



## Crumbs! Cake entries all disappear

Georgia Adams (left) won the farmers' market Great British Cake Off; judges Bill Williamson and Elyse Savage deciding her lemon and raspberry cake was, as Bill put it, "intensely fresh tasting". She won tea for two at the French Tarte. Charlotte McKenzie (right) won the U12s with her brownies, leaving

with a Regency Bookshop cook book. Fabienne Jaimes won the pro section, his madeleines pipping Bosco's ornate entry into second. "They are simple, but delicious, and I've eaten a lot of cake in my life!" said Elyse. Within half an hour, all 15 amateur entries were crumbs, sold by the slice to benefit the Star and Garter.



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Two flies – Sue Lee, left, and Jane Grove – discuss life and love in David Gray's Come Fly With Me, a one-act play at the cornerHOUSE in May. ● Full details on p7

## Keep cats indoors

Keep cats inside, and supervise them if they go out. That's the shock advice as a cat killer moves uncomfortably close to Surbiton.

Kingston and Richmond were recently targeted, Tony Jenkins of rescue charity Snarl told The Good Life: "It sounds drastic, but that's the advice we're giving cat owners until this psychopath is caught."

To date, 19 cat killings are confirmed; tails or heads gruesomely removed as 'trophies'. Early incidents were in Croydon, but now the south-west suburbs are under threat.

RSPCA post-mortems confirm foul play, rather than road accident deaths. A criminal profiler is working with police. "If you see anyone trying to coax a cat with food, note the car number and call 999," said Tony.

"It's hard to understand how someone could do something so hideous to an innocent animal," added Elaine Swift of Surbiton's Mr Monty's Fuss and Feed.



Who are Tolworth's top performers? This trio! Isla (left), Fiona (right) and Olivia won the area's recent talent show ● Turn to p7 for more

# Greenway to be extended

Tolworth's Greenway is getting longer. The controversial central strip, painted in everything from jade to olive, lime to turquoise, currently ends at the Esso garage along the Broadway.

But it is to be doubled in length, snaking round the corner and along Ewell Road before ending at Red Lion Road.

Senior planner Jean-Christophe Chassard told The Good Life that the project would involve significant remodelling of the junction at King Charles Road/Red Lion Road, including the installation of new traffic lights, to allow cyclists and pedestrians using the extended Greenway to safely rejoin the main road.

The jury is still out on how well the multi-shaded Greenway is working,



although everyone agrees we will never return to the days of a high central barrier splitting the two sides of the Broadway.

Do pedestrians have any rights when crossing? Are cyclists meant to use the central strip?

Mr Chassard, whose past achievements include the introduction of a new tram and rapid transit network in Switzerland, insists "the Greenway is

working". He concedes, however, that the vivid green horizontal stripes may not float everybody's boat, in a visual sense.

"It's a matter of taste," he said, adding in a murmur: "It's not my style."

But traffic speed along the Broadway has dropped, shoppers move freely across, and the route to Tolworth station from the Broadway is safer and easier.

Tim Harrison

## This act's worth a butcher's

A beef masterclass will improve Surbitonians' barbecuing skills, as the weather perks up. Staged during the food festival, it pairs ex-French Table chef Neil Rankin with Kevin Jennings from the town's premier butcher's in a rare (or possibly medium rare) double act of preparation and cookery.

The free evening on May 9 (email tickets@surbitonfoodfestival.org to confirm, then bring a bottle), also launches Neil's book, Low and Slow.

Kevin, who runs Jennings with his dad and uncle in Ewell Road, told The Good Life he would begin at 7.30pm by dividing a 'roasting' – the trade name for the huge beef carcass which includes loin, rump and forerib.



Kevin Jennings, left, and chef Neil Rankin

From it will be cut rump steaks, sirloins, ribeyes, T-bones and fillets, then smaller cuts such as picanhas and bistro rumps. Those attending will learn how to tell a porterhouse from a flat iron. The event is at the community kitchen, 117 Brighton Road.

"The meat comes from Inverurie in Aberdeenshire, where we get all Jennings' beef," said Kevin. "Cutting it up is quite theatrical. I'll demonstrate how to do it, then Neil will show how to get the best from some cheaper cuts."

Neil grins, adjusts his cap, folds his immense tattooed arms and says his aim is to teach people to "cook meat in the right way". The 39-year-old has been on TV's Great British Menu and

is, despite the Scottish accent, an adopted Surbitonian. He had a sandwich business in his 20s, then moved to Manor Drive, Berrylands, later getting a flat in Glenbuck Road.

At 26 he retrained as a chef, brazenly turning up at the French Table to persuade Eric Guignard to let him work, unpaid, to learn the ropes. After college he worked for two-Michelin-starred Michael Wignall and Gary Rhodes before doing shifts at Chez Bruce and The Glasshouse, Kew.

Then he discovered charcoal cooking, and has now made high-end barbecuing his niche. He opened Smokehouse in north London, and is now plotting a new venture in Soho later this year. ● Full festival story on p8

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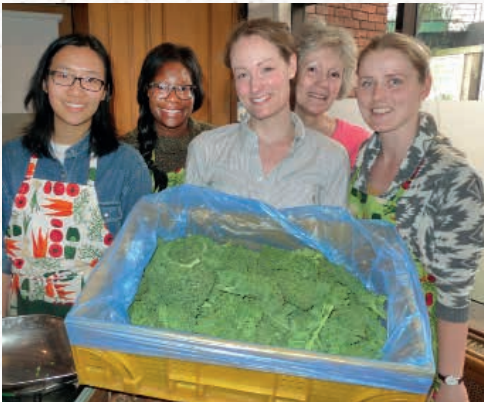
Surbiton's six-year-old organic veg collection and delivery service has been forced to close because of changes made by its main supplier.

From The Ground Up, run for the past year by Fiona Quinn, with fruit and veg collected from the YMCA or delivered by bicycle, processed its final orders last month.

There was an emotional farewell to a service valued by regulars, with a party at the Victoria Road collection point. Naturally, the cake which was enjoyed was made with organic ingredients.

"I received an email from our main supplier detailing significant changes to our supply arrangement that would see us lose the valued range of produce – only allowing us to sell one type of apple per week for example," said Fiona.

She added that the supplier had cut the service's margins, making it uneconomic to continue. "Unfortunately our size does not



Last day: Lynn, Juliet, Fiona, Pippa and Chantell

provide the economies of scale to be financially sustainable with these new terms, so we have had to come to the decision to close FGU," she said, thanking customers and volunteers for their support down the years.

Recipes for a Good Life: Annie Morris

## The ideal lunch-box cookies

These bars are easy to make, great for lunch boxes and beat any in the supermarket. You need a 397g can of condensed milk, 250g rolled jumbo oats (not instant), 75g desiccated coconut, 100g dried cranberries, 125g mixed seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, sesame), 125g natural unsalted peanuts, and a bar of good quality chocolate – your choice.



- Preheat oven to 140°C (130°C fan oven), line a 9x13in baking tin with greaseproof paper.
- Mix together all the other ingredients, then add the condensed milk using a spatula to fold and distribute. Spread the mixture into the tin and press down with the spatula to even the surface.
- Bake for 1 hour, remove from the oven and, after 15 minutes, cut into four across, and four down to make 16 chunky bars. Let cool completely.
- Decorate as you wish with generous amounts of melted chocolate.



Design trends with Elena Romanova

## Do you live in a museum?

Surbiton's Victorian homes range from handsome town houses to humble terraces; typically packed with features such as ceiling roses, sash windows, cast-iron fireplaces, cornicing and tall skirting boards. Some didn't survive the cheap modernising that swept Britain after the Second World War. Today, though, we want to preserve or reinstate original features to bring character to our home without compromising on contemporary style or functionality. So celebrate your home's past, without living in a museum.

● Keep sash windows. If you have originals, repair and waterproof to help prolong their life. Consider upgrading sashes with double glazing, which can be fit into existing frames. Alternatively, firms can manufacture authentic replacements.

● Preserve original floorboards. We are still as obsessed with original boards as we were a few decades ago, when it became fashionable to rip up carpet and show off the wood beneath. Even battered and worn boards can be repaired and patched, so seek renovation advice before giving up on them.

● Celebrate a ceiling rose. Original features such as ceiling roses are great assets, but you can bring them up to date. Why not juxtapose a contemporary light fitting and a traditional plasterwork rose? Mixing and matching is all the rage.



● Use bold colour. Fashionable moody dark hues work brilliantly with Victorian features and are in keeping with that period's love of dark shades. Consider charcoal greys, and inky blues to give your space a contemporary feel.

● Upcycle period pieces. Source inexpensive Victorian pine furniture. Chests of drawers, cabinets and blanket boxes are easy to find in flea markets and on eBay. Bring them up to date by stripping them back and painting them a bright shade. Add new knobs or handles, too, for a fresh look. These upcycled pieces will feel at home in your Victorian property without looking stuffy.

● Add a sleek extension. Lots of homeowners extend Victorian houses by adding a super-sleek kitchen-diner... and it works on the mixing and matching principle. Much family life can take place in the large, contemporary extension, while smaller rooms in the original Victorian side of the house offer more intimate space. ● For more advice, get in touch with Elena on 07990 560264 or email [elena.interiors@yahoo.com](mailto:elena.interiors@yahoo.com)

## Watch the tennis stars of the future

Here's a chance to watch top tennis stars on your doorstep. The Aegon Surbiton tournament runs from June 4-12 at Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club, Berrylands, with free entry on the first four days. The Davis Cup – the largest sporting trophy in the world – will be on display.

For 110 years, players have limbered up for the All-England Club by playing on the grass in KT5, with last year's winners gaining wildcard entries to Wimbledon.

It's a feather in Surbiton's cap, and a chance to spot future stars. A little-known junior, Roger Federer, used it as a springboard to greatness in the 1990s.

It's also a terrific community effort, with 100 volunteers helping to marshal the crowds, drive competitors about and accommodate players in spare bedrooms.

All 11 of the club's grass courts (plus nine hard courts for back-up) are in use.

Director Roy Staniland is hooked on the history of a club created on Berrylands Farm in 1881, with cows and pigs moved to allow grass courts to be created on the elevated, well-draining land.

He has amassed an impressive collection of old programmes, photos, memorabilia and film clips ("I love that sort of stuff").



Denis Kudla serves at last year's Aegon Picture: Tom Smeeth

What began as the Berrylands Lawn Tennis Club had a converted farm shed as its first 'pavilion'. It still stands – a dark, anonymous building at the right of the entrance.

Few tennis clubs of such antiquity are still on their original sites, but Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club (as it was renamed in 1999) is one. Wimbledon moved from its original Worple Road site in the 1930s.

Although some courts became vegetable plots during the Second World War, the club bounced back strongly in the 1940s and 50s.

Fred Perry was a regular visitor. Others who have played tennis at Surbiton down the years include Pat Cash, Stefan Edberg, Tim Henman, Boris Becker, Sue Barker and Billie-Jean King.

The club also runs extensive coaching programmes, and has four top-quality squash courts and a big gym.

Tickets for the major tournament days at Surbiton (culminating in the semis on June 11 and the women's and men's singles finals on Sunday June 12) are available by calling 0844 581 1530, or visiting [www.surbiton.org](http://www.surbiton.org)



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Cost per minute

The cost of buying a house in the suburbs rises by £3,048 for every minute the property is closer to the centre of London by train, says estate agent Savills. Number-crunchers studied prices near 314 stations, including Surbiton, Berrylands and Tolworth. Inner London house prices average £606,000, but half an hour out of Waterloo that drops to £458,0000.

It's bathtime...

The grisly facts of acid bath murderer John Haigh's exploits enthralled Surbiton District Historical Society as Jonathan Oates covered the life of the most prolific English serial killer of the first half of the 20th century. The May 3 talk (7.45pm, Surbiton library hall) will be calmer; Mike Brown will speak about the Spanish Civil War.

The history boys

Shrewsbury House school's May history talk sees Saul David speak on the 1976 Israeli raid on Entebbe. He is military history professor at the University of Buckingham. In March, Anne Curry, professor of medieval history at Southampton University, discussed Agincourt... 600 years on.

Phone advice

Never respond to unsolicited sales phone calls. That's the straightforward police advice as fraudsters continue their scattershot targeting of Surbiton residents. Never trust anyone asking for 'advance fees', and get legal advice before making a decision. If you have been a victim, call 0300 123 2040.

Mayor's salute

Among community-minded residents given awards by mayor Cllr Roy Arora were Alison Persson, who chairs Surbiton Business Community, and Tom Hooker, who launched Surbiton Wildlife Group and spearheaded the transformation of Claremont Crescent gardens. "I feel incredibly proud to be part of a borough which has such a community focus," said the mayor.

A smallish tribute

The death of entertainer Ronnie Corbett called to mind 'four candles', but also a local Two Ronnies gem on the A3. A cement mixer collided with a prison van on the Kingston By-pass. Motorists are asked to be on the lookout for 16 hardened criminals.



Hold tight please

These beautiful specimens were among hundreds of display buses when Surbiton Photo Circle held an outing to Brooklands for a celebration of classic British workmanship from years gone by. The photographers snapped away, and results will be screened at the meeting on May 9 at Maple Works, Maple Road, at 8pm. All welcome. Bring memory stick.

Blonde highlight

Having performed Pirates of Penzance, Surbiton-based Hinchley Manor Operatic Society is now limbering up to produce Legally Blonde at Epsom Playhouse in 2017. Details at www.hmos.org.uk

It's hard cheese

There was wailing and gnashing of teeth when Norbiton Fine Cheese ceased trading and stopped bringing its popular artisan cheeses to the monthly Surbiton farmers' market. But now Cheeses of London has plugged the gap. "We only sell farmhouse, handmade and artisan cheeses directly from the makers," confided owner Gabriel Marton.

Room dedicated

The studio at the cornerHOUSE has been dedicated to actor Barry Rocard, a linchpin of the Douglas Road arts centre until his sudden death last year.



Tall man in a hat is back

Like running into an old acquaintance you thought you'd seen the back of years ago, Surbiton motorists have been reunited with a very tall, thin man in a yellow hat. He stands on the Tolworth Rise North slip road along the By-Pass, by the junction with Elmbridge Avenue... 50 yards from his tubbier former self, who wore a larger tifter. Yes, Tolworth's A3 speed camera returned in February, 20 yards before the pedestrian underpass which takes Surbitonians beneath the busy carriageways to Southwood Drive. The old, squat Gatso camera's fading road markings are still visible on the tarmac. It had a chequered history. Loathed by drivers as it was on the downward slope towards New Malden, it was targeted by, presumably, militant members of the Clarkson tendency. Several years ago it was burnt out by having a tyre filled with petrol-soaked rags slung round its neck and torched; a fate unlikely to befall its new cousin as its business end is much higher off the ground. As The Good Life went to press, the new road markings had still not been painted on the triple lanes of the By-Pass. British motorists have a Dutch rally driver to thank for the fixed speed cameras that

dot our highways. The Indonesian-born Maus Gatsonides developed the device in 1958, five years after a Monte Carlo Rally win. The kind of inventor who tinkers quietly in his garden shed, Gatsonides came up with the apparatus to measure his own cornering speed, but then realised there was a wider law-enforcement potential. The police were initially sceptical about its value, so he demonstrated his adapted camera for them on a stretch of public road in Holland... and was somewhat harshly done for speeding, becoming the first victim of his own device! In 1992, Britain's first Gatso speed camera was unveiled on the westbound A316, over Twickenham bridge. Back then, the police were only interested in catching the worst offenders, so the camera was set to catch drivers doing more than 60mph in the 40mph zone. Amazingly, in its first three weeks, the Twickenham camera captured images of 22,939 drivers exceeding 65mph. Whether you approve of, or loathe, the cameras, the stats speak for themselves. Since Gatsos were introduced, deaths on Britain's roads have halved. **Tim Harrison**

Mutual help when you reach a certain age

She's 57. There. That wasn't so hard. Meet Karen Lloyd. She's a Surbiton woman who is launching classes for mature ladies because "I'm



concerned for the many women out there who feel lost as they get older". Karen wants to create conversations under the banner Variety Girls. "I'm aiming for an extended dinner party feel, because when you're having a girly evening you will chat to each other," she said. "When you have children, the community comes into your life and you accept it," said the Adelaide Road resident. "When you're 40+ and children are older, you hit another change." She hopes that if women share their experiences of the menopause, it will help demystify something that can be – as she puts it – "as uncertain as an earthquake". "Sleepless nights, hot flushes, forgetfulness, tiredness... but it can last eight years, and it can happen as early as your 20s," she said. It also often coincides with the

pressure of having to take care of elderly relatives. A qualified IT trainer who has also done historical research and was, until her 30s, a television dancer, Karen is divorced and has raised two children (her daughter is now 28, her son 30). She aims to run gentle, challenging, assuring and inspiring courses for Surbiton women; bringing them together to share ideas and solutions, perhaps start taking a few risks again, talking about their experiences and extending a helping hand. "I'd like to pioneer it in Surbiton, to see if it works," she said. She is organising everything through a website (www.variettygirls.webnode.com), and is planning two-hour workshops each week, at a cost of £36 for a six-week course, mainly to cover the cost of hiring space to meet. **Tim Harrison**

Heard on a 281

Murphy was a gifted artist. As his fame grew, people from all over Ireland asked him to paint their likenesses. One day, a limo arrived at his humble home, and a beautiful young Englishwoman offered him £10,000 to paint her in the nude. Anxious to avoid marital strife, he asked her to wait while he conferred with his wife. The missus eventually agreed... on one condition. Murphy returned to the front door. "T"would be a pleasure to paint your portrait," he told the woman. "The wife says it's OK. I'll paint you in the nude... but I have to leave my socks on, so I have somewhere to wipe my brushes."

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# The perfect old buffer

One of the most prolific character actors, Allan Cuthbertson, made Berrylands his home. Born in Perth, Australia, in 1920, he flew Catalina flying boats in the Royal Australian Air Force during the Second World War; a welcome release from a stifling pre-war job as a bank clerk.

In 1947, having done repertory work Down Under, Allan came to England to pursue acting, landing theatre roles in Bristol, then the West End. Although he continued to appear on stage, his screen career dominated, eventually running to appearances in more than 100 films.

He met and married Gertrude Willner, who fled her native Czechoslovakia during

the war, moving across occupied Europe, one step ahead of the Nazis, to England.

She got a job at Tiffin Girls' as a language teacher, but also hosted parties for German

war orphans. One was a six-year-old called John.

Unable to have children herself, Gertrude persuaded Allan that they ought to adopt. "I'd been invited to an evening at Tiffin Girls' School," John told the Good Life. "Gertrude saw me and said: 'I'm going to have you!'"

Coached by his new mother, John learnt English. The family initially lived in Ewell Road, but 6ft 2in Allan found the garden cramped ("When he stretched his long legs out he could touch the back wall!") so a move to Berrylands, by Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club, followed in the late 1950s.

Allan's aristocratic bearing meant he regularly landed film roles as supercilious military types. His Aussie accent was undetectable as he turned on his trademark upper-crust British officer voice.

He looked exactly right. Rigid, stuffy and po-faced, he appeared in war film after war film; Ice Cold in Alex, The Man Who Never Was, I Was Monty's Double, The Guns of Navarone and, as Capt Eric Simpson, in Tunes of Glory.

"He was always away, working on location," recalled John. "He went to Greece to do Guns of Navarone."

He did his own stunts, until he burnt his back on candles in a costume drama alongside Burt Lancaster. But his ability went beyond action movies. He was in Half a Sixpence, Jules Verne's Rocket to the Moon, and Performance, alongside Mick Jagger.

One of his finest roles was George Aisgill in the 1958 British classic Room at the Top, playing the husband of the woman with whom Joe Lampton (played by Laurence Harvey) becomes infatuated. A risqué film of its day, it was given an X-certificate for its steamy bedroom scenes, and won Oscars for Simone Signoret as best actress (she played Allan Cuthbertson's screen wife) and

Neil Paterson for screenplay.

He was in Danger Man, The Avengers, Emergency – Ward 10 and Dixon of Dock Green, and his straight face and deadpan delivery made him the perfect comic foil for Tony Hancock, The Goodies and Tommy Cooper. "Cooper drove dad up the wall," laughed John.

"He ad-libbed all the time and never stuck to the script, but dad also said he was a very funny man!"

Allan played the irritating neighbour Tarquin Spry in Terry and June, and was a Morecambe and Wise regular, but his crowning glory came in 1975 as Colonel Hall (the one with the nervous tic and 4ft wife) in the Gourmet Night episode of Fawlty Towers, where his role as a pompous moustachioed ex-military buffer couldn't have been bettered by anyone.

He was often seen out and about in Surbiton. If recording in London, he would stride out of the house, then march bolt-upright – as if on parade – down St Mark's Hill to the station.

"My father's advice to anyone who wanted to go into acting was 'Don't!' It can be a hard, lonely life," said John, now in his mid-60s and still at the family home. "I remember him being quite strict. Mind you, at the beginning I couldn't speak English

and he couldn't speak German. He was very military in the way he ran the house – the rules he kept."

Allan was pally with Ronnie Barker, and friends from the world of showbiz were regulars at the dining table in Berrylands. Away from stage and screen he was an avid collector of (and lecturer on) old illustrated books and caricatures, especially Ronald Searle's distinctive drawings.

He died suddenly on February 8 1988 at 67. He and Gertrude were in the audience of a West End play when he clutched his chest, fell to the floor and couldn't be revived.

Gertrude, a member of the Methodist church congregation in Ewell Road, died in 2006 at 92, and is fondly remembered by ex-Tiffin girls. "She was a lively teacher; I enjoyed German lessons," said Laurie Hancock. "In her travels she learned to speak 11 languages. She taught us a lot about German culture; I learnt more about the Berlin Wall from her than I did in history."

Allan Cuthbertson hated watching himself on telly, and would get up and walk out of the living room rather than sit through his old performances. He flatly refused to do adverts, despite offers. What a pro! ● Allan Cuthbertson, April 7 1920-February 8 1988. Tim Harrison



Allan, right, alongside Laurence Olivier in the 1962 film Term of Trial

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# Fast service ‘is safe’: MP

Rumours that Surbiton’s rapid link to Waterloo – clocked at under 14 minutes last week – might be sacrificed for Crossrail 2 have been scotched by the local MP. James Berry, who helped persuade Chancellor George Osborne to back the £28billion project, assured The Good Life that the fast trains which underpin the area’s local economy and housing market would remain.

A public meeting at the British Legion suggested Crossrail 2 might boost local services at the expense of the morning and evening fast-track sardine specials. “Surbiton will retain fast and semi-fast trains,” the MP insisted, citing official paperwork which states the aim is to actually increase frequency by raising capacity via the resurrection of Waterloo’s mothballed Eurostar platforms.

“No other borough is being offered Crossrail 2 for every station,” added the MP. He said it was the “only plan on the table to tackle the massive increase predicted in overcrowding”, and pledged to “fight tooth and nail” to keep the fast services.

Crossrail 2, given the green light by the National Infrastructure Commission, will link Surbiton, Berrylands and Tolworth stations to a new north-south tunnel between Wimbledon and Tottenham Hale. Scheduled opening is in 2033.

Meanwhile Waterloo – the busiest station in London, despite Clapham Junction’s claims – is having a £800m facelift from Network Rail, with platforms 20 to 24 (used for Railway Children shows with Surbiton actress Amy Noble) brought back into use, and the titchy platforms 1 to 4 lengthened for 10-car trains. Surbiton station gains “enhancements to increase capacity and improve passenger journeys”. Every year 27 million rail passengers use Royal borough stations. **Tim Harrison**



● This atmospheric picture of Surbiton’s top landmark was taken by Marion Wotton of Corkran Road, a photographer specialising in food, products and nature. She moved here from Chiswick two years ago with her husband and two young children, drawn by the good schools and rapid commute. Her business clients include Regency Bookshop. “We have found ourselves in the happy situation of discovering ever more fabulous things in our local vicinity the longer we live here,” she said. Family research has unearthed camera-wielding ancestors. “Who says skills, interests and passions can’t be passed down just like personality traits?” she asked.

## Andrew’s new shop gets into gear

Surbiton cycle doctor Andrew Manning (right) has a shop after outgrowing his repair cabin. After running Cyclelink for a year and a half from a workshop behind his Ellerton Road home, he has set up in Thames Ditton, after failing to find suitable premises in Surbiton.

“As I expanded I needed more specialist equipment more stock, and ran out of space,” he said. His USP is a collect-and-return service for bikes which need repair.

An eye-catching Dawes tandem fills the window at 52 High Street,

a former hockey and cricket equipment shop.

He also offers social training sessions under the tags ‘brakes then cakes’ and ‘gears then beers’ to help cyclists get more from their bikes.

“Whether it’s young mums or retirees, it would be nice to get people out on short rides from here,” said Andrew, who plans to organise cycle outings along safe routes.

The shop is open 9-5 Mon-Sat, but at other times he will pick up and drop off bikes. Call 020 8398 0055 or visit [www.cyclelink.bike](http://www.cyclelink.bike)



## Is the new Lycra highway fit for purpose?

The new 1.6km Lycra highway is almost open – but with uncertainty hanging over how it will operate in practice.

The ‘armadillos’ – the humped road divides – which were originally to separate cyclists from cars along Portsmouth Road were dropped after consultation, replaced by ‘rediwelds’ – beefier moulded divides made from compressed recycled plastic bottles.

But how do cyclists navigate from the river roads to the two-way cycle lanes on the Thames side of the road? And how are they supposed to turn into the side streets across

two lanes of pretty continuous traffic?

Another issue is that the Lycra highway, from Kingston town centre to the Seething Wells university accommodation, isn’t compulsory, so cyclists can still legally ride along the main traffic lanes.

Extra pedestrian crossing facilities have been added, and better bus stop arrangements.

Improvements to Queen’s Promenade mean pedestrians will be encouraged to use the river path, so pavement width is reduced at the pinch point of St Raphael’s church.



## Surrey gin proves popular at the market

As evocative and enticing a name as it’s possible to conjure up, Silent Pool Distillery is the reason shoppers are no longer leaving Surbiton’s farmers’ market in a straight line.

Based in the Surrey Hills, Silent Pool produces gin, navy-strength (57% abv), vodka and English fruit eau de vie.

The distillery encourages visits (it’s 20 minutes from Surbiton, down the A3, on the edge of the Duke of Northumberland’s Albury estate), to

admire the pool from which it draws its name, and water.

It was set up by ex-ITV commercial director Ian McCulloch, who decided to try to do for gin what Scotland has achieved with whisky. “He got intrigued,” said Steve Markwell on the market stall. “He realised the location was part of the brand.” He linked up with Californian craft distiller Cory Mason, and Silent Pool was born.

Twenty-four botanicals are added, said Steve, explaining why Silent Pool stands out.

Outside the market, Majestic stocks the gin.



Alex Powell and Steve Markwell on the Silent Pool stall at the farmers’ market

# SPRING



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## Border controls

When planting gardens, a frequent request is for all-year interest – keeping the show in the garden going for as long as possible, making sure one plant bursts into life as another fades, and there are no gaps or patches of bare soil.

The most effective way to achieve continuity of interest is to plant a mixed border with trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses, annuals and bulbs – the whole caboodle. Rule nothing out.

The more space, the better. I suggest a minimum depth of 2.5metres, allowing planting at three levels – the front, below eye level; the middle at eye level; and the back, at above eye level.

The secret of success is careful planning. Know your soil and how much sun you will get. Think about a colour scheme. Gertrude Jekyll liked cool whites and blues that merged into warmer pinks, then hot reds and oranges.

Trees and shrubs come first. Individually they create their own interest with flowers, berries, textured foliage, colour, interesting bark and so on.

However their main purpose in a long season border is to provide a permanent structure and all-important backdrop or foil for ornamental and flowering plants.

For this reason it is best to base your choice of shrubs or trees on characteristics that are always present; shape, habit or foliage.

This backdrop should be pleasing in itself with a mix of evergreen and deciduous. Not all plants can be star performers after all – it would hurt your eyes!

Choosing the flowering plants or perennials is probably the most difficult task as they are often short-lived; and have to share the same space without getting in each other's way. Moreover some die back to a rootstock in winter so it's easy to forget you've planted them in the first place!

Here are some tips:

- Check out the eventual height and spread of each plant and season of interest so you give it adequate space and can plan for its successor.

- Combine flower shapes, for example, the globes of alliums, spires of delphiniums, blousy oversized blooms of peonies.

- Think about different heights. Not all tall plants need to be at the back – a few of the taller plants at the front can break up the formality.

- Plant in uneven numbers for a more natural effect.

- Repeat plants or combinations throughout the border to create a harmonious planting scheme.

- Don't forget spring and autumn bulbs.

- Annuals or plants in containers can plug the gap until other plants grow to make an impact.

Now is the right time to plan a new border, so maybe it's worth some thought?

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



## The beet copper

After 14 years at The Yard, Dave Bendall wants to patrol your yard. The 36-year-old detective constable has given up policing to take up gardening, and wants to encourage Surbiton's next generation to grow veg.

"When I was seven, and lived in Worcester, I helped on grandad's allotment. There wasn't much conversation; but it was nice to be there, growing vegetables. It's very therapeutic."

It's also tasty. "Cooking what you grow is as good as it gets," he said. "No allotment plot in this country is the same; everyone brings their individuality to it."

Dave, of Ditton Road, enjoyed his police service, but now that he has a six-month-old daughter with his partner, Emma, he is ready for a change. He is offering Surbitonians all garden services, from mowing to weeding to watering to hanging baskets to planting.

"The customer determines the colour and scale, then I'll do the work," he said. "After all, you don't go into someone's



house and tell them how to decorate."

He is particularly keen on veg. "I enjoy encouraging children to grow their own," he said, adding that the greatest satisfaction was turning a ropey garden into the finished product.

**Tim Harrison**



Grand commander Brian Roberts in the lodge

## The mixed masons

People have driven up and down the road for years without spotting it, says grand commander Brian Roberts, sitting at his imposing desk.

He's referring to a sign halfway up Surbiton Hill Road proclaiming Hexagon House, a sprawling redbrick pile, as home of 'international co-freemasonry'.

For no obvious reason, Surbiton is a hotbed of masons. It is well known that lodges operate out of Glenmore House near Surbiton station, but they are strictly men-only. Yet across town, just up from the Waggon & Horses, is sited the UK headquarters of mixed-gender masons.

However never the twain shall meet, despite sharing many ceremonies, handshakes and archaic phrases.

Freemasonry's image may be of grey-haired old buffers pressing each other's knuckles in arthritic handshakes while comparing aprons as they wait to be fed in rooms with blanked-out windows, but Brian's granddaughter Nikki is a co-freemason... and she's in her mid 30s.

The co-freemasons have been based in Surbiton since 1992, after selling their old Notting Hill home to Peter Gabriel from Genesis.

Twenty different lodges use the two temples inside, with members coming from all over the South-East – although one or two are within walking distance.

Brian has enjoyed the title grand commander since 2002, an unpaid voluntary position.

But what's the point of freemasonry, and does it have any relevance for modern living?

"Our lodges have everything to do with spirituality," says Brian, adding that dual-gender freemasonry began in France in the late 1800s. Masons are not required to believe in God, but are encouraged to explore their beliefs and concepts to "become better rounded persons".

That involves the curious ceremonies and initiations that have been much lampooned down the years.

The lodge names are Pythonesque. Groups in Surbiton include the De Molay Preceptory & Priory, Light of Amen Ra No717 Craft Fidelity, and Encampment of the Eagle.

"Church membership has declined, but interest in spirituality is growing," insisted Brian.

Fading photographs of past bigwigs dot the walls, and there are also framed medals and symbol-laden aprons.

The main temple, pictured, up the hexagonal stairwell that gave the house its name, is artfully lit and ringed by chairs. It features a big wooden throne at one end.

Intriguingly, co-freemasonry is 55% female, possibly because the regular Grand Lodge version refuses to countenance women members, and settles for a token

annual ladies' night.

"People don't like single-gender organisations," said Brian, who is keen to attract new blood, and points out that many married couples are members. "Wives no longer tolerate husbands going out all evening," he said, adding that his own wife is a co-freemason, as is one son, while another son and daughter are simply not interested.

Members pay annual fees of around £100, and a Google search for co-freemasonry takes you to the website. In a first for Surbiton, the co-freemasons are leafleting homes to drum up newcomers seeking 'a happier, more fulfilling life'. TH



## Anyway, how you bin?

Gardeners wanting to give their beds a springtime treat need to take a bucket to Waitrose next time they're shopping.

A galvanised metal bin near the lifts is full of grounds from the store's three free coffee machines... help yourself. Endorsing the scheme, TV's green-fingered guru Alan Titchmarsh said: "I'm delighted Waitrose is offering spent coffee grounds; they're useful in the garden, and they're free."

Coffee grounds are a source of nitrogen to speed decomposition. They appeal to wormery occupants, form a soil-improving mulch around plants (don't let grounds touch stems, however), and they turn into an aromatic liquid plant feed if added to a container of water.

The free offer comes, however, with an unusual warning. 'Use to deter pests is against EU law,' says Waitrose in its small print!

Manager Mark Stevens said: "We provide the grounds and a scoop, customers bring their own bag or tub."

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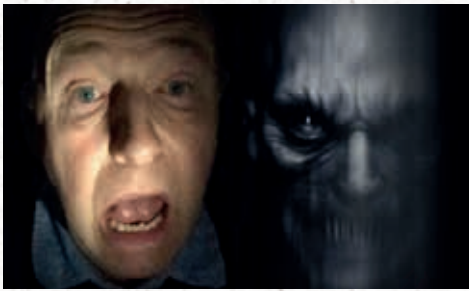
# There's drama in Nutwood

Surbitonian Alfred Bestall's Rupert the Bear books have been enjoyed for generations. Now Rupert takes to the stage in Michael Staniforth's comedy Rupert and the Search for a Modern Adventure – one of nine plays being performed in this year's oneACTS festival at the cornerHOUSE. Its cast includes Ian Mole and Debra Shepherd, pictured.

Other topics of plays which alternate in batches through the week of May



9-14 at the Douglas Road arts centre include the life of flies, a confrontation with a stranger, ballet dancers and student nudity. The festival of new writing is now in its 11th year, with each play between 15 and 30 minutes. "It's a real mix of comedy and drama," said festival chairman Jon Constant. Tickets and full information at the arts centre website, [www.thech.org](http://www.thech.org)



## Notwork comedy run

Surbiton playwright Sharon Wright's acclaimed life-affirming comedy The Social Network, has transferred to Kentish Town's Lion and Unicorn Theatre for a week-long run. The show, packed with laughs and featuring a fresh cast directed by Adam Wollerton, explores how three women use social media to restart their lives after redundancy. Abigail Halley, Ruth Keeling and Shereen Roushbaiani star. The show runs from April 25-30, with tickets bookable via [www.lionandunicorntheatre.co.uk](http://www.lionandunicorntheatre.co.uk)

## A talented selection

When I told a friend I was judging 2016's Tolworth's Got Talent he said, rudely: "Well that shouldn't take you too long." Ouch.

Tolworth Junior School X-Factor night actually showcased promising raw potential. Bleunn Callo'ch (can't be many in the phonebook) acted out a multi-voiced stream-of-consciousness routine, while Alex Swann produced one-liners. Song highlights included Freya May singing Adele's Someone Like You.

Compered by the unlikely, but effective, pupil/teacher combo of blackboard monitor Lucas Dinnin and 6ft Michelle Gibbs, the event delighted a full house in the main hall of Tolworth Girls' School.

- 1st: harmony trio Pick 'n' Mix (Olivia Healy, vocals/keyboard; Isla Griffiths vocals; Fiona Qekrezi vocals) with Sam Smith's Stay With Me. "I was really pleased we got into Tolworth's Got Talent in our final year at school," said a delighted Isla.
- Second: Frankie Chamberlain, singing James Bay's Let it Go; a wonderful performance of controlled power.
- Third: quintet Red Lips (Flora Healy, Charlotte Peachey, Thalia Pickles, Flo Queen and Bella Syme), singing Lips are Movin'.

**Tim Harrison**



### Meditating on life

Talk about a book of two halves! Tony Butcher's autobiography, The Life of a London Yogi, spends 200 pages describing a conventional south-west London suburban upbringing, then turns to championing meditation and Indian goddesses.

Yet having lived in Tolworth for 55 years, the only time Surbiton rates a mention is when he once collects someone from the station! "I was secretary of a gardeners' group in Surbiton," he said when I pointed out that half a century in Beresford Avenue, Tolworth, appeared to have passed him by. "I do like it round here, but my focus is on unusual things." A son in Tolworth Park Road and daughter in Ellerton Road don't share dad's fascination for mysticism. "They'd rather not talk about it; they think I'm [pause] unusual. They've got their own lives."

Tony, 78, still follows the cricket he loved in his youth, and sees parallels with spirituality. "It is my religion. Every time you go in to bat, you take it as it comes; a 50 one day, a duck the next." His hero remains Denis Compton. The book can be downloaded via Amazon for £1.99.

**TH**

## Regency dancing

Polish your Regency dancing in Mrs Bennet's class at St Mark's hall. As well as being historically stimulating and immensely sociable, it offers an aerobic workout, offset by tea and cake at the mid-point. No experience is necessary, and you rapidly pick up the basics at the classes, which build to a tea dance on Sunday July 17. The dancers added a touch of early 19th century class to April's farmers' market with a display by the Antelope. Next dates: April 27, May 11 25, 8pm. £5. No costume required, no partners needed, just soft-sole shoes.



- Surbiton artist Ian Rowlands has won £1,500 in the open art Lynn Painter-Stainers Prize. The Pond, pictured, was in a 139-painting exhibition at the Mall Galleries, and hangs in Guildford from June 25 to July 17. "The removal of colour has been an attempt to convey a sense of melancholia and unease reflecting my interest in early photographers such as Steichen and Stieglitz."

## Effective exam revision

How's revision going? Here are some tips. Plan! List what needs doing, and when. Timetable specific sessions in 1.5 hour chunks, include breaks and don't revise round the clock. Decide how you learn best. Out loud? Infographics of key facts? Rewriting notes? Revise, then practise questions.

Ask yourself if you know and understand, or if you need another session. If you find exam rooms difficult, practise somewhere similar; a library, café or somewhere at school. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask parents, friends or someone neutral for help. Don't let it become an issue. If you'd like a couple of maths or English sessions, call NumberWorks'nWords. Tel: 020 8399 1234. [Surbiton@numberworks.com](mailto:Surbiton@numberworks.com) **Celia Osbourne**

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7



So this is what I have to deal with regularly:  
*Chum 1: Don't listen to her, she's from Chessington.*  
**Me:** I'm not from Chessington, I'm from Surbiton.  
*Chum 2: Where were you born?*  
**Me:** Kingston Hospital.  
*Chum 1: Where was your first house?*  
**Me:** I live in Surbiton, thank you.  
*Chum 2: Where were you taken from hospital?*  
**Me:** Grange Road.  
*Chum 2: Is that Grange Road in Chessington?*  
**Me:** Yes, but I only lived there for about the first six months of my life.  
*Chum 1: But you come from Chessington.*  
**Me:** I don't come from Chessington. If anything I come from Kingston. The Royal Borough.  
*Chum 2: Your first house was in Chessington?*  
**Me:** That is entirely irrelevant.  
*Chum 1: Where did you move to after that?*  
**Me:** Ditton Road.  
*Chums 1 and 2 together: In Tolworth.*  
**Me:** Ditton Road is in Surbiton. Yes, for a short while there was a sign outside the front garden that said 'Welcome to West Tolworth', but the council clearly realised they'd made a terrible mistake and took it down.  
*Chum 1: You mean your parents took it down.*



## Don't shoot the messenger

Californian Chris Vance – on a four-month Surbiton stay – has been helping deliver The Good Life, revealing intriguing differences between our suburban life and his.

Letterboxes are a novelty. “Our mail comes to a mailbox outside the property, so it's unnerving to walk up to someone's front door,” he said. “I feel I'll get shot or sued... those are the two options in the States!”

Mind you, first he has to find the slot. “It's a search,” said the 21-year-old. “Some have a box and a slot, so you have to choose. Some are marked 'mail', some 'newspapers'. I'm not sure which The Good Life is.”

Chris approaches houses hesitantly. “You can see right into some! I actually look away and feel awkward if there's someone inside. You'd never go up to someone's house back home, especially at dusk! And as for opening an outer door to get to a letterbox on an inner door...”

Chris says privacy is taken far more seriously in the States. “It's like that old guy Mr Magoo waving his fist and shouting: ‘You damn kids, get off my lawn!’”

Most perplexing are houses with a front door down a side passage. “I've never seen that in the States,” he said. “Every house has a front door at, well, the front.”

● Join The Good Life deliverers! If you can spare an hour, six times a year, to help with a road or two, email Tim Harrison at [thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com](mailto:thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com)

# Grrrr! I'm from Surbiton

**Me:** The Mayhews are not prone to acts of vandalism. I am Surbiton born and bred and let that be an end to it.

*Chum 2: [whispering eerily] Chessington.*

I'm not going to lie to you, it gets on my wick. I don't know why. Am I a snob? Does the spirit of Margo Leadbetter perch primly inside me? Must I so ardently contest others' assertion that I am from Chessington, and deny the fact that I have ever lived in Tolworth?

There is nothing wrong with Chessington. It has a theme park of national acclaim and a lovely industrial estate. Tolworth has M&S and a skyscraper. I went to Tolworth Girls and I'm proud of it. But I'm from Surbiton. I lived in Chessington for six months, for heaven's sake. I was barely alive and had no say in the matter. Had I been a little older I'd have suggested moving to Surbiton, 'for the tremendous convenience of the mainline route to London'.

But actually, what's so great about Surbiton? If someone asked me to summarise the three main benefits of Surbiton – without

mentioning the extraordinary convenience of a mainline route to London – then, after a short pause, I'd probably resort to ‘many pubs.... a wide choice of caffeinated beverages... reasonably flat terrain...’

And Chessingtons would scoff from their three-bedroom houses at us Surbitonians shivering in the derelict air-raid shelter we're renting for twelve hundred a month, and maybe I need to wonder: is Surbiton better? When all's said and done, should I be so vehement in denying my Chessington roots?

From now on I'll stand tall and proclaim: ‘My name is Becky and I come from Chessington.’ Only joking, I won't do that in a million years, Surbiton's way better.



Becky Mayhew

## Hollyfield's early vote

The election for London Mayor is days away, but Hollyfield School's politically savvy students have already held their hustings. The school in Surbiton Hill Road staged a heated debate between five political parties ahead of the May 5 poll.

On the platform, Surbiton MP James Berry (Conservative), Alan Craig (UKIP), Emily Davey (Lib Dems), Andree Frieze (Greens) and Martin Whelton (Labour).

Nicholas Buckman, head of government and politics at Hollyfield, organised, and chaired... in front of 80 students from the sixth form and Year 11.

“It was exciting and interesting, covering topics such as the EU migrant crisis, the EU referendum and the London housing crisis,” he told The Good Life. “Our speakers spoke with passion and engaged our audience of young people with the issues surrounding this election.”

Students bombarded the panel with questions, impressing Surbiton's MP.

“I'm heartened to see such a lively interest taken in current affairs,” he said.

## Food festival promises variety of flavours

Surbiton's annual food festival runs from April 30 to May 15, with – for the first time – the community kitchen in the Museum of Futures, Brighton Road, able to host events.

Highlights include the sardine festival in St Andrew's Square on May 1, followed by a banquet at Pickled Pantry, an afternoon children's cookery course on May 2, with an entertainment that evening in the Lamb pub featuring butcher and blues singer Joe Corbin.

Mexican street food is on the menu at a pop-up restaurant in Brighton Road on Thursday May 5, with local favourites Margo and Rita doing the cooking, and there will be a demonstration of sugarcraft by the Surbiton Sugarcraft Guild on Friday May 6.

Surbiton's village fete and dry hopped beer event take place over the weekend of May 7 and 8, and there will also be a children's pizza-making class at Da Lucio in

Maple Road on May 8, with a prize for the best young pizza maker.

Maple Village WI will be running the competition tent at the village fete in St Andrew's Square, while there are also Thai cookery demonstrations from the chefs at the Waggon and Horses pub, and tutorials on pasta and sauce making, and crostini creation, by The Good Life's own cookery expert Annie Morris.

The Black Lion stages a food quiz on Tuesday May 10, while the French Table has a cheese and wine pairing evening on Wednesday May 11 hosted by Sarah Guignard.

Everything is rounded off in Victoria rec on Saturday May 14 with a community sports day and dog show. There are a host of different categories for pet pooches, including the ever-popular ‘dog that looks most like its owner’, waggiest tail and best veteran (over 10). It will be judged by

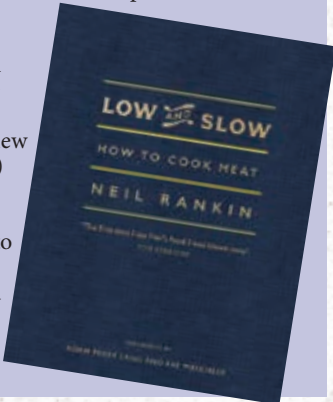
experts from Surbiton Veterinary Hospital.

In all, there are 24 individual events during the festival, with full details at [www.surbitonfoodfestival.org](http://www.surbitonfoodfestival.org) and a festival app available to download to your mobile.

If you take pictures, there's a food photo contest, and expect Facebook updates.

Chef Neil Rankin (see p1) will be selling his new book (inset) on May 9.

Low and Slow, How to Cook Meat is published by Ebury Press at £19.99.



## A 17-minute lament

by Morris Thain

**By seventeen minutes I outstayed my time**  
**Waitrose's wardens saw that as a crime**  
**Stuck to my screen something sticky and yellow**  
**Once I'd unwrapped it, dear me did I bellow!**

**Yes, fellow shoppers, enforcement is hot**  
**Measure your stay to two hours on the dot**  
**The new breed of warden shows no sign of mercy**  
**To vicar or barmaid, to surgeon or nurse**

**Seventeen minutes, a £40 fine;**  
**Me in the doldrums, your man on cloud nine.**  
**They measure your stay on a digital clock**  
**Then watch as you reel from the unpleasant shock**

## Nina dies just short of her century

Long-term Surbiton resident Nina Colombo has died, months short of her 100th birthday. Born to an Italian father, Romeo, and German mother, Dora, Emma Henrietta Colombo saw daylight on November 1 1916, in Lambeth. Her parents, who met in Switzerland, were emigrating to the USA, but only got to London before the First World War intervened.

Some called the girl Emma, some Emily. But most settled for Nina. Brother Victor was born 10 years later, and the family lived in Raynes Park.

Nina worked in the accounts department of a Hatton Garden jeweller then served in the Second World War in Egypt in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (she was made corporal), before arriving in Surbiton in the 1960s, settling in South Terrace, opposite the library.

By day she worked for Camden Council, but by night was active in many of Surbiton's groups and societies, including the wildlife group and the Surbiton & District Historical Society, which she enthusiastically supported.

She also went on outings with the Surrey County Council staff gardening club, attended church, and gave generously to charities (who bombarded her with follow-up appeals as a result). In her final years she lived in Grace Lodge, Hinchley Wood, and was regularly visited by the Rev Caroline Mullins of St Christopher's.

Nina never married.

● Nina Colombo, November 1 1916-February 19 2016.




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