



Bumper market planned

The Maple Road farmers' market on December 21, promises to be memorable. With arias sung from the French Table balcony, a hog roast behind The Antelope, mulled wine and carols, it will be overflowing with festive fun – sun, rain or (left) snow. Money raised will send Kingston's Young Carers on an ice-skating outing to the Hampton Court rink.

A crafty way to buy your festive gifts

Buy from local producers, not multinationals. That's the thinking behind the inaugural Seething Christmas craft market on Sunday, December 15.

The pop-up market gives an instant shop window to self-employed jewellery makers, bakers, designers and small-scale producers. Staged from 3-7pm in the courtyard garden of the Lamb, Brighton Road, it encourages local purchase of locally made gifts, with the added incentive of a glass of mulled wine.

Drawstring bags, lavender-filled heart-shaped pillows, paintings, sculptures, hand-made cards, prints, artisan cheeses and

chocolates are among the items being sold.

There are also home-made jams and pickles produced by the Betsy Boutique, including Indian spiced courgette chutney and seriously hot chilli pepper jam. Other stalls include: Hearts and Flowers, Serendipity, Sausalicious Hotdogs (barbecue with homemade hot sauce) and jewellery maker Natalia Lovat. The craft market will raise money for charity, and entry is free.



● If looks could kill, Millicent Fritton would be doing time. Instead, the cane-wielding spinster is headmistress of St Darcyan's academy, where she is planning to fund her retirement by flooding the art world with forgeries created by her pupils. Richard Williams is playing rosy-cheeked Millicent in the 26th cornerHOUSE panto, The Belles of St Darcyan's, in January. Tickets are already selling well. Any latecomers will have to report to Millicent's study. Full details of the show on p7

Who wants to be a billionaire?

Why can't there be a talking fridge that tells you when food is near its sell-by date? How do you keep the duvet in the corners of the duvet cover? Why can't loos have a foot pedal to lift the seat?

Random thoughts occur to everybody every minute, and are promptly forgotten.

Now five Surbiton twentysomethings hope that by pooling and sharing ideas, thoughts stand a better chance of becoming reality.

David and Chris Harkin, Jenny Pool, Emma Howe and James Warner were drinking in The Antelope when the concept emerged.

The result, www.7billionideas.com, a website which collects and celebrates thoughts, and encourages others to carry them forward.

With seven billion people on the planet, ideas have the potential to change... yet almost all pop up, and are promptly forgotten.

The quintet created the website and an iPhone app, letting people share creative, left-field thoughts which others comment on. "By sharing, the hope is users will spend time developing ideas as their confidence builds," said David.

Supported by £30,000 generated via internet crowdfunding, an iPhone app was launched last year, followed by an education programme (Think Big, Dream Big) to encourage students.

The next step is for entrepreneurs to club together online to take ideas forward. Already, 6,500 ideas have been posted. 6.9bn to go.

Why can't there be professional huggers at stations to embrace cold passengers and warm them up? Why aren't toasters made of see-through material so you can see if your slices are ready? So you don't open your front door to strangers, have doorbells recognise fingerprints. Why can't there be a place to put newspapers for others to read once you've finished them on the tube? Why can't you turn jumpers inside out to get a different pattern on the other side? With so many shops charging 99p, why can't we have a 99p coin? As people use mobile phones for shopping lists, why don't trolleys have phone holders? Fill cereal boxes with stay-fresh portion bags, like crisps.

"Everything we do is about inspiring people and entrepreneurs to share fun, thoughtful and creative ideas, and work on making private ideas a reality," said David. "This has been exciting and rewarding. With a bit of effort, a pub idea can change your life."

HQ is a flat in North Road – the street linking St James and St Andrew's roads near the station, with a blank bit at the southern end which, in 1860, had a modest prefab chapel; the forerunner of the grand Arthur Blomfield-designed St Andrew's church, with its quirky semi-detached tower.

In this issue

- One lucky Good Life reader will win a £70 turkey. See **p2**
- Why restrict embarrassing jumpers to Christmas? Becky Mayhew knits her plea on **p8**
- Seeking present inspiration? We've plenty of suggestions in our Surbiton gift guide on **p6**
- Two Surbiton residents are encouraging everyone to learn a bit about dementia. See **p5**
- Absurd or inspired? We navigate the path of Tolworth's Greenway, below, to sample life in the middle lane. See **p3**



From left: Chris Harkin, Jenny Pool, David Harkin, Emma Howe and James Warner

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Time to help feed the birds

Surbiton's back gardens are vital to bird survival, says the RSPB, building to its 35th Big Garden Birdwatch. This year's survey placed once-common starlings on the red list, the highest conservation concern, as numbers sank 16 per cent in a year. House sparrows fell 17 per cent.

Surbiton's most plentiful birds are, in order: blue tit, woodpigeon, blackbird, house sparrow, great tit, starling, robin, magpie, long-tailed tit and goldfinch.

Last January, 15,000 people from Surrey were part of a 590,000-strong UK army of Birdwatch participants. It wasn't all bad news. Siskin, fieldfare and jay numbers rose by 85 per cent as cold conditions drove birds into gardens, searching for food.

● Big Garden Birdwatch is on January 25 and 26. Visit www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch for details. Meanwhile, top winter food tips are: mixed seed, nyjer seed, fatballs, suet sprinkles, sunflower seed, peanuts, kitchen scraps, mild grated cheese, rice and porridge oats.



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Gardening tips by Janice Cripps

Time for winter bloomers!



Colours may not be as intense, nor foliage and flowers as abundant, but winter garden have a stark beauty.

One of the easiest to create, it relies on form and structure; the strong shapes of trees, shrubs and hard landscaping such as arches, pergolas and statues. These give a presence not so obvious in summer when the garden is bursting with colour.

Too often we dig, weed, prune, and fail to see the garden as a whole.

In winter the bones are laid bare; a chance to look at the structure, decide what works well and what might be improved.

How is good structure achieved?

A well-designed garden has a strong geometry. In a small courtyard this might come from a central square flowerbed edged with lavender and an ornamental tree or statue. In a

large garden it might be an avenue of pleached trees.

One or more well-placed trees

There is a tree for every garden, no matter how small. Go for something with more than one season of interest like a snowy mespilus with white flowers in spring and stunning autumn foliage, or a Japanese maple with ornamental peeling bark.



Evergreen plants

The backbone in the winter garden. Virtually unnoticed in summer, overshadowed by showy perennials, they take a front seat in winter. In my garden, two evergreen grasses flank a gravel path. I only notice them in December when everything around them has died back.

Topiary

The art of training plants, usually evergreen shrubs and trees, into stylised shapes. They are generally

easy to maintain, provide a permanent feature all year and are perfect for structure. Lollipop bays and clipped box balls are probably the most popular, but there is virtually no limit. Why not a giant bird of prey handcrafted in yew? Maybe not.

Colour

The palette in winter is more subdued, with cool combinations of whites and greens interspersed with deep reds and purples. However there is no shortage of stunning winter bloomers. Chinese witch hazel, dogwood, daphne and winter flowering viburnums can knock your socks off, and are deliciously scented.

Who says a garden can't look fabulous in winter?

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

Christmas is coming, and the turkeys are fattening up nicely in Norfolk. One lucky Good Life reader will get a plump, free-range bird worth £70 delivered to the door on December 23 in our free draw, courtesy of Godwick Hall, where

WIN a plump Norfolk turkey

they've farmed for three generations.

Farmer Robert Garner (below) said: "Our turkeys grow up in a happy, stress-free environment, with 24-hour

access to the great outdoors."

Chef Antony Worrall Thompson said of the Godwick turkey he had last Christmas: "It was lovely, flavoursome and moist, and cooked very well."

Our prize bird will be large enough to feed a dozen diners.

The winner will be chosen at random on December 14, and notified that day. To enter, simply visit www.godwick.co.uk/ competition, and leave your email address.



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30 years of clean service

Town centre cleaner Roberts has reached a remarkable milestone – 30 years in business in Claremont Road.

The double-fronted shop, now running a 30% discount deal to celebrate the anniversary, has changed little since 1983 (right), when Robert Helliwell (centre in staff picture below) opened it.

Half the premises were formerly Shattock's furs and ladies' tailoring, while the other part had been a greengrocer's shop.

The staff are a loyal lot at Roberts – a fact greatly valued by the owner.

"They're a good team," he said. "I have one whole family here; husband, wife, daughter and granddaughter!" Some have worked with Robert for decades. "They do seem to stay, so I can't be that bad," he joked.

In his three decades of trading in Claremont Road, Robert has seen a lot of change in the town. "Shops come and go, and not many have done 30 years and



lived to tell the tale," he said. "But I've had some of the same customers since day one; we do have some very nice people in Surbiton... either upwardly mobile, or nicely settled. Steady, gentle people."

The change since 1983 is, Robert feels, the boom in Surbiton's night life. What were once sleepy streets after dark are now busy and buzzy.



Majestic closes

Brighton Road now has a big gap after Majestic shut its Surbiton branch. It closed on October 7 after head office balked at the price demanded for lease renewal. As the discount wine store was next to Blockbuster, it leaves a long blank stretch. Having its entrance round the back, off Cottage Grove, didn't help, but town retailers still expressed surprise at the timing as so much Majestic business is done in the pre-Christmas quarter.

Baby bargains

Another baby goods sale is taking place on December 7 from 2-4pm at Surbiton library hall, Ewell Road. The last event was a runaway success, with top sellers including toys, books and games. All stalls are sold out, to the delight of organiser Janine Turland. Grab Christmas bargains in maternity, baby and children's items. Want to have your own stall? Turn up and see how it works. Visit www.mum2mummarket.co.uk

Festive stories

Santa's grotto is being set up behind The Antelope, Maple Road, in the days before Christmas. Check blackboards for exact times, but expect more than the usual bearded old boy sitting on his throne. This one is telling festive stories, and encouraging the little ones to read.

Mulled cuppas

Want a festive flavour, without the alcohol? Victoria Road's Lebanese DeliCafe is serving mulled tea and coffee, with a warming cinammonny taste, ideal for a winter's day.

School concern

A Tolworth primary school has been placed in a 'category of concern' by Ofsted. The 276-pupil Knollmead primary will be checked again in 18 months after questions were asked about pupil progress and leadership roles. The council is looking to an outstanding borough academy school to give it support. A new head is now in charge.

Tikka mess-ala

The ex-boss of a Tolworth curry house has admitted five food hygiene charges. Ramnarraj Rajaratnam, who used to run the Spice House in Tolworth Broadway, told Lavender Hill magistrates he was guilty. He was fined £650, with £400 costs and surcharges. Inspectors found spoons and containers encrusted with congealed food waste. Rajaratnam, who had no food hygiene training, blamed his neglect on lack of time. He has now left Spice House.



Paint it black

Everything that can be painted black has been painted black in a concerted blitz on Surbiton town centre's railings and posts. The old dark red colour has been banished, perhaps to better reflect these austere times. To the amusement of bystanders, even defunct poles without signs or lights were coated in paint. Above, workmen tackle the railings at Claremont Road's junction with St James Road.

In Santa's grotto

Attractions at the Our Lady Immaculate School Christmas bazaar on Saturday November 30 in Ewell Road include a raffle for an iPod Touch, Kindle Fire and £100 of Amazon vouchers. Stalls include wheel of fortune, and there's an early chance to visit Santa's grotto. The bazaar runs from 1-4pm.

Navigating Tolworth's 'Greenway'

Without rules or conventions, users of Tolworth's 'Greenway' must make their own.

Like a flattened serpent, the striped confection snakes down the centre of the Broadway, baffling those either side of it.

The £3.1million project (supposed to be completed on September 13, but only just finished) has few friends, and many sceptics.

What's the reality? To find out, I navigated it, strolling from Our Lady Immaculate to the Charrington Bowl on a sunny November morning, over what the council calls a 'vibrant resin-bound gravel surface'.

It's unnerving. For a start, you feel exposed and unprotected, with vehicles whooshing past, inches away.

It's worlds apart from the original artist's impressions, with bushy trees on a green central reservation running down a dual carriageway so empty you'd think cars had still to be invented. Pensioners take the air, mothers push strollers and cyclists cheerily greet each other while pedalling past raised benches, doubtless provided for dumbfounded Surbitonians to sit and wonder where the traffic's gone.

Is this garish track meant to encourage an Italian-style 'passeggiata' – the early-evening pre-dinner perambulation beloved of Latins? As the sun sinks behind Tolworth's 22-storey monolith, will we see the glitterati sally forth, arm in arm, cashmere sweaters draped over shoulders, exchanging gossip?

Officially, Broadway traffic now moves at 20mph. With no obvious enforcement, this

actually translates to: 'as fast as you drive when a gap appears'.

As you near the Tower you encounter raised green platforms in the road itself. These are 'uncontrolled crossings'. Cars don't know whether to stop or not, people aren't sure whether to cross or not.

Without signs, it's anyone's guess. Meanwhile, the low kerbs encourage pedestrians to step out anyway. My money is on a fatality before Easter.

The stripes are loud. Bilious yellow gives way to olive, then pale moss, then more bile.

The few sad saplings to have been planted – looking neither dead nor alive – appear to have been sunk straight into the resin surface.

At the roundabout you encounter an unexpected crop of 15ft Lombardy poplars, then the start of an undulating wooden fence, pictured below, like an American Civil War fortification, or the edge of an adventure playground.

When I walked the walk, some of the crossing controls were still not working... but there were no signs to explain this.

The centre of the roundabout is now crossed by a wood-framed track, with smaller paths leading off it, to the old subways.

At the old Toby Jug end, there is another clump of poplars before the stripy path abruptly ends.

The real problem with the Tolworth Greenway isn't the colour (although that

is distasteful), it's the fact that pedestrians are apparently encouraged to jaywalk on a busy four-lane highway, while cyclists and pedestrians share a narrow track, despite moving at very different speeds. It'll all end in tears.

Tim Harrison



Lights jolly up the town centre

Surbiton town centre has been jollied up with £5,500 worth of festive lights on the new lampposts after the council's neighbourhood committee made cash savings elsewhere.

Surbiton Business Community organised the November 28 switch-on with stalls, live music and a procession. Co-ordinator Alison Persson said: "It's a great lift that

Victoria Road and Brighton Road have lights."

The launch event, Turn It On Surbiton, promised music, carols and Santa in a sleigh, magically illuminating lights as he passed by.

Through December, an 'advent calendar' of happenings is planned, hosted daily by a different Surbiton business or charity.

Overheard in The Maypole

A Surbiton man calls his son in Manchester and says: "I hate to ruin your day, but your mother and I are divorcing. Forty years of misery is enough."

"Dad, what are you talking about?" the son demands.

"We can't stand the sight of each other any longer," the man says. "We're sick of each other, and I'm sick of talking about this... so you call your sister in Edinburgh and tell her."

Frantically, the son dials his sister. "Like hell they're getting divorced," she shouts. "I'll take care of this." She rings Surbiton immediately and tells her dad: "You are NOT getting divorced. Don't do a single thing until I get there. I'm calling my brother back, and we'll both be there tomorrow. Until then, don't do a thing. DO YOU HEAR ME?" She hangs up.

The man puts the phone down and turns to his wife. "OK," he says. "They're coming for Christmas, and paying their own fares."

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Honouring the fallen

More than 1,500 gathered at the war memorial on Remembrance Sunday, and at 11am Ewell Road fell silent for two minutes.

Police sealed off the road as crowds filled the street and the memorial garden.

The Rev Bonni-Belle Pickard conducted the open-air service in dazzling autumnal sunlight “to remember those who have died in the two world wars and other conflicts, to honour those who suffered the pain of their loss, and to

be thankful for the freedom and justice that was won for us”.

Her words were relayed by loudspeaker to the poppy-wearing gathering.

A military band accompanied the hymns, while buglers played the Last Post and Reveille either side of the immaculately observed silence. Service and youth organisations laid wreaths, as did councillors and civic dignitaries, led by deputy mayor Cllr Alan Dean.

MP Ed Davey also laid a poppy wreath.



Afterwards he told the Good Life that plans were well under way for marking 2014's centenary of the start of the First World War.

“It's extremely important that we make an extra effort next year to mark the start of the First World War,” he said. “People are putting a lot of thought into the planning, and we've even discussed it in cabinet.”

● Peter Attwood (right) of Adelaide Road was at the service. Now 83, he joined up as a teenager in the 7th Tank Regiment, serving in the Korean War, and memorably spending Christmas 1951 in Libya.

“I did 16 years in the army,” said Peter, proudly wearing his regimental badge. As tanks helped turn the tide of the First World War, next year's centenary is significant for Peter. “The Germans had never seen tanks – nobody had,” he said. “People ran a mile!”



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Oakhill's timeline

The latest stage of Oakhill's history project is clear to see for anyone visiting the new health centre or delivering kids to Lime Tree primary. Information boards (left) form a timeline on the track linking Ewell Road and Oakhill Path. They are packed with facts gleaned by Heritage Lottery-funded research, with nifty QR symbols letting those with mobile phone apps link to the website www.ochp.org.uk. Hillcroft College principal Michael Wheeler said: “We're now working on time capsules.” **Phil Cooper**

Ditch Atkins... take the letterbox workout

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As part of the GL delivery crew, I've watched the community paper's evolution. When the day dawns, boxes of freshly printed papers arrive, and I receive the call. “Might you be free on Friday? How about tonight? Any chance of a hand at the weekend?”

Time to put on walking shoes. Reaching for high and low letterboxes. Puzzling entrances. Chatting with cats. Marvelling at recycling storage solutions. Enjoying fragrant floral displays. Negotiating moral mazes (Surely this paper doesn't fall foul of No Junk Mail?).

Your Good Life is delivered by an enthusiastic crew of volunteers who believe the paper positively contributes to the neighbourhood, and is worth supporting. You too can celebrate this quirky, independent gem by helping.

Either join the sociable distribution team for a few hours every six to eight weeks, or a counted batch of papers can be dropped off, and you can pick a time that suits to deliver to a couple of agreed streets.

Most rewarding exchange? Being greeted by a Surbiton resident with outstretched hand. “Oh good. I was hoping this would come soon. It's by far the best of the bunch.”

Few free papers in the UK generate such positive reaction. If you value the paper, try the Good Life distribution workout. Email timharrison444@hotmail.com **Claire Pilling**

Meet the lettings specialists

The great plus with Surbiton's new lettings agency is its specialist skills. KT5 Exclusively Lettings does exactly what it says, and it is family-run.

Launched in offices 100 yards from the station, the firm has already gained a reputation for value and professionalism at branches in Egham and Ascot. Surbiton seemed an obvious place to target when looking to expand further, said senior lettings negotiator Nicole Barrett. “Chimney pot-wise, the Surbiton area is huge,” she said. “With our niche experience in commuter and student lets, this was the ideal area to expand into.”

KT5 Exclusively Lettings is an approachable, down-to-earth firm which works to keep rates low and service levels high.

For landlords, the service takes away all the hassle, without charging the earth. For tenants, it's about meeting aspirations, paying close attention to detail and offering a personal, flexible and confidential service.

Nicole has worked in the lettings industry for many years. “Our experience allows us to understand and anticipate the needs of both landlords and tenants,” she said.

“My job is to ensure everything runs like clockwork; to maintain the service at a level where everyone is happy to recommend us, and to keep everything streamlined so that costs can be kept to a minimum.

“In my experience, a happy landlord and a happy tenant are those who receive a one-to-one service,

and don't have to pay over the odds for it.”

A part of Auriga Estate Agents, established 16 years, KT5 is the family firm's third branch, each having the personal touch of being named after the area postcode.

Working from serviced offices means KT5's fees are as much as 50% cheaper than rivals – savings it can pass on to tenants and landlords, with the company offering tenant finding, full property management and rent collection.

“We're looking for a long-term relationship,” said Nicole, who has set a target of managing 100 Surbiton properties in the coming year, with local staff recruited to help.

“Come in for a no-obligation chat, and we'll put the kettle on,” she added.



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Friends spread the word

We should all know more about dementia, say Graham Taylor and Elaine Swift. The Surbiton couple responded to an Alzheimer's Society appeal to become 'dementia friends' as part of a grassroots initiative to raise awareness of a condition set to affect one in 10 households.

They have linked up with local businesses to hold short, informal meetings to explain more, and are seeking suitable venues in Surbiton.

When Elaine's mother developed dementia, Elaine felt all at sea. "I didn't know where to turn or where to look for support," she told the Good Life.

Joining Dementia Friends has allowed Graham, an experienced lecturer, to deliver awareness sessions. "Dementia's effects can be devastating," he said. "The isolation, despair and frustration can be overwhelming, affecting not just the sufferer. Yet the message is that people with dementia can live well... with help."



The 'friends' concept is that a little knowledge is a small step towards making a big difference in the lives of those affected. "Nobody will chase you or beg for money," promised Graham.

Sessions give an insight and last under an hour. One suggestion is being more patient of those ahead of you in the supermarket queue who seem to be struggling.

● www.dementiafriends.org.uk

Inclined to amuse

Cow bells sounded, woolly hats assembled and St Mark's Hill briefly became an Alpine resort. Ski Sunday, an eccentric feature of Surbiton life, saw 30 enthusiasts – egged on by a 500-strong crowd – 'ski' down the slip road opposite Hotel Bosco.

Slip road was right. Wearing blocks of ice on their feet, many went sprawling as they vied to finish the 20-yard course the fastest. Winner was 21-year-old Jesper Hedlund, a skier and ice hockey player on an Erasmus year at Kingston Uni.

"We don't have anything like quite like this in Sweden," he admitted after his 9.97-second dash snatched the course record from Jack Dimes, whose 10.66-second time had stood since 2010.

A bathtub luge event followed, then vegetable soup in St Andrew's Square at the après-ski party. "Suburban skiing is to skiing what table tennis is to Chinese food," compere Robin Hutchinson helpfully explained.

Main Kitchen Supplies made the ice blocks, Waitrose stored them, From The Ground Up provided soup ingredients, and the Shooting Star children's hospice benefited.



Almost balletic, Wayne Hughes sashays down the course

An old-fashioned welcome in Hinchley Wood

The Hinchley Wood shops offer a warm festive welcome. The parade harks back to the good old days – a friendly chat here, a personal touch there... and traffic warden-free after 9.30am.

Jack Farruggia (below) is one of the best bakers this side of Italy. "We make 101 beautiful things," he told the Good Life. The queues snake outside

the door, rain or shine, and the shop window is crammed with goodies.

Top festive choice? Try panettone – the dessert bread filled with dried and candied fruit.

Jack, who also bakes gluten-free bread, added: "I wish all our customers a merry Christmas and prosperous new year."

Sentiments echoed next door at Stephen's Fine Foods, where Steve Crawley (right) emphasises: "We offer a personal quality, and we're here to help; come in and ask... and if it's possible to get it, we'll get it."

The sausages made on the premises include



pork and marmalade! Free-range turkeys are reared by the breeder he has used for years, and all meat comes from trusted suppliers.

"Everything is reliable, from good, traceable sources," he said. "Turkeys, geese, ducks, pheasants, capons and excellent free-range chickens."

At Steve's deli counter you'll find cheeses and olives as well.



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Cooking tips and top fare

Like decorating the tree and wrapping presents, there's something special about picking up the festive bird.

So says Kevin Jennings at Jennings the butcher, which has been taking turkey orders for more than half a century.

Kevin, dad Alan and uncle Brian are ready for the busiest time of year. "There's a unique atmosphere to picking up a turkey from the butchers at Christmas," said Kevin. "We're always happy to give cooking tips and advice for the big meal... and don't forget new year celebrations."

Jennings stocks Kelly bronze turkeys – top award winners for seven years running. Reared in Essex, the birds are the only ones in the UK taken from hatchery to adulthood on the same farm. Jennings has stocked them since the 80s – one of the longest associations of any supplier.

Endorsed by Nigella Lawson, birds are free to roam and are fed on locally grown cereals. They come with recipe ideas and cooking instructions. Free-range geese are popular. "They've really improved; not as fatty as they used to be," said Kevin.

Scotch beef fillets and slow-roast shoulder of pork are fine choices, while the bangers are made on the premises. These days, a good gammon is nearly as popular as turkey. "There are a lot of seasonal cuts, and game birds are in season; good for pot-roasting," said Kevin.

Check www.cdjenningsandsons.com for festive opening hours.



Brian, Kevin and Alan Jennings

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...and 101 beautiful things!



Tempted by the bright lights of the West End, or the bus to Kingston? Stop! Christmas shop in Surbiton! Support local businesses, and reduce your carbon footprint. The farmers' market in Maple Road on December 21 has gifts galore. Try **Corte dei Signori's** home-made Sicilian lemon marmalade. At £2.50 a jar, it has a wonderful sharp kick. **Bee Inspired** has four hives in Weston Green, and sells wax candles, facecream, soaps and

balms, with part of the take furthering honey-bee research. Visit Irene Nicola-Thompson's home-baking stall, **All Square Cakes**, for mini Dundees. She uses fruit from neighbours' trees in Derby Road!



For jewellery, **Gumus** in Victoria Road has bracelets from £19, with silver necklaces from £20, including crosses and hearts. **Hoi Polloi** (St Andrew's Road) has mouse-shaped ring tidies (£3.99), while **Farrago** (Claremont Road) has I Love Surbiton eggcups at £8.95). Both shops are packed with gift ideas. **Michael's Shoes** in Claremont Road has natty fold-up walking sticks for gran, from £25, wooden shoe trees from £12 and chamois leathers to buff the Jag. Anyone in tune with their feet will already know **Shoes At Last**, Maple Road; but beyond footwear it has lovely, quirky accessories. **The Lebanese DeliCafe** in Victoria Road (opposite the Y) will cook you a meze candlelit dinner at £20 a head... a welcome gift for foodies. **Main Kitchen Supplies** in Brighton Road has wittily altered London street names (Piccalilli Circus etc) on cork-



backed coasters at £2 apiece. A cute new patisserie, **Carmella** at 132 Ewell Road, features in our next issue. Meanwhile, try the liquorice sticks, or a mix of Turkish delight by weight. **Raspberry B Boutique** (www.rasperrybboutique.co.uk) is a vintage fashion website in Surbiton; pick and mix clothes. For bling stocking-fillers, the **Footwear Discount Centre** at 157 Ewell Road has chunky, brash quartz watches at a fiver apiece, while two doors down, a pop-up shop sells pictures, mirrors and knick-knacks. **Bye, Buy, Bye** lasts to December 20. **Waitrose** stocks a 300g mixed exotic mushroom pack for £3.99 – ideal for a Boxing Day breakfast toast topping.

Drawn to Surbiton?

Scenes of Surbiton, such as the iconic station facade (below), flow from the pen of Martin Alton. Framed pen and ink prints of Raven's Ait, the clock tower and even an art deco electricity substation make original Christmas gifts at £53 apiece. Martin, an artist for 30 years, has his works hanging on the walls of St Mark's Hill cafe Pickled Pantry, where owner George Setchell said: "We have six Surbiton scenes on display, plus one of the cafe itself." Buy there, or to order, discuss, commission or find out more, email martin@altonart.co.uk



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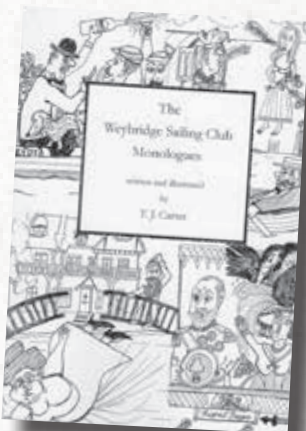
BOOKS++BOOKS++BOOKS++BOOKS++BOOKS++BOOKS++BOOKS++



Long Ditton pensioner **Daisy Thurbin** is an adventurer, although long-suffering husband Pat just rolls his eyes and asks: Where next? She has published two Kindle books, drawing on journals to describe her escapades to encourage others to fearlessly explore our extraordinary planet. The intrepid Kings Road voyager recently braved Siberia (that's her on horseback on Olkhon Island, Lake Baikal), and feels more senior citizens should slam the front door behind them and set off into

the unknown. "We pensioners are perfectly suited to planning original and exciting adventures; to spread our wings and explore more exotic horizons," she said. The retired barrister and Kingston Uni law lecturer loves all travel, even the K3 to Kingston. ● **The Itinerant Pleasure Seeker** and **The Deliberate Dilettante** are under £1 to download.

Surbiton chef and after-dinner speaker **Tim Carter** has collated half a dozen of his most popular postprandial monologues on the subject of The Thames; rhyming tales to delight lovers of witty language and river exploits. The book even has performance notes, including all-important advice on the most appropriate headgear for optimum delivery. It's a thumping good stocking filler at £6.79. Tim has earned standing ovations for speeches at his sailing club lunch (from those still capable of standing at the end). "It's a slim volume of comic tales about the Thames which I have written and performed over the last few years," he said. He has also illustrated the book, in an endearingly naïve style. ● **The Weybridge Sailing Club Monologues** by TJ Carter are available via www.lulu.com/shop



Watch out for an hour-long ITV documentary at the end of the year, James Nesbitt's New Zealand. In it, the actor encounters some of the country's oddest characters; meetings arranged by St Matthew's Avenue travel writer **Dan Coxon**. "The programme's producers contacted me as I'd already walked where Nesbitt was destined to walk," said Dan. "They wanted a genuine taste of New Zealand. In my book there was a ready-made blueprint." Dan spent three months travelling across New Zealand's North and South Islands, gathering stories and experiences for a lively book. "Having grown up in Surbiton, there was little to prepare me for abseiling through a crack in the ground into a cave!" he said. "Maybe that's why Peter Jackson chose New Zealand as the setting for his Lord of the Rings trilogy rather than our town, although some Surbiton pubs might have suited as the inns of Hobbiton." ● Dan has signed a copy of **Ka Mate: Travels in New Zealand** (£8.99). To win, tell us which actor is presenting the TV show. Tough, eh? Email timharrison444@hotmail.com. Draw on Dec 16.



The joy of a real tree

Florist Jamie Grant's first close encounter with Christmas trees was on his dad's flower stall. "I was 14, shivering in my fingerless gloves," he said. "I'd no idea I'd still be selling them 20 years later... in a slightly more cosy shop in Surbiton." This year Gardenia will sell 2,000 trees via website, shops, stalls, and fairs, delivering them in the evening so customers don't have to drag them home. "We'll miss the comedy of an 8ft tree sticking out of the sunroof of a Mini, but we must move with the times," he joked. But some things won't change. "Nothing will convince me to entertain the idea of an artificial tree," he said. "I'm often surprised to hear that choosing a real tree is somehow damaging or unsustainable. Yet one acre of Christmas tree production can produce the daily oxygen requirement for up to 18 people; 2.5 acres will absorb up to 6 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year." Tree farms help stabilise soil, provide wildlife habitats and protect water supplies. And while cut trees have a short lifespan, they are recyclable and biodegradable. Gardenia's are mulched for use in parks and bridleways. "If I've convinced you to go green, here are my tips for ensuring your real tree makes it through to January," he said. "Firstly, choose a position away from sources of direct heat. Standing it near a fire, radiator or warm lighting can cause it to dry out. Before you place it in your stand, cut 1-2cm off the trunk. This will break the natural seal and help it suck up more water. Once it's in place, remove the netting and brush the branches down to help it fall into shape." Astonishingly, Christmas trees can drink up to 4.5 litres a day, so keep the stand topped up. ● Jamie Grant is the owner of Gardenia of London. Mention this article in the shop at 17 Claremont Road to get 10% off your Christmas tree, or quote code GLXMAS13. Visit www.gardeniaoflondon.co.uk

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Choir leads concert

While Benjamin Britten's A Ceremony of Carols is at the heart of a concert at St Andrew's church, Maple Road, on Saturday December 7, topicality dictates that music by the late John Tavener will be of great interest too. Tiffin School choir, pictured, led by Simon Toyne, will raise the roof from 7.30pm, with an illuminating pre-performance talk by concert director Ben Costello at 6.45pm. Tavener died two weeks ago, so his works are very much in the spotlight. Pieces by Elgar also feature, and there are some hearty carols for choir and audience. Elizabeth Scoriah plays the harp, with Max Barley at the organ. Tickets £12, discounted in advance at www.ticketweb.co.uk or on 08444 771000.



Rocking the Royal Oak

Surbiton rockers Eddie and the Redheads will perform at the Royal Oak, 261 Ewell Road, on February 7. They take to the stage at 8.45pm, playing a stream of rock anthems. Free.



Natural world snapped

Rarely caught without a camera, professional children's clown Palfi Rinehart exhibits framed photos in Photopoems at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road. Images date from 1967 to the present, and capture the beauty of the natural world. With prices from £25, there are original Christmas gift ideas aplenty. The show runs from December 1 until January 4, any time the cornerHOUSE is open. Launch night, Sunday December 1 from 7pm. This picture is Tulips. "My Photopoems are a selection of what I believe to be my most powerful work over nearly 50 years behind the lens," he said. "The images are not tampered with in any way. Their worth is that they record precisely the wonder of our actual environment." More at www.palfiphotographs.co.uk



Keith squares a circle

Travel photographer Keith Hern was guest of honour at November's Surbiton Photo Circle, and presented some of the pictures which have made their way into his books. Keith, standing, who lives in Thames Ditton, has been to 70 countries. He told the informal snappers' group: "Travel is the reason I got into photography as a mid-life career change." He had tips, pointers ("Keep it simple") and words of advice, not only about subject composition but also the best way to approach strangers if you want to picture them... and get home alive. Shots included a fisheye-lens view of New York, which won a US award, and a clever picture of half a zebra's head. Two pre-Christmas club gatherings are planned; an outing to the South Bank to capture brutalist concrete architecture and brutal congregated skateboarders on Sunday December 8 (meet at Surbiton station at 10.30am), and a meeting in Maple Works, alongside Gordon Bennett! in Maple Road, at 8pm on Monday, December 9.

It's pantomime... but is it art?

Desperate to attract pupils following a string of damning Ofsted reports, St Trinian's has become an academy and reopened as St Darcyan's. The head – a woman with the cunning of a fox and

the suspicion of a moustache – is not all she seems. The Belles of St Darcyan's, the 26th cornerHOUSE panto, tells an extraordinary tale of art forgeries, police investigations and lacrosse matches. Are men in uniform any match for maidens in gymslips?

The panto runs from Tuesday, January 28 to Saturday, February 1, 7.45pm plus a Saturday matinee at 4pm at the cornerHOUSE arts centre in Douglas Road.

Tickets £8 (concessions £6) from www.ticketsource.co.uk/event/37489

Pictured, from left, Richard, Rebecca and Lydia Williams, Amelie Dinnin and Lucia Marfe.

Picture: Jon Constant



Fantasy and wildlife mix

Pastel pictures of wildlife and a series of unusual digital fantasies will hang side-by-side in a joint show at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, throughout January. Roger Fowler specialises in animal pictures. "I've attended art workshops to interact with animals such as wolves, to gain a better understanding of my subject," he said. Meta Rocard is more experimental. Her prints, on foam-backed board, are computerised images created from enhanced photos, turned into abstract designs. Prices start at £5. "When asked to form an exhibition, I decided to share the space with Roger who, like me, is nervous of going solo," admitted Meta. Meet the artists at a gala night on Tuesday January 14, from 7pm.

● Pictured, right, are (top) one of Meta Rocard's bird abstracts and (below) a tender study of an orangutan and infant by Roger Fowler



And a large bells, please

A Christmas bells concert is being staged at St Andrew's in Maple Road on Saturday December 14 at 7.30pm. The handbell-ringers of St Mary's, Teddington, led by Grant Sullivan, will perform festive favourites, and some more unfamiliar works, as well as carols for everyone to join in.

It's a wonderful movie

Celebrate Christmas with a heart-warming classic movie. It's A Wonderful Life (U) was made in 1946, with Frank Capra directing and James Stewart starring. It's on the big screen in Tolworth in mid-December at the cornerHOUSE film club at the Douglas Road arts centre. You need to be a member, but membership is free. Email info@thecornerhouse.org to join, learn dates and times, and be notified of future films. Also being screened during the month, Polar Express (U), an animation featuring the voice of Tom Hanks.

Crafty alternative gifts

Looking for home-made Christmas gift ideas? Check out the Crafty Aft group, the cake-eating, tea-sipping band of creatives who gather in the bar of the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, on December 14, from 1-4pm. From card-making to photography, jewellery to patchwork, no craft is left untouched.



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I wish it could be every day

Dogs are for life, not just for Christmas, but I'd like to make a case for other things that should go on all year round...

Mince pies and mulled wine If you whipped out either of these delectable treats for a picnic in June, you'd be mocked, treated with contempt, and possibly shunned by your friends. This is seasonal food prejudice in its rawest form, and it needs to cease.

Jolly jumpers Festively ironic from about December 4-29, but after that they become a social offence, and I'd like to dispute that. Those whimsical knits bring tremendous joy to humanity, and I urge the gentlemen of Surbiton to make their festive jumpers a regular feature in their year-round wardrobe.

Flamboyant stuffing Stuffing is magnificent whatever time of year, but at Christmas it goes mental. Pancetta and rosemary? Cherry and pistachio? Apricot and chestnut? Acceptable – nay, expected. But serve up a portion of walnut and blue

cheese with a casual April roast, and your guests will come away muttering 'It's all very nice, but she's a bit theatrical with the stuffing.'

Julie Andrews Give me one good reason why Mary Poppins and The Sound of Music aren't on TV in summer. Julie Andrews should, and I mean this with every fibre of my being, be enjoyed on a daily, if not hourly basis. All year. Forever. Fact.

Setting fire to puddings How much more exciting would a humdrum Sunday lunch in March be if someone said 'Tell you what, shall we set light to the crumble?'

Getting grandparents drunk What's not funny about seeing Grandad Sid capering about in his slippers to Jingle Bell Rock, pinching Auntie Margot's bum, calling pop singers 'warbling fairies', then falling asleep in a chair with a half-eaten mince pie on his stomach? That's the sort of spectacle we should be able to enjoy weekly.

Overeating An ordinary day in August, and you have single-handedly consumed a turkey the size of a small bungalow,

gorged on chocolate, trifle, Bombay mix, and an unreasonable amount of cheese, and have been found face-down in a chestnut fool. Your loved ones are aghast, exchange concerns about depression, and sign you up for Overeaters Anonymous. Have the same day in mid-December, and your loved ones are engaged in a gladiatorial battle for the last drop of brandy butter. This is brazen hypocrisy, and if I want to consume an embarrassing amount of poultry and potatoes on a warm summer evening, then I ruddy well will.

Laziness May 26. 'What do you mean you've spent the whole day on the sofa watching episodes of The Vicar of Dibley? That's disgusting. Get up and go for a walk. You nauseate me.' December 26. 'What do you mean you went for a walk? That's disgusting. Get home and remain in a semi-recumbent posture until your skin starts to meld with the sofa. You nauseate me.' I know which one I find more attractive. Who's with me?

Becky Mayhew



A crackling good postcard

Historic river view postcards of Surbiton abound... but this novelty card dating back to the First World War is a real porker. Sorry, corker.

Drawn by former Beano illustrator Reg Carter, it recently fetched a fiver on eBay. Bizarre, and not a little disturbing, the card shows a pig declaring: "I may be a little piguliar, but I do like Surbiton."

Posted in the town at 2pm on July 19 1915 (franking was clear and precise then), the card needed a halfpenny stamp to reach its recipient, Elsie Ford of Cobham.

It was posted by 'LU' at the end of a fortnight's holiday in Surbiton which, according to the message on the back, was going to end with a visit that evening (a Monday) to the Coronation cinema at the foot of St Mark's Hill.

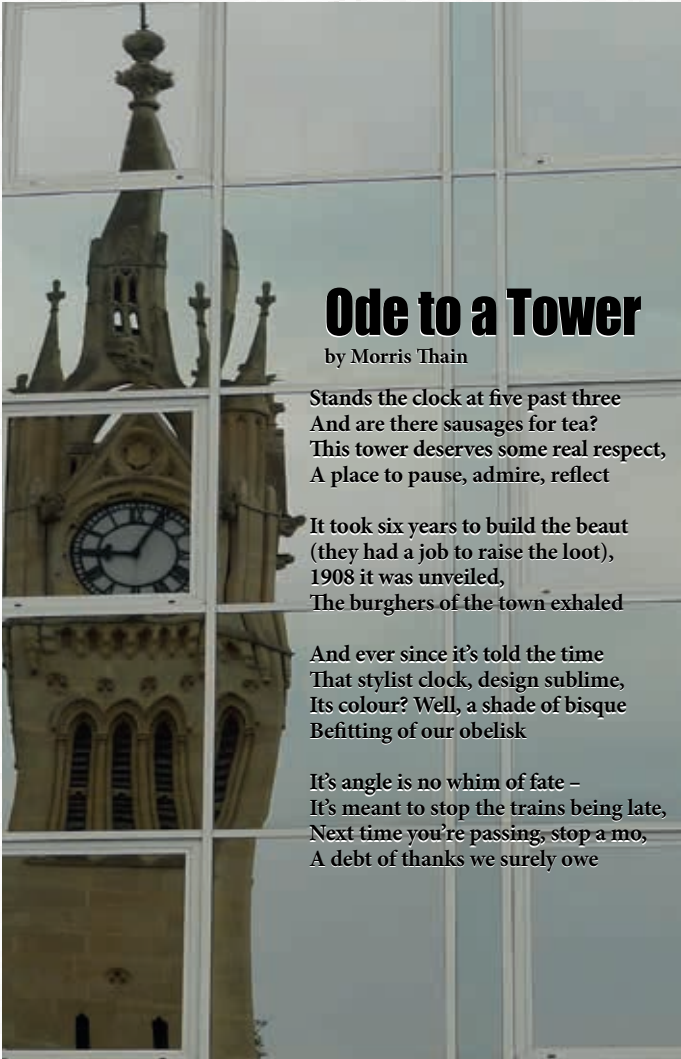
Today it's a Wetherspoon's, but when it opened four years before the postcard was sent – on the day of King George V's coronation, hence the name – it was the bee's knees of cinemas, capable of seating 600 people. Equipped with both piano and organ, it changed its name in 1947 to The Roxy.

Tantalisingly, the postcard ends: 'Nellie goes back about 5 o'clock today. You can guess she is not very lively today.' No explanation of why Nellie is 'not very lively'. Perhaps she had had a heavy night at the Black Lion, or the Victoria... or possibly the Southampton Hotel, which then stood almost opposite the cinema, beside the station.

Published by Britain's oldest postcard printer, J Salmon of Sevenoaks, the card was designed by self-taught Suffolk artist Reg Carter.

A prolific illustrator, creating more than 1,500 different postcard designs, Reg left school in Southwold at the age of 14 to work as a solicitor's clerk, but by 17 was making a good living from his real love, art. He drew comic strips for The Beano for a decade, including the cover of the first issue in 1937. He died in Sussex in 1949 at the age of 62. Collectors refer to his cards as 'Reggies'.

Tim Harrison



Ode to a Tower

by Morris Thain

Stands the clock at five past three
And are there sausages for tea?
This tower deserves some real respect,
A place to pause, admire, reflect

It took six years to build the beaut
(they had a job to raise the loot),
1908 it was unveiled,
The burghers of the town exhaled

And ever since it's told the time
That stylist clock, design sublime,
Its colour? Well, a shade of bisque
Befitting of our obelisk

It's angle is no whim of fate –
It's meant to stop the trains being late,
Next time you're passing, stop a mo,
A debt of thanks we surely owe



Pleased to meet you

Princess Alexandra met resident Betty Pritchard at the official opening of the Royal Star & Garter Home. The Upper Brighton Road building, with 63 en-suite rooms, is one of several replacing the original Richmond Hill Star & Garter, coincidentally opened by Princess Alexandra's grandmother, Queen Mary, in 1924.

Phil Cooper

Popular juice

Freshly pressed local apple juice? Farmers' market shoppers lapped it up in Maple Road when Abundance Kingston showed how to use seasonal fruit gluts. Money raised funds growing projects. Set up by Elise Barron (left), the group harvests apples and pears to turn into jam, juice and chutney. Also pictured, Hilary Gander (centre) and Liz Darley. Volunteer harvesters can get involved at www.ttkingston.org/groups-and-projects/abundance



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