

Cup cake craze keeps Sacha busy

Sacha Leake (left) of Pantry Cupcakes serves Martha Noble at last month's event. Sacha has a busy week of baking ahead of her, to fill the stall again.

Showers made the March market a soaked souk, but shoppers still turned up in force, delighting the organisers and proving the Maple Road event really is waterproof.

Expect more brisk business at the post-Easter, April market – rain or shine – Saturday April 21, from 9am to 1pm.



Picture: Jon Constant

From porkies to prime porkers

Five years ago Tracy Mackness was lying on a lumpy mattress in a Maidstone prison cell, nearing the end of a 10-year stretch for serious drug offences.

Today she runs one of the most popular stalls at Surbiton's Farmers' Market, her insistent cornercrake voice urging shoppers to try her new spicy chilli bangers.

With the smell of sizzling sausages all around, nobody needs a second invitation.

The tale of the Giggly Pig Company is remarkable, and is soon to be published as a book.

Sheer hard graft, combined with the enthusiasm of shoppers at markets such as Surbiton, have turned a life spiralling towards oblivion into an extraordinary success story. Turn to page 5



Picture: Jon Constant

Twitter keeps us all awake

Raucous robins are keeping Surbiton awake at night with bright new street lights fooling them into thinking it's daytime.

The red-breasted garden birds have been confused by improved lighting, and have begun their distinctive peeping and twittering in the middle of the night. For full story, turn to p3

WIN market goodies

Find the headless man, and win jars of pickles or preserves from Surbiton pickler Quack's. Turn to p7

The soaring sunflowers of Surbiton



Picture: David Jacobson

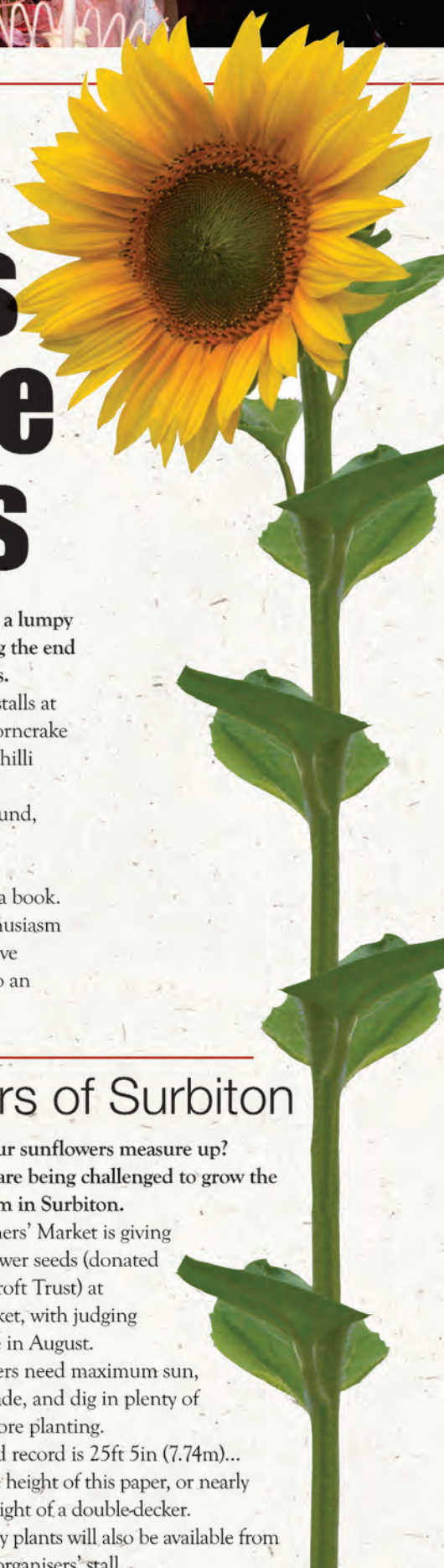
How do your sunflowers measure up? Gardeners are being challenged to grow the tallest bloom in Surbiton.

The Farmers' Market is giving away sunflower seeds (donated by The Fircroft Trust) at April's market, with judging taking place in August.

The flowers need maximum sun, so avoid shade, and dig in plenty of manure before planting.

The world record is 25ft 5in (7.74m)... 18 times the height of this paper, or nearly twice the height of a double-decker.

Strawberry plants will also be available from the market organisers' stall.



Bikes in the frame



Picture: Gareth Howell

Surbiton second-hand specialist Recycles wants to see unwanted bicycles back on the road rather than dumped at the tip where they are often broken up for scrap.

For four years, the shop at the river end of Brighton Road has been salvaging, restoring and reselling bikes – and it pays cash for cycles that are no longer used.

That forgotten Falcon, that rusting Raleigh, that bedraggled BSA in the shed... all can be transformed into smart, saleable second-hand bikes like the ones on display in the synchronised line-up outside the shop.

“We prefer to put old bikes back on the road,” said Lee Boyle of Recycles, a fanatical cyclist and the man with the biggest biceps in Surbiton. “Anything 60s or 70s and hand-made is pretty strong – people took a pride in making them.”

The shop offers an affordable alternative to pricier new bikes, with fully restored and serviced models selling for as little as £45, compared to upmarket new bikes costing hundreds of pounds or £50 supermarket specials which fall apart after a month’s use.

As well as buying and renovating old bikes, Recycles also services bicycles for owners (a full strip-down and

service is £55, a general service £30), and stocks a huge range of bits and bobs. It has a speedy puncture repair service at a tenner a time, and the knowledgeable staff give no-nonsense advice, whether it’s about finding the bike to best get you to Surbiton station in the morning, or what to buy if you fancy some summer weekend exercise.

“We just love bikes, and we resell bikes very cheaply,” said Lee, who asks that people selling cycles turn up with photo ID to guard against fraud.

“We’re straight-talking, and we do part-exchange against bikes that we have. We’ll be honest. If it won’t make any money, we’ll tell you!”

It’s as good an incentive as you’ll get to drag out that half-forgotten steed buried behind the lawnmower in the shed, or the sorry-looking, flat-tyred specimen lolling against the wall in the side passage.

“We don’t buy the full-suspension Halfords bikes, and we don’t buy kids’ bikes; they’re generally cheaply made,” added Lee.

Which means pretty much everything else is fair game.

Recycles is at 151 Brighton Road KT6 5NW. Call 020 8399 8365 or visit www.recyclesbikeshop.co.uk

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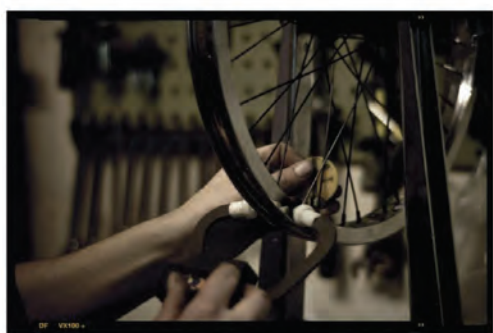
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From Tolworth to the Titanic

There’s no escaping the big news of a century ago. The Titanic sank in the Atlantic on its maiden voyage on April 15... and barely a day goes by without it plunging once again to the ocean floor in some drama or other on our TV screens.

One of the victims was 40-year-old stockbroker Austin Partner, a first-class passenger on board the ill-fated ship. He lived with his wife and two sons in Ewell Road, Tolworth.

Ten days before he sailed, the moustachioed moneyman had started a new job with the brokerage firm of Myer & Robertson.

He paid £28 10s for his ticket, and was heading for Canada (his 17th trip across the Atlantic) to visit an affiliated firm there.

His lifeless body was fished from the water, and was identified by a silver cigarette case bearing the initials AP.

On May 11, 1912, his embalmed body was shipped back to England aboard the SS Minnehaha.

The coffin remained one night at the



family home before he was interred on May 23 in the graveyard of St Mary’s, Long Ditton – one of only a handful of the Titanic’s 1,514 victims to be returned to the UK for burial.

The single funeral hymn at St Mary’s was Nearer My God to Thee – poignantly, the hymn sung by the crew and passengers of the ship as it slipped below the surface to its watery grave.

If you walk in through the lych gate of the church and turn sharp left, it is three plots in, beside the hedge. You can’t miss it. A white carved marble angel stands guard, holding a wreath.

The inscription reads: Sacred to the memory of Austin Partner of Tolworth, Surbiton, who lost his life in the foundering of the steamship Titanic in mid-Atlantic on the 15th day of April 1912, whose body was recovered and interred here, May 23rd, aged 40 years.

In the same grave are the remains of his widow Nellie, who died on July 13, 1957 aged 85.

Fuelled by the 100th anniversary, the Titanic souvenir and memorabilia trade has never been stronger. One of the more affordable items is a postcard of a lifeboat picking up bodies from the disaster, signed by Austin’s daughter-in-law Irene, and on sale for \$99 on one website.

Tim Harrison



Rockin' robins causing sleepless nights in Surbiton

Raucous birds are keeping residents awake after improved street lighting fooled them into thinking they were serenading the day. **Tim Harrison** reports



The pretty red-breasted gardener's friend the robin has become confused by brighter lights, and has begun its distinctive peeping and twittering in the middle of the night. Surbiton & District Bird Watching Society confirms that robins often sing in the early hours.

"Now is the time of year when this starts to be noticed with the increased day length and shorter evenings," said membership secretary Gary Caine.

According to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the dawn chorus is triggered by the birds' internal clock and the first rays of light.

"Even low light can trigger song, with the unrivalled kings as daytime-birds-turned-night-time-songsters being robins," said the RSPB.

The national bird charity's view is endorsed by Surbiton bird watchers, who belong to a group which is just two years away from its diamond jubilee. Mr Caine confirmed that robins often sing in the early hours.

"... birds in towns sing more noisily than birds in the country, because they have to make themselves heard ..."

"Now is the time of year when this starts to be noticed with the increased day length and shorter evenings," he said.

Residents in Victoria Avenue, Balaclava Road, Effingham Road and St Mary's Road have reported a noticeable rise in nocturnal twittering.

One local who has been woken by the enthusiastic chirping is Madeleine Hern. She said: "The birds often seem to start in the middle of the night, and sometimes it's difficult to sleep – especially when it's warm and we have the windows open."

Robins are always among the first birds to begin the dawn chorus – and one of the few to sing all year round.

The birds reserve their most insistent peeps for spring, with a song that the RSPB describes as 'powerful, confident and upbeat'. The noisiest birds are the males, laying claim to their garden territory.

It is thought that replacement streetlights, designed to focus more light downwards, reducing light pollution, have convinced robins that it's time to tweet – even if it is the middle of the night.

An Effingham Road bird-watcher, setting off last week on an all-day foray to spot swallows, told The Good Life: "Robins and blackbirds are the main culprits. They are particularly noisy at this time of year as they try to attract mates and stake out their territory. Sometimes wrens and dunnocks join in."

"The brighter street lights here have made a difference, and birds in towns sing more noisily than birds in the country, because they have to make themselves heard."

The RSPB explained: "Robins are insectivorous and are well adapted to foraging in dim light, continuing to feed in artificial light well into the night. Robins are one of the earliest birds to start the dawn chorus, and one of the last to stop singing at night."

The RSPB said that street lights did trigger robins' song – with many supposed reports of nightingales turning out to be robins (which are, in fact, a distant relative).

Surveys have suggested that robins and other birds have learnt to counter noisy daytime conditions such as traffic by switching their singing times to the night, just to make themselves heard.

City-dwelling great tits, for instance, have developed a new, high-pitched staccato song to attract mates, while their country cousins use a slower, longer twitter.

Sheffield University researchers discovered in 2007 that in areas where robins sing regularly at night, the daytime noise levels are, on average, 10 decibels louder than in quiet areas.

At one site where daytime traffic noise hit 69 decibels, researchers discovered one robin which only sang during the night!

Nocturnal singing may be annoying for anyone in Surbiton who is struggling to get to sleep, but it isn't ideal for the birds either.

Dr Richard Fuller of Sheffield University explained: "Birds may become more stressed if the sound of the city keeps them awake longer. If they are singing at night, it is going to take more energy than sleeping, so this may not be good news for them."

■ If you have any unusual local sightings (or sound-ings) of birds, Surbiton's bird-watchers would be delighted to learn about them. The society's recorder, Tony Quinn, can be reached at www.encief.co.uk/sdbws

The society meets monthly at Surbiton Library's upper hall in Ewell Road. See p8

Now here's a funny story

Best joke heard in a Surbiton pub this month, on April 3 at the Black Lion.

An old man answered a knock at the door one evening, and found two policemen standing there.

The first policeman asked: "Sir, are you married?"

"Why yes," the old man replied, "for 48 years."

"Do you have a photograph of your wife, sir?" the second policeman asked.

The old man pulled a picture out his wallet and handed it to the officers.

They looked it over and handed it back to him.

"Sir, I'm sorry, but it looks like your wife has been hit by a truck," said the first policeman.

The old man said: "I know, sir, but she's got a wonderful personality, and she's a great cook."



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Thinking outside the box

Two years ago, a New Yorker with a bright idea set up a fruit and veg box service to supply food lovers with wholesome organic produce.

The first collection point was in Kingston, and last autumn a second was added – in the back garden of The Lamb pub in Brighton Road, Surbiton. The venues alternate each week.

From The Ground Up is a thriving concern – still community-minded, and still ploughing profits back into the business. Overheads are contained thanks to a rota of willing volunteers, and more than 200 people place regular orders for boxes of produce.

Stephanie Hofielen, who arrived in the UK from New York City 17 years ago, is delighted with the way the enterprise has blossomed.

“It was founded by the Transition Town Kingston food group,” she explained. “I went to them with my proposal, and the buying group has evolved into 200 people in the online shop, and a lot more people on the mailing list. Word of mouth has grown it into quite a thriving enterprise.”

Each week everyone on the list is sent an emailed prompt asking them if they want to place an order.

There’s no obligation, and you can order as much or as little as you want. If you just want a single organic garlic bulb at 49p... that’s fine. If you don’t want anything for a few weeks, that’s fine too.

Stephanie recommends that newcomers who want to find out about the service do a Google search for From The Ground Up Kingston. Then click on a



Volunteer packer Toni Izard

Picture: Tony May

link to the shop, and browse through the organic fruit and veg.

It doesn’t just stop at fresh produce. Two local honey producers sell their jars (“If it wasn’t for us, they’d be sitting on 40 jars of additive-free honey!” said Stephanie), you can buy jams and marmalades, fresh bread from the Ham-based Ruben’s Bakehouse (a regular at the Maple Road Farmers’ Market) and Flour Power City, herbs, cheese, eggs and organic apple juice. Many opt for a mixed seasonal veg or fruit box, then add to that.

The Kingston collection point is at the environment centre in a prefab in Fairfield East, while Surbiton veg collections are made from the beer garden behind The Lamb at 73 Brighton Road, thanks to the support of landlord Adam Lewis.

So the collection on this week’s Maple Road Farmers’ Market day – April 21 – is from Kingston, while the collection on Saturday April 28 is from The Lamb.

“We’re not trying to compete with Riverfords or Abel & Cole because we can’t,” said Stephanie. “We’re a real community-minded group; a channel for naturally produced food in the area.”

From The Ground Up promises weekly boxes of safe, healthy food produced by earth-friendly methods at good prices, focusing on seasonal crops and supporting local producers.

New volunteers are always welcome, to pack boxes (although most people bring their own bags) and collect cash for the weekly orders.

Visit www.ttkingston.org/fgu and click on online shop.

Help after rail death

Surbiton Samaritans offered help to travellers and schoolchildren who witnessed the death of a man at the station last month.

They gave out leaflets and spoke to passengers following the incident at 3.30pm on March 19 in which a 27-year-old east London man died after being struck by a Waterloo-bound express.

Volunteer information evenings are being held on April 17 and May 17 at the Samaritans office, 12 St Andrew’s Road, next to St Andrew’s church. See p8

Prue sells out

Books sold – appropriately – like hot cakes when cookery school queen Prue Leith signed copies of her autobiography and met readers in Surbiton.

Prue attracted 70 people to a canapés do at Glenmore House in The Crescent, organised by Pat Freestone-Bayes of The Regency Bookshop.

“We sold out,” she told The Good Life. “Everyone really enjoyed it.”

Early this month author Lynn Crilly, who wrote *Hope With Eating Disorders*, signed copies at the shop in Victoria Road.



Picture: David Jacobson

Thinking of having a new garden?

Did you know there’s a leading landscape contractor right in the heart of Surbiton?

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Playing sardines

An open-air fish barbecue celebrates the ‘history’ of sardine fishing in the Thames at Surbiton.

Ancient crones once cast nets into the water at Seething Wells and hauled in huge numbers of the distinctive oily fish... according to Robin Hutchinson, organiser of the first Seething Freshwater Sardine Festival, which takes place on Sunday April 22, the day after the April Farmers’ Market.

The fun starts on Queen’s Promenade, by the Thames opposite Raven’s Ait – at the end of St Leonard’s Road, at 3.30pm.

The fish will be ‘landed’, before the fisherfolk, dressed in their distinctive fishy garb, straggle up to Maple Road, pushing the catch in an antique cart (modelled on ancient Seething Wells fishing trolleys) to St Andrew’s Square for a fish barbecue at 4.30pm.

Folk music will be supplied by the Green Rock River Band and The Mayflies, and a sardine king and queen will be crowned.

According to researchers, the old fishing boats used in Seething Wells were called chueners. They had azure-coloured sails, and were therefore obviously known as blue-fin cheuners.

Full details at www.seethingwells.org



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A fit of the Giggles

She lives modestly, in a caravan on her pig farm in Romford, with her partner Barry and her four Jack Russells; Sausage, Mash, Gravy and Chops. She gets up at 4am to prepare the vans (her teams work at more than 70 markets a month) then sets off to sell bangers.

Running The Giggly Pig Company is full-on, demanding total motivation. There isn't a second in the day for a quiet cuppa, but Tracy Mackness (pictured below with The Good Life editor Tim Harrison) wouldn't have it any other way.

The 47-year-old has turned her life around from when suicide seemed an appealing option to running a sausage business with a £500,000 turnover.

As you look at her 700 saddleback pigs, snuffling about in the Essex sunshine, it's hard to believe that five years ago she was behind bars, nearing the end of a 10-year sentence for conspiracy to supply cannabis with a street value of £4million.

"Prison does work," she states with disarming frankness after her five and a half years inside. "I had time to think. I had two options - kill myself, or get on with it."

She got on with it, doing a string of courses and discovering the joy of working on the prison farm, looking after the rare-breed pigs.

"In prison I got more sense from the pigs than half the people inside," she said. "The pigs kept me sane. They saved my bacon! They kept me going when there were times I could have given up."

Behind bars, she took NVQs in pig husbandry, and on release - with the £3,000 she'd saved from her prison



wages, plus her £57 discharge grant - she started her own pig business.

"My friend Kim and I, we'd heckle the men when we were out on the town; we were the giggly pigs," she said, explaining how the name originated.

From starting with 30 pigs, a battered van, a borrowed field and her mum cooking samples at the back of a Romford market stall, she now runs a sausage empire, with her animals kept in the best conditions, and a shelf full of awards for sausages which now come in 70 flavours, from lemon and fennel to honey and thyme, stilton and celery to ginger and spring onion.

Part of the fun is experimenting with new flavours. She has tried chilli and chocolate, and is now attempting to perfect a strawberries and cream sausage for Wimbledon fortnight.

The packs fly off her stall at Maple Road, which is, she says, one of her favourite markets.

"We do a lot, but Surbiton's really good. The people are very interested in what we're doing; they appreciate the finer things in life. They understand a good sausage, and my sausages are for foody people. They're eager to try new things. Some people just won't try a sample in other markets, but at Surbiton I won't let people walk past without sampling!"

"At Surbiton you can see the area is about food - there are so many pubs and restaurants, and the other stalls have nice cakes and nice veg, and nice crabs. It's a pleasure to be there."

The 9am-1pm hours also appeal. She has invariably sold out by the close, meaning she can get home in good time to feed her porkers.

She loves saddlebacks - loves the fact that they have a different temperament and nature to commercial pigs. "They're good, hardy outdoor pigs."

They breed twice a year (intensive farmers push that to three times), producing an average of 14 piglets. For 10 weeks they remain with the sow, squealing enthusiastically as they feed, then at three months the boys are separated from the girls.

"I don't want any teenage pregnancies," she laughs.

Gestation is precisely three months, three weeks and three days, and at around a year they are humanely dispatched and turned into the product shoppers enjoy.

Her monthly pig food bill is £5,000 - a figure that has doubled in the five years since she set up in business.

Giggly Pig also does hog roasts (the jubilee and Olympics are already overbooked), runs a butcher's shop and is about to start an online mail order business.



But markets are where the real trade is done. She was courted by Asda, "but they wanted them for next to nothing, and we hand-make sausages and cut them singly".

From growing up on fruit and veg stalls at her local market, Tracy has gone from Essex bad girl, via two failed marriages and jail, to winning the Barclays Trading Places award and being invited to become a Prince's Trust ambassador. Her own father was sent to prison when she was 14, and she overcame mental breakdowns on her remarkable route through life.

Now she gives talks on how to turn your life around, she will soon be a published author ("Yeah, but it's ghost-written!") and she provides jobs for a score of other Essex girls and boys. "I do my own bookings, I do the wages, I do everything," she told The Good Life. "Maybe I don't trust people after being in prison. I'm a bit of a perfectionist."

Visit www.gigglypig.co.uk



Meet The Good Life's garden guru

A client once said to me: "A garden is not a garden without a lawn."

He is not alone in his thinking. Most people won't part with their patch of green, even if it's tatty and uncared for.

Yes, the British love their lawns and, a little like outdoor barbecuing, it's a predominantly male preserve.

Maybe it's the challenge of man versus nature or order over chaos.

During the 17th century, when the lawn was invented, it was something of a status symbol. Only the wealthy had lawns because only they could afford to have a team of labourers constantly scything and shearing their grass to perfection. It was an incredibly labour intensive activity, and it still is today.

In truth, a lawn looks best when it has just been laid, and from that point on, the battle begins.

For stalwarts in pursuit of perfect lush green swards in geometric stripes, be prepared to scarify, aerate, top dress, level, weed and feed. But for those of us whose



sentimental attachment to our lawn often outweighs the number of hours we're prepared to put in, here is some basic advice.

- Choose the right lawn mower for the job. A rotary mower is fine for most family lawns but a cylinder mower will give the highest quality cut. A hover mower won't give you a striped lawn but will make light work of long grass and bumpy lawns
- Keep your mower regularly serviced. The blades must be sharp to avoid tearing and damaging the grass
- Mow regularly to keep your lawn in good condition, but be guided by the weather. Never mow in wet weather and mow less frequently when it's dry
- Never cut more than one third of the total length of the grass. Too close cutting can scalp the lawn and encourage shallow roots, making it more susceptible to drought, weeds and moss
- Don't even think of laying a new lawn right now. It will need plenty of water to get it established. Thames Water imposed a hosepipe ban on April 5 and you risk a £1,000 fine if you ignore it (unless you are a blue badge holder or are planning to stage an Olympic event in your back garden!). It can be a mistake to start watering in a drought, even if a hosepipe ban is



not in place, as this forces grass roots upwards towards the surface seeking the water, encouraging shallow rooting and weakening growth

- Leave fine grass cuttings on the lawn during a drought. They act as a mulch, slowing down moisture loss
- Apply a spring feed, for lush green grass, and an autumn feed for healthy roots.

If all this sounds like too much effort and it's not for you, there are other options. In general it is always best to work with existing conditions, so you could opt for a woodland garden in a shady site or a gravel garden in a dry sunny site. Then again you might consider abandoning the lawn altogether and replacing it with natural stone paving and container planting. After all, why fight nature?

Janice Cripps is a professional garden designer based in Surbiton. Visit www.janicecripps.co.uk

Farmers' Market stalls for April 21

(List correct at time of going to press)

Allingham Farm

Lamb and rare breed pork

Anila Sauces

Sauces / Bhajis / Samosas

Corte dei Signori

Olive oil

FA Secretts

Vegetables

Just Desserts

French patisserie

Lallapolosa Baking Company

Baked goods

Norbiton Fine Cheese

Cheese

Nut Knowle Farm

Goats cheese

Olive & Things

Olives

Pimpernel Fisheries

Fresh fish

Quack's

Pickles

Ralph Wettach Boutique Catering

Deli foods

Ringden Farm

Organic fruit and fruit products

Rosie Home Preserves

Jams / Jellies / Marmalades / Chutney

Ruben's Bakehouse

Organic breads

Pantry Cupcakes

Cakes

Simon's Free Range Eggs

Free range eggs

Sussex Smokers

Smoked Meats / Fish

Sussex Way Meat

Meat

The Giggly Pig Company

Rare breed pork sausages

The Parsnipship

Vegetarian pies

The Sussex Pie Company

Freshly made pies for home baking

Tiger Spring Tea

High-quality loose teas

Wrights Original

Ginger / Fruit drinks and food products

It's the way the cookie crumbles

Elyse Savage started baking when she was seven. Armed with a couple of children's cookbooks, she stood on a chair in her mother's kitchen and began experimenting with dough and chocolate.

Soon she was baking cookies and brownies for church dinners in her native Ontario... and the platefuls always emptied the moment they touched the table.

Three decades on, Elyse (right) and her partner Adam Jones are Lallapolosa – a Surbiton-based baking company on a mission to supply the tastiest cakes, brownies and cookies to the world.

It's one of the most popular stalls at the Maple Road Farmers' Market, with the sample pots emptying as quickly as they can be filled. It seems Surbiton has a bit of a sweet tooth. Fragments of jammy dodger, chunks of smartie cookies, pieces of peanut butter brownies and offcuts from giant ginger biscuits compete in the popularity stakes.

On market day, bags of biscuits sell for a bargain £1.25 each, or five for a fiver.

"My parents gave me free rein in the kitchen," said Elyse, 37, who met Adam in Australia, when she went travelling round the world in her twenties.

"Both of us reckoned we didn't want to work for someone else."

Although Elyse was teaching English at the time, her passion was still for quality baking. "I always wanted to start my own business, and it took time to evolve," she said. But last autumn Lallapolosa was born. As was their son, Theo.

With its distinctive logo of pouring chocolate, the Lallapolosa Baking Company is now getting established as a proper brand, with an inviting and very professional website to back it up.

The name is a play on the century-old American word lollapalooza – a slang exclamation for something amazing.

Which about sums up the brownies.

Elyse still loves experimenting with flavours, and new varieties are conjured up in the kitchen of their high-ceilinged flat in Maple Road, near the Assembly Rooms.

Chocolate truffles and toasty oatly raisin cookies cook on the work surfaces, filling the rooms with a divine smell.

If six-month-old Theo doesn't grow up adoring chocolate, it'll be a surprise.



Picture: Jon Constant

The market has proved a perfect local launch vehicle for the cakes, biscuits and brownies, with those rapidly emptying sample pots holding the key to success.

"Without them I wouldn't sell half of what I do," said Elyse. "It gets people in, and thanks to British politeness after they've tried a couple they feel they should buy!"

Customers at Maple Road followed Elyse right through her pregnancy, and brought gifts for Theo on her first market back – underlining the cuddly community feel of the monthly Surbiton event.

Brownies are the market leader, with the salted caramel pecan dreams the top seller. The most exotic is the gold digger brownie, containing edible gold leaf!

All the recipes are Elyse's.

"Yes, I'm the creative one. Adam's totally into the marketing," she said.

"I keep creating all the time; I bring something new to the market every few months."

Adam, 34, concurs. "She's quite a perfectionist with her baking," he said, pointing out that only free-range eggs, unsalted butter and top Belgian chocolate are used.

Further down the line there will be baking classes, combining Elyse's teaching and cookery talents. There will be an early chance to experience the tuition at the April market, when Elyse will demonstrate how to ice Easter egg cookies.

When the market isn't on, there is next-day delivery on website orders, in beautiful cushion-padded presentation gift boxes decorated with ribbons and charms.

Check out the tasting pots at the Farmers' Market on April 21, and visit lallapolosabaking.co.uk to see the full range.



Picture: David Jacobson

How Beaker came to be

A hundred young fans listened enraptured during the Easter holidays as queen of children's literature Jacqueline Wilson told them about growing up in Kingston and shopping in Surbiton.

The former children's laureate – who still lives in the borough – signed books and chatted to the audience who bombarded the ex-Latchmere and Coombe Girls pupil with questions about creating characters and inventing names.

The most famous, Tracy Beaker, originated in her bathtub. Lacking a surname, she gazed around her.

"Flannel. No. Soap. No. Tap. No. Toilet. Definitely not,"



she said, to giggles. "I washed my hair. I don't have a shower attachment, I just use a beaker to rinse. I picked it up and thought 'That's it!' This is my girl. I'm very pleased the name popped into my head," said Jacqueline, 66, speaking in the Surbiton Library hall in Ewell Road.

Appropriately, for an event marking the 200th birthday of Charles Dickens, she has introduced young readers to Victorian history thanks to her stories about Hetty Feather.



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pub + kitchen

84 Victoria Road

Supporting charities

April's Maple Road Farmers' Market is working with two charities. Among the 26 stallholders will be the Release Counselling Service, run from the YMCA. It offers 50-minute sessions, with fees based on ability to pay.

Also being supported is The Stud Nursery, which provides work and horticulture training for adults with learning disabilities. It will be selling potted plants and bedding plants grown in Home Park.

Chilli pickle is hot choice

Two new varieties of potted pleasure appear on the Quack's Pickles stall at April's market. Hot chilli pickle is being marketed as The Whistling Gaucho, while spiced apple jelly is sold as Handsome Bertie's Soothing Balm.

The label designs, by Quack's founder Peter Short, suggest that Bertie and the Gaucho are Victorian music hall stars.

"Tasting pots of the new flavours went down well at the March market," said Peter. "So now we're in full production."

The pots sell at £3.50, and join existing lines which include Madagascan Platypus Eggs and Lady Pugilist's Ungent.

Team seek Smokey

Three members of an animal search team have been scouring Balaclava Road for a missing cat. Smokey, a distinctive long-eared grey puss, vanished on March 30, soon after moving to Surbiton from Tooting.

"He's a bit naive and vulnerable," owner Helena Clay told The Good Life. "He's a year old, and he's got a brother at home who's missing him."

An insurance firm paid officers from animalsearchuk.co.uk to search gardens and streets for the micro-chipped moggie. There is a reward. Call 0800 4320 340 and quote reference 52221.

COMPETITION Figure this one out

Cerne Abbas has a well-endowed giant, Wilmington has a long man, Uffington has a white horse... and Surbiton has a headless man.

It may not be on a par with England's great chalk hill figures, but our area icon has a certain quirky charm.

Simply tell us the name of the supermarket car park where Surbiton's headless man is found, and the first correct emailed response chosen at random on May 1 will win two pots of preserves or pickles from Quack's Pickles at the Maple Road farmers' market on May 19.

Entries close on April 29. Email your answer plus your name and address and a daytime phone number to: competition@therichmind.co.uk

Good luck.



COMPETITION

The hunt is still on

Easter's gone, but you can round off the hols with chocolate, thanks to an egg hunt organised on the day of the market by Yorda Adventures.

It is being staged from 9.30am on Saturday April 21 in the playground of St Andrew's and St Mark's junior school... opposite the stalls.

Find hidden tokens, and win chocolate. You can also get your face painted. £3 per child.

Yorda is a not-for-profit organisation working with families in and around Surbiton, supporting children and young people with disabilities.

Workmen threw Surbiton into confusion last month by changing the time on the clocktower two days before the clocks altered.

To save on overtime, Kingston Council arranged that the extra hour be added to the coronation clocktower by Waitrose on Friday March 23.

As British summertime didn't begin until the small hours of March 25, it put many Saturday shoppers off their stride.

Clocking off



2% adrift

A contestant came close to landing the Black Lion quiz jackpot of £1,000 cash, with a question on nitrogen's proportion in air.

The prize question was put, but the inspired guess of 80 per cent had to be spot on. Landlord Mark Sheehy commiserated, but the correct answer was 78 per cent.



Chiu and Amie bring new Chinese to Brighton Road

Yumcha, the restaurant at the Brighton Road/Maple Road traffic lights, has been replaced by another oriental eatery, Naturally Chinese.

The interior of 59 Brighton Road underwent a solid week of round-the-clock renovation before reopening on April 5, with a 10 per cent discount deal on picked-up takeaways.

As well as opening every day from noon-10pm (10.30pm on Friday and Saturday), owners Chiu and Amie plan dim sum classes and wine-tasting events.

Yumcha, which closed in February, struggled to pay its way, despite eat-all-you-can offers and free deliveries.

Football legend George Best, who lived in nearby St Andrew's Road, was a regular before the bottle finally caught up with him.

Surbitonians with longer memories remember the restaurant as a branch of Fish! in the 1990s, after the corner clocktower building was enlarged with a three-storey rear extension.

Naturally Chinese (slogan: Our food doesn't do sleepovers, made from scratch every day) has four set menus, Chinese classics, new dishes and seasonal specials.

Visit www.naturallychineserestaurant.co.uk

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April

- 16-21** oneACT festival, cornerHOUSE arts centre, 116 Douglas Road KT6 7SB. See p10
- 16** Zumba class, St George's church hall, Hamilton Ave KT6 7QA, 10am, and every Monday morning
- 16** Surbiton Arts Group watercolour demonstration by Terry Harrison, 8pm, Library annexe, Surbiton Library, Ewell Road KT6 6AG. £4
- 17** Cocktail mixology classes at Maple Road bar, Rubicon. See ad on p3
- 17** Samaritans volunteer information evening, 7.30pm, 12 St Andrew's Road, Surbiton KT 6 4DT. See p7
- 17** Surbiton & District Bird Watching Society meeting, Surbiton Library, Ewell Road KT6 6AG. 8pm
- 17** Actor Laurence Foster depicts the London of Charles Dickens and Oliver Twist. 2pm, £2. Surbiton Library, Ewell Road KT6 6AG
- 18** Rubicon Book Club, Rubicon cocktail bar, 97 Maple Road, KT6 4AW, 8pm. On the table, The Cava Queen by Kingston writer Amanda Meheux. £5. Call 020 8399 5055 or email info@rubiconbar.com
- 18** Deadline to register to vote in the May 3 London Mayor elections
- 20** Women's business start-up course, Hillcroft College, South Bank KT6 6DE, led by Carly Ward, Women in Business winner. 020 8399 2688
- 20** Philatelic Society, Surbiton Library hall, Ewell Road KT6 6AF, 8pm. Airmails. brian.sole@btinternet.com
- 20-21** Hook Beer Fest with 40 real ales and ciders, scout hall, Verona Drive KT6 7SU, 6-10pm. £5. Over 18s only
- 21** Workshop, Lamb pub, 73 Brighton Road KT6 5NF, 14pm, to create fish costumes for Sardine Festival
- 21** Rhyme time for dads, babies and toddlers. 10.30-11am, Tolworth Library, 37 The Broadway KT6 7DJ

- 21** Children's tap dancing, YMCA, 49 Victoria Road KT6 4NG. 11.30am
- 22** Seething Freshwater Sardine Festival, see p4 www.seethingwells.org
- 22** Chamber concert, 4pm, St Andrew's church, Maple Road KT6 4AB, Waldegrave Ensemble. See p10
- 22** Quiz night, Duke of York, 65 Victoria Road KT6 4NQ. 8pm
- 23** Who Do You Think You Are? Genealogist Nick Barratt talks to the Maple Village WI, 8pm, St Andrew's & St Mark's junior school, Maple Road KT6 4AL. Guests £5
- 23** Jam session, Duke of York pub, 65 Victoria Road KT6 4NQ. Bring your instrument. Fronted by Val and Richard of Bad Influence. Free. 8.30pm. Details at www.jam-pact.com
- 24** Gala evening for Wild Intelligence art exhibition at the cornerHOUSE, 116 Douglas Road KT6 7SB. See p11
- 24** Adult reading group at Surbiton Library, Ewell Road, KT6 6AG, 7-8pm
- 24** Cocktail mixology class at the Rubicon bar, Maple Road. See p3
- 24** Quiz night at the Black Lion, 58 Brighton Road KT6 5PL. Jackpots up to £1,000. 8pm
- 25** Surbiton Chess Club, Fircroft, 96 Ditton Road KT6 6RH 7.30pm. www.surbitonchessclub.co.uk
- 25** Adult table tennis, Wednesdays, Methodist Church, 39 Ewell Road KT6 6AF. 8pm. 020 8390 4598
- 25** Vocality choir, St Andrew's church, Maple Road KT6 4DS. Led by Ben Crawley, 8pm. Good for the voice, and good for the soul. www.vocalitysinging.co.uk
- 25** Yo Baby preschool music and movement class, YMCA, 49 Victoria Road KT6 4NG. Babies 9.40am, toddlers 10.30am. £6, pay-as-you-go for 45-mins. www.yobaby.co.uk
- 26** Parenting Children course, Christ Church, 8 Christ Church Road KT5

- 8JJ. 7.45-9.45pm. Suggested donation £5. www.ccsurbiton.org
- 26** Scottish country dancing by the Surbiton & District Caledonian Society, St Matthew's School, Langley Road KT6 6LW, 8pm. £4
- 26** Mixed badminton, Methodist Church, 39 Ewell Road, Surbiton KT6 6AF. Every Thursday at 7.45pm at the church. Full details: 020 8390 4598
- 27** Discussion on Charles Dickens and Oliver Twist and talk by Jane Jordan. £2, Surbiton Library, Ewell Road KT6 6AG. 6.30pm, talk 7.15pm
- 27** Unusual clothes and jewellery at the Little Frock Shop at the Rubicon bar, 97 Maple Road KT6 4AW. 9am
- 27** Social night & cornerHOUSE agm, 116 Douglas Road KT6 7SB. 7pm. Cheap beer and wine at the bar, DVD and book exchange. Free entry
- 27** Surbiton Recorded Music Society. Waving The Flag with Peter Jones, 7.45pm, Raeburn Hall, URC, Elgar Avenue KT5 9JR. £2. 01372 273204
- 27** Surbiton High School junior girls' open morning, 9.30am. 13 Surbiton Crescent KT1 2JT. 020 8439 1309 or email admissions@surbitonhigh.com
- 28** Organic veg box collection at The Lamb, 73 Brighton Road KT6 5NF, noon. From The Ground Up, www.tkingston.org/fgu
- 28** Squeeze, Balance and Roll, BoCo Yoga and Pilates centre, 6 Electric Parade KT6 5NT. 2pm. Trish Soper
- 28** Kids' hip-hop dance, YMCA, 49 Victoria Road KT6 4NG. £4, for 9 to 15-year-olds, 8.30am. 020 8339 7083
- 29** Junior table tennis, Methodist Church 39 Ewell Road KT6 6AF. Every Sunday 5pm. 020 8390 4598
- 29** Quiz night, Duke of York, 65 Victoria Road KT6 4NQ. 8pm
- 30** Mark Ford presents Still Life Surprise, 8pm, Surbiton Library, Ewell Road KT6 6AG. £4. Bring materials

- 30** TJ Johnson fronts jam session at Duke of York pub, 65 Victoria Road KT6 4NQ. TJ worked in the Hendrix tribute band Bold as Love. Bring your instrument. Free entry. 8.30pm start

May

- 1** Katy's Drama Club, for five to 11-year-olds, every Tuesday in term time, cornerHOUSE, 116 Douglas Road KT6 7SB, 3.45-4.45pm for fives to eights, 5-6pm for eights to 11s. £3. Email katysdramaclub@gmail.com
- 1** Rotary Club of Surbiton, Holiday Inn, Portsmouth Road KT6 5QQ. Tuesday meeting gathers at 6.45pm
- 1** Breatheasy meeting for people with lung disease or lung disorders. Held in Surbiton homes on the first Tuesday of month. Call Bill, 020 8948 4419
- 1** Celebrating St Paul's Cathedral. The Grevatt lecture at Surbiton and District Historial Society by Linda Shepherd, Surbiton Library annexe, Ewell Road, 7.30pm. Non-members £2
- 1** Surbiton High School senior school open morning, 9.45am, 13 Surbiton Crescent KT1 2JT. 020 8439 1309
- 1** Surbiton's Multiple Sclerosis Carers' group on first Tuesday of each month. For venue, call Ray on 07986 514 513
- 1** Quiz night at the Black Lion, 58 Brighton Road KT6 5PL. 8pm
- 2** Cocaine Anonymous group, for help with addiction to cocaine or other drugs, YMCA, 49 Victoria Road KT6 4NG. 7-8.30pm. www.cauk.org.uk
- 2** Zumba class, Hollyfield School, Surbiton Hill Road KT6 4TU. Call 07758 216 988. 8-9pm. £3 first class
- 2** Ladies-only badminton, Methodist Church, 39 Ewell Road KT6 6AF. Wednesdays, 2pm. 020 8390 4598
- 2** Vocality choir, St Andrew's church, Maple Road KT6 4DS. 8pm. Ben Crawley. www.vocalitysinging.co.uk
- 2** What the Wednesday? Comedy night at the Rubicon, 97 Maple Road, KT6 4AW, 8pm. £5

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Central Surbiton
26 Brighton Road
Surbiton
KT6 5PQ
020 8399 2123

Kingston
50 Wood Street
Kingston
KT1 1UW
020 8974 8844



2 Lodge, Locality and Livelihood, free one-day workshop on the history of freemasons and society. Glenmore House, The Crescent KT6 4BN. 11am-4pm. Len Reilly, 020-7395 9256

2 Bread masterclass, The French Tarte, 83 Maple Road KT6 4AW. 6.30pm. Email zoe@thefrenchtable.co.uk or call 020 8399 1123

3 Craft evening in glass extension of St Andrew's church, Maple Road KT6 4AB. Lacemaking, knitting, jewellery making, embroidery etc. 7.30pm

3 Get to work group, Tolworth library, 37 The Broadway KT6 7DJ, 2.15-3.45pm. Free open-access computer sessions for jobseekers 020 8547 5006

3 Thursday Women meeting, for women of all ages, Christ Church, 8 Christ Church Road KT5 8JJ. 9.30-11am, chat, coffee, crèche. 020 8390 7215 or at www.ccsurbiton.org

3 Scottish country dancing by the Surbiton & District Caledonian Society, St Matthew's School, Langley Road KT6 6LW, 8pm. See Apr 26

3 Drop-in café organised by Mind, South Place Resource Centre, 15 South Place KT5 8RX. 6-9.30pm

3 London Assembly and London Mayor election day, 7am-10pm

3 Olympic Games stamps is theme of the Philatelic Society, Surbiton Library, Ewell Road KT6 6AF, 8pm

4 Rethink support group, for anyone affected by mental illness, 10am-5pm, Berrylands Christian Centre, 41 King Charles Rd KT5 8PF www.rethink.org

4 Karate for children 7+, YMCA, 49 Victoria Road KT6 4NG. 6.30pm

4 Maple Village WI quiz night at the cornerHOUSE, 116 Douglas Road, KT6 7SB. £10 incl fish & chips, 7pm. Book at www.maplevillagewi.ning.com

4 Surbiton High Sch boys' prep school open morning, 9.30am, 13 Surbiton Crescent KT1 2JT. 020 8439 1309

5 Smart recovery self-help group for people suffering from addictive behaviour, YMCA, 49 Victoria Road KT6 4NG, 5-6.30pm

5-6 Two-day plant sale, Ajax Sea Scout HQ. Shrubs, herbs, veg, hanging baskets, perennials and annuals. Water centre, Ditton Reach KT7 0XB (opp Dagenham Motors). 10am-4pm. Free

5 Who Let The Dads Out? Dads and children under 10 (incl babies). Games, crafts and a cuppa. £1.50 per dad, 10am-noon, Surbiton Children's Centre, Alpha Road KT5 8RS

6 Sunday night quiz, Duke of York, 65 Victoria Road KT6 4NQ. 8pm

8 Gala evening with artist Edna Dumas, exhibiting, cornerHOUSE, 116 Douglas Road KT6 7SB. 7-9pm

8 Rotary Club, Holiday Inn, Portsmouth Road KT6 5QQ. 6.45pm

8 Black Lion quiz night, jackpots of £1,000. 58 Brighton Rd, KT6 5PL

9 Vocality choir at St Andrew's church, Maple Road. See Apr 25

9 Zumba fitness class, Hollyfield School. See May 2

10 Pastry masterclass, The French Tarte, 83 Maple Road KT6 4AW. 6.30pm. Book on 020 8399 1123

10 KU19 clinic. Under 19s sexual health advice. Free condoms, advice, pregnancy testing. YMCA, 49 Victoria Road KT6 4NG. 3.30-6.30pm. Confidential. 020 8546 1115

10 Scottish country dancing by the Surbiton & District Caledonian Society. See Apr 26

10 Parenting Children course, Christ Church, 8 Christ Church Road KT5 8JJ. 7.45-9.45pm. See Apr 26

11 Tempting Fate, Surbiton Recorded Music Society, with Norman Burman. 7.45pm, Raeburn Hall, United-Reformed Church, Elgar Avenue KT5 9JR. £2. 7pm. www.surbitonrms.co.uk

12 Organic veg box collection at The Lamb, 73 Brighton Road KT6 5NF, from noon. See p4

12 Children's hip-hop dance class at Surbiton YMCA. See Apr 28

12 Seething Community Sports Day, Victoria Rec, Balaclava Road, 1-4pm. Traditional sports day including egg and spoon race. Bring a picnic. Free

12 Rhyme time for dads and male carers, plus babies. 10.30, Surbiton Library, Ewell Road KT6 6AG

12-13 Surbiton Croquet Club speed doubles, Alexandra Drive KT5 9AA. www.surbitoncroquet.org.uk

13 Quiz night, Duke of York, 65 Victoria Road KT6 4NQ. 8pm

13 Surbiton town centre guided walk. Surbiton station, 2.30pm. £3, U12s free. www.kingstontourguides.org.uk

14 Fibro Support Group coffee morning, Squires garden centre, Woodstock Lane North KT6 5HN. The group supports anyone with fibromyalgia. 11.30am-1pm

14 Monday night jam session, Duke of York pub, 65 Victoria Road KT6 4NQ. Bring your instrument. PA, backline, lights provided. Free. 8.30pm

14 Extra coaching in maths and English for children, Surbiton Library Hall, Ewell Road KT6 6AG, 4-6pm. Call Sushma Pathak, 07879 935 595

14 Recreational gym for girls, 12+, 8.30pm, run by qualified coaches at Avondale Gymnastics Club, Hollyfield Road KT5 9AL. Call 020 8399 3386

15 Rotary Club, Holiday Inn, Portsmouth Road KT6 5QQ. 6.45pm

15 Quiz night, Black Lion, 58 Brighton Road KT6 5PL. 8pm

16 Surbiton Probus Club ladies' lunch, Glenmore House, 6 The Crescent KT6 4BN. Noon. £17 per head. Brian Jackson, 020 8399 1811

16 Vocality choir at St Andrew's church, Maple Road. See May 2

16 Bread masterclass, The French Tarte, 83 Maple Road KT6 4AW. 6.30pm. Call 020 8399 1123

17 Craft evening in the glass extension of St Andrew's church, Maple Road KT6 4AB. Learn cardmaking. 7.30pm

17 Scottish country dance. See Apr 26. You don't need a kilt, or an accent

17 Thursday Women meeting at Christ Church, 8 Christ Church Road, KT5 8JJ. 9.30am. See May 3

17 Information evening for the

Confused by the property market?

PROPERTY

For clear guidance, call Lords. Surbiton Office 020 8390 3333

Lords ESTATE AGENTS

Samaritans, 7.30pm, 12 St Andrew's Road, KT6 4DT. See Apr 17

17 Parenting Children course, Christ Church, 8 Christ Church Road, KT5 8JJ. 7.45-9.45pm. Donation: £5.

18-19 Surprise! Surprise! Musical show by Royad's Golden Key Theatre Company, cornerHOUSE, 116 Douglas Road KT6 7SB. 7.45pm. Tickets £7. 020 8398 9050

18 Talk about the 1890 Penny Post jubilee by John Davies. Philatelic Society, Surbiton Library hall, Ewell Road KT6 6AF at 8pm

19 Farmers' Market, Maple Road. Yes, it's that time again. Nearly 30 stalls groaning under the weight of tasty produce. From 9am-1pm

19 Alcoholics Anonymous, YMCA, 49 Victoria Road KT6 4NG, 7.30pm

19-26 Spring exhibition by Surbiton Arts Group Library annexe, Ewell Road KT6 6AG. Not May 23

20 Quiz, Duke of York, 65 Victoria Road KT6 4NQ. Cash prizes: 8pm

To add your event to our listings, email timharrison@therichmind.co.uk

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Ruth Fogg (left) and Sue Lee take part in the oneACTS

Picture: Jon Constant

oneACTS festival lifts curtain on new writers

A festival of short plays all this week at Surbiton's cornerHOUSE arts centre, gives a platform to local writers and performers. More than 50 plays were submitted to the oneACTS festival, launched eight years ago, with nine making the final cut.

They are performed on alternate nights at the centre in Douglas Road, at 7.45pm.

Production manager Meta Thomas told The Good Life: "Every year we get a huge influx of good playwriting, and with 50 scripts to choose from, the standard is very high."

Five plays are on Monday (April 16), Wednesday (18) and Friday (20). Tina Soprano by Tim Harrison, directed by John O'Driscoll, is about a London girl gang, and was written in the wake of the August 2011 riots. O'Driscoll said: "The script developed as rehearsals proceeded, with the talented cast putting their own take on the text and storyline." One Small Step by Sam South, is a play about agoraphobics, and is described by director Aine Lark as "a simple play

with hidden depths". Schemers, directed by Tim Harrison, is, says playwright Eoin Carney, "a comedy for our times about the drudgery of jobseeking, and the worst it can bring out in us".

Name Dropping by Susan Cooke is a touching light comedy about the effect of Alzheimer's. With three strong female roles, director Lucy Hanneghan calls it "a gem of a play to work with".

Book Day is an insight into the world of primary school teaching. "Being a teacher was the reason for me to start writing plays and shows," said writer Mary Petley. "It's a highly amusing and oddly realistic piece," added director Dan Clinton.

Four plays feature on Tuesday (17); Thursday (19) and Saturday (April 21). The Programme focuses on the writing team of a TV series. "I am having a little dig at the present fashion for unpaid internships, or 'slave labour' as it used to be called," said playwright Ian Davies. Katrin Feldhus directs. I Am The Way explores how an old-school vicar (Richard Mayhew-Smith) reacts to the arrival of a man claiming to be

Jesus. "Essentially it's a comedy, but there are serious undercurrents," said writer Colin Irwin. Paul Hughes directs. The Road Less Travelled, inspired by Robert Frost's poem The Road Not Taken, stars Hamish Steele and Richard Williams. "This is the first time I've tried writing a more intimate piece for a small cast," said Sean Lang. Robin Johannsen directs.

Circus Acts, by Katie Davison, is "a study of the plight of the modern-day clown following the recession". Director Colin Goodger said: "With a mix of mime and clown, it is an interesting piece to direct."

Meta Thomas added: "One important thing is that we have open auditions for the plays, and with so much local interest, it really shows its value as a community event."

The oneACTS runs from April 16-21, 7.45pm, tickets on the door, £8 (£6 concs). The cornerHOUSE, 116 Douglas Road, Surbiton KT6 7SB.

Inspired by Surbiton

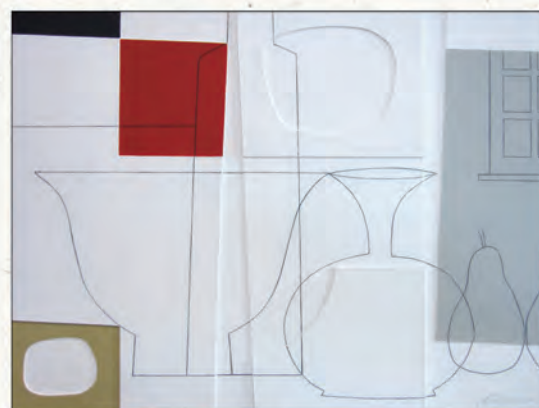
A quirky work of art on display in a still-life exhibition was inspired by Surbiton.

Geoffrey Robinson's Surbiton Remembered is among works on show in Kingsclere, Hampshire.

With a price tag of £1,200, the 50s-influenced relief work, 30 x 41cm, was created with pencil lines with patches of bold acrylic paint.

Robinson, born in 1945 in East Africa, switched 12 years ago from doing purely abstract work to still life pictures, featuring the outlines of domestic objects. Surbiton Remembered is typical.

The show, entitled Rooms, ends this week at the Jenna Burlingham Gallery, 2a George Street, Kingsclere, Hampshire RG20 5NQ, or view online at www.jennaburlingham.com



Maple Road Farmers' Market needs talent

If you play an instrument or sing, you could land a gig entertaining customers at future Maple Road Farmers' Markets.

Auditions are being held in early May for musicians to play on Surbiton market days.

Organiser David Jacobson explained: "We thought some laid-back tunes would make the market experience even more enjoyable for shoppers, while providing aspiring local musicians with much-needed exposure and experience."

"We want to keep the tone mellow, so we are looking for anyone who can sing and/or play an instrument, such as acoustic guitar, keyboards or sax."

If successful, musicians will not only get a stage to perform on market days – the third Saturday of each month – but will also get a box of market goodies and a trophy.

"Once people register an interest, we will hold an audition and the best acts will be invited to play at our spring and summer markets. Think of it like Britain's Got Talent, without Ant & Dec."

Email David Jacobson at talent@mapleroadsurbiton.co.uk

Brass with polish

A series of recitals by a wide-ranging musical ensemble continues at St Andrew's church, Maple Road, with a brass quintet performance.

The concert, on Sunday April 22 – the day after the Farmers' Market – features the Five Live Brass Ensemble, a quintet within the Waldegrave Ensemble, which formed in 2009 to perform everything from baroque and classical to jazz.

The brass quintet, which features some of the capital's brightest brass soloists, will play music by composers including Gershwin, Bizet and Saint-Saëns. The concert begins at 4pm.

More on the Waldegrave Ensemble's 2012 recital series at www.waldegrave-ensemble.com



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Surbiton bike pic snapped up for £262

A sepia photo of one of Surbiton’s first cycling clubs has sold on eBay for £262. The picture, in Berrylands in the early 1880s, shows a dozen well-to-do pioneering Surbiton cyclists. Two are women, in black dresses which reach to their ankles. All are perched on lever-drive tricycles with two outsize main wheels and a small front steerable wheel. Women liked the design as it didn’t jeopardise their full-length skirts. Many of the machines in the historic photo were produced by the Howe Machine Company of Glasgow – a sewing machine maker which diversified into bicycles and tricycles – but which had disappeared by 1890. Surbiton had several active cycling clubs in

late Victorian times, holding weekend rides out into the Surrey countryside. They were based at the town’s pubs, with one of the most popular meeting at the Black Lion at the junction of Maple Road and Brighton Road, and holding dances, dinners and musical evenings after a hard day’s pedalling. The picture was sold on eBay in early April by a Penzance antique dealer. Hectic bidding pushed the price from £100 to £262.77 at the end of the online auction. Written on the back are the words



‘Grandfather’s cycling club, Surbiton, circa 1880, back of Alfriston’, indicating that the picture was taken 130 years ago behind the grand old house which today forms part of the Alfriston day centre in Berrylands Road.

Mother and son go wild

An unusual art exhibition pairing means the paintings of a mother and son will hang side by side on the walls of the cornerHOUSE arts centre. The show, Wild Intelligence, runs until April 28, with a gala viewing evening (including glass of bubbly) on Tuesday April 24, from 7-9pm. Sarah Tucker and Thomas Edward Benjamin are, respectively, a travel journalist and an art student. Sarah got into painting because she wanted to do the illustrations for her own books. “I call it Wild Intelligence because of the combination of imagination, lateral thinking, spontaneity and instinct that go into the creation of each work,” she explained.



She works in acrylic on canvas, with rural France providing much of her inspiration. Both artists will be at the gala evening to discuss their works, most of which are for sale. ■ The cornerHOUSE, 116 Douglas Road, Tolworth KT6 7SB. Entry free.

Tarte treats...

The French Table’s sister, The French Tarte, is located next door at 83 Maple Road, Surbiton. Here you will find our famous breads, incredible viennoise, tarts and cakes all made on site.

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Why not Pop in for a coffee or light lunch and just chill...



Here’s a military mystery

As the ExCellar off licence departs from its prime site in Surbiton’s glorious deco station, an old sign is unmasked... begging more questions than it answers. Curved round the 30s frontage of the station, and the stylish window below, is a sign: Military Book and Collector’s Centre. The lettering looks 1950s. It was so specialised that some older Surbitonians must surely recall it in its pomp. What a wonderful era to be able to sustain a military bookshop. Any clues? Let us know... timharrison@therichmind.co.uk

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A bridge too far

Surbiton's new railway bridge is in place after a successful 99-hour operation marked the end of some of the most disruptive road diversions in living memory.

But the effect on businesses, especially around Brighton Road and Victoria Road, has been severe, with takings slashed and customer numbers plummeting.

Most of the old railway bridge in Brighton Road was more than 120 years old, with the old timber sleepers which were supporting the rails simply crumbling away.

A 500-ton crane was in place on Good Friday to take out the old and start winching into place the new.

Interlocking steel sections 16ft wide were transported to Surbiton from a yard in Stanwell, Middlesex.

The new bridge weighs 280 tons, without the support piers. It was made in Ireland and assembled in the Midlands.

Dozens of nesting pigeons were made homeless in the operation. A kit of pigeons wheeled round the YMCA for days after their roosts in the underside of the old bridge were destroyed.

The new bridge is higher than the old one, giving an extra 4ft of headroom for traffic. It also has a smooth, sealed underside, so no pigeons

can land below it, never mind nest.

Surbiton has endured major gridlock for weeks, with buses diverted along unaccustomed makeshift routes, and long traffic delays.

Coupled with the gas replacement work at the top of St Mark's Hill, it has been a particularly trying time. On bad days traffic in Ewell Road tailed back to Tolworth Broadway.

Since the start of March, workmen from contractors BAM Nuttall have been drilling into the ancient fabric of the bridge supports at Brighton Road, and at Ewell Road, Long Ditton. Only the bridge in St Mary's Road, near the junction with

Effingham Road, has been unaffected.

Some of the footings of the Brighton Road railway bridge date back to the 1830s, when the London-Southampton railway was routed through the town after Kingston pompously declared that trains would never take over from horses. Most of the brickwork dates to 1900.

Network Rail tried to restrict the worst of the road closures to Easter weekend, when some businesses were closed anyway.



Dates for your diary

The dates for this year's Surbiton Festival have been announced, giving everyone in the community a chance to celebrate all things Surbiton.

Saturday September 22 will see the Surbiton Regatta being held off-shore along the river Thames at the Queens Promenade, with the main carnival and

stalls stretching from St Marks Hill - down to Victoria Road in Surbiton on Saturday September 29.

The organising committee is interested in new ideas to add to the celebrations which last year saw around 20,000 people descend on the town centre.

Surbiton Festival 2012
Regatta & Carnival September 22-29

If you would like to take a stall, add to the carnival fun, volunteer to help, stage other events during the week or perform during the day please email The Good Life on surbitonfestival@therichmind.co.uk



Ode to Maple Road

by Morris Thain

On market day in Maple Road you really feel the buzz
The friendly folk, the tasty food - the best that London does
While other local markets meet more often, fill more space,
The stalls alongside Maple Road work at the perfect pace.
From fish to lettuce, pies to cake, variety is king

And you can taste before you buy... so I try everything!
My favourite stall sells sausages, I also love the bread
And when it comes to cup cakes, the best ones are the red.
We're lucky to have Maple Road - the market is so swish,
Now if it changed to fortnightly, then true would come my wish!

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