



May market will be music to your ears

Despite fearsome dark clouds which rolled across Maple Road, the rain held off last month's farmers' market, and large crowds turned up... including these happy shoppers queueing for Kevin's lobsters and crabs at the Pimpernel Fisheries stall.

The next market – Saturday May 19, 9am to 1pm – has all the regular stalls, including top-quality veg, meat, pies and olives, plus musical accompaniment.

Following the performance heats of the Surbiton Farmers' Market's

Got Talent show at the Gordon Bennett! bar, a judging panel of celebrities (including David Spinx, better known as EastEnders' Keith Miller) has been busily choosing the cream of the local acts to perform at future events.

It means there isn't just great produce to woo Maple Road shoppers every month, but entertainment too, from guitar duos and solo singers to school bands and barber-shop quartets.

April's market raised just under £300 for Stud Nursery – one of the

month's chosen charities – as well as donations to the Release Counselling Service and the 1st Surbiton Sealion Sea Scouts.

There was also a good take-up of sunflower seeds for a plant-judging competition in the summer, courtesy of Surbiton charity The Fircroft Trust.

With the planting season upon us, watch out for more intriguing things to bed into your soil at this month's event, including strawberry seedlings at the organiser's table, by the pillar box.

Doggone it! Enzo loses his tail, but thwarts the kidnappers



Picture: Jon Constant

A terrier has been rescued after being stolen by thugs who chopped off his tail using bolt-cutters.

The wire fox terrier – the same breed as Tintin's Snowy – was

'dognapped' by two men in the Victoria recreation ground in Surbiton.

Two days after he disappeared, and after receiving a mysterious midnight

telephone call demanding money, owner Tariq Siddiqi and his family were reunited with their pet... minus his tail, which had been brutally lopped.

At the April farmers' market, one-year-old Enzo (he was born on royal wedding day) seemed none the worse for his experience.

Turn to page 6 for the full story

Are you a typical Surbitonian?

Surely there's no such thing as a typical Surbitonian?

Actually, there is. In a fascinating insight into how others see us, a research company has decided that the average resident is single, wealthy, lives in a flat and loves reading newspapers!

Full story on page 3



Cook up a jubilee feast

When you've bought all your fresh veg and tempting treats at this month's farmers' market, stroll up to Cook at 33 Victoria Road for a tasting bonanza.

The shop, which specialises in quality freezer meals (individually prepared by chefs who sign the label), has named Saturday May 19 'jubilee tasting day' to unveil its summer range.

Between 9.30am and 6.30pm, shoppers can try the food, then take advantage of a day-long 15 per cent price reduction.

Since opening in September last year, Surbiton's Cook has rocketed into the top five of the 59-branch chain's outlets, partly because it remains open until 8.30pm through the week, to catch weary commuters on their homeward journey.

"They arrive from the train, hungry and exhausted but they still want a good meal," said chirpy manager Dominic Ranger.

Cook's summer specials include food that is ideal for jubilee parties, from quiches to coronation chicken, chorizo and lentil salad to galettes (the puff pastry tarts, perfect for buffets).



Catch of the day

There were few net gains for the Lib Dems in this month's elections... but local councillor Barry O'Mahony managed to gain a net. The woolly-hatted resident of Woodlands Road, Surbiton, seen here with a very fishy haul, helped re-enact the Seething Wells sardine 'catch' near Raven's Ait before the action shifted to St Andrew's Square. See page 2.

Weather for ducks?

You'd have thought the seemingly endless rain would have been perfect weather for ducks... but not all ducks, apparently.

A pair of mallards in Maple Road spent several days sheltering beneath the pavement tables of the French Tarte, before deciding that they fancied

the drier, warmer conditions inside.

To the astonishment of staff and customers, the ducks waddled inside the café for a look around.

After being gently persuaded to take their custom

elsewhere, the ducks marched in to

Shoes At Last where owner Sarah Taylor watched as they did a grand tour of her shop too.

Note to mallards: The à la carte menu of the French Tarte's parent restaurant The French Table currently includes... terrine of duck.



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Fishy goings on at square

It was nice weather for fish at the Seething freshwater sardine festival. Rain lashed the peasants as they re-enacted the catching of netfuls of silvery pilchards from the Thames, before hauling them on painted carts up St Leonard's Road and along Maple Road.

The afternoon's final destination was St Andrew's Square, which staged a grand grilling, accompanied by music and community singing.

After two hours of incessant rain, the ground looked like a soggy Glastonbury... but the fish fans' enthusiasm held up and revellers were rewarded when the sun finally broke through.

You could have your hair plaited in a fish-tail by girls from Hair by Mitch in Brighton Road and there was music from the Green Rock River Band. Tim Hart led the Seething Ale Voice Choir in the Seething national anthem (a song which sounded suspiciously like Bert Kaempfert's 1962 classic *Swinging Safari*) and a version of *The Wild Rover* with the chorus:

And it's Seething sardines
Seething sardines for tea
There's enough in the village
For you and for me!



Co-ordinating the music – despite struggling against a serious bout of sinusitis – was the aptly named Fish. I kid you not.

Adam and Liz Lewis, landlord and landlady of The Lamb pub, were crowned sardine king and queen, and rounded off the event on April 22 with bumper evening beer sales in their Brighton Road boozer as bedraggled fisherfolk piled in to reminisce about the days when Surbiton could sustain a small trawler fleet.

During her late-evening pub stand-up routine, Liz came out with the joke which was voted 2012 festival winner.

"Give a man a fish, and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you get rid of him for the whole weekend." Well done Liz.

An outdoor sanctuary

Since the Garden of Eden and Hanging Gardens of Babylon, man has sought to create peaceful contemplative environments to enjoy nature and escape life's daily rigours. Today, with our hectic lifestyles, it's even more important.

For the ultimate outdoor sanctuary look no further than the Japanese Zen garden. It epitomises peace and tranquillity, although ironically achieved by extreme manipulation of the landscape where no plants run wild and architectural elements are placed with the greatest precision.

The appeal of the Zen garden lies in its simplicity, order and well-considered use of plants and materials. In this respect it is minimalist and not dissimilar from modern urban gardens in steel and concrete where clean lines and lack of clutter evoke a sense of calm.

Yet creating your own outdoor sanctuary need not be about minimalism. It is very much a matter of taste, and covers all styles of garden. Some only need a comfy hammock under a shady tree, or a timber bench and scenic view. Others, who want privacy, might long for a walled garden with abundance of planting.

Your sanctuary doesn't have to be quiet or tame. It can be a party space or somewhere for the family to enjoy. But practical elements must be considered. The first is space.

Evaluate what you've got and how it relates to what you want. Negative aspects of the site can sometimes be turned into positives. If your garden is sandwiched between neighbours, you can turn the eye inwards by focusing on the centre of the garden. By placing a small table and chairs in the middle, surrounding it with planting and clothing the fences with wall shrubs and climbers, you blur the boundaries and create a relaxing space.

Think about scale too. Narrow borders almost always look mean and do nothing to make a space look serene. Opt for one big bold statement, a stunning sculpture in a small garden. You not only create drama but also show a clarity of expression which translates into a simple calming environment.

What if your idea of paradise is a wildflower meadow or a naturalistic landscape? It is almost impossible to recreate in a suburban garden but you can certainly produce a flavour. At its simplest, clumps of English bluebells under the leafy green canopy of a native beech tree can evoke the Constable-inspired landscape you crave.

After space and scale comes ambience, and this is all about appealing to the senses.

- Place fragrant plants by pathways and entrances to catch their heady scents;
- Use textured plants such as furry Elephant Ears which invite you to reach out and touch;
- Use colour effectively. Hot colours, red and orange, create energy and make spaces look smaller; cool colours, blues and greens, are more relaxing and make spaces appear larger;
- At night, transform the space with low-voltage garden lighting. You can control what is seen, and perhaps more intriguingly what is mysteriously hidden. At a simpler level, use votives, candles, sconces and lanterns in trees;
- Think about incorporating sound to enhance a mood. Water offers possibilities from a simple spout falling soothingly into a shallow basin to a classical fountain, a babbling brook or a silent rill.

With all these practical elements in mind, you can let your imagination roam and seek inspiration for your own personal oasis.

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

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Pickles winner

Congratulations to Nikki Cameron of Oaks Way, Surbiton, who correctly identified the location of the headless man in last month's competition as being in Waitrose car park. She wins two pots of pickles from Quack's Pickles at the next farmers' market.



Picture:
Jon Constant

Posh nosh for discerning palates

Few stallholders have created as big a first impression as Ralph Wettach, an Austrian foodie who made his debut at April's market.

The boutique caterer (he supplies posh nosh to Surrey's discerning palates) is based in East Molesey, but his heritage stretches back to productive stints in Vienna and Florence.

For 16 years he also lived in New Zealand, honing his catering talents and experimenting with new flavours to conjure up party food for cocktail dos, private dinners, themed events and working lunches.

Open sandwiches (the roast veg and asparagus with pesto is a winner), canapés, grilled sheep's cheese, warm salads... everything was on display (and up for tasting) at the last event.

"For larger events I can cater for between 25

and 120 people," he said. "I have done sit-down dinners for 140, but that's stretching it! It's quality above quantity."

Drop-off dinner prices begin at £12.50, and the Wettach service extends to providing staff, crockery, table arrangements and flowers too.

Among lines garnering the most oohs and aahs were a superb free-range chicken liver pate ("it's all made by me in East Molesey") and chorizo scotch eggs ("pop them in the oven for five minutes").

Ralph, who has lived in the UK for four years and who has also appeared at Richmond's farmers' market, grows his own herbs on his allotment.

An international array of testimonials feature on his website www.ralphwettach.com

Your neighbour is 30, pays off his credit card and reads the Times

The average Surbitonian has no children, is likely to be self-employed, and spends far more than people in neighbouring areas such as Kingston on quality brands of food from supermarkets such as Waitrose, and on organic fruit and veg.

He or she does not own a car, but does have several credit cards... and pays them off every month.

People in Surbiton are a staggering 30 per cent more likely to own shares than the national average.

The statistics, gathered together by the Kent-based firm Searchflow using a wide range of published sources, may help to explain why the monthly Maple Road farmers' market is such a success, and why shops such as Cook in Victoria Road, which specialises in quality frozen meals, have really taken off.

According to Searchflow, the typical Surbitonians are 'wealthy singles in small city flats and suburban terraces', either white or mixed race, ranging in age from early 20s to mid 40s. The two main defining characteristics are, however, 'the marked absence of children' and 'extreme affluence'.

While some may raise an eyebrow at being described as extremely affluent in these difficult days, the survey points to Surbiton's residents as having more disposable income than in many neighbouring areas.

The KT6 postcode area, which the survey focuses on, is two and a half times more densely populated than the national average, with house prices well above average and the typical length anyone lives in the same house or flat being under 10 years.

The population is highly educated, typically in a professional or white-collar job or self-employed. The number holding a directorship of a company is four times the national average, and people eat out more often than those in neighbouring districts.

Main occupations are service, financial and information-based, while Surbitonians are medium to heavy readers of newspapers (you're proving the stat by reading this far), especially at the Financial Times, Times, Independent and Guardian end of the market.

The typical Surbitonian's property is worth £500,000, car insurance premiums are at the low end of the scale, and you are less likely to suffer violent crime, or have your Prius nicked, than almost anywhere else in the capital.

However, there is a higher risk of being burgled, so remember to double-lock the front door and close the windows when going out to enjoy your curry at the Red Rose, go to the Flyer for a jar to talk stocks and shares with your mates, or snap up the organic vegetables in the farmers' market.

Tim Harrison

Have you heard this one?

Overheard at the Maypole pub on May 2.

Thanks to medical advances, a 65-year-old friend of mine was able to give birth. After she returned home, I called by. 'Can I see the new baby?' I asked. 'Not yet,' she said. 'First I'll make coffee.' Half an hour passed. 'Can I see the baby now?' I asked. 'No, not yet,' she said.

After another few minutes, I asked again. 'Now can I see the baby?' 'Not just yet,' she replied. By now I was getting impatient. 'Well, when can I see the baby?' I asked. 'When he cries,' she told me. 'When he cries?' I said. 'Why do I have to wait until he cries?' 'Because I forgot where I put him, OK?'

Building the family business

It's one of the most popular beauty treatment centres for miles, and it's at the heart of a growing family empire.

Rhonda Bayliss and her professional beauty therapists offer everything from Indian head massage to post-pregnancy tone-ups at competitive prices at The Beauty Room, 91 Maple Road.

She began business in a room at Shapes hairdressers (it's now Cook, Victoria Road) before the move in September 2006.

When daughter Isla was born two years ago, it was the excuse for mother Moira and father Robert to move south from their Ayrshire home to join Rhonda and her husband Chris, a former golf pro.

Now Moira helps with receptionist duties, while Robert Irvine's painting and decorating skills

(he has 35 years of experience working for a major house builder) are being put to good use in Surbiton homes. His services include plastering, paper-hanging and decorating.

The Beauty Room is the perfect size for Rhonda, allowing her to offer the personal touch that is the salon's hallmark via a peaceful treatment haven just off the main room. Osteopath Richard Frost uses the premises on Mondays.

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Barbies on jubilee weekend

Nostalgic meals are on the menu at The Vic over jubilee weekend. The pub in Victoria Road will host barbecues in the paved back garden through the extended bank holiday, serving pub grub such as chicken

and chips in a basket.

On the evening of Sunday June 3 there will be live music from Bommarillu, while on Monday, June 4, Doodlebug, a rock and funk cover band, plays.

Rename charity to win prizes

A charity which helps children in Africa wants children in Surbiton to think up a new name. The Landirani Trust believes its name is a tongue-twister, so wants young people to think of something better.

"We're after a name that's easy to remember, will attract more awareness and assist with fundraising," said Heather Palmer, 43, of Upper Brighton Road, who founded the charity seven years ago.

Landirani supports 3,000 orphans in Malawi (where Heather spent her first 10 years) and has sunk more than 50 wells and built two schools.

The name challenge is open to all schoolchildren, with Chessington World of Adventures tickets for the two best suggestions.

The closing date is June 11. Email entries to info@landirani.org or for more information on the contest visit www.landirani.org

Vegging out

Two cooks, one kitchen, remarkable results. The Parsnipship – surely the best name at the Surbiton farmers' market – is veggie heaven.

Olivia Taylor and Laura Cripps are vegetarians on a mission to show the world that meals don't need meat or fish to be enticing.

It is a collective (there are four other similar operations around the country) of like-minded souls who sell their tasty cooking through farmers' markets and food fairs.

"I read in the Vegetarian Society magazine about Ben Moss, who lived in Cardiff and wanted to get other vegetarians involved in running their own business," said Laura.

He began the project in 2006, to pep up run-of-the-mill market fare and offer quality vegetarian and vegan catering for weddings and events.

"We met him and the other Parsnipships," added Laura. "We share recipes and ideas."

The key is keeping everything local. Laura and Olivia work from their kitchen in Kings Road, Long Ditton; an area where Laura has lived since she was a child.

Where possible, ingredients are grown in the area. The most popular lines at Surbiton are the pies (simply take away and reheat), and buyers know they are getting super-fresh produce as Friday is cooking day.

"It used to be a bit chaotic, but we've got it fairly well sussed now," said Laura when I suggested it must be bedlam to make so much so quickly. "We're actually more leisurely now!"



Picture: Jon Constant

Keep an eye out for the parsnip and hazelnut lovebombs! Other options include spiced Indian summer pie, smoke Thai pea and tofu koftas, flowerpot focaccias (they sit on upturned pots) and goat's cheese pies.

Visit www.theparsnipship.co.uk for full details, or email laura@theparsnipship.co.uk

Stall changes for May

Ambrosia Chocolatier's designer chocolates are attending, while Pantry Cupcakes take a break from this month's event.



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Why I still hear Surbiton's siren call

It was the olives that stunned me. Last time I went back to Surbiton, the market in Maple Road had a stall just selling olives... but such olives!

Masses of them, a huge variety. It was like being transported to a market town in France. Every kind of gorgeous, delicious produce was on offer in a cacophony of colourful stalls. Oh boy, was I homesick! 'Why didn't you have this when I lived here! I never would've left,' I wailed at a stunned stallholder.

We have a monthly food market where I now live. In fact, my new home in the north Midlands is known as a market town. But it's nothing compared to Maple Road. True, it sits in a medieval purpose-built market square, complete with cobbles. But don't judge a market by its cobbles!

What it sells is what makes it. And half a dozen miserable little stalls each month do not a food market make, even though much of the produce comes from nearby farms. It just doesn't work in the rural area I live. But it does in much more metropolitan Surbiton. Why?

One word. Money. And perhaps attitude too. People who live in Surbiton may not be the biggest spenders. It's hardly gin 'n' jag territory, and we aren't exactly talking Footballers' Wives here. But despite the recession, decent incomes are still earned. And spent. Perhaps 20 or so years ago, when I lived there, Surbitonians wouldn't have been so eager to embrace such a stunning market. They certainly are now.

Surbiton, like much of the South East, and especially London, has changed beyond all recognition in the last two decades. It really is like visiting another country, though one where you know the language and can give directions to anyone who asks! I always find it odd but I'm often asked where a road or street is when I'm back perambulating

around Surbiton. For I walk. I always walk. There is so much to see now.

Maybe the town is also benefiting from the explosion in the student population in nearby Kingston. Of course in theory, this shouldn't make a difference, as students are hardly rolling in it. And yet, it does. What they lack in means, they make up for by helping to give the place a young feel. It makes Surbiton friendlier, warmer, nicer and much more interesting than it would be without them.

This wasn't the case when I first discovered Surbiton. Raised deeper down in Surrey, we came to Kingston looking for fun and a whole scene going on. But everyone lived next door in Surbiton. You went out in Kingston, but Surbiton was where you slept it off! Now you don't need to leave Surbiton. It's interesting enough in itself and, oh my, the food. So much of it, from upmarket all the way down to greasy spoon catts doing lovely fry-ups for a fiver or less.

Surbiton has always had churn. It's a place people live for a while (I was one) then move on when they want to settle down. But its bedsit land reputation is part of what makes it bustling, thriving, exciting. Young renters live side by side with older established residents and new families too. Not exactly an edgy urban melting pot, but a lovely diverse mix all the same.

I miss the place, and love any excuse to come back, but ultimately it couldn't give me what I wanted – a home of my own. For an area to remain vibrant, it's vitally important it has a good social mix not just an excellent mix of olives!

Laura Marcus used to be the Surbiton reporter on The Surrey Comet, left the town more than 20 years ago... but still misses it.



The Lamb

Voted best pub by CAMRA Kingston and Leatherhead

'For sheer community spirit, it is hard to beat The Lamb pub'
Metro



A dedicated follower of fashion



Picture: Elaine Swift

Rooms – part of the art and design museum. She is delighted with the reception her book has received from academics and business.

“This is a handbook on fashion,” said Virginia of Elmbridge Avenue, a woman with a wealth of experience in supply chain and product development, working with international retailers including Marks & Spencer, Wal-Mart and JC Penney.

“The book is aimed at first-year fashion undergraduates in buying, merchandising, design and marketing, but is of interest to anyone who wants to know more about the whole process of the fashion industry,” she said.

In the book, Virginia interviews leading names about the state of the industry. She also discusses concepts from couture to the high street, and the cogs which turn this vibrant, multi-million pound, fast-changing, attention-grabbing, global industry.

Would she ever consider writing a novel about the fashion industry?

“I could,” laughed the former designer, who continues to work on consultancy projects with several fashion brands. “But I would never work in it again!”

Apart from being an illuminating read for anyone who is interested in how a ball of white fluffy fibre from a field of cotton in India can end up as a fashion garment worn by Twiggy in a TV commercial for M&S, Concept to Customer will also be a bible for students – the future brains and backbone of the industry. Virginia’s publisher says universities are interested in using it as a key textbook. There are plans to publish international versions in several languages including Mandarin as well as an e-book in the near future.

Concept to Customer is £23.50 and is published by Ava Academia as the first in its Basics Fashion Management series. It is available from www.avabooks.com, Amazon and usual stockists.

Why boys adore zombies

How do you hold the attention of 200 schoolboys for an hour? Talk zombies. Author Charlie Higson proved lectures can be fun in a hall packed with Shrewsbury House and Southborough boys.

Shrewsbury House head Kevin Doble set the tone when he told boys they were about to be addressed on “flesh-eating, killing and mauling people”, before Higson, 53, tried to explain why girls preferred vampires and boys zombies.

“Nobody wants to snog a zombie; they’re dirty and smelly, have a terrible diet, communicate in grunts and shuffle about with their trousers hanging off their arses,” he told the enraptured young readers. “They’re just like teenage boys!”

Higson’s zombie books follow his Young Bond series, in which he imagined Ian Fleming’s famous spy as a teenager.

Inviting Higson to Shrewsbury House in Ditton Road was the idea of school librarian Helen Thorowgood. She told The Good Life: “It was great to be able to open it up to Southborough School as well; it isn’t often that we have author signing visits.”

As well as copies of The Fear, Higson was happy to sign dog-eared, well-thumbed copies of his earlier books which some of his more devoted fans had brought along.

Later Higson was floored by a left-field inquiry from one boy. Which of your three children is your favourite?



Confused by the property market?

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Baptist church or Fawty Towers?

WATERY FOWLS

Is Surbiton Baptist Church planning on twinning with Fawty Towers?

Like Basil’s infamous Torquay hotel sign, the letters on the wall of the Balaclava Road building keep dropping off into the street.

It currently reads Surito Bapt’st... but even the few letters that do survive are clinging on perilously.

It’s all reminiscent of the lettering on Basil Fawty’s hotel sign which, episode by episode, was rearranged by a mischievous paperboy.

One week Fawty Towers became Watery Fowls, before going on to be Fatty Owls, Flowery

Twats and, magnificently, Farty Towels.

So what do we make of Surito Bapt’st?

Surito is a brand of taco, Bapt is an aptitude test for computers, and ST clearly refers to Star Trek.

Which suggests that a Surito Bapt’st is a trekkie who likes Mexican food and can programme computers.



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Pet pooch home safe

A plucky terrier has been rescued after being kidnapped for two days by thugs and having his tail chopped off with bolt-cutters.

Enzo the wire fox terrier got out of the front door of his home in Chadwick Place, Surbiton, while property developer Tariq Siddiqi was distracted on the phone, and dashed straight to his favourite walkies area, the Victoria rec off Balaclava Road.

A dog lover who was near the pavilion café noticed that the terrier had no collar.

As she stroked Enzo, two men approached, claimed the dog was theirs, and left the recreation ground with the animal.

Meanwhile the search for the missing dog had widened beyond the St James Park estate, and Tariq reported Enzo's

disappearance to the police. He was reassured that missing dogs usually just turn up.

Back home Enzo's owner – Tariq's five-year-old son Cosmo – was beside himself with worry.

Following a Facebook appeal for help, the story of the two dognappers emerged. Descriptions of the suspects were circulated, and Tariq, who had posted his phone number on the social network site, received a strange tip-off, naming a local road where Enzo had supposedly been spotted.

"We tracked him down to the street where we were told the men lived, and as I walked up and down the road a man opened his door and said that he had seen a woman trying to find the dog's owner," Tariq told The Good Life.



"I knew that was a lie, and reported it to the police. They asked what proof I had, but my proof was the Facebook sightings."

Enzo, who was born on royal couple William and Catherine's wedding day, had vanished.

For two days nothing was heard, then Tariq got a phone call in the night. "There

was a suggestion I offer money," he said.

With word that a ransom was being sought, the family's detective work went into overdrive. Within half an hour of a doorstep confrontation, Tariq had a call from the RSPCA to say that Enzo had been found.

"His tail had been cut off with bolt-cutters, but we had him home again!"

Terriers' tails were often docked in the past when they were used for hunting, and it is suspected that the dognappers had planned to use Enzo for rabbiting.

On April 29, Enzo celebrated his first birthday at home with his relieved owners. The plucky terrier has made a full recovery.

There's an interesting postscript to the, er, dogged detective work which resulted in the pooch being found.

Before the family finally settled on the name Enzo for their terrier pup, the first choice being considered was... Sherlock.

Tim Harrison

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The snake charmers

An eye-catching snake has been spotted in Surbiton. The unusual piece of jewellery sums up the originality and freshness of Gumus, the silverware shop squeezed into 21b Victoria Road.

Run by two sisters, the jewellers concentrates on one-off items, such as this dramatic snake necklace, made of animal hide with silver clasps and red garnet eyes. The price is £439.

Eda and Ela Akgul are Turkish, and much of the stock comes from workshops in Istanbul, where their father is a jeweller. Gumus means 'silver' in Turkish.

"I would say that 95 per cent of things in the shop are one-off pieces," said Eda. "I do many of the designs; I draw things. Personally, I don't like too flashy jewellery; I don't like too much gold. That seems to be Surbiton's taste too. This is a small shop, but people always seem to find something they like."

Pressed to define the kind of jewellery Surbiton prefers, Eda said that most people like plain, simple small jewellery... or huge chunky rings. "My sister and I are different too," she added. "My sister likes sparkling zirconia, but I prefer plain semi-precious stones."



Saddle up

Rain makes Surbiton's high street look like an Olympic canoe course. I love riding my bike, but even I jump in my car and drive to work (taking 20 minutes longer than my ride).

The weather app shows a big rain symbol over Surbiton. We had heavy showers, but it wasn't raining at 8am when I drove in to work, and by 6pm it had brightened up.

I'd have had my fix of riding, and wouldn't have been so grouchy to Dan and Mark in the shop.

I look at the bikes in Surbiton station's sheds and realise others hadn't wimped out. Meanwhile, my second expensive parking ticket was the icing on the cake.

So I promise myself I won't let weather put me off. I have enough cycling gear to make riding in any weather easy, and with a bit of planning I can have a change of clothes at work, and a towel, and feel fresh and dry all day. But I will always fear putting on cold, wet cycling shorts.

My three-point plan is: never believe the weather forecast, adopt the Surbiton scout motto and be prepared, and man up.

For advice on riding in British weather, pop in to Surbiton Cycles.

Bike Buddha

Stack & Bonner

passionate about property...

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

Herman Cain

Stack & Bonner opened its first office in 1988 and 22 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).

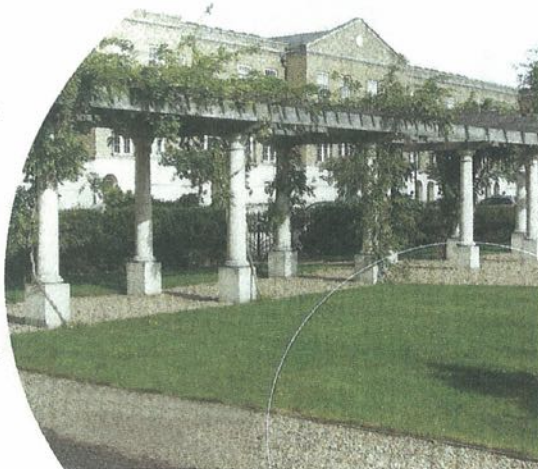
So, if you feel that there is a certain amount of reassurance and palpable benefits from instructing an experienced Estate Agent, where each individual has the proud knowledge that he or she has played a significant part in their company's achievements. A business they have worked within so successfully 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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Well worth trumpeting

The sheer ebullience of brass was celebrated at St Andrew's church during an hour-long concert by the Live Brass quintet – the opener to a season of recitals by members of the Waldegrave Ensemble.

A small but appreciative audience enjoyed a programme ranging from ragtime to the Tudors.

Led by trumpeters Kate Moore and Simon Sturgeon-Clegg, it opened with a series of short pieces by Henry VIII before moving through works by Ibert, Saint-Saëns and Bizet to a horn nocturne and, presto by Mendelssohn, surprising in its jaunty playfulness.

Excellent researched programme

notes added to the enjoyment as we moved through the years to the Second World War and A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square, followed by a swift trio of ragtime, waltz and salon de Mexico by Enrique Crespo.

With Sasha Koushk-Jalali on tuba, Steve Nicholls on horn and Steve Turton on trombone, the quintet concluded with four pieces by George Gershwin, including the beautiful Summertime – a song which, incredibly, consists of just six notes.

As an encore, the event concluded on a rousing note with one of Malcolm Arnold's Cornish dances.

St Andrew's church lived up to its



reputation as a space with the finest acoustics in the area. Next up, a flute, clarinet, harp and strings recital on Sunday May 27 at 4pm. £8 (£6 concs). See www.waldegrave-ensemble.com

Tim Harrison

Enter movie competition

Lights, camera, action! Young Surbiton film-makers are getting a chance to break into the movies.

The Childnet film competition, now in its third year, is aimed at youngsters aged seven to 16.

The challenge is to produce a short film about positive use of the internet. There are separate categories for primary and secondary pupils, with teachers – or youth club leaders – asked to register interest by emailing film@childnet.com

The deadline is June 15. Shortlisted finalists will attend a private screening at the British Film Institute in early July.

Whodunnit, Holmes?

Sherlock Holmes stories are enjoying a surge in popularity thanks to recent TV versions... so the mysterious case of The Hound of the Baskervilles should get decent audiences when it is performed on stage in Surbiton this month.

The full-length debut of Ewell Road director Maria Clinton, the show has an unusual twist... Dr Watson is a woman!

The Hound of the Baskervilles, adapted by Tim Kelly, is the first production of the borough's Green Theatre Company since it transferred from its tumbledown home in New Malden to the cornerHOUSE in Douglas Road, Surbiton.

A youth theatre company, which has been encouraging actors aged 14 to 25 to tread the boards for a quarter of a century, the group has assembled a 10-strong cast (six female, four male), with the pipe-puffing, deerstalker-hatted sleuth played by Dan Clinton (pictured, right), and his sidekick Watson played by Emma Sullivan.

"I chose the play because it's our first play here [at the cornerHOUSE] and I wanted something fun and interesting to direct," explained Maria.

"We have a female Watson; I thought it would work as it worked so

well at the auditions. They bounced off each other."

The play tells the tale of the Baskerville fortune, and the family curse, with the menace of death hanging over everything via the fangs of a living horror prowling the English moors.

The audience will have to try to spot the clues as suspicion falls on sinister servants, butterfly collectors, ladies in distress and escaped convicts.

Tim Kelly's adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classic mystery shifts the action to the present day – much like the BBC's recent version with Benedict Cumberbatch as Holmes.

But Maria Clinton has moved everything back to the more authentic Victorian era for a show set in the drawing room of Sir Henry's manor house, with views over the sinister moors.

"It's given me a chance to play with the lighting and the mood," she told The Good Life. "There are plenty of 'elementaries' and shouts of 'the game is afoot'!

"I love Sherlock Holmes; I've got all the books, and I like trying to work the mysteries out. Hopefully audiences will feel the same."

The show runs from Thursday May 31 to Saturday June 2, at 7.45pm at the cornerHOUSE, 116 Douglas Road, KT6 7SB. Tickets on the door (£8, £6 concs) or in advance via www.greentheatre.com



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Old soldiers' new home is taking shape

Here is the view you will have in a year's time where the Upper Brighton Road meets Langley Avenue.

The computer-generated image shows how the new Star & Garter Home for former service personnel will blend into the local neighbourhood.

Although preparatory work began on-site in January, construction of the building got under way officially in April.

Three of the four homes that originally occupied the site have been demolished to make way for the new development that will

provide 63 en-suite bedrooms for elderly ex-service personnel. The fourth house, currently in use as a site office, will be returned to a habitable state at the end of the project. The current work involves excavating an underground car park so that residents and visitors will not need to park in nearby roads.

This will be the second new Star & Garter home built to replace the original building at the top of Richmond Hill, which is being sold off for possible use as a hotel and apartments.

The first new Star & Garter was built in Solihull in the West Midlands in 2008, and soon won a healthcare design award.

Speaking recently at the official ceremony to mark the start of the building work at Upper Brighton Road, Vice Admiral Sir John Dunt, chairman of the Royal Star & Garter Homes, commented: "The time will fly by until building is completed and we can move into the Surbiton home, and we are very much looking forward to becoming an integral part of the Surbiton community."

Phil Cooper



It's quicker on two wheels

Mark Eke, manager of Lords in Brighton Road, has beaten the interminable roadworks by hopping on his gocycle for viewings.

"I've been able to nip under the railway bridge instead of having to drive all the way round," he said.

Shopkeepers reckon trade is down a quarter through the closures and diversions which have blighted life around the YMCA since the start of the year.

"Business has been slow; trade's down 25 per cent," said Taz Chughtai at Awan Heating & Plumbing.

The double whammy of bridge and gas

main replacement eased this week with two-way traffic, controlled by temporary lights, resuming under the replaced bridge, and buses back on normal routes.

The last workmen are due to leave by mid-June.

Assurances that the new railway bridge would be pigeon-proof seems to be contradicted by pavement evidence.

Network Rail told The Good Life: "As with all new bridges, it has been designed to prevent pigeons from roosting."

Anyone wanting to complain can call Network Rail's helpline on 08457 114 141.

So you can write can you?

Here at The Good Life, we love good writing – and we love finding out new things about Surbiton.

If you have anything to contribute to the community's buzzy newspaper, we'd like to hear from you.

Keep it short, pithy and lively.

Email to timharrison@therichmind.co.uk, or put it in an envelope, add one of those overpriced sticky things, and post to 13 Ravenscar Road KT6 7PJ.

Nine-to-fivers swear and cuss
When told 'It's a replacement bus'.
While weekend trains are now so rare
That even patient saints would swear.

I know the rail work must be done
But why disrupt my Sunday fun?
Can't everybody work at night
When most of us are sleeping tight?

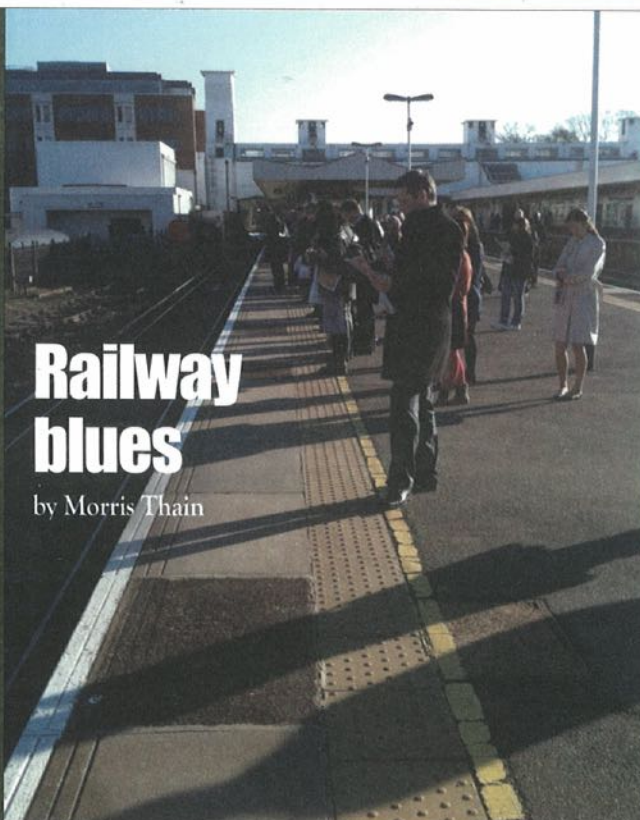
My poor heart sinks each time I see
That chequered tape obstructing me,
It's strung across the station ramp
Like guy ropes at a summer camp

And talking to the station staff
Is like addressing a giraffe,
They seem to turn their necks away
While I am trying to have my say

I can't resist a stream of cusses
Every time I see those buses.
Letting rip, when all else fails,
Is stopping me going off the rails!

Railway blues

by Morris Thain



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