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## Finally! A shop selling coffee!

Just what Surbiton needs... a coffee shop. The West Cornwall Pasty Co dispenses cuppas in what was Surbiton station's shoe repair shop. Incredibly, it brings the number of outlets selling morning coffee within a quarter of a mile of the station's main entrance to **32**. How many lattes can a town drink?



## Blind bowlers benefit

Blind bowlers have benefited from the generosity of Surbiton Farmers' Market, which spent £1,500 on new kit and transport for the Kingston Association for the Blind's lawn bowls team. Market volunteers Robyn McAllister (right, in blue) and Julian Meers went to cheer the team on at a match in Epsom. The market on Saturday, September 17 sees the start of a fundraising campaign for Refugee Action Kingston, including a sponsored walk and picnic. More at [www.surbitonfarmersmarket.co.uk](http://www.surbitonfarmersmarket.co.uk)



## Mind the gap



• Queens Promenade strollers fear the Go Cycle project is changing the character of the tranquil riverside walk. Gaps have appeared after 23 trees were felled, although 14 are being planted. "It feels like you're sitting in the middle of the road," said Yvonne Dell, 79, at the towpath cafe. "Cars whizz by; it used to be peaceful." Another said the manicured verges and flowerbeds were now "a wasteland". Memorial benches are being replaced. The council is still seeking relatives of some of those named, but insists the same number of seats will be installed. "We've traced more than half," Cllr Terry Paton said. If you are a Burt, Awan, Davey, Hayden, Holloway, O'Neil, Chamberlen, Hansen, Arnold, Larkin, Zohhadi, Arditti, Garbett, Maries, Bayliss, O'Gara or Greaves, call Owen Bentley on 020 8547 5002.

## Picture this: she's my kind of gull

Surbiton's annual festival runs from September 17-24, including an open day at the Thames Sailing Club, a parade... and a photographic competition with wildlife as its theme.

Less expansive than recent years, the festival includes a storytelling event run by Regency bookshop, a comedy night and a business expo at Glenmore House on September 22 with speed networking.

The event culminates in Victoria Road being sealed off to traffic on September 24 and filled with stalls selling everything from fudge to jewellery, honey to popcorn and coffee to doggie treats. The parade includes dancers, classic cars and marching bands.

Animal magic is the photo competition topic, with snappers – amateur or professional – invited to capture insects, birds,



foxes, squirrels, pet cats... or more exotic beasts. It is open to those with phones as well as those with flashier equipment.

Surbiton Photo Circle is taking charge, with entries on display in festival week. Wildlife experts will judge the pictures, with this magnificent study of a seagull by David Jacobson (taken in Essaouira on

Morocco's west coast) an inspiring example.

Drop entries in A3 print form at Maple Works, 73 Maple Road, by noon on Sept 2. Snappy Snaps in Victoria Road gives 50% printing discounts if you mention the festival, and more off if you have five prints done together.

For festival details visit [www.surbitonfestival.co.uk](http://www.surbitonfestival.co.uk)

## 20:20 vision

Get used to the feel of 20mph. Surbiton is three months away from adopting a blanket reduced speed limit, writes Tim Harrison.

If a consultation goes the way most predict, every street will be restricted to 20mph apart from the A3, Ewell Road, Upper Brighton Road, Portsmouth Road and Hook Road.

The cost of bringing in the blanket zone in Surbiton, Tolworth and Berrylands will be met by Transport for London.

You have a month to make your opinions known ([www.kingston.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.kingston.gov.uk/consultations), or via a leaflet at Surbiton Library), with comments going to a meeting of Surbiton's neighbourhood committee on December 7, where a final decision will be taken.

In the last couple of years, the debate about Surbiton speed limits has split on party political lines. Lib Dems favour an overall 20mph limit, while the Conservatives prefer to keep

roads at 30mph, with 20mph reserved for areas near schools.

Last month's Good Life highlighted the confusion that mixed speed zones can cause, with one stretch of Maple Road having three different limits in the space of 20 yards, and the odd anomaly of Tolworth Broadway being 20mph, while the narrower, car-lined streets off it are 30.

Both sides of the debate admit that rising traffic levels often make it hard to exceed 20mph in any event.

Nationally, 20mph zones have cut casualty numbers by 42%, and child casualty numbers by 70%.

Kingston was the first council in the capital to try 20mph zones in 1991 when it cut the speed in the Groves area of Kingston. Following a public campaign, Tolworth West (Ellerton Road, Worthington Road, Douglas Road etc) came next in 1995. The consultation runs Sept 5-Oct 3.

• More details on page 5



## ...but you won't be getting the hump!

**If agreed, Surbiton's new speed limit will be controlled by signs and markings, not speed humps.**

**Where possible, signs would be fixed to existing lampposts to reduce clutter.**

**Humps – notoriously unpopular with motorists, bus companies and 999 services – were tested in the UK in 1973, then began appearing everywhere in 1981.**

**They undoubtedly cut speed, but can increase noise, add to pollution levels (as cars slow and accelerate) and may cause longer-term damage to suspension and tyres.**

**Past 20mph consultations in other areas have yielded, on average, 65% support. Extra police mobile speedtraps would be set up to enforce the limit.**

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Recipes for a Good Life: Annie Morris

## Start spreading the news

This is a lovely spread to go on toasted country bread – it is very popular as a canapé to go with a glass of chilled rose wine in Provence.

You need: a 280g jar of sun-dried tomatoes, drained; a couple of tablespoons of good quality olive oil; 6oz (175g) pitted black olives in brine, drained and rinsed; 4oz (100g) capers, drained and dried on kitchen paper; 2 teaspoons of Dijon mustard; 1 clove of



garlic, finely chopped; freshly ground black pepper and salt. Put everything into a food processor and blitz – don't process it too much as you will end up with a purée. Loosen, if necessary, with some more olive oil until a spreadable paste is achieved.

Put into a container and store in the fridge until needed. Bring to room temperature before serving on toast.

## Arrivederci, Peppe e Stefano

Surbiton's cutest coffee shop is losing popular owners Giuseppe D'Omofrio (left) and Stefano Vitali. The Italians are leaving Amici in Victoria Road to run a business supplying Moretto coffee to outlets all over the UK, with their 20-seat sliver of a cafe opposite the YMCA changing its name to Soprattutto (most of all). It will be the second outlet for Mariola and Mariusz Marczuk, who have run the family-friendly Pistachios In The Park cafe in King's Field Park (just over Kingston Bridge in Hampton Wick) since July 2014.



"It's still going to be Surbiton's favourite cafe," said Peppe. "We will miss Amici; there's such a good Italian community here, and we have made so many good friends... but the cafe is a bit too small for two boys like us, and we're looking forward to our next step. But we're leaving the cafe in very good hands."

Design trends with Elena Romanova

## An inspiration board is the answer

Decorating a home? Put up an inspiration board where you can see it all the time. Flick through Beautiful Homes or House & Garden for cuttings, and browse the internet. Note colours, textures and shapes you're drawn to. Sir Paul Smith said: "You can find inspiration in everything... and if you can't, look again."

Then translate into specific room schemes. Make a shopping list (flooring, paint, fabrics, wallpaper) and collect samples. Best advice? Don't commit to buying before working out a complete scheme, and budget.

Chelsea Harbour Design Centre's a mecca for big design, but for one or two rooms, all you need is here, another benefit of Surbiton living.

For flooring, the choice of carpets at English & Oriental (5 Victoria Road) is hard to beat. They measure, quote, supply and fit. For kitchens and bathrooms, check out Acqua Kitchens (42 Brighton Road); a vast product range, and bang on trend.

For paints and wallpapers, Brewers behind the Holiday Inn, has brands from Albany and Crown to Farrow & Ball and Little Greene. Tester pots let you see what shortlisted paints will look like, while the wallpaper book selection in the



redesigned showroom is second to none.

But try Wallpaper & Fabric (32 Surbiton Road) for recent collections, and direction to the right book for your style and budget.

John Lewis home furnishings (second floor) is good for fabrics, off-the-shelf and custom-made window treatments and fixtures, plus brands from affordable Villa Nova to higher-end Zinc Textile or Romo's Black Edition. As always, the customer service is exceptional.

Still not sure? Book a free introductory design session. Email elena@elenainteriors.co.uk or call 07990 560 264.

## Capturing the moment

Photographer Paul John has a passion for dramatic subjects, and takes special delight in following the progress of his daughter Poppy, who has been pirouetting since she was four.

His pet hate is the artificiality of posed pictures, so he snaps away at rehearsals ("You can move around more easily without annoying parents who are watching!") and goes for the vibrancy of live action rather than attempting to organise line-ups which, he says, inevitably look staged and false.

"Posing gives you fake expressions," he said. "I don't want to stage things."

Paul began snapping dancers at Surbiton's Dance Direction, and has now turned it into a business.

Married to Amanda, and with two children, Paul, of Akerman Road, sums up his aim as "capturing a fleeting moment" in drama, dance or sport, and producing a treasured record for other parents.

It all began when he was six (he's 50 now), and he was given an original box brownie camera by his grandfather. Today he uses a Canon camera, without flash, mixes colour and black & white, and regularly shows off his best pictures at the Surbiton Photo Circle.

He also loves photographing judo. "It's as balletic as dance," he said. "Black and white always seems so much more effective for sport."

Paul works with other dance companies, putting his work online (www.focusedphoto.co.uk) in password-enabled folders to which clients have access.

Prices start at a fiver for a 6x4 picture. The next stage in this 'developing' career? Probably portfolio pictures, said Paul, who now wants studio space in Surbiton.



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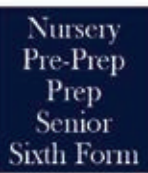
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Target: no waste

Surbiton aims to be in a ‘zero waste’ borough, creating negligible landfill. We’re third in London’s recycling league table, after Bexley and Bromley, but the council thinks it can be top by helping blocks of flats recycle more. Kingston, Croydon, Sutton and Merton have pooled waste recycling for efficiency, but Cllr Phil Doyle says: “We want, and can, do better.”

School is Grand

Grand Avenue primary is surely the most polite in the country. While we were out delivering the last Good Life, a crocodile of seven or eight-year-olds walked past in twos on their way to the playing field, and every single youngster said ‘Good Morning’ or ‘Hello’, as did teachers at either end.

Biobag sales

Need biodegradable bags for your weekly food waste collection? Surbiton and Tolworth libraries now sell a year’s worth for £2 – a cost-saving move which the council says is in line with other local authorities.

Maths catch-up

If you’re over 19 and missed out on English or maths at school, catch up on free GCSE courses at the King Charles Centre, Hollyfield Road, from mid-September with either a year-long or intensive three-month course. Call 020 8547 6436 for more, or visit [www.kingston.gov.uk/adulteducation](http://www.kingston.gov.uk/adulteducation)

Trims for charity

Massage, aromatherapy, haircuts and reflexology were offered for donations to the charity African Vision Malawi at an ‘indulgence day’ in Upper Brighton Road. Hand-made toys, cards and plants were also sold at an event which raised more than £1,500.

Grant us money

Apply by September 2 for community funding for worthwhile projects. Two schemes offer grants of up to £750 (for grassroots ideas where a little can mean a lot) or £3,000 for larger initiatives. Visit [www.kingston.gov.uk](http://www.kingston.gov.uk)

Toby or not Toby

Did you work behind the bar at the Toby Jug, or merely prop it up? Good Life editor Tim Harrison is producing a history of the building which stood at Tolworth roundabout, by the bowling alley, and wants to chat to past staff and customers. Email [thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com](mailto:thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com)

Run of the Mill

Two doors from the Royal Oak in Ewell Road is The Mill, with a range of pizzas and filled rolls. It is also a mini bakery, selling fresh loaves from what was, until June, the Kanishaa curry takeaway. Open Tuesday-Sunday.



Keeping healthy

Try a free Fit as a Fiddle course for Surbiton’s over 50s. It’s a day a week for six weeks. Nordic walking starts Sept 6, aquacise Sept 7, body balance Sept 8 and chair-based exercise Sept 9. Each one includes a healthy lifestyle workshop. Venues and times from Grace Shorthouse, 020 8942 8256.

Call for cameras

Local MP James Berry wants automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras on the Surbiton stretch of the A3 as police say burglars use the by-pass as a getaway route. He wants Kingston Council and the London Mayor to fund lines of overhead cameras like the ANPRs at Shannon Corner, New Malden.

Strings attached

The new Thames concert season at St Andrew’s church, Maple Road, opens on Saturday October 15 at 7.30pm when the tro of Kaija Lukas (violin), Emmanuella Reiter (viola) and Pei-jee Ng (cello) perform. For full details visit [www.thamesconcerts.com](http://www.thamesconcerts.com)



Crowds down at cycle race

Is Surbiton falling out of love with watching large-scale urban bike events? The RideLondon professionals attracted crowds, but numbers were down on past years to cheer on the 30,000 amateurs who rode along a traffic-free Portsmouth Road, left. Several incidents reminded everyone of the risks. One rider suffered a fatal heart attack in Kingston, another sustained head injuries after flying off his bike at Winters Bridge, where spectators criticised the state of the road. In all, 33 riders ended up in hospital after the weekend’s events. The challenge is to revive once-strong interest in the amateur race, as long stretches of Portsmouth Road were spectator-free. “I was told to hold back the crowds,” said a steward, reading a book. “But where are all the spectators?” One enthusiast said: “There are too many riders of different abilities; it’s now like the London Marathon, where some just walk it.” RideLondon, a legacy of the 2012 Olympics, expects to get a boost from Rio 2016, where Team GB’s medal success could stimulate interest in both track and recreational cycling.

Queens of the suburbs

Surbiton’s streets came together in a way not seen for years to mark The Queen’s 90th with a weekend of knees-ups. Roads which chose the Saturday fared best, weather-wise, but nobody let one of the wettest Junes since records began defeat their determination for whoopee.

In Manor Drive, Gary May’s music accompanied synchronised dancing as the Everything’s Jumping group turned neighbours into jivers, while a builders’ loo was aptly labelled The Throne!

Children wore fancy dress, a fire engine was clambered over, while competitions were resolutely traditional, including guess the weight of the cake, count the sweets in a jar and match the baby to the adult.

Mayor and mayoress Geoff and Sheila Austin were joined by MP James Berry to watch an egg and spoon race, while

burlier locals had tugs of war. “None



of it could have happened without a huge amount of help and support from a great number of people,” said delighted organiser Christine Jackson, now busy planning the party for Her Majesty’s 95th.

Events in Cleaveland Road were overseen by a life-size cut-out of the Queen. Martha won the fancy dress in her princess outfit, while Bill and Diana won best dressed house. Delight greeted the arrival of the French Table’s Eric Guignard with a pyramid of profiteroles (a croquemouche).



● Clockwise from top left: Dancing in Manor Drive; the Queen, plus corgi, visits Cleaveland Road; a change of frock and a second appearance to greet the organisers of the Effingham Road party; and Maud, 92, with patriotic hat at Manor Drive’s event



Masterminding the event was resident Sarah Higson. “A month on, and it’s almost impossible to get down the road without stopping to say hello to a new friend,” she said. “It’s created a real foundation for becoming more connected as neighbours.”

Sunday’s rain forced Effingham Road to swap picnic plans for an indoor party in the Long Ditton village hall. It went one better than Cleaveland Road when HRH appeared in person. At least it looked like

her if you’d had a couple of glasses. Anjali Frank co-ordinated the party, resurrecting a long tradition of street gatherings which were once a familiar part of local life.

Overheard, Maple Road

Mother texts her daughter: ‘What do you want from life?’ Daughter replies: ‘Dunno. Health, happiness, fulfillment, love...’ Mother replies: ‘Sorry, predictive text. What do you want from Lidl?’

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# The spy in the Berrylands bathroom

If you had to name the last place you'd look for a Nazi spy, you might choose the bathroom of an anonymous first-floor flat in Berrylands.

Which may be why Adolf Hitler's No1 secret agent at the start of the Second World War transmitted his clandestine reports from a four-storey block in Parklands, the quiet 100-yard street off Surbiton Hill Park.

Arthur Owens may have only lived here three months, but surely counts as a bizarre 'notable Surbitonian'; a Walter Mitty character who believed his own delusions and succeeded in persuading Germany's spymasters that he could supply high-grade intelligence material.

Born in Pontardawe, south Wales, in 1899 (a town which later produced Gareth Edwards, the greatest rugby player of all time) Owens was an engineer who devised a new ship battery in his garden shed in the mid 1930s, offered it to the Royal Navy and was briefly recruited by MI6 – the secret intelligence service – to spy on German shipyards, as his invention gave him

reason to travel. He became agent 'Snow', a part anagram of his surname.

His hush-hush reports were so poor, however, that he was sacked. Incensed, he offered his services to the Germans, was codenamed Johnny O'Brien, and for four years sent messages to the Nazis.

So began a career as a German spy, then a rehired British double agent. By the end of the war, no one was exactly

sure who he had really been working for, but MI6 had fed enough misinformation to Germany, some tapped out in Morse from beside the bathtub in

Berrylands, that the spy was eventually allowed to resume civilian life.

His reports to a receiving station in Hamburg focused on RAF activity in London and weather reports, supposedly to assist the Luftwaffe.

Owens moved to 12 Parklands in July 1939 as war loomed, renting the spare bedroom of Alex Myner, an unemployed clerk. A sturdy, sash-windowed Victorian building, it was demolished in the 1960s, replaced by Gareth House.

Today, Owens would be diagnosed as having a paranoid mental disorder clouding his perception of reality. In an interview, his son Graham summed him up in one pithy sentence: "The only side he was on was his own."

A small, rather weedy figure with a drink problem, he regularly shuffled down St Mark's Hill to the station, yet exotically shared his room with a blonde mistress, Lily Bade, after abandoning his wife and son in a flat in Morden.

In September 1939, MI6 raided the Parklands flat, digging up the transmitter which had been hastily buried in a flowerbed in the garden. Now a double agent controlled by MI5 and MI6, Owens was moved to 9 Norbiton Avenue, Kingston, ending his short stay in Berrylands.

Owens, also used by Germany to supply ID cards to their agents in Britain, was eventually deemed so dodgy that he was interned in Dartmoor Prison, but was freed in 1945. He moved to Ireland, lived on a small British government pension, and died in Wexford in 1957. He is buried there, in an unmarked grave.

Tim Harrison



Arthur Owens' passport photograph

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Deadline for representations: **1 September 2016.**

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## Kept busy

It wasn't all blooms and wellies at the Hampton Court Flower Show. A Surbiton clothing designer was kept busy selling blouses and cardigans.

Ella & Cherry operates from a magnolia-coloured semi in Beresford Avenue.

"I'm the designer," explained Cherry, right, adding that she has run her business for six years.

Show customers looking for both Cherry and Ella were, however, disappointed. "Ella's my daughter," said Cherry, laughing. "She's not here because she's six, and at school!"

In fact Ella is a pupil at Grand Avenue primary. The firm began as she was born, inspiring the name.



"We mainly do shows, and sell mail order," said Cherry.

With blouses and cardigans from £69, the clothes designer was wrapping and bagging purchases every few moments.

She describes her style as simple, elegant, soft and wearable, with distinctive ruffles on collars and cuffs.

The range also includes linen scarves covered in material flowers.

## Fresh menu at Langleys

A new chef is at the helm at Langleys, Ewell Road, refining the menu with a fresh take on many dishes.

Mandar Desai, right, and sous chef Jay Panchal have worked together for most of the past decade.

Mandar, originally from Mumbai, has worked at the Savoy and the Gore, Kensington, but now oversees Langleys' brasserie style of cooking, headlining the menu with English meat and fish. Sunday roasts launch for the autumn.

The historic Victorian building has been sympathetically restored.



## Impressing Ofsted

One of the principal college choices for Surbiton students has wowed Ofsted's notoriously flinty inspectors, who swooped in June with only two days' warning.

Kingston College is officially 'good'; a rare London college moving in the right direction.

The 'highly beneficial and well-focused support' of motivated and well-qualified staff was praised, and scores of students were asked for their frank opinions.

The positive rating was accompanied by special praise for the college's knack of helping its 11,000 students get good jobs.

Principal Peter Mayhew-Smith was chuffed, pledging: "We won't stop until our college is rated outstanding."

Governors' chair Dr Janis Brumwell called it "fantastic", while Surbiton MP James Berry said it was "important recognition" for a fine local seat of learning.

Nationally, a third of colleges are 'good' or better. In London barely half clear the hurdle.

## Fold and hold



A folding bicycle dock has opened at Surbiton station, with cubbyholes for eight bikes. Housed in a natty grey cabinet alongside the taxi slip road, the 'docking station' is part of the Brompton bike hire network... although the next nearest drop-off point is seven miles away in Turnham Green.

Available round the clock, the foldaway bikes (memorably grappled with by actor Hugh Bonneville in the BBC satire W1A) cost £2.50 a day to hire (plus frequent user £20 annual charge), or a fiver a day if you pay the quid-a-year 'leisure' charge. Brompton will monitor use to ensure that the lockers have a consistent supply of available bikes.

Surbiton's is the 42nd docking station in the UK, and the tenth in London, with a nationwide fleet of 1,000 folding bikes for hire.

To hire a bike, register your details (including job and age!) at [bromptonbikehire.com](http://bromptonbikehire.com) before booking via a code sent to your mobile.

## It's the simple things that make the difference

Mental ill-health affects one in four people at some time, so everyone knows someone with a mental health problem, even if they are not aware of it.

As World Mental Health Day nears (Oct 10), Surbiton's Fircroft Trust advises on how best to help those with mental health issues.

"We provide a welcoming, non-judgemental environment, offering support, a cooked meal and activities to help people manage their illness, learn new skills and make new friends," said Jill Fletcher Meloun from the trust.

Mental ill-health is the result of

chemical imbalance in the brain, affecting mood, perception and even body organ function. It is the biggest killer of men under 50 and is beset by stigma and misunderstanding.

How to help? "The way you'd support someone with a physical ailment," said Jill. "Listen, be there, send a text saying you're thinking of them. Simple things."



● Don't use the words 'bi-polar' or 'depressed'; they are someone with a mental health issue.

● Don't blame them for their condition, or say it's because they are lazy/not busy enough/or don't choose to get better.

● You can't 'fix' how they are feeling, so don't try to give advice such as 'try some herbal tea'.

● Practise good listening skills. Don't pressure them to tell their story, tell them how they should feel, or give false reassurance. A sympathetic ear is often all they need from you.

More at [www.thefircrofttrust.org](http://www.thefircrofttrust.org)

# HAVE YOUR SAY



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## Plants with stings in their 'tails'

We've all heard about the fearsome reputation of poison ivy and hemlock – in fact their names are synonymous with danger – but there are many plants which stand pretty and proud in our borders that we should handle carefully.

As a garden designer, I'm often asked what plants are safe to grow – although usually the queries stem from an anxious pet owner concerned about their adventurous puppy who is merrily digging up the garden, rather than a worried parent. In fact the number of poisonous plants runs into the hundreds, but people can worry needlessly. That said, it's no bad thing to be aware about the plants you have.

While even common plants have risks, the likelihood of serious danger is remote. Yet there have been horror stories. A gardener in Hampshire in his 30s developed multiple organ failure and died after coming into contact with aconitum (also known as monkshood), pictured, a member of the buttercup family. But that was a rare incident.

Poisonous plants might cause an allergic reaction – 'sting' you, irritate, cause a rash, blistering, burning, and a stomach ache if you eat them. A stinging nettle is a good example



of a plant which defends itself mechanically and chemically, with its needle-like hairs and its poisonous sap. I can't, for instance, handle euphorbia without wearing gardening gloves. It has a sap which makes my skin go red and itchy.

There are lots of everyday garden plants which are toxic – the foxglove and bluebell, for example, while the bulbs of daffodils and hyacinths have caused problems. There have been cases where people have taken their daffs up, stored them over winter, and then mistaken them for onions. And while we eat the stems of rhubarb, the leaves are highly toxic. But you would have to eat a lot of them to make you ill – one nibble is unpleasant enough.

Berries on asparagus are poisonous, as are the seeds of apples and cherries, and children often mistake the fruit of the laburnum – which is highly toxic – for a bean or a peapod. But don't worry, the incidence of child poisoning from plants is negligible.

The message really is to be aware of what is in your garden, be sensible about the risks, but, above all, keep them in proportion.

Janice Cripps is a professional Surbiton garden designer. For advice, planting plans, or projects – concept to completion – [www.janicecripps.co.uk](http://www.janicecripps.co.uk)



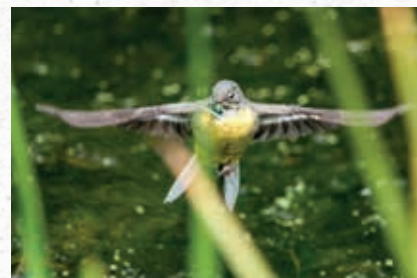
## Just a stone's throw away

Surbiton may not sound wild, but suburbia has a myriad of incredible species. In richness and biodiversity, we outcompete some of our national parks.

I'm a Berrylands resident fascinated by the natural world. I've always had an interest in wildlife and am now fortunate to be nature conservation officer for the Environment Trust; a charity protecting and raising awareness of our environment.

We are surrounded by wildlife reserves: to the north, Richmond Park; to the west, Bushy and Home Parks; to the east, Wimbledon Common; to the south, the Thames and metropolitan green belt. This has a positive influence on wildlife in Surbiton; we're a corridor linking different populations of species together.

We can have memorable wildlife encounters or peaceful walks a stone's throw from the front room. We can watch the world's fastest animal, the peregrine falcon, enter a hunting stoop over our heads,

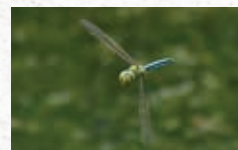


Grey wagtail and (below) emperor dragonfly, Claremont pond Pics: Nick Combes & Tom Hooker

see a kingfisher navigate the Hogsmill in search of an unsuspecting stickleback, or watch a badger thoughtfully plodding our well-lit streets.

I'll introduce you to some of our charismatic residents and lesser-known wilder spots, hopefully inspiring you to engage with these spaces and come along to a conservation day or nature walk.

Elliot Newton can be emailed at: [elliott.newton@environmenttrust.org](mailto:elliott.newton@environmenttrust.org)



A great family day out is in prospect on Sunday September 11, when the Thames Tide Fest is staged at the Hogsmill Nature Reserve.

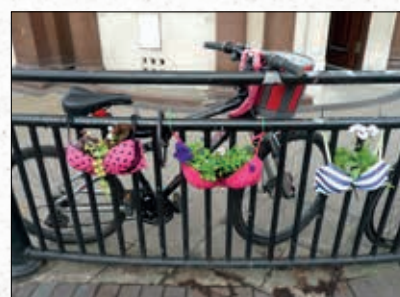
From 11am to 3pm, Thames Water's nature reserve in Lower

## Time to watch the birdie

Marsh Lane on the Kingston/Surbiton boundary gives Surbitonians a chance to visit a hidden haven. Watch birds from the hide, with local experts telling you what's what, build

bird houses, pond-dip, taste honey and visit the hives, create dragonfly fridge magnets, or get your face painted. There are bird and mammal identification games with prizes. Light refreshments available.

More information on 07747 647 708.



## Bra-vo, ladies

Women from the WI aren't burning their bras, they're filling them with plants to raise awareness of sustainable gardening.

Hanging 'braskets' are slung pendulously from the railings at the station roundabout – cast-offs from members of the Maple Village WI proving, says president Kelly Woods, "just how easy it is to grow beautiful flowers in urban areas where space comes at a premium".

From 32A to 44DD, the bras – suspended guerrilla-style at dead of night – have brightened up the summer.

Many have been 'adopted' by firms, while all have been kept watered during hot spells.

Bras can also be used, WI members claim, for growing veg and fruit, which is presumably where we get the expression 'a nice pear'.

The local WI, which holds its meetings at the Copper Kettle, has gained the kind of national publicity for its braskets last witnessed when the Calendar Girls stripped off and posed for charity.



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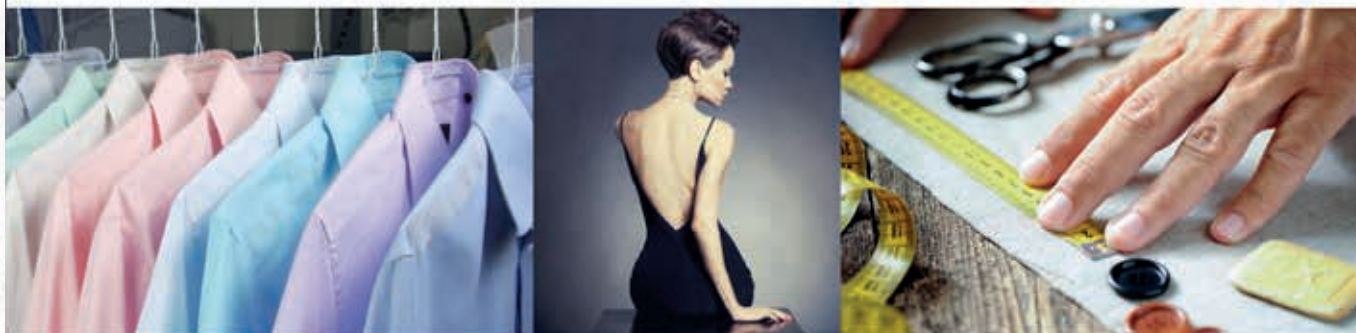
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Making bird houses at last year's Thames Tide Fest

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## Thames Tide Fest

Sunday September 11  
11am-3pm

A free family day at  
Thames Water's Hogsmill  
Nature Reserve in  
Lower Marsh Lane KT1 3BW

Bird watching,  
pond dipping,  
honey tasting,  
prizes, craft  
making &  
refreshments







Simon shows Caffè Amici's Tonya a few classic steps

# Recalling steps despite dementia

Simon Guntrip loves teaching dance, but says some of his most rewarding work is with people with dementia.

Simon, 38, of Warren Drive South, grew up with gymnastics at Tolworth Recreation Centre and the Avondale club, Hollyfield Road, then “fell into dancing”, becoming so proficient at ballroom and Latin American that he taught classes for Surrey’s adult education service.

He also began dance lessons at care and residential homes, finding that even those with severe memory loss would instinctively recall dance steps from their youth when coaxed on to the floor.

“One woman kept saying ‘I can’t, I can’t’; she was bent double, like Yoda,” said Simon. “But when the music began, muscle memory kicked in, and her feet started moving the way they always did.”

Simon is hoping to expand dementia dance classes to other Surbiton care homes. “It’s so rewarding. A 99-year-old woman told me: ‘I haven’t danced in 40 years, darling.’ But she joined in too.”

When another resident politely asked ‘Have you been here before?’ as they waltzed, he had to reply: “Yes; I danced with you last week, and the week before!”

He does a mix of private classes, adult education and care homes, at venues from the British Legion to the King Charles Centre and Emmanuel church hall. Email [simon@bestfootforward.dance](mailto:simon@bestfootforward.dance)

# Jill is favourite

Surbiton Arts Group’s 69th show saw 370 paintings, prints, miniatures and cards on show at the library hall in Ewell Road. Sam Burgess, head of Kingston Adult Education service, performed the opening, with visitors choosing Jillian Richards’ watercolour of Clovelly, right, as their favourite.



# Tall tales from Tim

A triple bill of new drama at the cornerHOUSE is entitled Unexpected Items In Bagging Area. The shows include The Great Gandolfo, pictured, the remarkable life story of an old magician who can still produce rabbits from hats. The three plays, written by Tim Harrison, are directed by Yaz Nixon, who was in charge of the acclaimed Come Fly With Me in the Douglas Road arts centre’s recent one-act season. As well as the magician’s tale, there’s a twist on Dragons’ Den entitled I’m Out! and a play about fallout from the referendum called Trolley & Basket. Unexpected Items In Bagging Area runs from October 6-8, 8pm, tickets £8 (£6 concs). Book at [www.ticketsource.co.uk/gandolfo](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/gandolfo)



Pulling rabbits out of hats? Tim Harrison as The Great Gandolfo

# Faces on the wall

There are few smiles in Milena Cull’s exquisite portraits. “I like intense expressions,” said the 37-year-old artist at the opening of her Faces on the Wall show at the cornerHOUSE. She works in pencil, oils and charcoal, doing pencil portraits from photos, oils from life. She grew up in Naples, sitting next to her father and watching him paint. “When I was a teenager, I picked up a pencil,” she said. She has lived in this area since 1999. Works include the study of an African woman’s head, pictured. More at [www.milenacull.com](http://www.milenacull.com)



# View Noah’s Ark

Looking for needlework inspiration? The Smarties embroidery group will show their wallhangings, including the new hanging of Noah’s Ark (which been evolving at Crafty Aftys sessions at the cornerHOUSE in Douglas Road) at St Matthew’s church from September 8-10 (Thurs to Sat). Chat to the seamstresses, browse charity stalls, enjoy refreshments. On the 10th there’s an all-age craft workshop.



# Snow business...

Hollyfield students trod the country’s most prestigious boards this summer... and don’t they look happy about it?

The school was one of 12 groups performing at the National Theatre’s Connections festival, giving young actors the chance to stage new plays and perform in top venues.

The 36-strong student Ilex company, aged 11-17, first put on It Snows, a drama about two outsiders whose lives are changed by an unexpected snowfall, to 200 family and friends at school, followed it up with a show at Kew’s Watermans Arts Centre, capping it all with the performance at the Dorfman Theatre in the National complex.

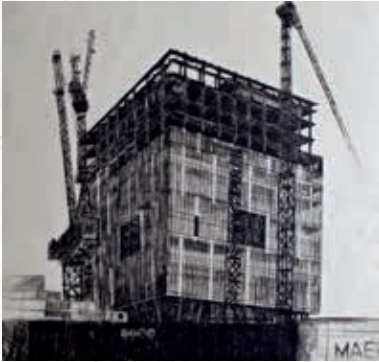
Maggie Bailey, Hollyfield head, said: “This is testament to the hard work that’s been put into the production. Together with the enthusiasm and support of our drama department, Hollyfield School has achieved something truly remarkable.”

# Rhyme and reason

The first of a new series of poetry evenings attracted more than 40 people to the Rocard Room – the cornerHOUSE’s studio – with a dozen reading poems they’d written



# Melanie’s work graces the RA



Surbiton’s Melanie Bellis, inspired to capture a view of London’s changing face... has ended up gracing the walls of the Royal Academy.

The artist who lives a mere paintbrush’s flick from Surbiton station, was selected for this year’s RA summer exhibition for the second year running.

“I’m very excited to have my work acknowledged in this way,” she said. “It’s a fantastic opportunity to be part of such a prestigious show and get this level of exposure for my work.”

Her print, *US Embassy construction site, Nine Elms*, was selected from more than 12,000 entries, and was hung alongside works by Tracey Emin, Gilbert & George and Jake and Dinos Chapman. The exhibition, held annually since 1769, is the world’s largest pro/am art show.

Melanie, who studied printmaking at Norwich, focuses on construction, urban scenes, iconic buildings and the changing London skyline, including Vauxhall/Nine Elms which, as Surbiton commuters can confirm, is transforming a once-neglected district. She starts by drawing on site, then develops the work using the 500-year-old process of etching, then turning it into prints. The RA picture was drawn at the end of last year.

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Forget Brexit, Trump or Ed Balls being on Strictly, Surbiton is home to a truly explosive controversy... the Portsmouth Road cycle lane.

Let us acknowledge that cyclification (not yet a word, but I'll be on to the OED first thing) of Portsmouth Road is a good thing. It's positive that cyclists are being looked after and that more people are encouraged to get on a bike instead of sitting in traffic listening to Abba.

As a keen cyclist, I appreciate the angst of sharing the road with a hostile army of motorists secretly hoping to nudge you with their wing mirror. And we must concede that Portsmouth Road is exceedingly busy and spacious enough to accommodate a cycle lane.

But come on. It's the widest thing in the world. This cycle lane is wider than a cannibalistic hippo that has feasted on three of its own kind and then become uncomfortably distended through its own inability to burp.

I don't care what kind of bicycle you ride, or how jaunty your cycling technique, no one needs that amount of space to cycle, unless you

## All hail the alien superhighway

regularly re-enact Torvill and Dean's Boléro through the medium la bicyclette on your way to work, in which case, happy days.

What was the council expecting? For the whole of Kingston and Elmbridge boroughs to suddenly think: 'Ah! The Lane has come. I shall unearth my trusty steed from its cobwebbed tomb in the shed and affix it permanently to my lower body, for we must all flock to The Lane,' and for a perpetual mass of wheelers to flow gracefully up and down Portsmouth Road like a gently ebbing tide?

And what about those poor misguided cyclists who, emboldened by a breezy free-for-all up the Tolworth Greenway, swoop into the cycle lane and disappear, lost in its incalculable vastness until the end of time?

Maybe the reason so many cyclists are not using the Widest Cycle Lane in the World is because they think it's a bus lane, or a tank lane, or a lane for that herd of distended hippos that is known to occasionally

rumble into Kingston.

Perhaps it's not a cycle lane at all. Perhaps it's part of the council's contingency plans for an apocalyptic future, and that when the alien spacetanks inevitably roll in from Esher, the cycle lane will provide a convenient highway for them to quickly get to the Bentall Centre.

Whatever the reason, I'm sure we'd like to thank the council for putting Surbiton on the map for boasting the first cycle lane visible from space, and we must hope that the peddlers of our town enjoy the intoxicating freedom of the open road, and are not ploughed down by confused motorists pulling out of the Harts Boatyard car park.

Becky Mayhew



## 97 reasons to try

The concept? 'Countryside meets city', because – says owner Sam Berry – Surbiton is in the middle.

No97, totally reimagined from its former Rubi bar identity, is a 30-cover Maple Road restaurant/tapas bar/wine bar with seats around the ground-floor kitchen, for those who get a buzz from watching food skilfully prepared.

Provocative artwork dots the walls, while below stairs is a gin bar with 40 different alternatives.

An adaptable space, the subterranean room can be used for meetings by day, and has a screen that descends from the ceiling for No97's film evenings.

"I designed it," said Sam, whose mother runs a Surbiton nursery.

The layout dictated what could be done, but the configuration has already won admirers; it's bustling most evenings.

With no possibility of



installing a food lift, the kitchen had to be sited on street level, so it has been placed centre stage to create catering as entertainment.

Tuesdays are designated experimental days, with gin tastings etc, while the food menu changes every six weeks.

## Smith's crisp

One of the first branches of a new type of mini WHSmith has opened in Ewell Road.

Franchised WHSmith Locals aim to look more professional than corner shops... so the old racks of onions, tomatoes and potatoes on the pavement have been banished.

Until June, the shop in Grand Parade (three doors from B&M, the former Budgens) was Malar Foods, a Sri Lankan and Indian grocery store, typical of Tolworth Broadway late-opening food shops, but specialising in fresh fish as well as fruit, veg and meat.

The new-look shop stocks WHSmith products and benefits from instant customer recognisability. Staff wear WHSmith-issue



uniforms, with the high street chain training workers and supplying display material.

WHSmith claims that newsagents which turn into its 'locals' typically pay back their franchise fee in 15 months. Open seven days, 7am-7pm.

## Sandy: a very helpful puppy

After hearing a talk on the Woofability charity, Shrewsbury House pupils adopted a puppy to help mobility-impaired people. A mix of golden, flat-coated and black retrievers, Sandy (as the boys voted to name him) will learn tasks such as emptying the washing machine, turning on lights, passing a ringing phone, collecting the post, and even helping his owner undress by taking off his socks. The Ditton Road school has donated £14,000 to train the puppy. Headmaster Kevin Doble said: "The boys and staff were amazed by the abilities of these dogs, and we look forward to watching Sandy's progress."



Jon, Charlie, head Kevin Doble with Sandy, Joshua and Rafe



American pairing and ladies doubles champs Sanaz Marand and Melanie Oudin

● Tennis fans at the Aegon Surbiton Trophy noticed the changes; as in 2015, the Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club looked fantastic – courts immaculate – but electronic scoreboards replaced manual... and most professional it looked too. Another upgrade: grandstand seating was built round one show court not two, giving players room to move and removing the spectators' agony about which match to focus on. The standard was impressive and the crowds could appreciate the competitors' pace and power up close.

What a privilege to have a superb event and tennis club, on our doorstep, with match after match of amazing tennis.

Rain on an epic scale forced nifty re-scheduling, with some matches played to 'sudden-death deuce' to get back on track. And the inexplicable blaring of the club fire alarm meant one long ladder was swapped for a longer one, then another, until the bell stopped. The 2016 Surbiton Trophy was a resounding success. Roll on next year! Lisa Wilks

## Summer

If birds and bees  
And leafy trees  
Can strollers please  
And moments seize  
If vivid flowers  
Possess the powers  
To wave for hours  
In summer showers  
If someone spies  
Through shielded eyes  
In pale blue skies  
Two butterflies  
If holidays  
Let nature's ways  
Improve their gaze  
Then sing the praise  
Of mossies, wasps  
And more (alack)  
Which we despatch  
with one swift Whack!

Morris Thain



● Hats off to the council's gardening team for the stunning hanging baskets adding dramatic seasonal colour to the town centre. This double display at the Brighton Road/Victoria Road junction is echoed on lampposts up and down both streets. A brilliant effort.

## Faraz is a chirpy chappy

If you'd promised your loved one a chameleon, bad news. Reptile Kingdom has closed. But if you want a haircut, there's a new option. The 122 Ewell Road lizard emporium is now chirpy Iranian Faraz Sepahvar's barber shop, open seven days. The 42-year-old, below, from Karaj said: "Just walk in, no need for appointments."

There's no shortage of choice for the hirsute. Trendy Fellowship occupies what was O'Neills



opposite Gordon Bennett! at 77 Maple Road (haircuts from £16.50), the Hair Xcel unisex salon at 26 Claremont Road is now Surbiton Talent Barbers, and Alberttodino Tailoring, the alteration shop on St Mark's Hill, has become Smokey Barbers, the place to run into up-and-coming Chelsea footballers.

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