.

There is also a woodland with oaks, yew and hawthorn providing habitats for



Photo by Maria Sprostranova

bats, badgers and birds.

The site has a barn, which this summer had a kestrel nest. Three chicks fledged, which I'm sure will worry the field voles that scamper through the long grass.

In July, we welcomed 100 people to wildlife walks focusing on species including small mammals, birds, dragonflies and the slow worms on the adjacent Kingston University sports

ground. We later tucked in to a veggie barbecue.

It was a fantastic day, with lots of excited children discovering the incredible species which can be found close to home.

To find out more about this and other sites, please get in touch. We hope to enhance its value for wildlife in the future, and we really want to get as many local people involved as possible.

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

Sacha follows Packham

A Surbiton High student has won a science award for a project advancing the treatment of horse injuries.

Sacha Eyles-Owen, 17, received the Prince Philip and Marsh Prize Award from the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), recognising innovative animal biology research among under 19s.

Past winners include Springwatch's Chris Packham, commended in the 1970s for a study of kestrels.

Sacha impressed judges with her subject knowledge and being able to talk at length about her paper 'Dietary turmeric reduces inflammation and improves mood and mobility in horses with fetlock joint'.

She received the prize from ZSL president Sir John Beddington, who said: "Sacha's project demonstrated a true advancement in scientific understanding – it was evaluated by ZSL's own scientists to be of an incredibly high standard and she is a very deserving recipient of this medal."

Sacha herself said she was really proud, adding: "It was fantastic to have the chance to receive the prize in person at London Zoo."



Ideas aplenty for allotment project

More than 40 people turned up to brainstorm ideas for a collective approach to reviving an area of allotment land off King Charles Road, beside Travis Perkins builders' yard.

Crunching vegan snacks, they heard of plans to crowd-fund restoration of the land's shed, with a new roof and electrics opening up the possibility of a community project which could include aquaponics... simultaneously rearing fish and plants, with the plants cleaning the water. "When the fish reach a certain size, you have a barbecue," explained Keith McMahon who, with the Community Brain's Robin Hutchinson, was keen to garner suggestions from a wide-ranging group of enthusiasts.

Raised beds, perhaps a greenhouse; the idea is to use the land as a test bed for further projects to 'green' the Tolworth area at a time when it is poised for a huge influx of new residents – few of whom will have gardens to cultivate veg or fruit.

"We hope we can inspire people to feel proud of where we live," said Robin. The plan is also to look into the history of allotments from the wartime dig for victory campaign.



Kingston Uni students want to use Tolworth as a 'dreamscape', while the plan is to also work with schools, including the creation of a wartime allotment with Our Lady Immaculate pupils; planting, harvesting then having a community meal.

The brainstorming session produced some intriguing suggestions. How about a newsletter, printed on seed-infused paper, to plant after reading?

Or subterranean sheds, with vegetable plots on green roofs?

And why don't we replace ornamental street trees with fruit trees?

Or convert the underused Tolworth Broadway railway sleeper benches into raised communal veg beds?



- The delicate beauty of dragonfly chrysalises emerging, pictured by Brian Shindler at the Kingston Permaculture Reserve in Knollmead, Tolworth (kpr2016.wordpress.com)

Ed Davey tells Tim Harrison how it feels to be Surbiton MP again

It was the day before the election, while canvassing commuters, that Ed Davey finally allowed himself to believe he could become the town's MP again. "I was outside Surbiton station and I've never had such a warm reception," he recalls, looking back on Theresa May's snap summer poll, and its aftermath.

"The day before voting was the only time I became confident we'd win; I really felt then that we were in with a shout," he said.

Ed turned 2015's 2,834-vote defeat to Conservative James Berry into a 4,124 Lib Dem majority ("More comfortable than the 56 votes when I was first elected"), and says he's chuffed to be back.

Kicking his shoes off in his constituency office in Berrylands, he points out – with a broad grin – that his personal general election 'score' now stands at 5-1, stretching back to 1997 and that wafer-thin success over then local MP Dick Tracey.

"I'd been predicting a snap election since Theresa May became PM," says Ed. "But I gave up predicting it in January. Having got in the mindset that there wasn't going to be an election, I saw the Tories' 48% rating at Easter, and thought she might be tempted."

Initially, the 51-year-old had serious doubts. "At the beginning, the Tories were talking about a 150 to 200-seat majority, but you go into elections to win," he says. "We went crazy and spent, spent, spent on leaflets and campaigning before the official limit began."

"My confidence changed during the campaign; we got more confident as we talked to voters. Our supporters were more up for it than they were in 2015, when we were coming out of coalition."

Tactical voting

Ed believes that he benefited more from tactical Labour voting this time around. "The other thing was a massive increase in membership; there were 273 members locally when I first got elected, but we have 960 now – half of whom joined after 2015," he says. "A lot of people were upset in 2015 at losing me, if I'm being modest! People were annoyed there was no Liberal voice."

With local Conservatives focusing their energies on specific target areas, the Lib Dems went for a blanket approach.

"We fought everywhere in the borough, because every vote matters," he says, adding that gaffes by Theresa May and her team had given his, and other opponents' campaigns, momentum.

"Brexit counted for us in this area, however the election was not about Brexit; the electorate was far more bothered about other issues," he says. "The message is to listen to voters. Candidates need to be far more humble. Politics is in an odd place at the moment. It is more volatile these days – you can't believe the opinion polls any more, and things happen late in campaigns."

He is again immersed in constituency work. "It's great to be back; it feels like home, and I've had an incredibly warm welcome."

Ed has fought to hang on to his office opposite Brave New World (formerly the Bun Shop), which at one time was a tiny specialised factory making gold discs for the record industry!

"I wanted a permanent base, and I raised £30,000, including my own savings, to keep it going," he says, adding that the target is to pay off the mortgage in 2018. Two surgeries run there each week.

His opponent James Berry – MP for two years – has already closed his rented base, just along from the Royal Oak in Ewell Road.

Ed and wife Emily are planning a move away from the river road they've called home for so long – principally to address the caring needs of son John, whose disabilities require round-the-clock help.

In 2008, the family came a whisker away from a move to Douglas Road, Tolworth, – until their purchasers pulled out. Now they are on the lookout for a house with appropriate ground-floor access.

"The plan is to stay in Surbiton, where we've been for 22 years. I'm definitely staying in the constituency," says Ed. "Surbiton is where we are; our social life, our church... and Surbiton station is an amazing place to be close to."

Worse for staff

As he lost the Surbiton seat as recently as 2015, does he, I wonder, have sympathy for James Berry? "Politicians of all parties try to do their best, and when you lose it can be upsetting," he says. "In 2015, I didn't take it personally. In many ways it's worse for the staff than for the MP; we get six months' redundancy. James has always been polite and courteous; he's a nice person."

When Ed lost in 2015, he was barred – as a former minister – from working for three months.

After that, as well as gaining a knighthood, he went back to his roots in economics, and set up a consultancy, each client having to be cleared by Acoba, the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments, which checks on potential conflicts of interest.

He has done charity work, but now he is back in parliament he has resigned from most posts. The three clients he still has involve less than two days a month, and include chairing Mongoose Energy, a community renewable energy specialist.

Shares he holds are held in trust by a foundation to provide lifelong 24/7 care for son John. "I earn no money from businesses; it all goes into the foundation," says Ed.

Now Lib Dem home affairs spokesman, Ed has had chances to stand as party leader – most recently against Vince Cable. Why didn't he?

"I was very tempted but, after hard reflection, concluded my family really need me around as much as possible in the next 2 or 3 years – so I resisted!"

The big issues facing him as MP? Unexpectedly, crime is high on the list in this relatively safe borough.

"What surprised me in my casework is the effect of local police cuts," he says. "We've lost 10 per cent of PCs; it's having a massive effect."

He also worries about the scale of building in Tolworth. "We need housing – there's no dispute about that," he says. "The question is, how much and what type? My view is that we need 400 family homes on the Toby Jug site [rather than 900 flats, some in new tower blocks]."

Other topics filling his mailbox are education and health, including the conundrum of what happens to EU staff at Kingston Hospital, post-Brexit.

Good to be back!



Mr & Mrs are fashionable

Husband-and-wife fashion designers from Beresford Avenue did a brisk trade at the Hampton Court flower show. Jason Yap, 41, who has lived in Surbiton for 32 years (he went to Grand Avenue primary), ran one stand, while his wife ran another... 50 yards away!

She sold blouses, cardigans, ponchos and hand-stitched silk ranges. But why two stands? "Before we met, many moons ago, we had our own businesses; I go for more floaty, drapery clothing, Ella goes for more fitted clothing," said Jason.

Meet the rock stars of tomorrow



● They've got talent, they've got belief, they've got attitude! The Lamb pub in Brighton Road hosted Kids Rock in August, and the stars of tomorrow poured in. Full story in next issue.

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Becky Mayhew strolls round her favourite haunts



Boots is made for walking

It occurred to me today that I have been into Boots six days in a row. I can't help it; my Boots radar takes me there on autopilot. I always find something to buy, be it a tedious item like hayfever tablets, or a thrilling purchase such as a new flannel.

I don't mean any old Boots, I mean our very own Boots in Victoria Road. No bones about it, it's one of my favourite shops in town. There's something charming about the fact it looks the same as it did in 1989 when I'd stand snottily behind my mum as she bought candles for my Wright's vaporiser.

So I've been thinking about my favourite Surbiton shops, and right up there at the top of 'supermarkets' is M&S. Not only is it statistically the coldest place on Earth, which is handy in a heatwave or a hot flush, but the surface of the floor is mercifully horizontal, unlike Sainsbury's, which will snatch your child-laden trolley in an instant if you let go at the top of the centre aisle.

For general stuff, nowhere beats Surbiton Homewares. I'm deeply saddened that the larger Surbiton Hardware Store is no longer in Brighton Road, because there was nothing it didn't sell. I had been propping open my bedroom door with a book for nearly three

years, and on deciding to do the grown-up thing and buy a doorstop, I found Surbiton Hardware had seven types. I didn't think humanity had invented so many!

As for coffee, I'm with Nero's all the way; its staff members are ludicrously efficient. I shall proudly state that due to childhood memories McDonald's is still my No1 fast food stop, but there's a lot to be said for chips from Kebabs & Southern Fried Chicken by the station (tip from the top, there).

It feels uncharitable to pick my favourite charity shop, but Fircroft Trust in St Andrew's Road is definitely it; the Tardis of forgotten wonders, with a veritable cavern of books, clothes and other stuff out the back.

After an hour perusing Surbiton outlets, it's sensible to go for a drink, and I'm intensely biased towards the Black Lion. Not only was it the first pub I drank in, but it has been my local for well over a decade, so it would be heinous not to choose it. But in second place, let's not forget the Waggon and Horses. The poor old Waggon always gets forgotten, due to its strenuous distance from all the other pubs, but it really is a delight.

Oddly, I don't have a favourite estate agent.

Need a car? Madeleine Jones issues a challenge



Your motor just can't compete

It might seem a controversial time to mention it, with half of Surbiton looking as if it's been invaded by giant moles intent on thwarting attempts to get from A to B, and South West Trains practically failing to go in any compass direction at all, but the town's transport links are second to none.

I feel cars can't compete; Surbiton renders them obsolete. Perhaps the reason the disruption to our railway timetable, due to platform work at Waterloo, has us frozen like a rabbit in the headlights is because buses, trains and taxis usually operate with reasonable efficiency.

We don't realise what we have until it's gone: at least four trains an hour straight to London and buses every few minutes – in stark contrast to my cousins in a village in the depths of Sussex. For them, it's two miles to the station without pavements or street lamps, down twisting lanes with no apparent speed limit, and a car park so small it couldn't

house Tom and Barbara's livestock. No buses – not not even two at once – and cycle lanes that only exist in the imagination. And my aunt? Fulfilling her nightmare as an unpaid chauffeur.

But here, in this public transport paradise, my parents gave up our car some years ago, benefiting from the K2 route planners planting a stop literally across the road from our house.

We've found it possible to access nearly everywhere on foot, by bus, train or bike, finding adventure as much in the journey as in the destination.

Hopefully this doesn't make us sound too sad. I realise that we live within one and a half miles of everything we do.

Some people ask if I mind not having a car. Perhaps it has something to do with getting a new bike out of the arrangement, but I honestly don't think I do. I take the lack of car in my stride, pounding the pavements when I need to... not because I was a particularly patient or understanding child, but because distances between things like school, station and library were so small they never seemed to matter.

Now it seems almost ridiculous that we ever felt the need to drive.

Put that ruddy light out!

A remarkable glimpse into Surbiton's wartime past has surfaced after 70 years – a watercolour of an air raid wardens' post.

This brick-and-breezeblock bunker stood on the triangle of land where Langley Avenue, Ashcombe Avenue and

Southborough Road meet.

The picture was painted in the summer of 1943 by Tom Cross of 2 Glenbuck Road, who was one of the wardens stationed at the post.

It is a rarity because few images survive of active, operational ARP (Air Raid Precautions) posts; their locations were official

secrets in wartime in case they became bombing targets.

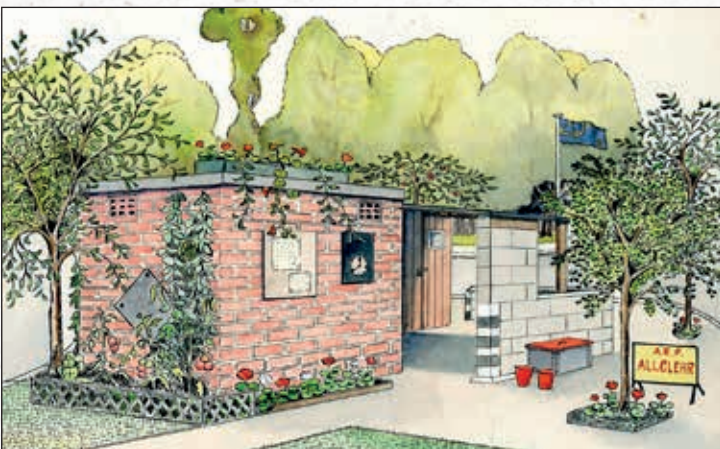
When war was declared in 1939, this concrete-roofed structure, right, was hastily built at the road intersection.

During the Blitz, from the autumn of 1940 to the spring of 1941, nearly 30 civilians died in air raids on Surbiton.

Yet between the summers of 1941 and 1944, there were no casualties from Luftwaffe bombers in the borough.

Only when doodlebug flying bombs began did casualty rates rise, with the worst incident being the bomb that destroyed 61 to 69 Tolworth Park Road on Derby Day 1944, killing 12 people, including children aged two, five and 12.

The respite from air raids explains the tranquil feel in this picture of the Langley Avenue ARP post. Instead of sandbags protecting the walls, there are



tomato plants and geraniums.

In front, next to the yellow 'All Clear' sign indicating no raids expected, are two fire buckets and a water tank. The clock next to the noticeboard on the side of the red-brick control room is set at 8pm – the time of the evening blackout, when heavy curtains had to be drawn to deny German pilots navigational help.

This ARP post was one of 40 in Surbiton. Wardens on the rota set

off along a nightly fixed journey – known as Route 5 – along Langley Avenue, Upper Brighton Road, Walpole Road and Glenbuck Road to Surbiton station. After hollering "Put that ruddy light out" a few times, they went back to the post for a cuppa.

The picture was donated to Kingston's local history room by a Woodlands Road resident who recently unearthed it among some old papers.

Tim Harrison

Poetry night allows rhymers to shine

Not only can Surbiton's poets give their words an airing in front of a supportive audience, but their verses could be displayed on the walls of the town's arts centre.

The cornerHOUSE in Douglas Road is hosting another of its popular poetry evenings at 7pm on Friday September 15.

Accompanied by cheese and

biscuits, the informal event offers poets published and unpublished a chance to read their works... with a selection being hung on the walls throughout the month for wider, and more leisurely, appreciation by audiences using the centre.

The themes for the September 15 evening are: A river runs

through it; Animals; and Through a window.

Wash down the cheese and biccies with drinks from the bar.

Entry is £4, to include the food.

To get your creative juices flowing, here's an offering from apoplectic poet KC MacHonison of Kingsdowne Road, Surbiton.

Exhausted (a plea)

Dearest driver, if you can,
When you park your car or van
Outside my house, respect my cough
And kindly turn your engine off.

To leave it on there is no need
When travelling at zero speed;
Your battery is charged enough
So go on – turn that engine off.

Perhaps it's just that you don't care
That you're polluting England's air
Please, old chap, do be a toff
And turn that blasted engine off.

You'll keep it on? Well, thanks a bunch,
You're on the phone and having lunch –
Do us a favour while you scoff,
And turn that flippin' engine off.

Like Donald J, you've scant regard
For those beyond your own back yard,
But heed the words of Nabokov:
'Comrades – turn zose engines off!'

I've thought of many a cruel way
To make such vile polluters pay,
Involving shocks and loppings-off,
Just turn that bl**dy engine off!

And as my blood begins to boil
Watching you waste both fuel and oil
Hear me scream, in language rough:
TURN THAT ***** ENGINE OFF!!

KC MacHonison



It's nice to meet Voo

Five-year-old tabby Star's dislocated kneecap is pinned into place by vet Kavit Manro, assisted by Steph Maitre. If you didn't know it was a puss on the operating table, you'd have thought this was a real hospital. The day before, Robin the pet chicken was in to have his broken foot X-rayed, repaired and set in a mini splint.

Welcome to Voo, the renamed Claremont Road vets' practice in Claremont Road. Voo? "It's a brand name, thought up by the Nestle people," says Kavit. "It's short and memorable, and resonates with what we do." The logo includes a paw print. The summer dog show on Victoria rec, which Kavit judged, saw the launch of the welovevoo.com website.

You no longer climb steps at the front; now you enter via a light, airy reception at the back, with dedicated car parking.

"It has been designed with natural light, which reduces stress," says Kavit. There are separate cat and dog doors.

On September 16, the canine portal will be opened by former Strictly stars Lilia Kopylova and Darren Bennett, while children's writer Jacqueline Wilson will open the cat entrance.

It's been a vet's since 1890, when the vet lived in the main house and people brought animals to his door. Kavit's dad ran it in the 1980s, and by 2004 father and son were working together.

"We have scope for operations and X-rays; it's like a human hospital. We can do open chest surgery on cats and dogs," says Kavit. "It's day and night; vets and nurses are here 24 hours."

The family-run service gives free second opinions, and offers orthopaedics, soft tissue work and neurology as well as every routine treatment. "It's more affordable now, because our specialist care is so accessible," says Kavit.

Saturday October 7 has been set aside for an open day with escorted tours around the new facilities.

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We're making plans for Nigel

Vincent Van Gogh sold one painting in his lifetime. Nigel Kingston has done better – 4,500 and counting.

The self-taught artist, who paints at home in Raeburn Avenue, offers sale-or-return terms; your money back if you decide you can't live with the canvas you've bought!

"I'm happy being an artist, I like the quirkiness," says the affable 51-year-old, who says we all have a dormant creative streak. "A lot more people should have a go. I'm not a natural at drawing. Ask me to draw an elephant, and it would look like something a five-year-old had done, but if you gave

me a picture of an elephant to copy, I could."

This refreshingly honest brushstroker works in oils, acrylics and even gloss to create large abstracts, Turner-esque seascapes, cartoon penguins, London backdrops, animal heads and woodland scenes.

His USP is to take a picture round to the customer's home and hang it, then leave them to live with it for a bit until they're certain it's right.

Nigel, who gained fame on Channel 4's fly-on-the-wall series The Auction House, sells originals for £100 to £400.

At a recent fair at Surbiton High School he took a shoal of

orders. As I left him, he was off to Langley Avenue to measure up a space over a fireplace.

"Most artists specialise, but I'd get bored doing woodland scenes all day," he says. "John Lewis sells prints for the price I sell originals. I'm not greedy, and I get a lot of repeat business because of it.

"I like being busy, and I enjoy painting. Sometimes I paint in the middle of the night. I'm more confident in my ability now, but it's still lovely when people ask you to do something.

"It's a bit like being an actor; I could get one job, and then I might not get any work for a



Nigel Kingston with an abstract triptych destined for a house in Barnes

month. You have to be proactive."

He moved to Surbiton three months ago, and loves it. "It's leafy; I can

breathe, and it's near enough to London," he says. "And I'm as happy talking to a milkman as an admiral." Meeting

customers gives him as big a buzz as creativity.

● See more pictures at www.justoriginals.co.uk

Tim Harrison



Film show organiser William Allberry, left, with Billy Williams

And the winner is...

Oscar-winning cinematographer Billy Williams brought a touch of Hollywood glitz to Tolworth when he turned up at a cornerHOUSE screening of Gandhi with his gleaming statuette.

Billy, 88, spoke about filming Richard Attenborough's epic (the last feature film to include an intermission), and the magic of going on stage to collect the statuette. "Richard was the most inspiring and dedicated leader I have ever worked with," said Billy, simply. "A remarkable man."

A question-and-answer session after the screening began with: What is 'cinematography'? "It's telling the story with photography, composition and camera movement," said Billy, who left school at 14 to join his film cameraman father, another Billy. "He started in 1910 with hand-cranked films," said Billy. "I became his apprentice."

When the VIP guest's name came up on the credits at the end of the movie, the audience spontaneously cheered and applauded.

The film won eight Oscars in 1983, including best picture, best director and best actor for Ben Kingsley, who flew to India a month before shooting to fast so he was the right weight for the lead role.

Williams' Oscar is heavier than you'd think from watching winners brandish statuettes during acceptance speeches. CornerHOUSE audience members were allowed to lift it... and several struggled!

"What's important about the film is we filmed, where we could, in the actual locations Gandhi lived and spoke," said Billy. "We were aiming for realism, and we watched hours of newsreel footage."

How were 300,000 extras marshalled for the biggest crowd scene in pre-digital cinematic history?

Gandhi's funeral scene was filmed on independence day, a public holiday, and all the extra 'extras' simply turned up to watch the ballyhoo. For other scenes, up to 5,000 locals were hired!

In the interval, Indian and European refreshments were served at the arts centre in Douglas Road. Donations went to a charity supported by screening organiser William Allberry, a regular visitor to Joan's Grace Home, which provides secondary education to youngsters in Tamil Nadu, southern India, who wouldn't otherwise go to school.

● Surbitonians have been urged to fund a pupil via a regular monthly sum (www.kathrynsmercyhome.org).

As you like quiche

Jessica Hern won't eat quiche! The actress has had her fill since embarking in June on a four-month cycle tour of Shakespeare's As You Like It with the wittily titled Handlebards girl troupe.

As part of the comedy, actors raid audience picnic hampers. "We're famished by the time we perform as we usually cycle 35 miles a day, and there's never time to grab a bite," said superfit Jess, who lives just off Portsmouth Road and whose CV includes treading the boards at Surbiton's cornerHOUSE. "If you eat quiche for weeks, you never want to see another slice."

The 24-year-old and three other thespians have performed from Cornwall to Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden. They play multiple characters, cycle from venue to venue and use their bikes in the show itself. By the end of the tour they'll have notched up 1,500 miles.

"The most enjoyable thing is that I've discovered a real passion for cycling," said Jessica, a Guildford School of Acting graduate who has played at some stunning venues, and kipped down for the night in farms, barns and a haunted castle. A particular favourite was Bolton castle, performing indoors, getting a standing ovation then spending the night on the floor on a roll mat by the fire chatting to the host about the building.

"The most challenging bit is cycling up hills pulling a 9st trailer with the set and camping gear as the heavens open. If all else fails, you get off the bike and everyone helps push."

Having performed at the Edinburgh Fringe, the Handlebards are pedalling south towards the final destination, Chelsea Physic Garden on Sept 14-16. To book visit www.handlebards.com/tickets



Pedal power: Jessica Hern pictured on her trusty steed Shylock

There's still time to write a play

Have an idea for a play? There's still time to enter the borough's premier playwriting festival. Plays of 15 to 30 minutes must be submitted to Surbiton's cornerHOUSE by Tuesday, October 31.

They will be judged, with the cream being performed in the 2018 oneACTS 2018 festival. In its 11 years, subjects have included Elvis, a mouse hunt, a sudoku addict, the antics of a group of clowns, internet dating, a fun run and a time-travelling Ofsted inspector.

Visit www.thech.org or email cornerhouseoneacts@gmail.com



Pop-up art

Surbiton artists Judy Dibiase (left) and Maura Jamieson created a pop-up gallery in Cadogan Road at an open house of, respectively, ceramics and photography. Maura's works on display included a stunning image of bluebells in the Surrey hills.

With fellow artists Armi Maddison (prints) and Alexa Simone (velvet 'grunge' cushions), they captivated visitors. All four are Kingston College art and design lecturers. "My ceramics are to do with memory, and how we remember things," said Judy. "I use shadows as signifiers; it's all about little moments and little things."

Maura's works use Victorian techniques to create dreamy landscapes and plant-inspired photographs.

Stuck in love

Turns out LoveStuck **is** a word: Being stuck in love when you don't want to be. A new rock musical, written and directed by Surbiton playwright Adam Wollerton with music by PJ Nielsen and Jake Few conducting from the balcony, it premiered at Marylebone's Cockpit.

It's the tale of a gay love triangle at uni, with Matthew Lee playing the young man at its pointed apex. Interwoven are cleverly developed, sympathetically depicted characters from nerdy Jake to rebellious Lily.

"It took two years to write, and another for the music," said Adam. LoveStuck deserves a wider airing. Visit www.adamwollerton.com

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11



It's bespoke racing

Although a handful of people still complain that they can't get use their car two days of the year, Surbiton has embraced its annual cycle extravaganza.

This was the scene at Winter's Bridge along Portsmouth Road on a weekend when more than 100,000 gallant RideLondon competitors of all shapes and sizes – some on tandems, some on those curious bikes you ride lying down – formed a seemingly continuous pedalling tide.

The professional men's race was, for the first time, awarded World Tour status; the first designated race of its type in the UK. A legacy of the Olympics, RideLondon 2018 is July 28-29.

Don't let this throw you...



Harry Zain-Prosser, in white, triumphs against a Sri Lankan opponent

Harry Zain-Prosser went to the Bahamas this summer... but not to sun himself. The 14-year-old from Ditton Road was one of the youngest of 72 athletes representing England at judo in the Commonwealth Youth Games – following in the bare footsteps of his dad and granddad, both active judo players in their youth.

Harry took up the sport aged six, is a former British champion and is now ranked No1 at U18 60kilos in England.

In the first round, Harry was drawn against the eventual silver medallist from Cyprus, losing a tough bout. But then he beat a 17-year-old 1st Dan black belt from Sri Lanka, and another from Scotland, finally losing in the bronze medal contest to a 16-year-old 1st Dan black belt from India.

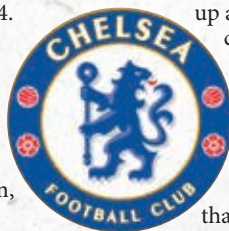
"It was an amazing experience," he said after flying home. It was the first time judo had featured at the Commonwealth Youth Games.

A new chapter for Ladies

Chelsea's male footballers may not have had the best start to the season, but Chelsea Ladies are buoyant ahead of their opener against Bristol City Women on Sunday September 24.

It heralds a new chapter for the champs who have moved from Staines to the Kingsmeadow ground in Kingston Road, where Surbiton, Kingston and New Malden converge.

Manager Emma Hayes, lifted by a shoal of positive showings from her team in the summer's Euros, says the women's game is poised for a full breakthrough into mainstream sport.



"It's clear which direction women's football is going," she said. "With the professionalism of the game throughout the world, fitness levels have gone up another level, as has the coaching."

Three of the Ladies' first games are at home, with Liverpool visiting on Oct 8 and Yeovil on Oct 29.

The good news is that season tickets are an affordable £42 for adults, £21 for juniors and seniors.

Chelsea Ladies are confident of drawing on the huge reservoir of support for the club in the Surbiton, Berrylands and Tolworth area to fill the ground.



British tennis No2 Heather Watson, 25, was runner-up at Surbiton's Aegon tournament, and is pictured with Malcolm and Maureen Arnell, two of the volunteers who helped make everything run so smoothly. The pre-Wimbledon wheelchair heats were also staged at the Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club.

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