



Next market:
Saturday **September 21**
9am-1pm

Surbiton
Farmers' Market

Issue 48

The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3

September 2019



● What's a boy meant to do? He's told throwing 'poo' in a loo wins points. But which to choose? See Hogsmill open day, **p13**



● Janice Cripps reflects on Hampton Court 2019. See **p6**



Relax. The new PM is well-informed on issues in Surbiton...

Doodlebug in Surbiton



See **p5**

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Co-op's theft headache

Security at Surbiton's Co-op is to be improved after it was revealed shoplifters had stolen £40,000 worth of goods from the branch at the end of Ellerton Road in six months.

Surbiton's neighbourhood councillors were given the figure by resident John Tellick who met the manager to report neighbours had spotted thieving. "In six months it runs to £40,000; not only alcohol but expensive meats too," he said.

Crowds fund festival

Helped by £3,700 crowdfunding, Surbiton's annual town centre festival goes ahead on Saturday, September 28 from 10am to 5pm with a midday parade (St Andrew's Road to Claremont Gardens) featuring two marching bands, 100 stalls in Victoria and St Andrew's roads, and music stages in St Andrew's Square and Claremont Gardens (a family zone: teddy bears' picnic, bouncy castles, Punch & Judy). Full details at www.surbitonfestival.co.uk



The shed boys

The neglected issue of men's mental health is being tackled with the help of sheds in the leafy grounds of a Surbiton charity.

Having raised over £5,000 via crowdfunding, the Fircroft Trust in Ditton Road runs two safe, supportive drop-in days each week to help counter loneliness, isolation and vulnerability.

"It's an idea that came from Australia," said Peter Kensell, pictured, offering me a mug of tea as half a dozen men chatted, chuckled and, well, pottered.

The man shed scheme is informal. From 10am-3pm, Mondays to Thursdays, all are welcome at 96 Ditton Road, taking as active a role as you want in a project to help men feel good about themselves, while keeping mind and body active.

"It's an opportunity for guys to come together; it replaces the old social clubs and smoky bars," said Peter, 52, who believes it's a valuable counter to isolation and the pressures of life. "We can be blokey, and do things that



interest us, such as make bird tables, bookshelves and so on... but the main point is as a social space everyone can feel comfortable in."

● Continued on **p11**

Station bike crime epidemic

Bicycle thefts from Surbiton station have rocketed 37% in a year, with only four stations in the UK having a worse crime record.

At least one bike a week is pinched from the 330 'secure' racks at Surbiton, with South Western Railway pledging to redouble efforts to fight the problem.

Measures being considered include upgraded lighting, more CCTV cameras and more swipe card entry systems for bike rack areas... but it is a nationwide problem with criminals knowing commuters' bicycles are left at stations for eight to 10 hours at a stretch.

In 2016, 4,500 bicycles were stolen from UK stations. Last year that figure had risen to 6,400.

Surbiton has the fifth highest number of station bike thefts, with 140 stolen since 2016. The figure is only exceeded by Maidenhead, Fareham, Bedford Midland and St Albans.

British Transport Police want cyclists to invest in quality D-locks to deter thieves, stamp bicycles with security codes and register bikes at www.bikeregister.com

Yet despite investment in better

racks at stations, bike crime keeps rising as criminals view it as low risk, high gain.

Surbiton has an annual footfall of 9.1 million passengers and – since 2014 – has had the 'secure' racks installed.

A spokesman for SWR told the paper: "There were over 210 million passenger journeys last year on the network, and the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime remains very low.

"Our security team works very closely with British Transport Police to help reduce bike theft across our network."

He said that all crime reports were taken seriously, that SWR "continuously evaluates where to deploy our own security staff to detect and deter crime", and that the rail company was staging cycle

protection workshops at key locations.

Long-term, the plan is to increase cycle spaces from 330 to 1,500, with Surbiton dubbed a 'cycle superhub', but the bike crimewave will have to be seriously addressed before another 1,170 cyclists willingly trust their steeds to the station.

Tim Harrison



Sir Ed is impressed

Three new, affordable-rent homes in Surbiton? It was such a rarity that MP Ed Davey turned up to cut the ribbon and take a tour. His verdict? "I'm very impressed."

They have been built on ground which once contained eight little-used garages at the back of a house in The Avenue, on land owned by Kingston Churches Housing Association, which manages a total of 275 flats and houses.

● Continued on **p13**



The team that get you moving



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Lisa Brand



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BAGGETTES - PANINIS

It's always been a favourite: the heroic misspelling of 'baguettes' at The Walnut Cafe by Berrylands station, coupled with that stray 's' on panini. But after seven years, Sammy has shut. The friendly cash-only coffee shop with oddly wayward opening hours is to become a building services firm.



The stretch of Victoria Road by McDonald's is, seemingly, now a motor bike deliverers' park with up to 25 scooters and mopeds lined up; riders lolling on the pavement, staring at mobiles...



It only opened in February 2018, but Telepizza at the Maple Road/Brighton Road lights has closed. A franchised branch of the 30-year-old Milanese firm, it was unable to compete with the established Pizza Hut delivery outlet next door in the town's bustling cafe zone.

Win a coffee a day for a month, and a good coffee at that.

Coffee on the Corner, newly opened at the junction of King Charles Road and Beaconsfield, is giving coffee lovers the chance to get their mornings off to a cracking start with a free artisan-roasted cup.

All you have to do is take a selfie in the frame (Honey Bryan, left, or Katie Bennett, right, will assist) then post the picture on Instagram with the hashtag #coffeeotc

Each month a winner will be chosen at random by cafe owner Kyle Hyams. Kyle, who grew

Snap! Selfie wins coffees

up in Hook Road, and went to Southborough, has long held a dream of opening his own coffee shop.

"I love coffee, it's a real passion," said the 25-year-old builder, whose grandma used to live a street away in Broomfield Road.

When he heard the former corner shop was closing, he jumped at the chance of turning it into a go-to destination for families, cyclists and dog walkers.

Cycle stands have been installed at the front and the patio garden at the



back is already proving popular with the mums and dads – and children – who use the Alexandra recreation ground playground opposite.

It seems they can't resist the cakes (the Red Velvet is a real hit), bespoke milkshakes and gelato, while a regular clientele who like getting a bargain are well catered for; £1.50 coffees before 9am have been well-received.

"Being able to provide the area with something like this is really special," said Kyle, who is backing learning disabilities charity the Fircroft Trust in Ditton Road with a suspended coffee scheme (you buy an extra cuppa, and trust clients get one free). **Jane Grove**

Bees abuzz

Strolling along Queen's Prom, you may have noticed that the turquoise-coloured Riverside Cafe near the Surbiton Road junction is now Trafalgar blue, with three super-size bumble bees.

It also has a new name, the Ginger Bees Cafe.

"We've been Ginger Bees in the background for three years," said co-owner Gavin Wong. "For me it's a statement of focusing on the natural aspects of both ginger and bees – and we like ginger and we like bees!"

"The reason we chose now is there has been a bit of a shift in terms of how we are



perceived. We've become a contemporary, up-to-date establishment; reflected in the clients and feedback.

"We see a different type of customer; more interested in doing the right thing for their health and the environment and it's really an area that we are focusing on.

"We are developing lots of ideas – which we can't talk about now – but it feels like the start of something big which is really exciting."

A beery festival

Beer lovers' alert! From Sept 20-22 the Antelope in Maple Road holds another festival. "There'll be 80 beers and ciders, live music, a hog roast and barbecue," said Rich Craig of Big Smoke Brew Co (once based in the pub's stables, now in Esher).

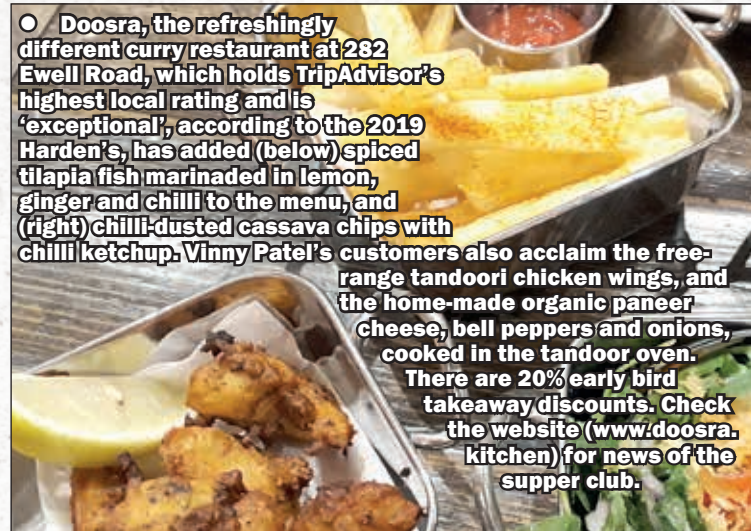


An A-grade bonus

A curry house named best in the London suburbs (Asian Restaurant Awards) rewarded top students with £25 free meals on A-level and GCSE results days. Ralph Sousa of Saffron Summer at the Ace of Spades, whose menu includes wild boar vindaloo, said: "We wanted to celebrate with customers who have something of their own to celebrate. Who better than students who achieve straight As?" The free gourmet meals on August 15 and 22 were cooked by head chef Awanish Roy. The eatery is at 4 Ace Parade, Hook Road, opposite the Shell garage. www.saffronsummer.co.uk



Doosra, the refreshingly different curry restaurant at 282 Ewell Road, which holds TripAdvisor's highest local rating and is 'exceptional', according to the 2019 Harden's, has added (below) spiced tilapia fish marinated in lemon, ginger and chilli to the menu, and (right) chilli-dusted cassava chips with chilli ketchup. Vinny Patel's customers also acclaim the free-range tandoori chicken wings, and the home-made organic paneer cheese, bell peppers and onions, cooked in the tandoor oven. There are 20% early bird takeaway discounts. Check the website (www.doosra.kitchen) for news of the supper club.



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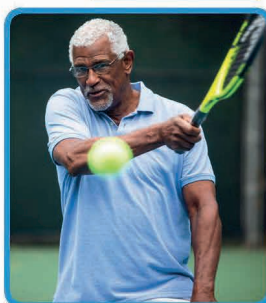
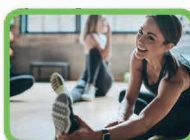
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the good life

Editor: Tim Harrison

Set up in 2012, the community paper for Surbiton, Tolworth, Berrylands and Long Ditton is now delivered to 11,070 homes. The Good Life appears six times a year between March and November. We're always delighted to hear from you, whether it's about editorial or advertising or joining our little group of volunteers who help deliver the paper. Email thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com



In between publications, you can keep up-to-date with Surbiton news via our regular Instagram posts (@[thegoodlifesurbiton](https://www.instagram.com/thegoodlifesurbiton))

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Rail noise likely

If you live near Surbiton's railway line you may need earplugs. Network Rail is refurbishing the track in the wee hours from October 21-25. Expect to be woken by grinding noises and shouts of "Oi mate, over here with that shovel!"

Awaiting the news

River road resident Roland Chesters, 59 – given two weeks to live after a late HIV diagnosis, but now healthy after treatment – awaits the 2019 National Diversity Award results having pipped 30,000 to the shortlist. Outcome to be declared at the end of September.

Speeders beware

A clampdown on speeding in Sugden Road, Long Ditton, and Manor Road North (from Manny's shop to Hinchley Wood) is imminent after a Surrey County Council survey revealed endemic flouting of the 30mph limit.

It's people power

John Tellick told the neighbourhood committee of a street light on all day at the corner of Ewell and Hollyfield roads. He'd reported it, but three months had passed. "It's time someone stopped wasting electricity," he said. Engineer Younes Hamade pledged to investigate. Within days a cherry picker arrived and cured the problem. Result.

Feeling chilly yet?

We may still be enjoying sun, but Surbiton & District Bird Watching Society is thinking ahead. An illustrated talk on Tues, Sept 17 sees Ashley Grove explore winter wildlife at Surbiton library annexe, Ewell Road, 7.30pm. www.surbitonbirds.org

Talking about loss

A bereavement cafe is open on Wed, Sept 11, 7.30-9pm, at St Mary's community hall behind the church in Long Ditton; a safe space to share feelings with a team trained to listen.

Cafes vie for glory

A record 90 firms are shortlisted in the borough's business excellence awards ahead of the ceremony on Ravens Ait on Oct 10. Battling for the top cafe gong: Surbeanton, Wags n Tales, Pickled Pantry, Surbiton Fish & Chips.

Six flats to appear

A block of six three-bed flats will replace a detached house at 36 Villiers Avenue, but cars are banned and new occupants can't apply for street parking permits. Objectors who said it was highly unlikely 24 people wouldn't have a car between them were overruled.

Neighbourly fun

Meet the neighbours at a community day at St Mary's, Long Ditton, on Sat, Sept 7, 10am-4pm. Live music, bar, food, treasure hunt, games and guided walks round the churchyard.

Dementia change

The Alzheimer's Society now provides dementia support in Surbiton after outsourcing by the council, complementing the service at Surbiton Health Centre. More than 1,700 people in the borough live with dementia.

Surbiton student numbers set to soar

A further 159 students are to be housed in the university halls of residence in the old waterworks site in Portsmouth Road, with listed buildings altered and extra storeys added to existing blocks.

Kingston University's Seething Wells campus, bounded by Portsmouth Road and Seething Wells Lane, currently houses 722 students in two and three-storey buildings.

The council has agreed a plan to add 159 more flats by bringing semi-derelict listed buildings back into use, and by topping housing blocks with an extra tier.

Not everyone is happy. Neil Donnelly, who lives yards from the campus buildings, objected because he is fed up with students openly taking drugs in Seething Wells Lane.

"On a daily basis I have drug users from the university outside my house," he told the development committee. "An increase in student numbers of 20% means I'm likely to get a 20% increase in drug users, outside my three-year-old's bedroom."

But the development committee, which unanimously agreed Kingston Uni's plan, ruled his objection invalid as antisocial behaviour is not a planning issue.

A cafe, and recreation spaces, will also be created in this expansion project,



although some neighbours said they feared the 'harmony' of buildings would be destroyed by rooftop extensions, the bulk of accommodation blocks was too big, and parking would be an issue (the scheme cuts bay numbers from the existing 129 to just 20).

The need for yet another cafe in Surbiton was also questioned, as the town is already awash with coffee.

Prof Steven Spier, the uni's £190,000-a-year vice-chancellor, was wheeled out to address councillors, justifying the expansion on the grounds that other universities were stealing a march on Kingston when it came to providing student accommodation.

"Students do sometimes act as students,"

was his response to claims of antisocial behaviour, although he added that students were regularly reminded of a duty to be good neighbours.

Historic England raised no objection to changes to listed buildings, notably the Lambeth Waterworks Coal Store – currently on the 'at risk' list – which is to have its missing roof reinstated ('a contemporary take on a traditional hipped roof') to create a study area, laundry and workshop.

A Grade II listed store block will be refurbished and turned into three two-bedroom student flats with a new kitchen/commonroom. The plan specifies that the new event space and cafe will be opened up for wider community use.

The loss of 109 parking spaces on the Seething Wells site means student car use will be limited to those with 'essential need'. There will be 11 disabled bays, and students won't be allowed to apply for residents' permits.

Cycle parking provision will rise from the current 129 spaces to 210, in secure, locked shelters. A 20mph zone will be imposed – at the uni's expense – and the university must also pay £15,000 to improve the area around the Portsmouth Road entrance (pictured).

Tim Harrison

SURBITON LIFE by David Cox



Julie's crop pulls the crowds

Rarely has a haircut attracted such attention! When Julie Watson, 35, who lives just off Ewell Road, resolved to lose her blonde locks for Macmillan Cancer Support's 'brave the shave', she chose the Black Lion as the venue. DJ Russ Cox provided the music, landlord Mark Sheehy persuaded regulars to donate, and the Surbiton pub filled with have-a-go trimmers. "I lost three friends to cancer, and that's why I'm doing it," said Julie before the hacking began. "I have really thick hair, but a bob is the shortest I've ever had before this!" added the former Tolworth Girls' pupil, who needed a few drinks to steady herself... then sat on a barstool in the middle of the packed pub to be shorn. On the night, Julie raised £2,390, but – with sponsorship – reached a stunning overall total of £7,370. A brilliant effort.



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Scouting supremo of Tolworth for 60 years

One of the area's most respected and inspirational scout leaders, Alan Thomas, has died at the age of 91.

Emmanuel church in Grand Avenue was filled with generations of scouts on July 15 for his memorial service.

Born David Alan Thomas in Forest Hill, south east London, in 1927, he was three when his parents moved to a newly built house in Raeburn Avenue, Tolworth. It was to be his home for the remainder of his life.

He attended Grand Avenue primary school before moving on to Surbiton Grammar School, in the buildings which now form Hollyfield School. After national service in the Royal Engineers (leaving with the rank of Second Lieutenant) he studied mechanical engineering at Battersea Polytechnic.

It was there – through the Gilbert and Sullivan Society – that he met Jill, who was taking a three-year teaching course in domestic science.

They married in 1953. A shared love of music and performing continued throughout their lives, in Emmanuel church choir and, separately, in male voice and ladies' choirs. Both were members of the Hook Singers.

Alan was appointed work study officer for the Metropolitan Water Board; his tasks included calculating the number of sheep needed to keep the grass short on the slopes of the Queen Mary reservoir as an alternative to mowing. The descendants of those sheep are still keeping the grass neat today!

Alan's office was in London, so he travelled from Berrylands station. In 1981 he purchased a Brompton folding bicycle for both stages of the journey to the office, and home again – something fondly recalled by his daughter, Hilary, who made her home, with her husband Julian Power, in the Isle of Man. Her brother, Martin, works as a postman in Kingston.

But it is for his scouting life that most people will remember Alan, affectionately nicknamed DAT after his initials.

He joined the cubs in 1935 and scouts in 1938, going on to become scoutmaster at 3rd Tolworth Scouts in 1957. From 1970-76 he was district commissioner of Surbiton.

He led expeditions for venture scouts in England, Scotland and on the continent, including one which saw senior scouts climbing a 12,000ft peak in the Austrian Tyrol after training on sandstone rocks in Sussex.

Other adventures included a trip to the Kyle of Lochalsh, near Skye, with an overnight camp on an uninhabited island, feeding on mussels and making a map survey. Another was to Beinn Eighe in the Torridon Hills in the Highlands, venturing to parts few had reached and savouring hoosh, a mixture of ground dried meat and fat, as eaten by Scott and Shackleton on their Antarctic expeditions.

As a climbing instructor, Alan donated money to the 1st Tolworth (St Matthew's) scout group to buy a climbing wall for their headquarters in Pyne Road. He was the first to climb the wall at the opening ceremony... in his 86th year! Rather than making it

a bequest, he wanted to see his gift being used.

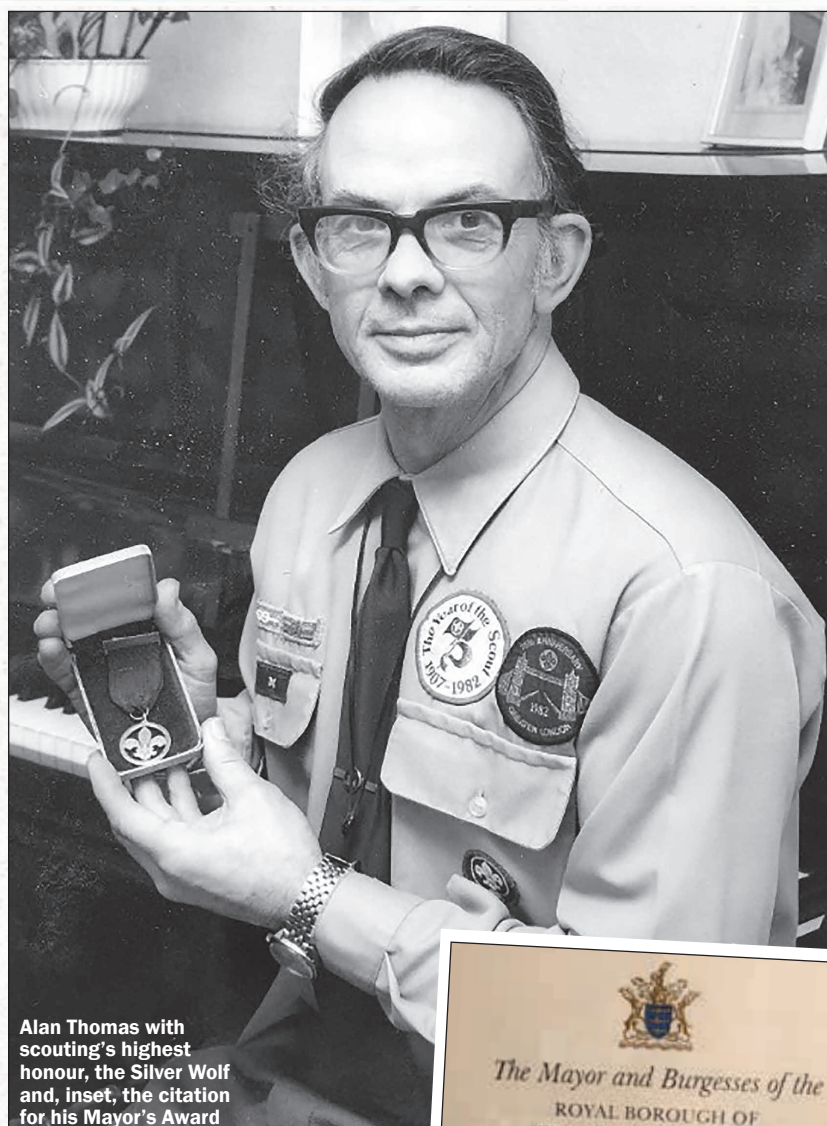
Alan received scouting's highest honour, the Silver Wolf, in 2000 for service of 'the most exceptional nature'. In 2007 he received the Chief Scout's Long Service Decoration for 50 years' service, but continued for a further eight years as group president of 1st Tolworth.

"Scouting has given me many wonderful memories of exciting experiences and comradeship with like-minded people," he said.

He loved anything to do with trees and wood. He ran forester badge courses for the scouts and was a qualified chain saw operator, putting his skills to good use during the ravages of Dutch elm disease, and in the aftermath of the hurricane of 1987. In 1997 he was presented with the Mayor's Award for outstanding service to the Royal borough.

It was a short step from felling trees to seasoning wood, which he turned into a wealth of beautiful objects. Plates, dishes, bowls, apples and other fruit were produced and offered for sale to raise funds for the scout group and churches to which he was affiliated.

Alan also turned his mind to creating a lightweight mountaineering tent, patenting



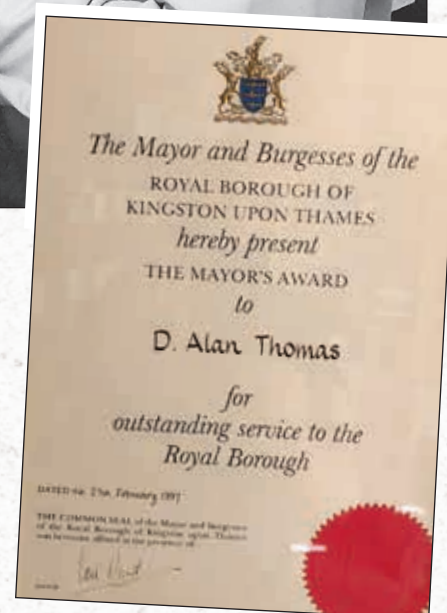
Alan Thomas with scouting's highest honour, the Silver Wolf and, inset, the citation for his Mayor's Award

some aspects of the design, including elastically linked aluminium poles – now a feature of almost every tent.

Knowing that his life was nearing its end, Alan had anticipated attending the St George's Day service at St Matthew's church. To his great disappointment, medical staff ruled that he was not strong enough to make the journey. However his neatly pressed uniform was brought to him, and he was able to make his scout promise for the very last time, as he had wished.

Janet Heskins

David Alan Thomas, born December 29 1927 in Forest Hill, died June 25 2019 in Surbiton.



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Starbucks flat white

Three one-bedroom flats are being created above the old Starbucks at 68 Victoria Road; two in a roof extension, the third in a first-floor storeroom. The shop has been empty since it shut in February.

Do I know you?

There's a chance to meet the neighbours over drinks and food as St George's church in Hamilton Avenue, Tolworth, stages a convivial gathering in its grounds on Saturday, September 14.

From noon-4pm the area around the church – dedicated in June 1934 as a religious and community centre at a cost of £5,354 – stages a fun day to celebrate the area's diversity, irrespective of faith.

There will be live entertainment, stalls, a bouncy castle, barbecue, games, teas and cakes.

Highlights will include a national and historical dress parade and dance displays. Entry is free, and space has been set aside for clubs and community groups to take stalls to promote their activities. Email meetyourneighbour159@gmail.com to book a spot.



Fine revenue plummets

Telling statistics reveal that Kingston Council's parking fine revenue plummeted once clearer signs were put up in Surbiton Crescent at the infamous bus-only lane.

Hundreds of previously law-abiding Surbiton motorists were caught out by the confusing barrier near Surbiton High School after the council suddenly banned cars from a road that generations had used with impunity.

Installed in September 2016, and initially resembling a Stasi checkpoint, the camera-monitored cut-through raked in more than £5million in fines because the signage was so baffling. At the Surbiton Road end, 'no entry' signs made the restriction perfectly plain, while at the Maple Road end, confusion reigned.

Now, after the belated installation of clearer signs, parking ticket fines have fallen by 22%, according to statistics compiled by click4reg.co.uk, with – as a consequence – Kingston dropping from third to 10th in the London borough 'league table' of fine income.

The City of London is king, with 192,841 fines issued in a year – the equivalent of 528 a day. Bexley dished out fewest at 11,365. Kingston borough's equivalent figure: 65,634.

75 years on... a doodlebug

Ernie Allen was crouching under the stairs with his mum when the doodlebug hit Tolworth Park Road on Derby Day 1944.

The five-year-old was shaken, but uninjured. Numbers 61 to 69 on the opposite side of the road were wiped out, with the backs of homes in parallel Ravenscar Road seriously damaged.

It was the single most devastating wartime attack on Surbiton in the Second World War. Twelve died, including sisters Barbara and Brenda Gale, and four members of the Scrivener family.

On the 75th anniversary, Ernie told the tale to a new generation after enterprising neighbour Neil Parsons built a belated 80th birthday present for Ernie under the willow tree at the junction of Ellerton and Ditton roads, by the Co-op.

Using cardboard sheets and duct tape, he



constructed a mocked-up Anderson shelter and a doodlebug, which youngsters launched through the air.

The Co-op joined in by giving away free oranges on the anniversary, commemorating Ernie's fifth birthday present. That gift, he said, meant the world to him as oranges were rarities because of the wartime food shortages.

Ernie was born in January 1939, on Jersey. Aged 16 months, he and his mother were on the last boat that left the island ahead of the German occupation in the summer of 1940.

The family moved to 76 Tolworth Park Road, and it was there, in the cupboard under the stairs, that Ernie and his mum were sheltering when the V1 flying bomb hit. They were relocated to Ellerton Road, where Ernie has lived for 75 years; the 'grandad' of the street and a hugely popular neighbour to fellow residents.

Tim Harrison

● You can watch a short film of children trying to launch the doodlebug model at www.instagram.com/p/By2IfclnCh6/



Ernie Allen, 80, and neighbours with the replica V1. Inset, the aftermath of the 1944 destruction which killed 12 in Tolworth Park Road. Bottom left, neighbour Neil Parsons builds a model Anderson Shelter

Gluts of fruit are being put to productive use

Are plums starting to ripen on your garden tree? Are the apple boughs on the verge near your home begging to be picked?

Toni Izard and the team from Abundance Kingston are standing by to harvest unwanted gluts of fruit and veg, to distribute to shelters and jam makers or – pictured below at August's farmers' market – press into organic, flavoursome juice.

"We aim to reduce the high level of food waste at this time of year, and our food carbon footprint, by enabling people to share in this local harvest," she said.

If you or your neighbours have fruit or veg you'd like help harvesting and re-homing, or your road has streetside fruit trees that never get picked, or you'd like a few hours of fresh air harvesting or juice making with a band of enthusiastic volunteers, or if you're a jam or jelly maker and could use a substantial quantity of fruit, email Toni at baizard@hotmail.co.uk or call 07749 633973.



Baptists' 145 years

Surbiton New Life Baptist Church marked its 145th anniversary in July with a three-day event, starting with a Friday evening concert. The next day saw the building in Langley Road (it began as the Oaklands Baptist Church) stage an open house, with archive display. On the Sunday, the very first sermon from 1874 by Charles Spurgeon, who set up an orphanage locally, was read once again as part of a commemorative service.

Roberts

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Not such a Little Weed

Bruna de Queiroz and Phil Renton get stuck in, removing invasive Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) from Tolworth Brook; part of a team clearing the stream in the Berrylands Nature Reserve of the plant which strangles everything in its path.

A relative of the busy lizzie, it reaches well over head height and is a major weed problem, especially on riverbanks. It grows rapidly and spreads quickly, smothering other vegetation.

Balsam bashing (pulling it up by hand, breaking the stems, then leaving it to decompose) was one task during a recent community conservation day at the reserve off Raeburn Avenue, Berrylands.

“We also cut back brambles and nettles growing into the stream to prevent them blocking the flow,” said Andrew Irving. “Some volunteers cleared foliage from paths to make sure they’re usable, and uncovered a bench which was overgrown by brambles.”

For more about the five-hectare site, and other conservation events coming up, visit www.berrylandsnaturereserve.org

‘Tar’ very much for the drama, but we really want a pond, says Janice Cripps

Rebranded, improved, Hampton Court



This year’s Hampton Court Flower Show was rebranded the Hampton Court Garden Festival, which more accurately reflects the annual show.

The RHS has, at last, recognised that trends in garden design are at odds with the type of gardens most want to see at Hampton Court.

Gone are the conceptual plots which bemused or baffled many visitors, and the cutting-edge or wacky ideas that people felt would not translate at home.

Hampton Court visitors do not follow the design trends from Chelsea, where the focus is on sustainability, ‘re-wilding’ and native planting. They want manicured, pretty gardens designed by artists and colourists, not naturalistic gardens where the predominate colour is green and weeds are allowed to flourish.

That is not to say visitors do not

want to be ecologically informed or challenged, but it is not their prime focus for a day out.

This was evidenced in my conversation with a visitor viewing the Matthew Childs smart meter garden which featured a luxuriant woodland with a large circular area (below) of what looked like tarmac.

Lights flashed beneath cracks in the black tarry surface to symbolise erratic energy use – very powerful, very dramatic, but the person I spoke to felt it would have been so much nicer with a pond.



Hampton Court doesn’t push the boundaries of creativity, and its subtle rebranding makes that clear. Now that we’re not comparing it with Chelsea we can enjoy the festival for what it is!

This year it was an absolute pleasure to visit... much better than last year’s offering. There seemed to be more space to get around, better eateries and numerous comfortable seating areas to relax within a truly magnificent setting.

There was something for everyone – live music, talks, demos, workshops, food – and the opportunity to shop for all things gardening.

True, there may have been fewer show gardens than in previous years, but they were of a high standard and very accessible, literally, *and* in terms of ideas to take home – black tar excepted!

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

Be a friend to beasties!

Wellies on! A community action day is being staged at Fishponds Park. Meet at the bug hotel in the centre of the park at 10am on Sat, Sept 21. The aim is to improve biodiversity on the 13-acre site by restoring ditches and ponds and getting stuck into other conservation tasks. Local wildlife expert Elliot Newton will give a short talk on the freshwater beasts found in the park’s ponds. The event at the park off Ewell Road, runs to 2pm. Any time you can spare is appreciated. Wear gardening gloves and weather-appropriate clothing.

Samba down to Brazilian fest

A weekend of Brazilian activities includes live bands, dancers, a costumed parade and food and drink to celebrate the rich heritage of Tolworth’s Corinthian-Casuals Football Club. On Sat, Sept 28, festival-goers at Vai Tolworth! will have the chance to hear the remarkable stories and amazing history of this amateur football club, as well as watch a home game (3pm) v Potters Bar Town. On the Sunday there’s a carnival atmosphere at the ground at King George’s Field off Hook Rise South, with a parade and music, and a chance to meet Tolworth’s new giant puppets. Vai Tolworth! is part of SHEDx Growing Ideas in Tolworth, a two-year project by The Community Brain to encourage communities to reimagine space; urban and green. www.thecommunitybrain.org/shedx



● Look out for Tolworth’s new market every second Sunday of the month in the slip road off Ewell Road by the Princes Avenue junction. The next is on September 8 from noon-4pm.

The arts and crafts market is a chance to buy quality goods made by local artisans at bargain prices. There’s also a chance to try tasty treats and hear live music by local bands.

The market is organised by SHEDx, which supports community regeneration in Tolworth.

Pictured, above, at the first market in June are Kay Mathewson of Tolworth’s handmade gifts company Oski & Aggie with an example of her fabric initial art, and Sarah Richardson, from Chessington’s The Place to Make with homemade beeswax wraps (use instead of clingfilm) and hand-poured vegan candles with essential oils.

Bee prepared

Real bees have top billing at the next Handmade at the Lamb event on Saturday, August 31.

Local beekeeper Keith McMahon, below, will bring his bees along to the Brighton Road pub during the arts and crafts afternoon.

Learn about beekeeping, meet the bees and the queen, taste raw honey, and understand how this amazing product is made.

A special ‘hive edition’ of the event promoting local artisans will focus on creating bee images from different materials for a community project spearheaded by Tolworth artist Debbie Chessell. They will be hung in a 12ft geodesic hive which will tour locally; a centre for workshops, music, talks, drama... a free activity space for locals. Other bee-related activities from noon-6pm, include making wire-wrap butterflies and bees, weaving workshops, pom-pom bees, felt creations, bee print face painting, stained glass bees, willow bees and sewn bees.



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GOOD SCHOOLS 2020



Surbiton’s schools have again proved they’re a cut above the rest, with a fine crop of achievements at A-level and GCSE – typified by another strong showing from Surbiton High School.

Cllr Diane White, co-chair of Kingston’s education committee, said she was immensely proud of the effort of all the borough’s teenagers, declaring the area’s schools “the best in the country”.

“Well done to all our students; a magnificent job done,” she commented as the 2019 grades emerged. “I am delighted to hear of their wonderful results.”

Cllr White said she was particularly

Schools are ‘best in the land’

proud that “our borough, diverse and rich in experience, leads the way in education for all our children, including looked-after children and those with additional needs”.

She concluded: “Our young people have worked so hard to achieve such impressive results, supported by the best teachers and schools in the country. We are very proud of their achievements.”

At Surbiton High, nearly 60% of all A-level grades were A* or A, with 39 students gaining three or more A*/A grades. Almost 90% of all grades achieved were A*-B, prompting principal Rebecca

Glover to say that another “strong set of A-level results” meant that students’ “focus, ability and holistic education will ensure they have a fulfilling career, where they see no boundaries in what they can achieve”.

On specific subjects, 80% of Surbiton High students taking further maths at A-level attained A* or A, while those grades were achieved by 62% in biology, 37% in chemistry and 39% in physics.

More than 93% of students secured places at the most competitive universities, including Oxbridge (eight places), Russell Group, Times Top 10 unis and medical, dental or veterinary schools.

Over 450 years of success

Founded in 1561, Kingston Grammar School is one of the most successful day schools for boys and girls aged 11-18 in the country, with a long tradition of developing individual talent and encouraging high aspirations.

Academic standards are high. Having broken school records last year, the 2019 cohort have matched their predecessors with two-thirds of all grades awarded A* or A, 80% offered a place at Russell Group universities and 10% attaining Oxbridge places.

The results are also impressive compared to the national picture. In 2018, just 8% of all grades nationwide were A*. The 2019 cohort at KGS achieved 28% at A*, with half of all students achieving at least one A* grade.

Several gained a full suite of A* grades, including twins Clara and Ellen Lyckeus with 3 A*s each. Eight students will go to either Oxford or Cambridge.

KGS pupils achieved academic success alongside a wide range of co-curricular activities. The school has a strong sporting legacy, including 26 Olympic Games appearances. Alumni include Olympic gold medallists James Cracknell OBE and Sophie Hosking MBE.

The co-ed school in London Road, Kingston, believes in holistic education; strong both academically and pastorally. “Without exception, those spoken to feel this is a kind school where unkindness is never acceptable,” said a 2017 ISI inspection report.

Headmaster Stephen Lehec said: “The success of this committed and hardworking group of students is

testament to their dedication and focus.

“With the unflinching support of their teachers, they have not only achieved excellent academic results but, for a large number of them, this was achieved alongside an extensive commitment to co-curricular activities.

“The students have all benefited from the unrivalled pastoral care the school offers.

“At a time when the pressure on young people seems to grow year on year, it is vital that they leave us as fully rounded individuals who will cope with the rigours of life beyond school.

The contribution these students have made to KGS during their time at the school, as well as to their communities through their charitable and voluntary work, is hugely appreciated.

“We know that Old Kingstonians go on to make a positive difference to the world and we look forward to following their journey. We are very proud of them all.”

Applications welcome at 11+, 13+ and 16+. Fee assistance (up to 100%) is means-tested. Main entry points are at 11+ and 16+, with occasional places at 13+. Admission is by selection on academic merit, with assessment and interview.

For 16+, predicted GCSE grades (or international equivalent) are considered.

Full details at www.kgs.org.uk



Making the most of timeless acoustics in the Lovekyn Chapel, built 1309; the last remaining free-standing chantry chapel in England

Kingston Grammar School: FACT FILE

Address: **70 London Road, Kingston KT2 6PY** Tel: **020 8546 5875**

Email: registrar@kgs.org.uk

Website: www.kgs.org.uk

Age group: **11-18**


No of pupils: **820**

Gender: **Co-ed**

Day/boarding: **Day**

Head: **Stephen Lehec**




KINGSTON
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28 September

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A leading independent day school for boys and girls aged 11-18, where 66.3% of our 2018 A Levels were grade A* or A.

Poets triumph in competition

Two Year 11 poets from Surbiton High School are among the winners of this year's Simon Powell poetry prize, contested by thousands of young wordsmiths across the UK.

Florence wrote *Lavender*, a touching elegy for her mother, while Esme composed a playful relationship poem, *Tracks* (below).

Stuart Bird, the school's writer in residence, described the girls' success as "a terrific achievement", while competition director Daniel Powell added his congratulations for being among the country's top writers in what he described as "a strong field".

The girls win a collection of books each, and an invitation to read on stage at a 2020 Poetry Live event.

This summer they also attended a Poetry Works workshop, hosted by poets Daljit Nagra and Imtiaz Dharker, at Simon Powell's former home in the Barbican.

Tracks

When it comes to our chance meetings:
My careful glance still stays

With you, present becomes past becomes memory.
Never again hasty words: only ever-fading faces.

Your mottled glasses, slipping
Down tracks of tears as you ranted.

Your arresting look; contorted
Into a glower of hatred for my eyes only.

I cannot meet your eyes anymore.
You punched me. I laughed. One small sound.

The what-ifs and the could-haves engrossed me.
My mouth curved to fit the mark of a question.

But then I saw you. On the train, I constantly recall.
You had changed your glasses – softer, unflecked.

I don't think you recognised me. How could you?
Our story has its full stop.
There is no need for a comma.

When we were together, our commutes never matched
– split by hyphens crossing separate tracks.
There must be irony, somewhere, in that.

I remembered how I loved you. I hope you forgot.

Future IT kings

Hats off to the young entrepreneurs at Southborough School, who have set up a young enterprise company complete with sales team, IT support, admin, operations and management to market a range of headphones that turn into speakers.

Using a 3D printer they have also developed eco-friendly docking stations, made from cornstarch and scrap wood.



You can support the boys and their projects by visiting www.irisye.co.uk



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Thursday 26th September 6pm-8pm **Sixth Form only**
Saturday 5th October 10am-12noon **Whole School**
Friday 11th October 9am-10.30am **Senior School**
& 10.30am-12 noon **Pre Prep and Prep School**

www.ewellcastle.co.uk



Mayfield, a large detached house on Tolworth's furthest-flung edge, opens next week as Liberty Woodland School

Woodland school approved

A 'forest' primary school which values playtime as much as formal classwork is poised to open.

Liberty Woodland School's arrival, on the furthest-flung edge of Tolworth, was criticised by some neighbours as likely to increase noise. But Surbiton councillors ruled that there were few nicer sounds than children playing, and approved conversion of Mayfield, a five-bedroom detached house and sheds in an acre of wooded land.

The new school at the distant end of Alexandra ward, off Old Malden Lane, deems understanding nature key to a child's development. With 56 pupils and 15 staff, access is across the Hogsmill via a 600 metre footpath from Richard Challoner School, where minibuses will deliver pupils.

It opens on September 2 and is run by Little Forest Folk, creators of the capital's first full-time outdoor nursery in Wimbledon (now way oversubscribed) in 2015. Founder Leanna Barrett and her family will live in a flat in the upper floors of the house.

Catering for children aged four to 11, it has a greenhouse, art studio, science lab, design room, kitchen and a 'focus on mastery' room. Fees are £4,000 a term with seven free places for local youngsters from less privileged backgrounds.

Bug hotel building, conservation, water experiments and wildlife investigation are on the curriculum, and there is an open-air storytelling zone and mini theatre.

Ms Barrett won councillors over by

saying her aim was to recreate traditional childhoods for pupils ("the sort of time you could leave the house after breakfast and not return until it was nearly dark, and only then because you were hungry").

Neighbour Ian Botes wasn't convinced. "The children will be outside, making noise," he said, questioning whether four-year-olds could safely walk 600m in winter.

Ms Barrett said that a long walk before school was just what Ofsted recommended to counter obesity.

Cllr Sharron Falchikov-Sumner said that it sounded like "an enriching way to educate children", while Cllr Diane White, on the issue of noise, said: "The sound of children is the loveliest sound around."

Cllr Sushila Abraham also backed the school. "The borough needs a school like this," she said. "Children have lost what we grew up with, and it's important to encourage it."

Cllr Hilary Gander agreed. "Being of a certain age, we had more opportunities to play outside. Children want that too. It's so fantastic to be outdoors."

Ms Barrett told the committee: "We are giving the children freedom and space to use their own sense of wonder; there is a high staff-to-child ratio, and there will only be quiet play areas near neighbours, with an edible garden and greenhouse."

The council's development control committee was unanimous in granting approval.

Tim Harrison

Tennis academy offers a specialist programme

Ben McManus and Luca Battista, two of Ewell Castle School's tennis academy members are delighted with their A-level results after already celebrating an outstanding season on the tennis courts.

They were key players in the Ewell Castle tennis team who were placed 10th nationally in the U18 category in the nationals at Nottingham. Both have gained places at Cardiff University. Luca also has been accepted on the prestigious Deloitte apprenticeship scheme.

Ewell Castle School tennis academy offers pupils aged 11-18 who are currently club or county standard a specialist tennis programme alongside traditional academic study.

Pupils wishing to join the academy must also

Ben McManus and Luca Battista, from Ewell Castle's tennis academy, were delighted with their A-level results



meet Ewell Castle School's academic entry standards as well as the tennis academy entry standards.

Ewell Castle School students achieved a 99.2% pass rate at A-level with most students gaining the grades they needed to attend their

first-choice university.

Over 70% of all A-level grades were A*-C.

The school's strong pastoral care and regular academic student tracking have ensured that a number have achieved grades considerably higher than those predicted.

Principal Silas Edmonds commented: "I congratulate our students for their diligence and perseverance. Many of our students have exceeded their predicted grades and I am delighted that so many will move on from Ewell Castle prepared for the world of higher education and beyond."

"With so many superb options and opportunities available to them, they begin their lives after school in the best possible way."

For more about tennis, email tennisacademy@ewellcastle.co.uk

Ewell Castle School: FACT FILE

Address: **Church Street, Ewell KT17 2AW**

Tel: **020 8394 3576**

Email: **admissions@ewellcastle.co.uk**

Website: **www.ewellcastle.co.uk**

Age group: **3-18**

No of pupils: **580**

Gender: **Co-ed**

Day/boarding: **Day**

Principal: **Silas Edmonds**



It's good to talk again, says Sarah

How do you get children talking again and improve their self-confidence in an age dominated by electronic devices? Surbiton entrepreneur Sarah Aird-Mash thinks she has the answer, and she's been awarded £10,000 of lottery cash to prove her theory, writes **Calum Kelly**.

The 49-year-old mother-of-two and former ad agency owner is co-founder of Together Equal, an outreach programme which uses conversation cards to stimulate youngsters and build self-esteem.

"We had to demonstrate our idea has an impact in the community and is sustainable," she said. "The National Lottery community trust can grant up to £10,000 if you prove your campaign is worthy."

She is offering a 10-week in-class programme to primary schools in Surbiton and Kingston, plus mentoring to older children – matching them with young adults to provide support in a social and supportive framework. Aimed at ages nine-15, it teaches the values of equality and self-worth and encourages them to put their electronic devices away and speak instead. "One of our main aims is to teach children that conversations make a difference," said Sarah, who lives in Park Road and has an office in Claremont Road. "We want to teach them to speak out, and that speaking out is a good thing."

Developed with Adam Matich, it involves a playing card game mixing fun and self-awareness. With four volunteers, she wants to assist youngsters to develop critical thinking and discussion skills via conversation.

"Thanks to the National Lottery, we will be able to press on with plans to broaden opportunities available to local children and their parents," said Sarah.

Tanya Mitchell, school outreach lead at Together Equal, added: "We hope that by helping children find their voice, we can create a greater understanding of what it means to be a British citizen."

Visit www.togetherequal.com for more details.



Shrewsbury House School: FACT FILE



Address: **107 Ditton Road, Surbiton KT6 6RL**
 Tel: **020 8399 3066**
 Email: registrar@shstrust.net
 Website: www.shrewsburyhouse.net
 Age group: **7-13**
 No of pupils: **330**
 Gender: **Boys**
 Day/boarding: **Day**
 Head: **Kevin Doble**



All departments open to view

Established in 1865 and located in Surbiton, Shrewsbury House School is one of England's oldest boys' preparatory schools.

With a superb academic record, broad curriculum, extensive after-school clubs and activities, excellent facilities, dedicated staff and exemplary pastoral care, it has a national reputation for success in scholarships and awards to top senior schools at 13+.

In 2019, the school's 54 Year 8 leavers gained 34 scholarships, prizes and awards between them, from schools including King's College School, Wimbledon,

Royal Grammar School Guildford, Tonbridge and Charterhouse.

The annual open morning on Saturday, September 28, 9.30–11.30am is an excellent opportunity to see the school, meet teachers and talk to current boys from a range of year groups. All departments are open, with hands-on activities in which children can participate.

Boys in any year group at their current school are welcome to attend with their family; you do not need to be a registered family.

Full details at www.shrewsburyhouse.net

OPEN MORNING

Saturday 28th September 2019
 9.30–11.30am

All are welcome
 Please visit www.shrewsburyhouse.net to register

Our boys achieved 37 scholarships or awards to some of the UK's leading senior schools in 2019



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107 Ditton Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6RL
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Kai karts towards his F1 dream

If you think it's impressive that 10-year-old Surbiton racer Kai Riemann fearlessly zips around karting tracks every moment he can, then ponder this... he's also currently studying for his maths A-level!

The Year 5 Surbiton High boys' prep school pupil who lives just off Maple Road had a memorable summer, joining his idol Lewis Hamilton on the grid at the British Grand Prix.

A 30-second video that Kai recorded, accompanied by his dog Frank, and declaring his intention to be a champion racing driver one day, clinched his place at Silverstone after it was chosen by ROKiT Williams Formula One driver George Russell in a competition.

"Lewis Hamilton's my favourite



racing driver," said Kai, who practises and races in all weathers on the Daytona track at Sandown Park. "I'm living my dream, karting as much as I can."

The Silverstone visit – where Kai was toggged out in F1 replica overalls – was also a chance to promote grassroots motorsport,

and karting in particular, as a key stepping stone on the path to F1.

"Without karting, I wouldn't be here today," George Russell confirmed. "We, as F1 drivers, need to put karting back on the map and get more people involved."

And Dan Parker of Motorsport UK added: "Kai really shows his passion for karting and F1, and we were delighted to have him at the British Grand Prix.

"All four current British F1 drivers won UK karting championships on their way to the top, highlighting its importance."

Kai, who races with the number 83 on his kart, began his racing career as a 'bambino' driver at Sandown at the age of five. He now documents his racing progress on Twitter @krracing119



Hollyfest's bonanza

Hollyfest, the fundraiser celebrating musical talent at Hollyfield School, raised £13,000 and – for head Thomas Maltby, pictured – underlined the bond between school and community. "The school is part of the community, and the community is part of the school, so I want to make sure that the relationship between school and community is as close as possible," he said.

Hundreds attended, enjoying food from around the world, a programme of live music performed by students, and a firework display. The money raised will support music at the school in Surbiton Hill Road.

The mayor, Cllr Margaret Thompson, was impressed. "There's something unique about this event because it brings everyone together so well," she said. "So many people here are clearly proud of their school; it really stands out."

The last Hollyfest raised £10,000, so Mr Maltby was delighted with the outcome. "Everyone had such a great time, the music sounded brilliant, and I'm really, really proud of how well the event went," he added.

Calum Kelly

SHS wins top rowing honours

Surbiton High is the top girls' rowing school in the country after its young oarswomen – pictured, right – won two golds, a silver and a bronze at the national schools regatta at Dorney Lake, Eton – the 2,000m 2012 Olympic course.

Competing against 158 schools and clubs in a three-day event attracting 6,000 rowers, the girls won gold in WJ14 first octuples, bronze in WJ16

first eights, gold in WJ14 second octuples and silver in WJ15 second eights.

Other notable finishes were 4th in WJ14 first octuples, 5th in WJ15 first eights and 2nd in WJ16 second eights.

In all, 88 Surbiton High girls competed, which is a testament to the success of the rowing programme.

Stewart Walker, head of rowing for the past nine years, said: "All girls who row at Surbiton High School own a part of this success, and can be very proud of this achievement."

Rowing forms one of Surbiton High's 'super 8 sports', and is part of the school's sporting choice for all programme.

The school won the TES 2019 independent school of the year sports award.

Meanwhile, past pupil Lola Anderson (she's on the right in Lucinda Dowse's inset picture) was part of the quartet which won gold for Great Britain in the women's quadruple sculls at the U23 World Championships in Sarasota, Florida.

After rowing for Surbiton High, and representing GB three times including the Junior World Championships where she won silver, she continued her rowing career while studying for an English



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SOLICITOR

Our pupils' education takes them on a personal journey through the School, where they discover who they will become. Surbiton High School's holistic education equips them with much more than academic excellence. Life skills, learning habits, self-belief and a positive mindset allow our pupils to achieve their aspirations with no limitations.

Find out more and book onto an Autumn Term Open Morning by visiting surbitonhigh.com/visit

T 020 8439 1309 | E admissions@surbitonhigh.com | www.surbitonhigh.com
Surbiton High School is part of United Learning

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Boys' Prep | Girls' Prep | Girls' Senior

Surbiton High School:

FACT FILE

Address: **13-15 Surbiton Crescent, Kingston KT1 2JT**
Tel: **020 8546 5245**
Email: **admissions@surbitonhigh.com**
Website: **www.surbitonhigh.com**
Age group: **Boys 4-11, Girls 4-18**
No of pupils: **1,622**
Gender: **Co-ed**
Day/boarding: **Day**
Principal: **Rebecca Glover**

degree at Newcastle University.

The women's quad of Lola, Ella Toa, Molly Harding and Lucy Glover won the first of six golds for Team GB, taking the lead in the final 500m and holding on to push Germany and Romania back into second and third places.

Her old mentor, Mr Walker, said that it had been "a testament to her hard work and determination" and proudly described her as "a great role model for the Surbiton High School rowing team".

Garage is officially the best in UK

Community Motors, the ethical garage and social enterprise off Red Lion Road, has been named garage of the year.

Launched in the Red Lion business park in 2015 to counter the traditional image of garages by providing a fair, friendly MoT and repair service, it is the UK Automechanika Garage of the Year, also topping the training category for its vocational work with young people and disadvantaged groups.

Delighted manager Mark Wedd said: "We pride ourselves on treating everyone fairly and with integrity; this recognises the work our staff do to develop themselves



Staff pictured with the garage of the year award

and help others do the same."

Training manager Kevin Martin pledged to continue to "set a great example to our trainees and give a great service to our customers". The award ceremony was staged at the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham.

www.communitymotors.org

Wellbeing festival success

The area's first mental wellbeing festival, staged by Kingston Adult Education at the King Charles Centre, King Charles Road, gave a shoal of organisations a promotional platform.

Community learning manager Annette Brown emphasised its importance for publicising local mental health provision. "We have so many partners here at Kingston Adult Education, so we thought it would be a great idea to bring them all together," she explained.

Her hope was that the well-attended event – which included guest speakers (pictured), a community choir and free taster sessions of mindfulness, card-making, positive thinking and tai chi – will spread the word about services for those experiencing problems with mental health.

"We run a six-week course for the tools to overcome mental health issues, and also run stress management courses, trying to build resilience in those who participate. 'Bend and not break' is our motto," she said.



One participating organisation was Staywell, on the Surbiton/Kingston boundary, which works with those struggling with issues such as dementia. One in six of over-85s is diagnosed with dementia, and Cathy Weight said that care for elderly people with such conditions was worsening. "More and more elderly people live alone at home without family in the modern day, with fewer going to a nursing home than in the past, and less local support being offered," she said. "At Staywell we are about raising awareness and giving people more independence."

Those attending agreed the day had been a milestone in helping break down the stigma surrounding mental health, showing residents that the community can give them the help and support they need.

Want to improve your mood, reduce stress, boost coping strategies and elevate your mental health and physical wellbeing? You're in luck! Wednesday courses, spread over

several weeks on either mornings or evenings, are running at the King Charles Centre, and they are **FREE**. Called Practical Ideas for Happier Living, they allow you to develop new skills and meet people. Courses run Sept 18-Oct 23. Book a place: 020 8547 6732 or email communitylearningkae@kingston.gov.uk

Calum Kelly

Man sheds help improve health

Continued from p1

Its aim is to reach out to men who can be at risk of developing mental health issues if friendships or a sense of purpose have deserted them, perhaps in changed circumstances in later life, or after retirement.

Using (or teaching) skills means man shedders can work on recycling, mending or refurbishing projects, as well as helping create useable space on former wasteland.

Anyone with DIY experience or woodworking prowess is especially valued, but the sheds are also great for anyone simply wanting to put the world to rights.

The crowdfunded money will pay for flooring the main polytunnel (using old wooden pallets), seating, lockage storage, outside decking for those all-important cuppas, and a weatherproof awning.

Knowledge and stories are exchanged in an atmosphere that is welcoming and unpressured.

With suicide the most common cause of death for men under 49, and the stark fact that men are much less likely to seek help for mental health issues, the Fircroft's shed scheme is already building bridges and proving a popular and relaxed drop-in.

After the crowdfunding effort reached its target, Fircroft was delighted to hear that the Mayor of London had decided to top up the fund by a further £2,000.

Email manshed@thefircrofttrust.org or simply bowl up.

There's no charge, and the tea, coffee and biccies are free. **Tim Harrison**



Every penny counts!

Outsize charity presentation cheques tend to be for nice round figures... but every penny counts at the Surbiton branch of the world's biggest building society!

Hence the payment of £1,006.01 made to a delighted Jenny Harwood of Jigsaw4U by staff at the Victoria Road office of the Nationwide.

The money was raised by customers of the branch in a raffle for hampers which staff

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Summer: ice cream, vomit & stress

Maths puzzle. What is the sum of 372 hours queuing at Chessington World of Adventures + 211 trips to the Kingfisher x 78 cups of coffee consumed while staring into the middle distance in soft play areas + 102 laps of Richmond Park trying to find a parking space ÷ 3 minutes of frisbee and 47 ice creams x the square root of a vomiting child at Hampton Court + £3,740 for a family ticket to see Toy Story 4 ÷ an argument over who played with the iPad for 17 hours yesterday + 295 hours sitting in motorway traffic listening to Baby Shark?

The total equals the dad I saw lying on his back in Claremont Gardens, arms and legs akimbo, eyes closed, with three small children jumping on his stomach. Assuming that I haven't been the witness to a terrible murderous ritual, we must assume that dad had been summer-holidayed. He had exhausted his ability to provide 'activities', and had offered up his own kidneys as a trampoline to keep the children entertained.

I understand. Even from a distance, the summer holidays look exhausting. I saw cracks appear as early as two days after schools broke up as a woman in Waitrose yelled at two volcanically hyperactive boys: "If you carry on with this behaviour you will spend the summer holidays locked in your bedroom." One must hope their behaviour improved, and that they aren't only

now emerging, pale and scrawny, from their Lego-strewn confines.

My childhood summer holiday highlights were the obligatory strawberry-picking at Garsons Farm (one for the punnet, five for Becky, repeat ad nauseam, and it often was nauseam by the time we got back to the car), and to Horton Park Farm (now Hobbledown) which in 1993 had two pigs, five rabbits, a handful of hens and a donkey, and a cracking gift shop full of pencils, rubbers, tiny metal animal figurines and horse rosettes, which my eight-year-old self inexplicably desired with the passion of a thousand suns.

Then came Guildford Spectrum; a game-changer. Swimming, bowling and ice-skating all in one day. Truly a gift from heaven (and a max-out on the credit card for mum and dad, but I was too busy hurling myself off diving boards and pretending I was Jayne Torvill to worry).

So, Surbiton parents, you can very nearly breathe again. You can almost dive into the gin you have been stockpiling, you can run around the house in your pants and eat ice cream while hanging upside down from the bannisters.

Hang in there. You're on the home straight.

And to the man in Claremont Gardens: if you were indeed the victim of a murderous ritual, I apologise for not calling the police.

Becky Mayhew



Rogue roofer warning

A rogue Tolworth roofer must repay £35,000 to hoodwinked householders. Jimmy Slater, of the Swallow Park travellers' site near Tolworth Girls' School, cold-called homeowners, took their money, then either did nothing or left the work incomplete. Many now have roof and gutter problems as a result.

At the Royal Courts of Justice, Judge Saggerson ordered him to repay £35,520 to victims, and foot Kingston Council's £7,327 costs. If he breaches the order, he can expect prison. Slater has a history of rogue trading as JBS Guttering, Response Roofing, Fascia Protection, All Round Plastics, Global Plastics, Clean and Clear Guttering Service, J & L Properties and Slater Roofing.

Trading standards has fielded nearly 100 complaints about him since 1998. Breaches of an earlier ban in 2001 resulted in six months' chokey.

The council says no one should do business on their doorstep, and should always get several written quotes for work. If you're aware of Jimmy Slater continuing to trade unfairly, you're urged to call Citizens Advice on 03454 040506.



Lanterns light lake

Nine hundred people enjoyed Taiko drumming workshops, music and the chance to make and float lanterns at a Buddhist festival in Long Ditton. An event in the grounds of an 18th century manor house-turned temple in Woodstock Lane North culminated in the launch of 200 lanterns, personalised with messages of hope and friendship. Members of the Shinnyo community performed traditional Buddhist chanting. Shohei Nishino of Shinnyo-en's UK centre said: "As a community it is important to us to get to know our neighbours." For more about Shinnyo-en visit www.shinnyoenuk.org

Confident, competent bass, tenor and soprano singers are needed to join an a cappella group in September. KT6 Vocal Group is increasing the 22-strong team to perform music from Joni Mitchell, Chaka

Choir seeking singers

Khan and Madonna to Metallica, in four to six-part harmony, directed by Matt Burdynowski. Rehearsals: Weds, 7.30-9.30pm at Surbiton High School. Taster

rehearsals and auditions on Sept 4 and 11. To apply for an audition or for more information and to hear some of the repertoire, visit kt6vocalgroup.org

– including Louise Barrett and Laura Baldwin, pictured here with Jenny – packed with goodies they had made or donated.

"It will go towards taking a group of vulnerable teenagers to Thorpe Park," said Jenny. "That age group often gets overlooked. It will be our first teenage trip to the park."

The charity supports children who have been bereaved, are in care, are young runaways, or are victims of crime, violence or exploitation. Its name refers to the aim of 'helping children put the pieces back together'. www.jigsaw4u.org.uk

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Thu 19:30 Mat Pilates Surbiton Studio The Studio, 87 Douglas Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 7SD	Sat 09:00 Mat Pilates St Mary's Hall St Mary's Community Hall, Church Road, Long Ditton, Surrey KT6 5HH	Sat 10:00 Mat Pilates St Mary's Hall St Mary's Community Hall, Church Road, Long Ditton, Surrey KT6 5HH

Sarah Mead

Email: tricknutspilates@gmail.com

Web: tricknutspilatesstudio.com

Book: tricknutspilates.simplybook.it

How do you really walk a dog?

Walking a dog may seem the easiest thing in the world, but when you've watched Laura Slade in action you realise there's more to it than putting a pooch on a lead.

Laura, of Lovelace Gardens, is a professional dogsitter, minding pets in their own home while owners are out or away on holiday... the antidote to kennel trauma. Dog day care and home boarding are licensed by the local authority.

She also takes dog-walking to a new level, mindful of each animal's sensitivities. I went for a stroll round Long Ditton's Stokes Field – opposite St Mary's church – with ex-racer greyhounds Dolly and Dash, and an elderly miniature poodle called Tallulah, to experience a proper dog walk.

She's well-equipped, with poo bags clipped to her shoulder bag, and a sanitising spray, which she uses to clean the ground after Fido.

She bakes her own treats, including softer nibbles for dogs with dental issues. She'd already given her three clients "a lunch of yoghurt and cuddles".

She has insurance and dog first aid training, and the care she lavishes on canine clients is a wonder to behold. If this trio could talk, they'd surely agree.

Laura has loved dogs since childhood; she had one pet for 15 years. Now 52, the ex-marketing manager gave up commuting to be the Dog Sitting Lady. She also volunteers at the Celia Cross greyhound trust.

It's clear, on an hour-long walk, that she thinks ahead; weighing up what's around bends, ready to step in if over-eager children pull Dolly's tail, assessing how other dogs she meets might react.

Laura, who grew up in Kingston and went to Tiffin School before doing an engineering degree at Bristol, looked after her first rescue dog, a German Shepherd, at 23. Since then, she's had 27 dogs to stay for various stretches;

each included in a montage on her wall. "I love dogs," she said. "I'm always buying things for the dogs I look after. It's surprising I'm not bankrupt!"

Laura feels strongly that education is needed to stop dog owners getting a bad reputation. She looked despairingly at a dog poo bag, dropped by the side of a path. "No one seems to understand dog lead etiquette in London," she said.



Treats all round:
Laura walks
Dolly, Dash
and Tallulah in
Stokes Field

She can move into other people's houses when they're away, to look after their dogs, and the testimonials are glowing. "All dogs love Laura," said Beverly Ahern, who entrusts her pets to the Dog Sitting Lady. "She gives the best care available, and is also brilliant at transporting dogs, safely, for walks or to the groomers." Email dogsittinglady@lauraslade.co.uk or see DogSittingLady on Facebook. **Tim Harrison**

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Step up



With echoes of Escher's impossible staircase, here is the inside of Kingston's Bentall Centre, painted by Surbiton artist Tony Tribe. Tony, of Maple Road, is one of five taking part in a joint show at the Piers Feetham gallery, 475 Fulham Road, from Sept 23-28; his paintings predominantly featuring Welsh landscapes.

In the 60s, Tony's subjects included Surbiton's waterworks, cinema and river front. "My paintings are to do with looking at nature and trying to record its many complexities," he said. His wife, Louella Gwillim, also exhibiting, boasts strong Surbiton roots. Her grandfather, Keith Dannatt, was a photographer and portrait artist in Victoria Road from the First World War until 1959.

Kingston Young Carers celebrated 10 years of drama workshops at Surbiton's cornerHOUSE with a full house for their most recent performance. Directed and supported for a decade by Paul Vitty, more than 200 young carers enjoyed their week-long experience. Young carers are children and young people looking after a family member with an illness or condition. Diane White, manager of the young carers' project, summed up the workshops. "It's one of my favourite weeks of the year; watching our young carers arrive on the Monday, lacking in confidence, but seeing that by Friday they're full of joy, making new friends and succeeding in putting on an amazing show."



You're never too young or too old to be a newspaper girl or boy! Rebecca, 2, helps her grandparents deliver The Good Life to their neighbours in Williams Grove, while Peter Grove, 84, speeds along with his trolley in Effingham Road. Could you help us deliver the community paper six times a year to a road near you? We need help in **Grand Avenue, Norton Avenue, Moresby Avenue, Parkside Crescent, Meldone Close, Edith Gardens, Lyndhurst Avenue, Rose Walk, Woodside Close and Vine Close**. Make the editor's day! Email thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com

Pub's new look

The Black Lion has had a top-to-toe renovation, with nearly £250,000 spent on redecoration, refurbishment and converting all eight rentable bedrooms above the pub at the corner of Brighton Road and Maple Road into en-suites.

The banquette seating is gone. In its place, new furniture and carpets, upgraded lighting and new loos, with the outside now resplendent in 'Good Life' green. All major sports are shown on giant screens, including TVs in the tented garden.

As well as popular Sunday roasts, the pub has a steak menu (from £10, including two side dishes) and a burger menu, both with vegetarian options.



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A fragrant outing to the sewage works

Once you'd have needed a clothes peg on your nose to survive a visit to the Hogsmill sewage works. Now a tour of the Hogsmill Clean Water Depot requires no such precautions.

On a scorching day, when unpleasant whiffs would have been all too obvious, the Thames Water site produced nothing but a good impression.

In the 70s, the summer stench could be so bad that Berrylands was nicknamed Smellylands, and house sellers deferred until winter, when the pong was less severe. One Surbiton website still has a smell-o-meter to gauge 'stink level'... but today it sits on zero.

Now, as our guide, Richard, observed at a well-attended open day, most filter beds are covered, and continuous modernisation eliminates any lingering aromas. "It's all about poo," he declared, to the delight of younger visitors.



We passed vast domes – like radar listening posts, built in 2011 to capture smells.

Today the huge area is a wildlife sanctuary, with acres of undisturbed land. A reed warbler was nesting in the reed beds of the clearwater lake; much appreciated by members of the Surbiton & District Bird Watching Society, which had a stand at the open day. In the first hour, 26 different bird species were spotted.

Children fished in the pond for sticklebacks, skaters and water boatmen; threw mock 'poo' into loos to score points; Keith McMahon introduced visitors to bee colonies; and Thames Water – doing its best to be a good neighbour – served free fish and chips to all visitors... cod, not battered stickleback.

The sewage works was built between 1953-55, with the eternal message to visitors being to restrict material put in the loo to the three Ps; poo, pee and paper... not the wet wipes, cotton buds and fat which congeal and cause blockages.

Every single day of the week, an entire skipful of wet wipes, caught in the filters, is removed from the site. Meanwhile the filtered waste is dried and trucked away as agricultural fertiliser.

Tim Harrison



Clockwise from top: Building the sedimentation tanks in 1954; domes capture smells today; 1953 workmen in hats and bow ties (and smoking pipes) dig the drainage ditches; an open day guided tour; fishing for sticklebacks



Parking ban approved

Daytime commuter parking is being banned from Browns Road, Surbiton, with a residents' permit zone also covering Alpha Road, Mayberry Place, Warwick Grove, South Place, King Charles Crescent, Britannia Road and Middle Green Close.

Objections were overruled. Councillors were told the aim of the zone was to ease residents' frustration by stopping station commuters parking their cars all day.

Oliver Gill, of Richmond Grove (which was excluded from a recent consultation exercise), said he objected to having to pay

for a permit to park outside his own house. "I'll challenge this in the high court," he said. "You've failed to conduct the consultation process properly."

Fears were raised about the effect two major new flat-building schemes will have. "Parking will just get worse... and it's a nightmare already," said one resident.

Cllr Hilary Gander said that removing the added pressure of commuter parking during the day should improve life. A ban on outsiders parking from 11am-2pm on weekdays was unanimously agreed.

Wakey, wakey Waitrose

A bid by Waitrose that would make a temporary night-time delivery arrangement to its Surbiton store permanent has been rebuffed by town councillors.

The Claremont Road supermarket can currently have three deliveries to its side entrance in St James Road a night until 2023, as well as daytime trucks.

But Surbiton's neighbourhood committee has refused to make the 10pm-7am arrangement permanent. Residents complained that the noise of juggernauts manoeuvring during the night woke them up. Waitrose wanted the deal to be guaranteed to ensure it remained competitive, and so early morning customers could find a full range of goods.

Councillors were told that residents' complaints to the supermarket about noisy articulated lorries arriving in the small hours had been ignored.

The application was deferred for two years for Waitrose to produce data which irrefutably proved it had complied with the council's noise reduction requirements.

We're chuffed

Railway enthusiasts will be chuffed to learn that Talking of Trains, a series of 20 lectures, resumes on Wed, Sept 18 in the Surbiton Library annexe, Ewell Road. Led by Dick Crane, the programme has been running for 60 years. One highlight is author Chris Green's December 4 Christmas lecture – with his take on the changes facing the UK railways. Talks attract anything up to 70 people, with the most passionate fans attending them since 1964!

They start at 7pm. The first meeting is free, then it's £50 for the entire talk series.

www.talkingoftrains.co.uk

Heathrow: final say

Time is of the essence if you want to add your voice to the debate on Heathrow airport expansion. The consultation on third runway proposals and their environmental impact ends on Sept 13. Surbiton will experience more aircraft noise under the plans, with a change from an ethereal whistle to a much throatier rumble. Kingston and Esher libraries have the full plans to inspect, and you can also examine them at

www.heathrowconsultation.com

Flats to replace detached home

Nine flats are to be built at the corner of Lovelace Road and Lovelace Gardens, after councillors approved plans to demolish the existing two-storey, three-bedroom detached home and replace it with a four-storey building of five two-bedroom flats and four three-bedroom flats, with parking for seven cars.

Fourteen neighbours had objected for a variety of reasons which included excessive height and bulk, overdevelopment, loss of privacy and sunlight, pressure on parking, being out of character, and for not respecting existing building lines.

Surbiton neighbourhood committee imposed a number of conditions on the developers, including a full landscaping scheme to be submitted before any work is undertaken, and an order that any trees and shrubs planted should be looked after for five years and replaced if they die within that period.



● Jewson in Brighton Road has closed, but no one at Coventry's head office is willing to chat about it. 'Lack of trade,' an insider reports. The valuable site is tipped to become flats... so having a local builders merchant would be handy!

TALKING OF TRAINS IS STEAMING AGAIN!



Regular weekly meetings resume **Wednesday 18th September** at 7pm in the Surbiton Library annexe in Ewell Road.

Widely varied programme, from the railways of Derbyshire area to rail preservation in France!

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www.talkingoftrains.co.uk

First meeting is free. Just £50 to cover all 20 future meetings



● Nostalgia plays a large part in Tony Williams' artwork, with a hint of irony. The artist, who developed a love of pop art in the 1960s, brings a solo exhibition to the cornerHOUSE in September. Tony, who where possible paints on wood because "it has a unique quality of its own, and has a novel way of throwing up surprises once painted", says art should be enjoyed, but not taken too seriously. Meet the Artist night on Tue, Sept 3, 7-9pm. Entry free, complimentary drink until 8pm, with the opportunity to buy original work. Until Sept 29.



Every day is Sunday by Terry Arpino

● Poetry and art collide at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, on Tue, Oct 1, 7-9pm, at a Meet the Artists & Poets night. Visitors can hear poems and see artwork on the subject of The Sea. The show runs Sep 29-Oct 27. Meanwhile, themes for September's poetry workshop at the cornerHOUSE are archaeology, the worldwide web and shopping. Have fun with words at the arts centre on Sat, Sep 7, 10.30am-12.30pm. Led by local poet David Loffman, the workshop is free and leads up to a poetry reading on Fri, Sep 27 at 8pm, when you have the chance to read your own poems. The £4 entry fee includes a tempting smorgasbord of cheeses.

MP's joy at houses

● Continued from p1

Called 1-3 Progress Mews, the cool, contemporary houses, energy-efficient and with brick chosen to match existing buildings in the conservation area, were designed by Broomfield Road architect Mark Slater, from Archadia, with sedum roofs to "partly absorb water, improve biodiversity and give a nice outlook from the bedroom".

Unsurprisingly, the new homes were rapidly let to 'key workers and working professionals', eager to pay £1,400 monthly rent – well below the £2,000 similar size houses typically command.

Ross Brown, KCHA chief executive, said the homes represented "the dawning of a new era for the association", while board chairman Glennis Beresford-Beven said that people expected social housing to be bland boxes, "but that this scheme shows what can really be done".

Sir Ed was shown round, and was clearly impressed by the build quality. "I've been admiring the design," he said. "This is exactly what is needed in the area; it's hit the button!"

The homes have both private garden areas and communal gardens.

● Eight more old garages, four doors away down another narrow access road in The Avenue, are to be pulled down to make way for two new two-bedroom homes, in an unrelated project. The garages, below, are at the back of No30.



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When being in a minority really counts

I'm a rarity, but that helps, says Fr Ignatius Edet, parish priest at Our Lady Immaculate church, Tolworth. It is relatively uncommon, he concedes, to encounter a black priest in south west London. "In Tolworth I can count the number of Africans I've met on one hand," he says, adding that it helps build bridges with minorities.

"I find it positive; in my ministry I have to be sensitive, to make sure everyone is carried along," he said. "It's important to work to be inclusive. My personal target in Tolworth is realising the needs of the parish, and growing the parish spiritually... empowering parishioners to take an active role in the wider community."

Appointed last autumn, Fr Ignatius was born in Nigeria, in Ibiono-Ibom, in the south of the country.

A 'cradle Catholic', his early life revolved round family, church and school, all a few paces apart. Although he dreamed of being a lawyer when young, he changed tack after a man from his mother's village was ordained deacon. "I attended his ordination, and was captivated by the bishops and cardinals, and the sung mass," he said.

That same deacon baptised Ignatius who, after studying philosophy and theology, arrived in the UK in 2011.

Now 44, the softly spoken priest (mother tongue is Ibibio, second language English, third French) is a

serial tweeter, reposting the Pope's messages and describing himself as 'passionate about positive reforms in church and society'.

"Tolworth? It's a welcoming parish with a good sense of community," he said. "It's a thriving parish, but with potential to grow." The congregation seems to agree. Attendance at mass has risen since his appointment.

He views his role as more than religious, helping at the food bank and supporting the well-established scouts.

Fr Ignatius says he's aware of pockets of poverty in the area, with the church's St Vincent de Paul Society working to address that.

Tim Harrison

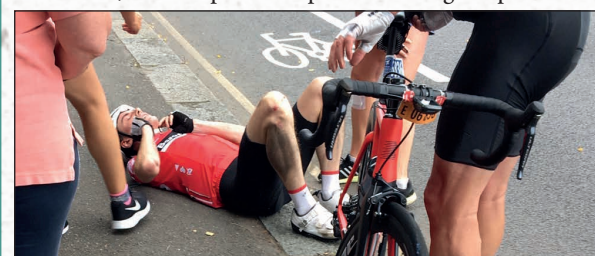
● Surbiton's neighbourhood committee meetings have moved from their usual home at Dysart School to Glenmore House at 6 The Crescent. The 7.30pm meetings focus on planning and highways matters. Next dates: Sept 10 with Sept 25 (TBC). For locations of the Nov 7 and Dec 5 gatherings, check Kingston Council's website, www.kingston.gov.uk

● The grin and the face painting says it all. Ethan Spillett, with environmental activist Mr Green, aka Des Kay, talk butterflies at Tolworth Court Farm during a community event at the nature reserve off Kingston Road. The five-year-old was among many learning about the 50-hectare site's fascinating wildlife. Forest school drop-in sessions encouraged children to engage with the natural world and there were picnics and art and mindfulness workshops. The event, organised by the Surbiton-based Community Brain and Citizen Zoo was part of the National Park City Festival.



● Remarkably, neither driver was hurt when a van being driven along Maple Road collided with a car coming down St Andrew's Road on Fri Aug 2. The church wall was demolished, distorting scaffolding put up for building work, while the car took out the garden wall of 43 Maple Road.

● An elite cyclist clips the bike in front, flies across the road and lands on the pavement – a mass of cuts and ripped lycra. Those watching RideLondon in Portsmouth Road rushed to help, but the Belgian, urged on by a colleague, got up and rode off. More than 26,000 amateur riders, like our fallen hero, and 150 pros took part in the August spectacle.



● Ewell Road jams will go on to the end of October, as temporary lights gum up traffic near Ditton Road. "We're replacing old, metal gas mains with plastic pipes," explained the gas firm SGN.

Let's consult on consulting

The council is in a consultation frenzy. There are consultations on the local plan, community plans, neighbourhoods, a citizens' assembly, the state of the borough, community engagement, community parks, street trading, the environment... and that's not counting consultations that have been and gone.

The council is even getting on its bike to canvass views on how you think your area could be improved. A pedal-powered 'parklet' was deployed in Victoria Road and Surbiton neighbourhood and communities manager James Geach set up shop on the bench outside Greggs eager to hear local residents' and business folks' ideas for their neighbourhood. "We are spending time in each neighbourhood to gather more thoughts and ideas for the council's emerging community plans," he said.

Liz Green, Kingston Council leader, said the consultations were an effective way of getting feedback from residents which would help the council in its future decision-making.

"The consultations are about people telling us their views, such as where their priorities are, where – for instance – they feel the opportunities are for new housing, business, offices and industrial land, and how we can deliver those, and the infrastructure needed."

● To be included in the conversation, visit www.kingstonletstalk.co.uk

Having battled her own demons, Tara Kent has completed an unusual marathon to raise awareness of mental health issues, and highlight the work of the Samaritans.

Tara, 49, from Beaconsfield Road, did a 'Samarathon'; a series of runs, jogs and walks adding up to 26.2 miles for the non-judgemental listening charity. In all, she achieved 71 miles.

She also used the challenge to get back on track physically after going through tough times. Tara battled depression and anxiety, using food as a coping strategy after unsuccessful fertility treatments.

"I'd no idea [IVF] would plunge me into an incredibly difficult journey of depression," she said of her "maelstrom of emotions including anger, guilt, sadness and shame".



Tara steps up to help

Helped by friends (she's lived 12 years in Surbiton, her mental health instruction business aiding others build mental wellbeing and resilience), Tara got through "the worst few years of my life".

"It made me massively appreciate Samaritans," she said. "I'd always known about them, but until I had my own mental health issues I never thought it would be something I'd ever need."

Having recovered mentally, Tara's focus is getting back into shape physically. She used her fitbit to measure her exercise during July, deducting steps she'd have taken anyway in a typical month. "In theory every step counts, even going round the corner to the Prithi," she said. "But the aim was to do something outside day-to-day walking."

Tara wore sparkly trainers ("Pink and sparkles make me happier") to do the extra steps, raising £1,300 in sponsorship.

● Calls to Samaritans are free on **116 123**. The number doesn't show up on itemised phone bills.



● Decades of writing by June Sampson, ex-Surrey Comet features editor and doyenne of local historians, were marked at a garden party attended by 100 at St Luke's, Kingston, organised by Surbiton historian and membership secretary of the Friends of Kingston Museum and Heritage Service Bob Phillips, who co-wrote The Story of Tolworth with Pat Ward.

"This was to celebrate June Sampson; the most prolific local historian in Kingston," he said. Fourteen of June's books were on show. The Highest Pinnacle, a 1979 history of St Luke's, was reprinted, with June signing copies.

Friends' chairman Patrick Codd spoke of the community's debt to June for making local history accessible through books and newspaper articles which "entertained as they informed". The St Luke's rector, the Rev Martin Hislop, gave her a bouquet donated by Pat Ward, while the mayor, Cllr Margaret Thompson, said June's articles had helped her get to know the Royal borough's history. The event also showed off the breadth of the Friends' work, and aimed to attract new members. "On both counts, success," said Bob. Tim Everson, Shaan Butters, John King and Michael Davison also signed their books.

● The rain cleared moments before the start of the Berrylands Festival, and the sun brought at least 2,000 people out to enjoy games, stalls and displays on the old lagoon site at Stirling Walk, off Raeburn Avenue. These handbell ringers were from the Lantern arts centre. Other highlights included the Royal British Legion marching band and a climbing wall, while the Berrylands Nature Reserve boosted its profile. In all, £6,000 was raised to help repair the local scout hut, and – as usual – the girls beat the boys at tug-of-war, while the children easily outpulled the adults.



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● Above is a computer-generated image of how the new play area in Surbiton's Victoria recreation ground will look when a major revamp is complete.

The well-used playground in the park alongside Balaclava Road is due for a £65,000 facelift.

Work is scheduled to start on Monday, September 9 and should be finished by early October.

Improvements include more imaginative play equipment such as 'talking flowers', a toddler train, a playhouse, cradle seat swings and a hurricane swing, and a bigger 2m x 2m trampoline. There will also be new planting, a toned-down surface, and better access, says the council.

The work is part of a £1.3million commitment to improve the borough's parks over the next three years.

Quick, call the AA

"I love twists," says Surbiton thriller writer AA Chaudhuri. "That's why I like crime writing so much."

Having tasted success as a women's fiction novelist, writing as Alexandra Sage (10,500 sales and counting), she has produced **The Scribe**.

Like her writing hero John Grisham, she trained as a lawyer... and draws on her legal skills in her new, twisting crime novel.

Available via Amazon and as a Kindle e-book, **The Scribe** is a serial killer story featuring lawyer Maddy Kramer – the genre's first female city lawyer amateur sleuth – who turns detective after a colleague becomes a victim.

"Law is a good fit with crime," says the 44-year-old, once a highly ranked British junior tennis player who occupied the inevitable hours of hanging around avidly reading.



The book will be closely followed by a second, **The Abduction**.

Alex, married with two young sons and lives in Hamilton Avenue, says the key thing about writing is persistence.

She hoovered up recent twisting dramas such as *Line of Duty* and *Killing Eve*, and has other thrillers in the pipeline... just waiting for the big breakthrough. www.aachaudhuri.com

Mothering heights

Surbiton author Sharon Wright has excited the literary world with a biography unearthing a Regency tale of passion: **The Mother of the Brontës: When Maria Met Patrick**.

"There's been huge interest from Brontë fans and scholars," said Sharon, of Cleaveland Road, after Pen & Sword published the book about Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë's mum.

For two centuries, Maria Branwell, wife of the Irish-born author and Anglican priest Patrick Brontë, has been little more than a shadowy footnote.

"Yet without this elegant, resourceful woman there would be no *Jane Eyre* or Mr Rochester, no Cathy, no Heathcliff," said Sharon, a former Daily Express columnist who also had publishing success with a book on female ballooning pioneers.

It is much harder to research the life of an 18th century woman than a man ("The only reason I've been able to is because she was from a wealthy family and married a famous man"), but Sharon has put in the miles, traipsing back and forth across Britain, piecing together details of Maria's whirlwind romance with Patrick, and the subsequent births of three of the most gifted literary siblings ever seen.

"Researching Maria has been fun, but also quite a slog," she said. "I went to Penzance, where she was born, I've studied her love letters and basically joined the dots. She was remarkable; educated, feisty and passionate, and [Patrick] was smitten!"



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● A new chamber orchestra – **Sonore!** – performs works by Schubert, Mozart and the Hungarian composer Kodaly on Sunday, September 22 at St Andrew's, Maple Road. It is the second concert by this enterprising group (the debut was in Esher in February), drawing players, amateur and professional, from around the Surbiton area. Philip Hesketh, left, wields the baton in a programme featuring Schubert's Symphony No4, written when he was 19; Mozart's Piano Concerto No24 in C minor, with soloist Viv McLean; and Kodaly's virtuosic Dances of Galanta. 7.30pm. £15 (£13 concs), U18s free. www.wegotickets.com/event/475476

● There's still time to submit your entry for the cornerHOUSE oneACTS festival. Denise Rocard, who chairs Surbiton's week-long showcase of original playwriting, said: "You have until the end of October to submit a 15 to 30-minute play; any genre, any subject. A panel of judges will read all the entries. Even if yours isn't chosen, you'll still get feedback which may help with future writing." The oneACTS will be staged at the Douglas Road arts centre in April next year. www.thecornerhouse.org



● Emily Lucas, left, who has been dazzling audiences with her heartfelt original songs, is on the bill for Out of the Corner. The unplugged showcase of local music talent will also feature the velvety tones of Mimi Drew and the tour-de-force that is 16-year-old Ashley Dee. For the full line-up at the cornerHOUSE on Thu, Sept 19 at 8pm: www.facebook.com/outofthecorner Tickets £5. 8pm. Free bottle of wine for tables of six.

Dark, twisty and unforgettable

The Pillowman, Martin McDonagh's dark comic thriller, is staged at the cornerHOUSE arts centre in Douglas Road, Surbiton, from September 5-7 at 7.45pm. Brutal, dark, twisty and unforgettable, the play raises compelling questions about family, art, religion and power, and the relationships between them, and turns the focus on the power of writers – not just as storytellers, but as those who influence the way we think. Directed by Tanju Duncan, tickets are £10 (£8 concs) from www.ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents



Brothers Turan and Reeve Duncan star in Martin McDonagh's dark comic thriller **The Pillowman**

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Drama school starts

Do you fancy learning acting skills in a fun, informal environment?

A new drama school, **The Young Pro School of Acting**, is starting in September... led by the Surbiton-based actor, singer and model Lily Driver-Thurston.

Lily, who helps teach the Royad group for adults with learning disabilities at the cornerHOUSE in Douglas Road and who founded the theatre company Instinct, is holding innovative, professional classes at Esher High School (a 10 minute walk at the end of the K3 bus route) for ages 10-18.

Tuesdays are devoted to 10-13s, while Wednesdays are for ages 14-18.

The former Hinchley Wood School pupil also runs a primary school drama group. www.theyoungproschoolofacting.com



● Auditions are being held for **Kindertransport**, Diane Samuels' acclaimed drama of childhood memories and mother-daughter relationships, at the cornerHOUSE on Sun, Sept 15 at 2pm and Mon, Sept 16 at 7.30pm. You don't need to prepare anything, and you only need attend one session. There are parts for five female actors and one male. Over 17s only. Directed by Peter Brooker, the show will run at the arts centre from Thu, Nov 21 to Sat, Nov 23. Just turn up to an audition. For more info email thechartistic.team@gmail.com

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● How cool is this? Paddleboarding with geese on the Thames! Instructor Leah Fraser of the Good Life Paddle Company (no relation) takes all standards out in the Hampton Court to Teddington Lock stretch of the river.

Leah first picked up a paddle four years ago. "I just find the river very relaxing – you can go out in the evening in fresh air and sunshine when it's really quiet and go into Zen mode," she said. "It is really gentle exercise if you want it to be. Alternatively I also do fitness sessions where you go out and do sprints, squats and sit-ups on the board; an amazing full-body workout."

A lesson lasts 90 minutes, tailored to suit ability, be it a gentle paddle, fitness session or forage for fruit next to the river. Beginners get tuition on land first, while Paddle Pro classes help improve work on technique and speed. "Literally anybody can paddleboard," said Leah, who starts Surbiton lessons from Westfield Landing by Ravens Ait.

"The nice thing about it is it improves your balance because you are using your whole body which is working to keep you stable. The other element is that I also have boards which are super stable – brilliant for beginners."

Lessons (£40) are predominantly any time on Fridays to Sundays, but Leah will also run classes on Monday to Thursday evenings too. Just email her at goodlifepaddle@gmail.com with your requirements, or visit www.goodlifepaddle.com



The Hogs bring home the bacon

With the fourth Ashes test about to start at Old Trafford, England's selectors might be tempted to pick a new all-rounder from this amiable bunch of beer-drinking sports heroes – the jubilant Long Ditton Twenty20 team, winners of the Fuller's Brewery Surrey County League T20 Cup. Captain Daniel Peall lifted the trophy after they beat London Gymkhana by 26 runs in a nail-biter at Wandgas Cricket Club, Worcester Park. As The Good Life went to press, The Hogs, who play at Stokes Field off Betts Way, Long Ditton, were hoping to do the treble by also topping the league (meaning promotion to the Surrey Championship) and winning the league cup final (noon on Sun, Sept 1 against Croydon at Weybridge Vandals' ground, Walton; a feat the club has never before achieved. The best of luck, boys.



Pic: Getty Images

Riske-taker! Alison wins Surbiton

Great crowds, great atmosphere and great tennis: the Surbiton Trophy again put the town on the map as Alison Riske defended her title in a tough three-setter against 2017 champion Magdalena Rybarikova. GB's Dan Evans lifted the men's trophy at the LTA event, beating Viktor Troicki 6-2 6-3. Praising his volunteers and staff, Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club director Roy Staniland said he'd been delighted with the event's success, cementing the club's reputation for staging this important pre-Wimbledon warm-up event. "It's a great start to the grass court season," added a breathless Evans. It also gave 1,600 children the chance to try out their skills. "This family-friendly event epitomises the LTA vision for tennis," said Lawn Tennis Association tournament chief George Donnelly.

Wall-to-wall footy for Ks and Casuals' fans

Football supporters have a wealth of local talent to enjoy on their doorstep.

Head on down to King George's Field off Hook Rise South, Tolworth, for Corinthian-Casuals and Kingstonian matches.

The ground-sharing teams play in the Isthmian League Premier Division. Home games for Corinthian-Casuals until the end of the year are on Sat, Aug 31; Sat, Sept 28; Tues, Oct 1; Sat, Oct 12; Sat, Nov 2; Sat Nov 9; Sat Nov 30; Sat Dec 14 and Sat Dec 28. Rivals Kingstonian play at home on Sat, Sept 14; Sat Sept 21; Sat, Oct 5; Sat, Oct 19; Wed, Oct 23; Sat, Nov 16; Sat Nov 23; Sat Dec 7 and Sat, Dec 21.

Season ticket holders of one club can enjoy the other team's home matches for half price – a great incentive to experience this friendly, competitive venue.

For information on ticket prices and kick-off times, visit either of the club websites: www.corinthian-casuals.com or www.kingstonian.com



Pic: Stuart Tree

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Blues sell season tickets for £5

A sell-out 41,000 will greet Chelsea Women's opener against Spurs on Sept 8 at Stamford Bridge, but Kingsmeadow hosts its first match for Millie Bright and Carly Telford (left) in the Conti Cup game on Sept 22 v West Ham. Telford says the thought of playing at the Bridge is "unbelievable". Home matches Blues fans are relishing come on Sun, Oct 13, at 2pm against Arsenal in the league, and on Wed, Nov 20, under the lights v Tottenham (Conti Cup). Season tickets are £49, but for under 20s or over 65s, they're just a fiver! www.tinyurl.com/yys3epc6



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Surbiton's human dolphin, Lloyd Edwards, came home with a clutch of medals (two of them gold) after success in the Surrey County Masters swimming championships at Guildford

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