

Issue 4

The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3

June 2012



### Market's musical soudtrack

June's Surbiton farmers' market will have a musical backdrop following the success of the talent show at Gordon Bennett!

Listen out for crooner Karl Prinz, 76, star of 60s TV talent show Opportunity Knocks, and Leonardo Liccini, a multi-instrumentalist who cites inspirations as diverse as Claude Debussy and Captain Beefheart.

Also giving it their all on the stage by The Antelope are Josh and Martha - Josh Burrows, 14, and Martha Christofou, 13 - who have been singing together for a year. Last up is Zac Pajak, singer and acoustic guitar player.

The 24 stallholders at Maple Road on Saturday June 16 are expected to include Garsons Farm in place of holidaying cupcake queen Sacha Leake.

As The Good Life went to press, June's benefiting charities were tipped to be The Fircroft Trust and Cats Protection.

Fircroft raised £315 at the May market through plant sales, a sum increased to £565 by the market organisers' charity fund.

May's market featured Surbiton Farmers' Market's Got Talent winner Hannah White (right) and classical guitarist Egidio Fedele.

The market is once again being heaped with praise by a string of judging panels of UK awards, and is already in the finals of the South London Business, Time & Leisure food & drink and Observer Food Monthly awards.

It is also entering the national Farmers' Market of the Year competiton, having reached the finals last year at the first attempt.



### Now here's a crushing fact...

How many olives does it take to create a litre bottle of olive oil? 100? 200? 400? It actually takes 800.



How do we know? Because Dani and Janet Signor, a Tolworth couple who are regulars at the Maple Road farmers market, press their own superb oil in Sicily, then drive it all the way up to Surbiton

in their old Transit van.

The oil is labelled Corte dei Signori, and only 1,000 litres are made each year. The oil is put in Florentine bottles, with distinctive square bases and round shoulders. Full story on page 5.

To complete a memorable dinner party, don't forget to visit the Norbiton Fine Cheese Company - another mainstay of the Surbiton market - to sample their famous cheese bombs.

Full details on page 6.



Ten thousand Swarovski crystals and 12,000 pearls were hand-sewn on to 18 metres of delicately painted fabric to create this fairytale outfit, writes Tim Harrison.

It took five months to make in the front room of a Surbiton semi... and it has just been voted the most incredible dress in the UK.

Remarkably, until a year ago, Eileen Skopnik hadn't so much as sewn a button on a

Last week, in front of 70,000 people at London's ExCeL centre, the 25 year-old actress unveiled her creation to a huge ovation at the annual MCM Expo show.

'There's only one problem now," she told The Good Life. "I'm not sure what to do with it!"

Full story on p2





### Olympic visit brings home the gold

Team GB track hopeful Eugene Ayanful ran into Shrewsbury House School ahead of the Olympics, and showed Harry Morgan, 13, how to sprint start.

It was a chance for pupils at the Ditton Road school to try on the new Olympic tracksuit kit less than two months ahead of the London Games.

Enterprising boys, staff and parents have raised £15,000 for Sports 4 All, the charity which campaigns to broaden sport participation among people with disabilities, and other charities.

Eugene, 22, who has run 100m in 10.34 seconds, will know on June 22 if he has made the Olympic squad!

# **Creating a fairytale dress**

It's the fairytale dress to eclipse every onceupon a time story. Eileen Skopnik's sewing project took 150 days in the front room of her home in Red Lion Road, Tolworth.

It's only the second item of clothing she has ever produced. A year ago she taught herself to sew, made a futuristic costume, entered it in the novice section of the 2011 MCM Expo in east London (a show about video games and comics) and came first.

Last week, she entered the expert section of this year's show, and again triumphed.

"I can't believe it," said the actress, who needed five people to help her walk across stage in front of a crowd of FA. Cup final size.

She had set off from Surbiton by train on the Friday, only to find several parts of her costume had broken on the journey. "I spent hours doing repairs," she said.

Starting in her undies, she added an Elizabethan-style 'bum roll' to support the hooped skirt (five metres round the base), then three layers of

net to build volume. Rose-covered bands were suspended from her waist, each covered in individually sewn-on pearls, then a jacket, a free-standing collar (featuring 1,300 pearls) and necklaces. Three trains, one of mock fur, splayed behind, before cuffs, wig, crown, a second whisk collar, orb and sceptre were added.

The Swarovski crystals and pearls add to the weight, making movement tricky.

The look cost more than £1,000 in materials and is the coronation dress of Japanese cartoon character Queen Esther from the Trinity Blood series.

"I looked at websites to see how Elizabethan dresses were made, but you can't find out how to do ruffs; it's just trial and error," she said. "I bent all my nails and my hands were bleeding. The cuff material was so hard that I broke many needles on the sewing machine."

As Eileen is half Brazilian, she must have carnival costume-making in her genes.

Now the challenge is finding a use for the extraordinary creation.

Tim Harrison

Is this lke's bike?

As Surbiton gears up for a vintage cycling event in the late summer, the discovery of an old American bike is exciting two wheeled historians.

A 1930s Hawthorne double crossbar steed with sprung saddle is among bikes that will be taking part in a rally in the town.

The question: Is this the bicycle shipped over by General Dwight D Eisenhower in 1942? Is it Ike's bike?

Lee Boyce, who runs the Recycles shop at the river end of Brighton Road, hopes to solve the mystery before the Seething Trycyclingathon in Claremont Gardens in September.

The bike which has come into Lee's possession is a hand-built Wards Hawthorne, made in about 1936.

It has an unusual double crossbar, between which once clipped a storage tube housing the battery to power a front light.

There are no orthodox brakes, just a freewheeling coaster brake, so if 'Ike' Eisenhower used it to cycle to Kingston or Surbiton from his wartime home, Telegraph Cottage, Kingston Hill,

he'd have taken his life in his hands rocketing down the slope.

More likely, Eisenhower, who prided himself on his fitness, used the Hawthorne to cycle around the sprawling base which covered much of Bushy Park – Supreme Allied Command, where the D-Day invasion was planned.

Eisenhower, who was 52 when he arrived in Kingston, was appointed Allied commander of Europe in December 1943, and spent the next six months working with other generals on the Normandy campaign, which ultimately liberated Europe.

American cycle historian Mike Cartier, who recently moved from Surbiton to Switzerland, says everything points to the Hawthorne being Eisenhower's.

"There are very few of these bikes left – there are only five for sale in the whole of the USA, and they command prices of \$5,000 or more," he said. "My research points to this Hawthorne being the one General Eisenhower used in Kingston in the 1940s."

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#### Janet Cripps' gardening tips

# **Making first impressions count**



Front gardens are often neglected, featureless spaces, paved over to provide parking spaces or, worse, bin storage.

Living in Surbiton, where space is at a premium, it is easy to see how an attractive, inviting front garden

might be low on the priority list. It is particularly challenging for those of us who live in older properties, not designed with the needs of the two-car family in mind.

Take a long, critical look at your front garden. Does it do justice to your property and its interior? Does it have the 'kerb appeal' beloved of estate agents? Does it combine planting with practical considerations such as access, parking and storage?

A common feature of the neglected front garden is that planting has become old and tired. Often, in an attempt to keep everything under control, plants have been savagely pruned into amorphous shapes without regard for aesthetics or

the plants' characteristics or requirements.

If you need to rethink your planting, many low-maintenance plants will thrive. Before you buy, read the labels and note the eventual size.

Evergreen shrubs look good all year round and can provide a useful backdrop for seasonal planting or screening for bins. If space allows, plant a small tree. Choose one that will work hard throughout the year such as Snowy mespilus. It has delicate white flowers in spring, berries in summer, stunning autumn colour and attractive silver bark in winter.

If you use your garden for parking, ensure you can drive in and out safely with clear lines of sight. But introduce greenery in the dead spaces. ClimbingO plants can dress bare walls and fences. Pots can be placed in areas without soil or where space is tight. Choose large containers that create more impact and are less likely to be stolen or blown over

If you are designing your front garden from scratch, make sure building materials and planting style complements the architecture.

Consider materials and plants that were available when your house was built. A tarmacked hard standing with tropical planting is not going to fit in a Victorian terrace.

Keep the design simple and use the highest quality materials you can afford.

As front gardens are part of the street landscape, they are covered by strict planning regulations. The cumulative effect of paving them over causes serious environmental problems of flooding and increasing local temperatures, so regulations stipulate that porous paving materials must be used unless you have planning permission.



A good inexpensive permeable paving option is gravel, which is low cost, suits most styles and is good for security as it crunches underfoot.

Site plants into the gravel in planting pockets, or use low-growing plants, like creeping jenny and bugle that tolerate being parked over.

If you want to create a new access across a pavement, you will need planning permission. Other regulations may affect boundaries, hedge heights, materials and plants. Check these out particularly if you live in a conservation area.

A tidy, welcoming front garden is a pleasure to come home to. It adds to the value of your home and enhances the neighbourhood and sense of community. Which surely benefits us all.

• Garden constructed by The Garden Builders. Photo courtesy of GA Lighting

Janice Cripps is a professional garden designer based in Surbiton.

For advice, planting plans or taking projects from concept to completion, visit www.janicecripps.co.uk

### Rain bonus

One of the few to appreciate the wettest spring since hosepipe bans began was Michael Holding of Surbiton Shoe Repairs at the Surbiton Station forecourt. "When it rains, people notice the water coming through the holes in their shoes," he explained.

### **YMCA** death

The two police community officers who tried to revive the man who fell to his death from a fourth-floor window at Surbiton YMCA were less than a week in the job.

They battled to save the 64year-old until ambulance staff arrived, but despite an hour of attempted resuscitation, he was pronounced dead at the scene.

The incident, at 10am on Thursday May 24, is being treated as suicide. A note is believed to have been found.

Surbiton Samaritans offer 24-hour confidential emotional support on 020 8399 6676.



### Written off

Another letter has fallen off the ever-changing Surbiton Baptist wall sign in Balaclava Road, this time creating the curious phrase Surito Baptt.

As a public service, here are some ways the church could use the surviving letters more creatively. Pub to artist. It's to abrupt. Patriot bust. Stout bra tip. Toast rub pit. A turbot spit.

### **Festive plans**

Preparations for the 2012 Surbiton Festival are under way. The main parade and stalls will be on September 29.

Music and entertainment will include many of last year's most popular attractions, as well as a host of new acts.

Volunteers are urgently needed to help it run smoothly. If you are able to help, email surbiton festival@therichmind.co.uk

### What is 1.3 miles long and thinks it's being ignored?

Dismayed at being written off as a 'corridor', shops in Ewell Road have clubbed together to form a campaign group, writes Tim Harrison.

Every business from Surbiton Library to Tippetts motorbikes at the end of Douglas Road is being approached to join the Ewell Road Business Group.

Indignant traders are still fuming after Kingston Council's Surbiton neighbourhood committee dubbed Ewell Road a corridor on its agenda.

"We're being ignored," a furious Helen Crewdson told The Good Life. "Everything's always about Kingston town centre or Surbiton town centre, but we have lots of shops in Ewell Road that no other area has – businesses that you just don't find in other parts of Surbiton." The group aims to raise the profile of Ewell Road and tackle the issue of improving short-term street parking, to help businesses struggling in these difficult trading times.

"We'll be a voice for the area," pledged Helen of Hypoxi Therapy Centre. "We've had a lot of interest from businesses and from the local residents' association. If people want to join us, we're open to all Ewell Road businesses."

It was the Surbiton neighbourhood committee meeting at the end of March which referred to the 'Ewell Road corridor review'.

identity. Another suggestion, that the group include 'Surbiton Hill' in the name, was also rejected.

Early joiners include Jennings the butchers, Traders

or 'Tolworth' in their title as it might compromise their

Business group members decided not to use 'Surbiton'

Early joiners include Jennings the butchers, Traders Coffee, the Prithi and the TaxAssist accountancy firm.

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Monday menu

and new wines

& sparkling wines



### Question time at the Lion

What was Michael Jackson's first UK No1? Which rugby league club is known as The Wire? Which island was split into six 'sheadings'?

If you reckon you know, you should be taking part in the Black Lion pub's Tuesday night quiz.

As landlord Mark Sheehy runs through the questions in the different categories, the debates begin. "I'm pretty sure it was Ben." "No, I don't think it was a No1." "Yeah, but I really like the song."

The sport category included the intriguing poser: Which team always goes last in the Olympics opening ceremony? "Got to be Zambia." "What about Zimbabwe?"

In the end, the winning team was Cat's Angels. Gerry Chat (left in picture) went up to collect the £50 cash prize from landlord Mark.

There were bottles of wine for second and third, and two packets of pork scratchings as the booby prize.

After the quiz, the jackpot. You buy a strip of raffle tickets, and if your number comes up you have a crack at a £600 question.

How many red cards were there in this year's Champions League competition? "Four," guessed Charlotte. "Wrong," roared Mark. "Twenty two." A second question – also for £600 – was: In the last 60 years, how many official overseas visits have been made by The Queen? The guess of 243 wasn't bad. The correct answer was 261.

The quiz is free, the atmosphere terrific and everything gets under way after 7.30pm on Tuesdays at the Black Lion, at the corner of Maple Road and Brighton Road.

• Michael Jackson's first UK No1 was One Day In Your Life. The Wire are the Warrington Wolves. The Isle of Man was formed of six parishes, or sheadings. The last country to march in the Olympics opening ceremony is always the host country.



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### Flag show

Surbiton's stunning flag display will last all the way through to September's annual town festival.

Andy Bacon, chairman of Surbiton Business Community, praised everyone who created the red, white and blue spectacle. "It's been a terrific effort," he said.

Staff from Traders
Coffee in Ewell Road
did most of the
flagpole
work.

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Tim Harrison tries his hand at mixing cocktails, pairing food with wine, and making bread - a series of perfect evenings for Surbiton foodies

### Taste the difference

Which wine is best with fish? Is curry better with something oomphy or light? Is there anything in the world finer than a rich red and some mature cheddar?

Maiestic - the Brighton Road wine warehouse - runs free (you read it right) Sunday tastings to answer the questions, and introduce potential customers to the world of sipping. sniffing and slooshing.

David Price (below right) conducted last week's two-hour course on his first day as branch manager at Surbiton. "We're trying to work out why scientifically some things work and some don't," he said.

Half a dozen of us squeezed round a table in an aisle. Six glasses sat on numbered circles before us. Whites were first.

First, assess the colour. Light colour, light wine. Then give it a swirl. It's been sleeping in the bottle, so it needs waking. We learn that posh wine tasters slurp as they are drawing oxygen into their mouths to amplify the flavour,

Is the wine acidic, does it make your mouth water? We admired the 'legs' - the drip pattern on the side of the glass after you swill the wine around.

Six tasters, six opinions, although we all agreed on the zesty freshness of a Loire sauvignon blanc and the fruitier



punch of a Chilean chardonnay. We were urged to decide if wines were old world (France etc) or new (South America, Australia etc). Generally there is a bigger fruit character to new world wines because of the warmer climate.

After a champagne cleanser we tried three reds. A light New Zealand pinot noir, a plummy Bordeaux and a dark, rich Aussie shiraz. Each sells for around a tenner.

Then the food test. Eat a cherry tomato, sip a glass of white. The light lemony taste of sauvignon blanc pairs up well, but you can forget the oaked chardonnay.

A handful of Bombay mix simulated curry flavours, with the peppery shiraz (14.5 per cent) redoubling the spiciness. Salmon and cheese went well with Bordeaux (the tannin of the wine mixing with the protein in the cheddar). "It's why big wines work so well with steak," said David, 25.

Many people shop by price. Thanks to supermarkets, 80 per cent of wines are still under a fiver. Majestic's course proved that a little extra investment can pay dividends.

# Would you make an expert bartender?

Lined up along the bar, a gleaming array of shakers. Next to them, shot glasses, long-handled spoons and buckets-of ice.

I'm in the Rubicon cocktail bar in Maple Road, and we're about to stir things up. Bartender Jamie Mumford (pictured) is in charge and it's cocktail mixology night - a dream session for anyone who has ever pondered the perfect martini.

Each week, a different base drink is picked. Tonight it's whisky and bourbon. Seven of us are watching the main man. First we see how he does it, then we're let loose.

The task: a Manhattan. First we compare bourbons and whiskies. The technique is to sniff one, then sniff the back of your hand to neutralise the smell, then sniff the next glass.

A Manhattan involves whisky or bourbon, vermouth and bitters. You don't need a premium Scotch, as it's going to be mixed up. "Some people want it made with an 18-year-old malt," said Jamie. "It makes bartenders cry!"

Supposedly it dates from the 1870s when it was served at a party for Winston Churchill's mother.

We have a go, rinsing the ice with vermouth, adding the spirit then finishing it all off with a couple of cherries.

Next, an Old Fashioned. The problem is each one takes six minutes to make, which ties up a bartender for a while.

First, brown sugar. Mix in some orange-flavoured angostura bitters, a tiny splash of Surbiton tap water, then gradually add ice and a double shot of bourbon, stirring continuously so that the ice slowly melts during the six-minute stir.

There are no short cuts. Then you squeeze orange zest. When Jamie did it, he held a cigarette lighter to the peel, producing a satisfying shower of orange oil sparks.

The odd thing was, even though we all had a go, every one was different; flavour, colour, everything.

"Good bartenders argue that you judge other bartenders by an Old Fashioned,' said Jamie.

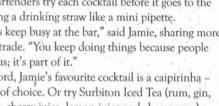
We tried our cocktails. We tried each other's cocktails. We tried Jamie's cocktails. I tell you what. Quite apart

from the fun of watching an expert mix a drink and having a go ourselves, you drink a fair bit for your £12.50 ticket.

Rubicon bartenders try each cocktail before it goes to the customer, using a drinking straw like a mini pipette.

"You always keep busy at the bar," said Jamie, sharing more secrets of the trade. "You keep doing things because people are watching us; it's part of it."

For the record, Jamie's favourite cocktail is a caipirinha -Brazil's drink of choice. Or try Surbiton Iced Tea (rum, gin, vodka, tequila, cherry juice, lemon juice and champagne), Surbiton Sling (gin, cherry brandy, Benedictine, lime juice, angostura bitters, orange and pineapple juice) or Maple Road to Ruin (bourbon, maple syrup, apple juice and lemon juice).



## My fougasse looked like Nicolas Sarkozy

Perfectionists leave nothing to chance, and pastry chef Michel Rissons is king of the breed. Flour and yeast are measured on electronic scales, and baking times are tweaked depending on how humid it is outside.

The French Tarte's baking czar is an enthusiastic teacher. I joined four other novices at an evening class. Decked out in stripy aprons and fortified by canapés; we gathered round the marble slab in the inner sanctum of the Tarte in Maple Road.

Around us, proving chambers and baking ovens burred. In front stood Michel (pictured), wearing a shy Gallic smile.

Our task was to replicate the fresh-daily loaves of the French Tarte, but it was also a chance to snoop behind the scenes. Kitchen staff use colour-coded chopping boards, so raw meat doesn't come into contact with cooked meat, and fish is forever separate from veg. I was impressed.

"Precision is important," said Michel, carefully weighing flour into a bowl. "It's important, but we're not drug dealers."

Michel uses milk to make croissants, rather than water, and unsalted butter, to control salt content.

The most important utensil is the flat of your hand. Kneading gruyere bread mix demonstrated that.

Olive bread came next... Surbiton's favourite loaf. "It's been our bestseller here from the beginning," said Michel, admitting it was not his favourite.

The French Tarte has a weekly delivery of ten 25-kilo sacks of Parisian

flour. The yeast is all fresh (our man has never used dried), and if eggs weigh more than 50g you use less water as it affects the overall weight. Perfection.

How had he become a chef? "The father of one of my best friends at school was the baker," he said. "I was four when I said I'd be a pastry chef. I -changed my mind once, when I visited an airport and thought I wanted to be a pilot!'

We made croissants,

brioches, carrot bread, olive bread and date, walnut, dried fruit and honey bread. We made fougasse - a Provence bread which can be given facial expressions. Mine was Nicolas Sarkozy on election night.

"Experimenting is my job," said Michel. "The day you think you know everything, It's time to quit."

I came home with two bags of fresh bread. "Did you make

all that?" shrieked 'er indoors.

Easy if you're taught right.

French Tarte, Evening course £65 020 8399 1123 www.thefrenchtable.co.uk Rubicon. Evening course £12.50 www.rubiconbar.com Majestic. Afternoon course free 020 8399 5676

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## Sicilian sunshine in Maple Road



Italians adore their olive oil, and Surbiton has the taste for a quality Sicilian version named among the top 10 sold in the UK.

Just 1,000 litres are produced by Dani'and Janet Signor, and sold at the Maple Road farmers' market under the banner Corte dei. Signori.

It is pressed on a 15-acre estate 5km outside the historic town of Syracuse in Sicily, and transported twice-yearly back to Tolworth in a Transit van

Dani, 63, and Janet, 65, married in 1973 after meeting at a wedding in Australia. She was

bridesmaid, he was best man!

"We leased an apple and pear orchard," said Janet, recalling their early days in New South Wales. In the late 80s, with daughter Jacqueline and son Dominic, the family fell in love with Sicily after driving round Italy, partly visiting Dani's relatives.

"That was 10 years ago," said Janet. The estate they bought had oranges, olives and lemons, but the Signors planted more olives and 5,000 vines.

Corte dei Signori olive oil is unfiltered, has low acidity and a fruity, herby flavour with peppery aftertaste (Tuscan olive oil, by comparison, is grassier). The Independent newspaper named it one of the top 10 oils on sale in the UK.

Market prices are £7.50 a half litre or £4 for 250ml, in distinctive Florentine bottles with a square base and round shoulders. In the handful of delis that stock it, it sells for up to £13 a half litre!

"Dani's uncle has a tablespoon of it every morning before breakfast," Janet revealed.

Their market stall often has wine, lemons, orange blossom honey (£3.50), and almond biscuits made by a Syracuse baker.

"We love the Surbiton market; it's so busy, especially between 11 and 11.30. Regulars come up, grab, give us the money and go! Lots of people tell us about their visits to Sicily. The Sicilian tourist board should pay us commission!"





#### **THERAPISTS**

OSTEOPATHS Kathy O'Callaghan-Brown Oliver O'Callaghan-Brown Sabrina Payandane

CHIROPRACTORS
Neil Reilly
Pernille Larsen
Kyoung Won Kang

SPORTS THERAPY Sophie Capito Gary Lambeth

CHIROPODY/PODIATRY
Paula Maple

COGNATIVE
HYPNOTHERAPY
Anette Self
Jon Young

ACUPUNCTURIST Liz Xeri Victoria Busk

REHABILITATION EXERCISE THERAPY Carley-Ann Offer

> MEDICAL HERBALIST Stuart McLean

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## Half-mast trews are a health threat

Surbiton chiropractor is warning teenage boys that wearing trousers at half-mast is causing medical problems.

With no sign of the bottom falling out of the fashion, Neil Reilly of Ace Natural Therapies in Ewell Road, says: "In my chiropractic practice I have seen cases of repetitive strain caused by years of wearing sagging trousers."

He has given the condition a name – Pectineus Pants – after the thigh muscle most offected

Low-riding trousers have been part of popular culture for two decades, with the rest of the world forced to admire the underpants of wearers trying to look like US jail hard men, deprived of their belts for safety reasons.

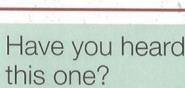
"To stop sagging trousers falling down completely, the wearer abducts and internally rotates the lower limb," explains Neil. "The constant contraction of the pectineus muscle can cause groin pain, and can be the precursor of iliotibial band problems, all in an effort to make



"This can lead to inhibition of some of the major buttock muscles, resulting in disc strain."

This will eventually force wearers to seek help from specialists.

"We are on the cusp of an epidemic of musculo-skeletal problems caused by this fashion," says Neil, adding: "Please remember to keep your tongue firmly in your cheek when you see examples of Pectineus Pants."



Overheard in the New Prince on June 2.

"Sixty is the worst age to be," said the 60year-old man. You feel like you have to pee and most of the time you stand there and nothing comes out."

"That's nothing," said the 70-year-old. "At 70 you can't go. You eat bran, sit on the loo all day and nothing comes out!"

"Actually," said the 80-year-old, "Eighty is the worst age."

"Do you have trouble peeing, too?" asked the 60-year-old.

"No, I pee every morning at 6. It's like Niagra."

"So, do you have trouble with your owels?"

"No, I go every morning at 6.30."
Exasperated, the 60-year-old said: "You pee every morning at 6 and go every morning at 6.30. What's so bad about being 80?"

"I don't wake up until 7."

### Portas quest continues

Despite failing to land one of shopping guru Mary Portas's £100,000 revival grants, Surbiton town centre is pushing for a place in the second round.

The bid for regeneration cash, organised through the Surbiton Business Community, included a 99-second film of shop-window reflections of people in Victoria Road.

Although Surbiton lost out to 12 needy high streets from Croydon to Stockport, another 15 bidders will become winners in a second round which ends on June 30. More than 350 towns are competing.

Robin Hutchinson, who did the voiceover on Surbiton's promo film, told The Good Life: "Although we are naturally disappointed, all those involved with the first bid will be working hard to engage with more people and organisations to develop ideas for a second-round submission.

"With support, Surbiton has a very bright future. If anyone wants to get involved in the new Portas bid, email the Surbiton Business Community."



# A cheese you simply can't defuse

Want to make your next dinner party truly memorable? Plant a small bomb in the middle of the cheeseboard.

The Norbiton Fine Cheese Company - a regular at the Maple Road farmers market - specialises in unusual British and European cheeses... including a mature Lancashire sealed in black wax like a cartoon anarchist's grenade.

As long as your guests feel brave, it can sit happily on the sideboard next to the grapes until you near the end of Surbiton; it's as if they starve for the the meal.

Richie Bissett, who runs the stall, concentrates exclusively on markets since closing the shop that

> used to operate near the railway bridge in London Road, Kingston.

We do between five and eight farmers' markets each week, plus the wholesale business," said Richie.

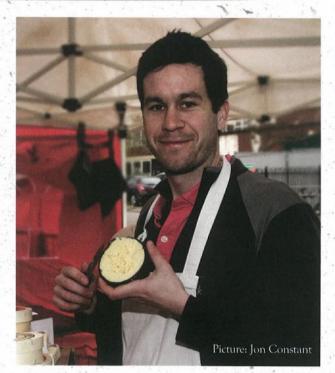
"When we closed the shop, people thought at first that we'd moved on... but we haven't gone.

We get good sales figures each week. They're cheese-mad here in rest of the month that we're not here!"

The Lancashire bomb sells for around £9, is produced by northern cheesemaker Andrew Shorrock, and is matured for two years. A dozen are sold at every Surbiton farmers' market.

"A guy found one that had sat in his fridge for six years," said Richie (pictured). "They opened it... and it had got even better!"

Like many Maple Road stallholders, Norbiton Cheese reckons Surbiton is the best market of all. "It's well run. and it's our best performing market because it's not on every week," said Richie. "People don't get bored with it because it's only once a month."



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# Snap hap



Despairing of the stress of formal studio portraiture sessions, and the fixed-grin photos that so often resulted, Surbiton lifestyle photographer Laura Gioffredo (left) decided to set up in business.

The Indiana-born lenswoman took classes, kitted herself out and began practising

on the two most obvious subjects - four-year-old daughter Olivia and two-year-old son Alex. "Everywhere I went I carried my camera," said Laura, 35, who has now run her bumps, newborns, babies, children and family group photographic firm for two years from her home in Jennings Close.

Her aim is a more relaxed, naturalistic style of portraiture, relying on natural rather than artificial light.

"I prefer to see children in a natural environment," said Laura, 35. It applies to clothes too, where she encourages people to wear what they feel comfy in, rather than anything formal.

Laura makes prints available to clients via a password-accessed part of her website (www.lauragioffredo.com).

"In the US it's the thing to have a family photo, and you go into a studio where they have gigantic studio lights and it's really hot. Olivia cried the whole time," she said.

Laura's portrait sessions are more likely to be among the trees in Bushy Park. "I'm passionate about what I do," she said. "I love giving people the memories.'

Laura has a stall at the Surbiton Festival on September 29.

# Feeling

I was going to talk about the weather, but I don't want to

Who knew Surbiton had a world champion cyclist? John 'Happy Jack' Keen had a bike factory in Surbiton, and used a track here too. Surbiton was the centre of cycling excellence... in 1869.

Looking at the feats Happy Jack achieved, and being a keen cyclist myself, his records are something all Surbiton can take pride in.

Riding a penny farthing, he achieved several world records. In today's context the speeds seem a little lacklustre, but in 1869 a penny farthing was singlespeed and over 6ft high.

He rode at 22mph on those crazy machines - no mean feat even on a modern geared racing bike. More on Happy Jack Keen at Kingston Museum.

Now I did say I wasn't going to talk about the weather, but the sun has been shining so get on your bikes and make the most of it. Riding down by the river last week I have to say this little enclave of ours is so beautiful when the sun is shining.

Bike Buddha



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### "Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful

Stack & Bonner opened its first office in 1988 and 24 years on we now have four offices in Surbiton and Kingston.

The two founders John Stack and Andrew Pollard are still actively involved in the day-to-day running of the company and our ethos of honesty, integrity and customer service is still as important today as ever.

But most importantly, we are genuinely "passionate about property" and a very contented, driven and proactive Estate Agency.

This is demonstrated by the fact that within our company, the average length of service is 12 years – and believe us, with the property market we have recently encountered, I should think this compares incredibly favourably with an industry average of 2 or 3 years (maybe less).

So, if you feel that there is a certain amount of reassurance and palpable benefits from instructing an experienced Estate Agent, where each individual has the proud knowledge that he or she has played a significant part in their company's achievements. A business they have worked within so successfully and which they have enjoyed participating within so much, then we would very much hope we are offered the opportunity of being your chosen agent either now or in the future.

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# Book your place for an author meeting

Building on the success of an evening with food queen Prue Leith, the Regency Bookshop is staging another event to give readers a chance to meet favourite authors. Barbara Nadel and Nicola Upson will be guests of honour on Tuesday July 10.

Barbara will talk about, and sign copies of, A Private Business: A Hakim & Arnold Mystery, published by Quercus. Nicola will discuss Fear in the Sunlight, the fourth title in her period crime series which revolves around novelist Josephine Tey, published by Faber.

Tickets are £10 for the event at 7.15pm at Glenmore House, 6 The Crescent. You can buy them from the bookshop in Victoria Road. Canapes will be served, and there is also a bar.

### Surbiton routines aid Himalayan women

The day-to-day routines of 100 women are examined in a book celebrating UK diversity... including Surbiton.

Janet Hyde of Balaclava Road describes working in the City under the heading Woman in a Man's World.

"Once I'd chosen my title, the words just tumbled out, simply because of the free rein, I had to be myself," she said. A Day in the Life of 100 Women in Britain (published by The Book Project at £9.99 and available at the Regency Bookshop) offers a candid snapshot of modern living through the eyes of women from 18 to 95.

The book raises money for less fortunate women in the developing world for whom education, employment and empowerment are often only dreams.

Projects include Himalayan Adventure Girls, training young Nepalese women to become tourist guides, and a micro-finance project for an agricultural community, where £60 can enable a woman to buy livestock, tools and seeds to cultivate kitchen gardens.

Earnings from the book have already covered publication costs, so all proceeds now benefit causes. "It just goes to show how enterprising and enthusiastic women the world over can be," added Janet, 50.

More details at www.the 100 women book project.com



## Glorious arias

St Andrew's church will echo to glorious arias and divine duets from 100 voices when Kingston Choral



Society presents A Night At The Opera on Saturday June 30 at 7.30pm.

Conductor
Andrew Griffiths
told The Good
Life: "I've made
the selection
based on what's
reasonably
accessible to the
choir, so there's
nice variety."

Mozart, Bizet, Puccini, Wagner and Verdi will

feature, as will Pietro Masagni. Works will be sung in French, Italian and Czech... but not English!

Andrew Griffiths has now brandished the KCS baton for a year. "It's been very exciting; the choir's really come on," he said. "There have been three really big projects including Mendelssohn's Elijah and Bach's St

John Passion."

Topping the bill at the Maple Road church on the 30th will be soprano Elisabeth Meister and tenor Ji-Min Park (pictured). Susanna Stranders accompanies.

Pay on the door (£12, concs £10, U18s £5) or buy in advance on 020 8977 4801.



Surbiton Rotary is organising a diamond jubilee concert at Kingston Grammar School, London Road, Kingston, on Thursday June 21 at 7pm. It begins with early music, moves on to an accordionist, then a soprano sings operatic arias. Elsewhere in the programme are a female saxophone jazz quartet, a Spanish guitarist and the Earthly Voices choir. Tickets for the fundraiser are £15 (£12 concs) from 01372 726689.

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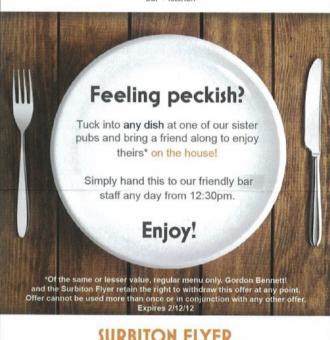




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#### New kids on the block

Meet the new neighbours. A pair of cygnets, snapped by Chris Burchill of Ditton Road as he walked his dog in Fishponds, Ewell Road.

The proud parents, a pair of mute swans, return year after year to Surbiton to breed. Last year there were three cygnets, this year two.

"Swans mate for life and this is the third year this pair have been back to Fishponds," said Chris, who will update the cygnets' progress on his blog, www.chrisburchill.wordpress.com



# Scoring high on the quality of life index



hen I moved to Surbiton in 1991 it was less crowded and more dependent on big brother Kingston. Now every parking space is policed, every last leaf swept away and every

road green, red, white and yellow.

A lot has improved though much remains unchanged, such as the station with its dubious listed building status. That Surbiton is an unfinished masterpiece adds to its charm.

Developers prod and tease like a gardener in a mature, crowded garden, while at its heart, Surbiton is a large swathe of flats. Even in 1991 big houses were mainly conversions; owners and tenants degree-wielding young thrusters riding eight-carriage stallions to their up-town jobs.

In those days a two-bed flat in a quiet road set me back £74,000. Today? Three or even four hundred thousand.

Those prices create their own problems. Surbiton is home to all walks of life. The rough and smooth keep it real and avoid that horrid feeling caused by life lived behind solid private gates.

Three supermarkets and the big coffee chains have joined the high street. Boots and Pizza Express sit cheek by jowl with smaller independents, with barely an empty shop in sight. Surbiton is flourishing.

Over the last 20 years I have made a living investing in rental property in Surbiton. For the first three years, I did not have to pay more than £50,000 for a flat. Over the last decade rental prices have barely risen, but since 2007 purchase prices have been falling and the days of value for money are returning. There are opportunities out there.

I invented an index to match the city ones. The Quality of Life Index. Add up the coffee shops and subtract charity shops and empty stores. The higher the figure, the higher the quality of life.

Cobham fares well. Walton is a riser, but not Esher. Surbiton is unique. More than 50 places sell coffee, not including restaurants. The score is sky high.

From its beautiful river frontage and period properties to its real people and quality of life, I can think of a lot to like about my much-loved Surbiton

David Pengilly attended Tiffin School and lives in Surbiton. His novel, An Audience of Two, the Breaking of a Seventy Year Record, is self-published on Kindle and can be downloaded for peanuts. All proceeds in 2012 buy school books for children in India.

### Southern Brew leaves the caff scene

Southern Brew, the Surbiton café with the South African accent which was run by a brother and sister team, has closed. The Claremont Road coffee shop operated since Easter 2011 in what had formerly been the little indie caff Mooka.

The shop's destiny is unclear. The windows have been covered with paper. Denzel Howard, who ran Southern Brew, carved out a niche by serving boerewors – a spiral beefy sausage – as part of the café's £5.95 cooked breakfast which also included a grilled banana.

Meanwhile, what was once the friendly, juice-orientated independent café C'est Bon, just around the corner in Victoria Road, has ended its brief spell as a charity shop and opened as a branch of the mobile phone chain Phones 4 U.

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# Mr Sommelier, may I introduce Mrs Barista?

Half offie, half café. An unusual concept is opening in the shell of the former Moben/Sharps/Dolphin centre on the corner of Brighton Road and Victoria Road.

ExCellar is finally ending one of the longest running closing-down sales in history in the Surbiton station forecourt and moving to the former kitchen, bathroom and bedroom

Boss Simon Baile's concept is novel - an off licence which will double initially as a coffee takeaway before finally developing into a sit-down cafe among the wine displays.

"The top end of Victoria Road has the coffee big boys, then you have places like Foodie that do really good coffee... but at our end there really isn't that much," Simon told

"We're going to concentrate on wine, with coffee, olives, charcuterie and cheese take-outs, then when we're comfy with the space we'll let people stay!"

When he was growing up, Simon's mother ran a successful deli in Islington.

ExCellar will be competing with Majestic 100 yards away, not to mention Sainsbury's,

but in terms of good coffee at the Brighton Road end of Victoria Road there is only Three Peas in a Pod, which mysteriously remains closed on Saturdays.

Simon is modelling the shop on continental charcuteries, which successfully mix food and wine. "For some reason, in this country we see a distinction," he said, pointing out that some bookshops operate good cafés within them.

ExCellar focuses on wines from smaller producers. There is already a branch in Hare Lane, Claygate.

# 10% OFF with this advert Surbiton

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### Summer display by Morris Thain

They smoke their fags, they swig their booze They proudly flash their loud tattoos Each time the sun decides to peep It wakes the inked ones from their sleep.

I Love Mum, a heart with 'Elsie', Elvis Lives or My Team's Chelsea. Out they slink like alley cats Determined to display their tatts. Now small tattoos I sort of get, If hidden under clothes, and yet These monstrous inky splodges stay On view on every sun-filled day.

The welcome signs that summer's here Fill me with dread, year after year. I love the sun, I love the heat But spare me from the exposed meat.



I do not need to know that you Are 'Gaz' or 'Tracey', 'Del' or 'Boo', When, from your cans, you start to sup Please spare us all, and COVER UP!

Published by The Good Life

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