

Issue 20

The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3

Winter 2014



With this spring (onion) I thee wed

Love has sprouted among the leeks and carrots at Surbiton's farmers' market. While serving customers cabbages, kale and caullies, Vladimir Mirov and Tanya Mirova realised they wanted to spend more than the odd morning together. On October 4 the couple, captured on the Secretts veg stall in this

David Jacobson photo, were married.

December 20th's market has a Giggly Pig hog roast, carol singing and oodles of foodie gifts, including pots of honey mincemeat. To mark its fifth birthday, market organisers gave £1,000 to help the area's young carers.

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Surbiton's most popular papers

In order of numbers sold, the current top five at the Platform 1 station kiosk are.....

1. The Sun

The Times
 Daily Mail
 Daily Telegraph
 The Guardian



Read all about it: John Grieg at the kiosk

Paper kiosk to fold

The man who greets commuters with their first 'good morning' of the day and sells them their daily paper is quitting.

John Grieg, who runs the platform 1 kiosk at Surbiton station, is becoming a train dispatcher, based in a signal box at Effingham Junction.

"After 17 and a half years, I'll miss it," said John, who is calling it a day partly because South West Trains is raising his rent.

In its heyday, the kiosk sold 300 Daily Mails a morning. Now it's 25. Reflecting a more mixed demographic than is often appreciated, Surbiton's top-selling paper is... The Sun. Page 3 and all.

"Nine times out of 10 I reckon I can tell what the customer will want!" claims John, who plays for the Old Malden Manor over-35s in Worcester Park, where he is nicknamed Paper!

He will also do his football coaching badges. His 15-year-old daughter plays at King George's Field, Tolworth; his eight-year-old son in a little league near the family's Sutton home.

"Nikki, my wife, is happy," he said. "She won't have to do any more VAT returns."

John's departure will leave a gap in commuters' lives. Dozens enjoy early-morning banter with a man whose humour isn't so much dry as arid.

"It'll take time for the old body clock to adjust," said John, 47, who since his late 20s has got up at 4am. The family's newspaper history is impressive. Father-in-law Keith (who will man the kiosk until the end of December) ran the little shop by the station, while Keith's late father, Bob Glass, sold papers in Surbiton for 60 years, retiring at 75. Bob died in 2011 at 92.

Bob's father, William, set up the forecourt newsagent's after the First World War.

"It's a shame; I like my little shop, and I like the customers, but the rent's going up, and SW Trains are silly enough to give me another job," joked John. "Every Christmas we lose a few more sales to Kindles and so on. Then Sainsbury's opened in the forecourt, and that chipped a few more away."

What will happen to the cute sliver of a kiosk, which dates back to 1937, when the art deco palace of a station designed by architect James Robb Scott was unveiled?

SW Trains plans to demolish it, to ease overcrowding at the foot of the concrete steps. The old phone box and free-standing timetable boards have already been removed for that reason.

But as the kiosk makes a fleeting appearance in Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, it has a certain movie history value. It is glimpsed as Daniel Radcliffe sits moodily in the curved-glass waiting room, flirting with a waitress as he reads the Daily Prophet, while Michael Gambon (Prof Dumbledore) pops up on Platform 3.

Tipped off by The Good Life, Warner Bros, which runs Harry Potter tours in its studio complex near Watford, may try to cut a deal with SW Trains to resite it in Hertfordshire.

• All Harry Potter aficionados know The Half-Blood Prince was part-filmed on platforms 1, 2, 3 and 4 on November 17 2007, but few know that David Yates (fresh from directing The Order of the Phoenix) planned to turn the station forecourt newsagent's into a wizarding bookshop. John Greig was sounded out... but Yates had a change of heart, and deleted the scene. Intriguingly, the shop bore the name 'R Glass'; a vital item of sorcerers' impedimenta!









From top: a blue welcome in Seymour Gardens; pop art in Arlington Road; a curt instruction in Raeburn Avenue; and footprints on a mat in Ditton Grange Close

You're welcome

One thing you notice when delivering the Good Life is the variety of welcome mats in Surbiton. From the straightforward to the comical to the animal-themed to the outright sarcastic, our mats say a great deal about us. If you're intrigued by the quartet above... brace yourself for p5

Warring faction

One hundred years ago, Surbiton was consumed by a dispute over a street name. Today, the road in the Alpha estate is called Hobill Walk. But back in 1914, with Europe immersed in deadly conflict, its title caused the residents so much offence that the council had to act. See p4



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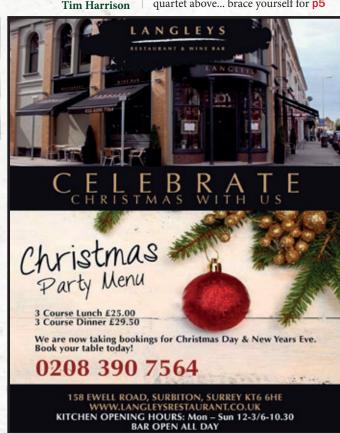
20 zone is rejected

Plans to create a blanket 20mph zone in central Surbiton have been defeated in a political argument pitting 'Jeremy Clarksons' against 'sandal-wearers'.

Kingston Guildhall's Tory majority overruled Surbiton's Lib Dem-dominated area committee, which wanted a 20mph limit in a zone bounded by Brighton Road, Victoria Road, St Mark's Hill, Surbiton Hill Road, Avenue Elmers and Claremont Road. Instead, roads will only be limited to 20 within 100m of schools.

Conservative Cllr Richard Hudson insisted low-speed zones would only appear more generally after "independent evidence which supports the effectiveness of such traffic-calming measures".

• London's first 20mph zone was created in New Malden's Groves area in 1991, followed by parts of Tolworth in 1995.



Mr Dahlia creates his last flower display

his annual floral display reached its latesummer peak.

Robert Hedley, whose splash of colour at the corner of St Phillips Road and St James' Road was one of the town's great talking points, was 63. In the days after his death, the blooms seemed to be hanging their heads in sorrow, as if mourning the loss of their devoted custodian.

Born in Salford on February 20 1951, Robert moved south when he was 11. At 13 he had an accident at school, resulting in concussion and recurrent epileptic attacks.

Summer holidays were spent in Manchester, at the home of his uncle Len, a keen gardener. It was where Robert fell in love with dahlias, assisting Len to create an eye-catching frontgarden display; a forerunner of things to come.

As Robert's parents had split up when he was young, Len (who was a stage magician performing as Len Marvel) became a father figure, passing on the gift of theatre and showmanship which was later to find a home in the flowerbeds of Surbiton.

Uncle Len died at 93, a fortnight before Robert's own death. Robert attended Len's funeral, making a floral wreath for the coffin which read 'My Dad'.

Robert left school at 15. A Saturday job in a garden centre led to work at a Ewell nursery, but at 17 he was apprenticed to a joinery firm. A wooden scout hut

he built in Lower Morden is in use to this day. After meeting and marrying Maureen, he moved to Streatham and joined forces with another uncle, Jamie, to learn painting and

decorating. He began building house extensions for customers in Kingston and Surbiton. The family expanded with the arrival of Darren, Annette and Charles, and they moved

to a run-down house in King Charles Road, which Robert renovated. Eventually his property empire included the mansion block in St James' Road where the dahlias bloomed, and the former Corky's bar in

Claremont Road, now Vinoteque. After Robert and Maureen divorced, Robert remarried... but the relationship with his Thai wife didn't work out, and there was a second divorce.

Twelve years ago he met another Thai woman, Alisa Klinsu Khon, and they lived in

the garden flat by the flowerbeds with Alisa's 13-year-old daughter Catherine, a promising student at Hollyfield School.

Thailand became Robert's second home. His favourite spot was Surin, a five-hour drive northeast of Bangkok, which hosts an annual elephant round-up.

But it was his passion for dahlias, watered by a Heath Robinson irrigation system, that made him a familiar figure in Surbiton. He was



never happier than when pruning his flowers, in the raised wooden beds which he also built.

At the height of the colourful display, a notice appeared among the blooms, urging people to admire them rather than nick them! Robert specialised in the large-headed pom-poms, rather than pinwheel types, though he had an affection for all dahlias, drawing inspiration from the gardens of National Trust properties, and the Hampton Court Flower Show

"It is extremely comforting to know my dad's wonderful creation was appreciated by so many," son Darren told The Good Life. "He put his heart and soul into it and the dahlias gave him great pleasure."

Robert, who enjoyed fishing and organised firework displays in St James' Road, was given a woodland burial near Guildford; his own dahlias placed beside him. **Tim Harrison**

...as I was only saying

news

A new club has launched, to help Surbitonians become more confident and skilled public speakers.

Meeting fortnightly at the YMCA in Victoria Road, the Surbiton Speakers Club is organised by Charlie Warshawski, as a part of the not-for-profit Toastmasters International.

The aim is to help people fearlessly stand up in front of an audience and deliver presentations and speeches.

People are encouraged to speak off the cuff, and are given tips on delivering prepared talks via supportive feedback.

"Members come from a wide range of backgrounds; from teachers to students, business leaders to council employees," said Charlie. "Your current skill level doesn't matter; all that does is an interest in improving your speaking skills."

Details at www. meetup.com/Surbiton-Toastmasters-Meetup/



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Gardening tips by Janice Cripps

Don't fence me in

arden designers often talk about the borrowed View'; the way to tie in your garden design with what can already be viewed beyond your fence. If this is done well, the plants in your garden merge seamlessly with those beyond, creating a single stunning vista.

This is perfect if you live in the countryside surrounded by fields and trees. But in town it is more likely you would prefer to block some views rather than borrow

There are myriad ways to create privacy, but the first step is to consider how to define your garden boundary, and what material to use

The expensive option is to construct your garden boundary using stone or brick. There are numerous advantages here as a well-built wall is attractive, strong and long-lasting, and makes a positive immediate contribution to the garden and environment as a whole. So if you are staying in your home for a long time it might be worth the investment.

For a contemporary look, walls made using concrete blocks with a rendered and painted finish are a popular choice, but for most of us, expense dictates we 'make do' with timber fencing.
There are many different

styles of timber fencing such as woven hurdles in hazel or willow, bamboo screens and various post and rail systems. Horizontally slatted timber

panels are a welcome change from traditional closeboard fencing and give a contemporary, stylish appearance which sits well with the organic nature of plants.

Most timber panels are pressuretreated softwood, but pricier hardwoods last much longer. Steer clear of those nasty orange panels, and buy the best you can afford. After all, if you are spending hundreds of pounds on plants, you ought to give them a lasting and effective backdrop.

One of my favourite options for a boundary is hedging - cheap, easy to maintain and always looks good. Erect a simple wire mesh fence to fix the boundary line if necessary, and allow the hedge to grow through and eventually conceal the fence itself.

Hedging plants can be bought in varying sizes. For those wanting instant impact, you can buy 'instant impact' hedges as much as 2m high.

There is a lot of choice too; evergreen hedges like holly and laurel, flowering hedges like viburnum and hawthorn, hedges with colourful foliage or native hedging to attract wildlife.

If you have heavy soil, deciduous hornbeam with its crimped bright green leaves is an excellent choice. However my favourite is evergreen yew which, unlike hideous leylandii, is easy to maintain, can be regenerated from old wood and has a much longer lifespan.

There is no legal height limit for hedges and so theoretically you can let them grow as high as you like. This is not necessarily desirable.

Apart from overshadowing your neighbour's garden and causing annoyance, a solid hedge can sometimes be quite overpowering and detract from your garden as a whole.

From a design point of view you need to decide whether you want to emphasise, embrace or disguise your boundaries. This is where planting in general can help.

A mass of plants in front of the boundary baffles the eye and disguises it.

Bold planting with vertical emphasis or interesting foliage creates interest, and again distracts the eye from the boundary.

Where space is tight and a height is required, pleached hedging or a 'hedge on stilts' might be the answer. Again, these can be bought ready-made, and offer instant impact.

Climbers can soften and unify the boundaries, particularly when a single species is used more than once.

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



A horizontal slatted fence

Undergraduate Open Event

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Trial of strength

Waitrose in Claremont Road has removed the espresso option from its free coffee machine because too many people were sneakily adding extra shots to beef up their brews.

Flats for garage? Brighton Road's former Esso garage

Brighton Road's former Esso garage is to turn into housing. Tooting developer IndigoScott is levelling the site and digging up the subterranean petrol reservoirs. The council anticipates a bid for flats. Motorists' refuelling options are now just four.

Bespoke bikes

Surbiton Cycles in St Mark's Hill has reinvented itself as Bella Velo; aimed at female customers. Manager Peter Robson's ethos is to focus exclusively on women cyclists, rather than be a shop 'with a token women's section'. The Portsmouth Road marina branch still stocks bikes for all.

Tolworth sparkle

Tolworth Broadway will glitter this Christmas, with businesses making a festive effort at 5pm on Friday December 5. "We want to make the Broadway sparkle," said Andrea Tucker of the Broadway Community Group. Prizes for best shop window.

Care for a refill?

If you feel Surbiton has enough coffee shops, read the next three words sitting down. Another is opening. Mohiden Dardouk's DeliCafe in Victoria Road has closed, to be replaced by an Italian espresso bar. Mo now plans to sell his falafel in Kingston Market Place.

The one to bleat Despite fierce competition, the Lamb

Despite fierce competition, the Lamb in Surbiton is 2014 pub of the year. Adam and Liz Lewis were voted top in all of Kingston, Elmbridge and Epsom by the local branch of the Campaign for Real Ale. "We're chuffed," said a delighted Liz.

Tapes to taps

The old Blockbuster video shop in Brighton Road is to become Acqua Kitchens, stocking only Germanmade units. The firm also has a branch in Burlington Road, New Malden. Director Owais Ali told the Good Life that Monday January 5 had been pencilled in to open.

Sale at St Mark's

Mums sell to mums at a nearly new sale at St Mark's church hall, St Mark's Hill, on December 6, 2-4pm. Organiser Janine Turland promises stalls of quality clothes, toys and items, many making ideal Christmas gifts. Up to 200 buyers turn up. Twofor-one vouchers and stall details at www.mum2mummarket.co.uk

Research paper

Research your neighbourhood. The borough archive (in the throes of a long-term move to the Guildhall) is temporarily at Surbiton Library, Ewell Road, every Tuesday, 9.30am-7pm, until December 23. Maps, books, newspapers, photos and street directories available to peruse.

Grotto will open

Our Lady Immaculate School's Christmas bazaar in Tolworth is 1-4pm on Saturday November 29. Raffle, face-painting, Santa's grotto, cakes, cafe, bottle tombola. £1 adults, 50p OAPs, children free.

Lighting up time

Surbiton's Christmas lights are switched on at 5pm on November 27 in the Surbiton station forecourt, before the mayor leads people to a pop-up market in Brighton Road.

Volunteer rescue

When guest speaker Lady Teviot clean forgot she was meant to be at Surbiton Historical Society in October, four volunteers gave off-the-cuff talks. David Bowell (town guide), Ann Glover (Hampton Wick), Margaret Mitchell (the Romans), and Bob Bushell (scouting) "saved the evening", said society secretary Marilyn Jennings.



A time of remembrance

A minute's silence was observed by more than 1,100 who thronged Surbiton's war memorial on Remembrance Sunday.

attendance I've ever seen," said former mayor Douglas Reynolds.

Another past mayor, Peter Gray, said: "I've been coming to these services for 40 years... and it's never rained!" MP Ed Davey also

commented on the

"tremendous crowd"
as bright sunlight
illuminated the ceremony
in Ewell Road. The Rev
Bonni-Belle Pickard of
Surbiton Hill Methodist
Church officiated.



Greenway to gain a new crossing

year to the day after Tolworth's Greenway opened, a pedestrian-controlled crossing is to be added... on the precise spot where one used to be.

A sum of £110,000 has been allocated. After animated discussion at this month's Surbiton neighbourhood committee, it was agreed to build the crossing on the site of the previous one, near the M&S car park entrance.

The old crossing vanished when the steel barrier which divided the road was replaced with a brightly painted central pavement. Further tweaks are also planned following consultation with residents. Stand by for better disabled access, clearer signs, replanting dead Italian cypress trees, levelling the slope on parking bays and adding 'Look Left' and 'Look right' road markings.

For the present, nothing is being done to improve the wooden block benches along Tolworth Broadway, even though councillors concede these were 'poorly designed'.

The moves follow an impassioned plea to councillors from resident Hazel Summers, who said current pedestrian provision was "useless". She asked: "Motorists haven't a clue what the [raised green] crossings are for; why can't we have a proper crossing?"



The 'care gap' in Surbiton is being mended by Brighter Care, set up by Martyn Bridger to help people live independently at home. Services from the Weston Green carers include shopping, transport and meals.

Official figures show 40 per cent of the

UK's two million needy older people cannot call on family help. "People are less likely to have immediate family close by to provide care, and we have responded by setting up this service," he said. Costs are on a sliding scale. Details at www.brightercare.co.uk

Volunteer visits combat loneliness



Lionel looks forward to visits from befriender Ayesha

Cutting energy bills

Residents are saving money on their energy bills with the help of charity South West London Environment Network.

A community project run in partnership with Sunray and Egmont Residents' Association in Tolworth and funded by the UK Power Networks charitable foundation, it provides households with a home energy check carried out by volunteer assessors.

As well as supplying free monitors, light bulbs and energy-saving equipment, the volunteers share tips on saving electricity and gas without getting chilly. Forty-five households have already benefited.

For a home energy check, email Clive Messenger on clive.messenger@blueyonder. co.uk or call 020 8546 5471 or 07929 899276. Christmas can be lonely for elderly people living alone, but a day centre is tackling the issue via volunteer befriending.

Run from Alfriston in Berrylands Road, the service recognises that older people can feel isolated in their homes.

The service is free, sending trained people to visit senior citizens to offer companionship... with care taken to match befriender and beneficiary.

"Our volunteers feel passionate about what they do and have formed rewarding relationships with the people they visit," said centre manager Diane Double. "We are always looking for new volunteers, and older people who might benefit."

Čall 020 8399 4289.

Overheard in Pickled Pantry

The little boy greeted his grandmother with a hug. "I'm so happy to see you, grandma," he said. "Now maybe Daddy will do the trick he has been promising us." She was curious. "What trick's that, my dear?" she asked. The boy replied: "Daddy told Mummy he'd climb the walls if you came to visit us again."



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The curious story of

a problem surfaced in ■Surbiton. The Great War was three months old. Nearly 100,000 British servicemen were fighting in France, with fresh troops arriving daily.

A propaganda offensive had begun at home, aimed at stoking up hatred of the Hun and persuading volunteers to come forward... and 11 households in Surbiton were feeling rather uncomfortable.

By a historic quirk of streetnaming, they lived in German Place. The tiny street ran midway between Ewell Road and King Charles Road, and consisted of a row of brick cottages (much like nearby Richmond Grove), constructed in 1878 by builder Sam Hobill, who also sat as a councillor, representing Hook and Southborough ward on Surbiton district council. He lived three-quarters of a mile away, in Thornhill Road.

The murmurings began in the autumn of 1914 in the area's pubs - notably The Angel and

the Paragon Arms. With Britain at war with Germany, how was it right to have a German Place?

By Christmas, the murmurings had become a clamour.

No one in German Place wanted to keep the name.

Sam Hobill spoke up. He had not only built the cottages, he'd also picked the name, 36 years

His explanation came as a surprise. "I named [the road] myself in memory of very happy times I had for many years spent in a certain home in German Place, Marine Parade, Brighton," he declared. That road had been named after a German man who built its sturdy four-storey lodging houses in the 1780s. Did Sam simply holiday there, 20 years before the pier was built? Or was it, perhaps, the location of an apartment belonging to a young lady for whom he had a soft spot?

Whatever the connection, Sam was indignant about any suggestion that he was anything

GERMAN PL

but patriotic. "There is nothing German about my property!" he harrumphed, with the fervour of a modern UKIP activist, in response to the whispering campaign. "It was built by trueborn Englishmen with British materials and money.

But the issue wouldn't go away. In January 1915, Sam Hobill conceded defeat and made a formal request to Surbiton district council's highways committee to change the name.

Councillors proposed renaming it after its creator. The Comet reported: Mr Hobill modestly remarked that he did not quite approve of the new name, but it was a very good old Northamptonshire name and he would not raise any serious objection to it (laughter).

As Surbiton debated what to

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Gressingham duck or Scottish salmon.

do about its German Place, a parallel argument was happening 50 miles away. Surbiton's German Place became Hobill Walk, while Brighton Council voted unanimously to change its to Madeira Place - the name it has

Plotting the location of our old German Place is tricky as the Alpha Road estate redrew the map. The original terrace was demolished and replaced in the 1960s. There is still a Hobill Walk, but it snakes north to south, while the old one ran west to east. Thanks to local history officer Amy Graham, the Good Life has pinpointed it to the garage of the present-day 49 Howard Road!

Behind it is a stretch of modern-day Hobill Walk (numbers 42-54) which exactly mirrors the original German Place Tim Harrison

minimum of 21 days, are very

'Last year's 'in thing' was

shoulder of pork, and it's

become the fashionable cut

in restaurants," said Kevin

Jennings. "It's easy to slow-

choices, as are chipolatas,

a rich variety of bangers, all

made on the premises.

then shred with tongs.

cook at a low heat in the oven,

bacon and sausage meat, and

Gammons are also favourite

As Sainsbury's opens another 'local' in Ewell Road, the third in the area in a year, speculation is rife that the chain is planning one more in Raeburn Avenue, near the old lagoon site. Meanwhile the former police car pound at the Ewell Road end of Ellerton Road may get a Tesco Metro as part of a scheme including 23 flats.

Closing in on Sid

The Good Life's plea for information about a First World War volunteer has yielded results. Sidney Northfield never returned from Flanders. His widow sent the only photo of her late husband in uniform to the council, and it was lost for a century, until it turned up in a file. Researcher Robin Gill has now discovered Sid's closest relatives were all born in Edmonton. Great nephew Ian, a grandchild of Sid's brother Alf, was born in 1948, and married in Islington in 1978.



Surbiton's African Vision Malawi charity marked its impending 10th birthday by commissioning festive card ideas from Kingston Art College students. Five designs were picked, including these brightly dressed women by Malaika Hardy-Fraser, evoking three wise men. "I was really surprised by the quality of the entries," said the charity's Heather Palmer. Cards are £2.50 for five via

www.africanvision.org.uk

New Woodcraft

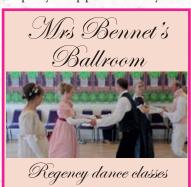
Tolworth's Woodcraft Folk group has relaunched. Aimed at over sixes, the group teaches equality, co-operation and love for the planet via fun, games and activity. Leader Andy Marshall said: "We encourage children of any race, gender, culture or ability to learn about the outdoor world, play together and make friends." Meetings on Thursdays, 6pm, at the Quaker Centre, Fairfield East, Kingston.

ght school shift

Surbiton houses almost all borough adult education after the service left the North Kingston Centre. Newent House, a former day centre in Browns Road, and the King Charles Centre, Hollyfield Road, serve 3,000 learners, some seeking fresh skills, others trying new hobbies. A new head of service, Sam Burgess, is at the reins, with prices frozen at last year's levels. Recent involvement in the Later Life Festival proved learning doesn't stop with formal schooling. More at www. kingston.gov.uk/adulteducation

Library fines rise

Charges and fines go up at Surbiton and Tolworth libraries on April 1. Hiring a new DVD rises 25p to £3; box sets go from £3.50 to £4 a week, and fines for books returned late rise a penny to 26p per overdue day.



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German Place used to start by the bins and black car at 49 Howard Road

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Beware! Evil-looking cat! Be afraid. This animal is on the

urbiton's relaxed fine dining restaurant Langleys is offering two

parmigiana as alternatives to the Norfolk turkey, braised lamb shank,

Also on the festive menu of the Ewell Road eatery is a starter of

Christmas Day and New Year's Eve, with prices starting at £25. Call

020 8390 7564 or visit www.langleysrestaurant.co.uk

menu, with a butternut squash risotto and an aubergine

vegetarian options among the six main courses on its Christmas

Jennings for choice cuts

popular too.

loose in Surbiton. The picture was the U10s winner in a drawing contest run by Mr Monty's Fuss and Feed, the service which looks after cats at home while owners are away. Leo Cox's prize was a set of art materials. "Turns out his name's Blackie, and he's not evil at all," said judge Elaine Swift. The U16s winner was Georgina Standerwick. Monty's did a survey of Surbiton cat names, to find the most exotic in the area. The winner? Caramelo!



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feature

Welcome

Ornamental trees in Glenbuck Road



A well-wiped welcome in The Ridings



Flowery home in St James' Road



A nautical salute in Selsdon Close



Hello ducky. A parade in Kingsdowne Road



Three playful pups in Berrylands Road



Contagion in Queen's Drive



Ladybird invasion in The Ridings



As surreal as doormats get. Arlington Road boasts 'Bottom line at the end of the day'



The spots are spreading... to Selsdon Close



Mat finish

Tou can usually expect a welcome in Surbiton. We're a hospitable lot... unless you gum up our letterboxes with pizza leaflets, or try to sell us packs of dusters in the middle of the Great British Bake-Off final.

Judging by the excessive wear to some doormats, the natives have been making visitors welcome for a long time. As well as preventing dirt entering our pristine homes,

mats personalise doorways... especially in the doormat's heartland; the between-the-wars semis of Berrylands. From hard-wearing coconut-fibre coir matting to rigid

metallic grids, from pressed plastic to stencilled roofing felt, our mats are as individual as we are.

immense, with

hardware shops, garden centres and online shops competing to offer twists on familiar themes. Animals are popular. You can

buy a Beware

of the Dog mat with one corner pre-chewed.

Other options? Wrong Address – Nobody Here Of That Name; Nice Underwear; Hope

You Brought Beer;

The Neighbours

received; Come

come right in; and

the droll 'I am not

an ominous dead mouse lying next

Actually, I reckon I have seen the world's oldest welcome

mat. On a trip to Pompeii in

word 'Have' Latin for 'Hail

the 70s I saw the

to you!' - set in mosaic on one stone threshold. At 2,000 years, it's even older than Surbiton's wellworn specimens.

Tim Harrison

a doormat'. Delivering last month's Good Life, I came across 'Beware of the Cat' in The Crescent, with

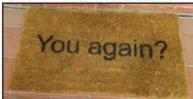
back with a warrant; Ask not for whom the dog barks, it barks for thee; This house is maintained entirely for the comfort of the dog; Haunted...

Have Better Stuff; Please stay on the mat; Your visit is important to us; Your knock will be answered in the order in which it was

Sober and subdued or vivid and dramatic, the variety is



Wellies on the mat in Arlington Road



A sarcastic question in Ditton Road



Yes, deer, A stag on duty in Chiltern Drive



Three goggle-eved owls in Pine Gardens





A pale welcome in Berrylands



Faded flowers in Queen's Drive





A cat-shaped mat in Berrylands Road



A trio of cats in Arlington Road



Unusual two-way messages, The Ridings



One crazy dog greets you in The Ridge



A festive plum pud in Pine Walk







When mats collide; overlap in Ewell Road



Paw prints in Arlington Road







A wrought iron welcome in The Ridings



las van Gogh moved to Raeburn Avenue?



Curious primitive symbols, Selsdon Close



Calmness in Grand Avenue



No place like home in Pine Gardens



A barcode to scan in Raeburn Avenue

your clothes aren't becoming to you, they should be coming to us

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Claremont Fan Court School

No porridge in the Clink

It's where naughty Surbitonians are sent, but Brixton Prison now also houses a restaurant, open to the public. The Clink is a 'behind-bars' eatery, training serving prisoners, and helping them into catering jobs on release.

As it's Category C (the Krays were once resident), rules are strict. Most restaurants take your mobile number when you book. This one takes the phone itself!

Keys, SIMs, cameras, laptops, chewing gum, lip balm, aftershave and emery boards must be left outside, in lockers.

You also have to submit your name and date of birth in advance, and take your passport as ID. But once in, it's fascinating, and Brixton's Clink makes a decent fist at creating a high-end dining experience.

The raw materials are good. Eggs are free-range from a clutch of Rhode Island Reds maintained by prisoners at HMP Send. Fruit, veg, herbs and salads are grown in prison-yard polytunnels.

The Clink is in the hexagonal Regency Roundhouse, the former prison governor's home, built in 1819 and topped with



a giant clock counting away inmates' sentences. Inside, floors are pale stone while the brown flecked walls are dotted with prison art, including an A3-size pencil sketch of Nelson Mandela and a model of the Eiffel Tower made from 1,500 matchsticks by an old lifer.

Purple circular suspended lights hang from the ceiling like Star Trek transporters.

The loos are ultra-modern, with full disabled access. What would the first governor, who moved in at the time of mad King George III, have made of a Dyson airblade hand dryer?

Spotlessly clean glasses and fan-shaped paper napkins sit on the glass tabletops, but there's no wine list as alcohol is banned. I settled for ginger and lemongrass cordial.

Starters included 'deconstructed chicken Caesar salad', smoked apple and blue cheese mousse, and soup with sour dough bread (yeast is banned as inmates might use it to make hooch). I had mackerel pate with oyster mayo, garnished with purple sprouting leaves. The finely chopped onion was nicely balanced with the raw fish.

Main courses included pan-seared cod loin with pea crust and lardons on a bed of samphire, but you could also go for roast guinea fowl or beetroot and feta risotto. Two vegetarian options out of six choices was a better ratio than many places offer.

My tea-smoked duck and watercress salad with compressed pear earned six out of 10. Battling cold rare roast duck is tough with plastic cutlery, even if the Stockport-



made polycarbonate forks cost 60p apiece. Knives are tougher than M&S cutlery, but they don't cut particularly well. The compressed pear slices were too al dente.

However, my plate was empty at the end, and there's no denying the menu is bold. The waiters were well turned-out in black trainers, grey trousers and dark blue collarless shirts. Shaved heads and tattoos abound. These are not waiters you would argue with (which might explain the green panic alarm buttons on the walls).

Puds included fruit and ice cream, and chocolate tart, but I went for cheese, on a hefty marble disc, with fig chutney.

The 120-cover Clink aims to smooth the

path to reintegration with the outside world, and improve employment prospects. As they win trust, prisoners start a day-release programme, working by day then returning to Brixton jail at night.

"I'd like to get my own cafe or bistro; learn to be a chef. It's better to work for yourself," one said. He has 18 months to go, but the restaurant gives him renewed purpose. "I like it," he said. "Anything to make the time go quicker!"

My bill was a fair £27.36. The Clink sells souvenir mugs, aprons and prisoner poetry books. Few London restaurants offer such memorable mementos. Book at www. theclinkrestaurant.com

Tim Harrison

Do your Xmas shopping right here!

If you thought socks were a dull cop-out of a gift, think again. At first glance these fun pairs look the same, but they're actually subtly different. Shoes at Last in Maple Road sells these distinctive pairs in several sizes at £15.

It's the perfect way to point out that you need go no further than Surbiton's wonderful independent traders to shop this Christmas.

As well as trawling the high-street gift shops (Hoi Polloi etc) and the bargain-basement pound shops, there are scores of alternatives on your doorstep.

Try the Beaconsfield Road-based Mr Monty's feline art emporium for cat-themed prints, paintings, glass, textiles and embroidery. Visit www. mrmontysfussandfeed.co.uk and follow the links. The Surbiton farmers' market on December 20

The Surbiton farmers' market on December 20 has foodie gifts (olive oil, pickles and preserves, chocolates) and some divine items on the Bee Inspired stall, with Thames Ditton-made candles, soaps, balms and creams.

Before that, there's the Made in Surbiton Christmas craft fair at The Lamb in Brighton Road on Sunday December 14 from 3-7pm; a pop-up market in the pub and garden which gives local run-from-home businesses a seasonal shop window.

And if you still need to buy things after that, how

about Gumus in Victoria Road; a treasure trove of exquisite designer sterling silver jewellery, much of it discounted by up to 20% in the run up to Christmas.

For something different, pop into the Ewell Road patisserie Carmella for ropes of vividly coloured liquorice, or a mixed box of Iranian-style sweets.

Another worthwhile Surbiton website – based in the artistic powerhouse that is Beaconsfield Road – is Gemma Whates' www.allbymama.com, a selection of gifts made by mums. "The idea was hatched while I was on maternity leave," she said. Several participating mums are Surbiton-based, with gifts including coasters, cushions, lampshades and personalised prints.

Vintage clothing by Surbiton's Raspberry B Boutique is stocked in Hoi Polloi; an unusual example of a shop co-operating with a web-based operation.

Alternatively, pamper the one you love with a voucher to spend at Surbiton's top beauty salon, The Beauty Room at 91 Maple Road. You can order online at www.thebeautyroomsurbiton.co.uk

Michael's Shoes in Claremont Road has unusual gift ideas, including leather wallets and wooden shoe trees, while local artist Martin Alton's quirky sketches of Surbiton buildings are available in print form at Pickled Pantry, St Mark's Hill.



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Adoption effort pooled

The adoption service covering Surbiton has been merged into an operation spanning the boroughs of Kingston, Richmond, Sutton and Merton.

The South West London Adoption Consortium's new website, launched to great fanfare with a 'Magic Roundabout' image, is the initial point of contact for would-be adopters. Pooling resources between four boroughs gives economy of scale and lets the former stand-alone services share expertise.

Consortium chair Mac Heath told The Good Life that learning from others' experience was vital. He said that www. southwestlondonadoption.org.uk was an intuitive website designed to be viewed on different devices, including phones.

Dr Heath said: "Our biggest achievement is what's going on behind the website; about matching the right adopter to the right child."

Website designer Allan Bingham-French said 'perfect family' images had been avoided. "The aim has been to attract a wider base of people to be adoptive parents," he said.

Mood 'positive' says store

The Bank of England's chief economist says the economy is 'writhing in agony and ecstasy', but Surbiton's Waitrose has never been busier. Tills in the Claremont Road supermarket open more than 30,000 times a week, making the branch one of the top in the UK.

The profile of customers evolves through the day, from commuters in the morning to 'more mature' shoppers later on.

"On Sunday mornings, when we unlock the doors, we often see the same faces waiting outside to come in to browse," admitted manager Mark Stevens, in an intriguing insight into local shopping habits. In the year and a half since he took over, he has grown to appreciate the town and enjoy its vibrant shop scene and stimulating population mix.

"It's quite a big place, with many socio-economic levels, yet it pulls together as a community," he said, pointing to the annual festival as an example of a town which knows how to enjoy itself. "Some parts are wealthy, some less so, but everyone gets together and gets stuck in; there is a real community feel to Surbiton."

How is the town doing, economically? "We're happy with how we're doing," he said. "I get the sense from customers that they can see the economy moving forward a bit; the mood is positive."

Reading tips

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But a love of reading doesn't always come naturally. Start reading to your children young, and make it part of your family routine. Ensure enjoyment of the story is different from expecting them to decode words. Read books which are too hard for them to read alone, but gives access to wonderful stories and words. Reading aloud is a great way to motivate readers, and a wonderful family activity, even as your kids get older.

- Make it regular. Bedtime is obvious, but some kids get too tired, so try after dinner or straight after school.
- Do the voices. Children love funny voices and accents -
- even if you think they're rubbish! It brings the story alive.

 Make it interactive. Ask 'What do you think's going to
- happen?' 'Was that a sensible thing to do?'

 Leave them wanting more. Driving kids mad by stopping at the most exciting part of a story or refusing to read the next chapter feels mean. It works though!
- Cut the stress. Never use reading as a bargaining tool.
 Even if you've had a stressful day or tricky behaviour, don't withdraw the story. It's always a calming, positive way to end the day. More at www.numberworksnwords.co.uk



PROVE IT.

Tartuffe ticket news

It's the last chance to see Tartuffe at Surbiton's cornerHOUSE. The final show is on November 22 at 7.45pm. Moliere's play, the arts centre's first in-house show in years, is a comedy about religious hypocrisy. Tanju Duncan directs. Tickets £8 (£6 concs) from www.ticketsource. co.uk/event/70031 or on the door.

Eddie's in town

The rafters will shake at Ewell Road's Royal Oak on Friday November 28. Eddie and the Redheads perform their energetic set of rock anthems from 8.30pm. Free entry.

Grant for concerts

Connaught Opera, which performs for elderly people in care, has been given a £680 grant by Surbiton's neighbourhood committee to stage Bless 'Em All, on a First World War theme, at the Royal Star & Garter Home and Alfriston day centre.

Monthly art group

If you're keen on art, join the Surbiton Arts Group. It meets monthly at Ewell Road's library annexe. Evening meetings (8-10pm) typically include talks and workshops by successful artists, and there are exhibitions in spring and autumn. The meeting on December 8, with mulled wine and nibbles, includes an auction of art items, materials and books. More information on 020 8397 1050.

Seasonal concert

The Thames concert season at St Andrew's church - a building likened to Wigmore Hall in terms of acoustic quality - runs until February. After artistic director Benjamin Costello welcomes jazz pianist Ian Shaw to headline the concert on Saturday November 22 (£15 on the door, 7.30pm), attention turns to a programme of seasonal music - including Humperdinck's Overture to Hansel and Gretel - from the Thames Youth Orchestra and Thames Youth Choir on Saturday December 20 at 7.30pm. Tickets are discounted in advance on www.ticketweb. co.uk, or visit www.thamesconcerts.com for more information on the season.





Mark will mind yo

ebrett's has updated its etiquette guide to include advice about eating on buses, but Surbiton writer Mark Leigh, pictured, has gone one better.

How To Chat Someone Up At A Funeral (and other awkward social situations) is Mark's 50th book – an achievement which means he joins a rarefied club.

The fact that 48-year-old Mark, who lives off Ditton Hill, writes in spare time from his marketing job makes it more amazing.

His new manual of manners covers all conceivable non-essential situations: the correct way to write a ransom note; how to remove an archbishop's blood from a hotel carpet; what to do if you block the toilet

at someone else's house; how to behave at an Amish party; how to respond if you discover your girlfriend is a serial killer.

T've been accumulating books on etiquette for a long time," Mark admitted.
"The advice in my book is based on fact, even if the situations are a bit bizarre."

If, for instance, you encounter a mountain lion during a dinner party, you should hold your jacket open, to make you appear larger than you are.

Mark's next project is a book written from the point of view of his cocker spaniel Max; life from a pet's perspective. His current book is published by John Blake at Tim Harrison

Shirley you cannot be serious

Shirley Holmes and the Sound of the Basket Wheels, the cornerHOUSE's 27th panto, is a gripping, if unconventional, mystery.

The cross-dressing detective, and his bumbling sidekick Dr Whatnot, are called in after the hapless plodders of Tolorth D'Arcy CID come up short. Set in Victorian London, where the cabbies are hansom but everyone else leaves a lot to be desired, it has an original musical score, but gives a fresh airing to

more old puns than you could shake a calabash at. The show supports charity African Vision Malawi, and runs Tues, January 27-Sat, January 31. 7.45pm, with a 4pm Saturday matinee. £8 (£6 concs). This picture, by Jon Constant, shows Richard Williams as Shirley with (left) Elani Sherwood eyeing things up, and Amelia Carter. Tickets at www.ticketsource.

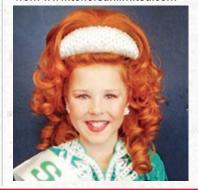
co.uk/event/72195 Isobel is the dancing queen

Eleven-year-old Surbiton dancer Isobel Fairclough, below, performs alongside Tenors Unlimited at a concert on Saturday, December 13.

A Year 7 Hinchley Wood School pupil, she was U9 2012 Southern England Irish dance champion, and was second in 2013's European tournament in Spain. She competes for the 2014 world title; a feat made the more remarkable as she has cystic fibrosis, and spells in hospital inevitably disrupt preparations. Last year, she was flagbearer at the world event's opening ceremony... while on crutches.

"Dancing is my passion," said Isobel. "If you dream it, you can do it." She is a pupil of Lauren Stapleton, 33, who has run the Kent Academy of Irish Dancing in Hook Rise South, Tolworth, for five years, and was a principal dancer in Michael Flatley's Lord of the Dance show for a decade. Isobel joins Tenors Unlimited at St

Andrew's, Cobham, to benefit Cystic Fibrosis Trust. 7pm. Tickets from www.tenorsunlimited.com



Dodgers hang their first painting show

Consider yourself a mate of the Artful Dodgers. The amateur art group exhibit together for the first time in December under the show title Local Colour. Founder lan Williamson said: "The group met several years ago at an inspirational art class at the Malden Centre. During the summer term, the tutor encouraged the class out of the studio and into the great outdoors."

The group meets on Saturday mornings, en plein air (weather permitting). Newcomers always welcome.

The show at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, runs December 1-January 4, after Mariana Willard's current exhibition ends. Dodgers' gala evening: 7pm, December 2. Sixty pictures for sale (from £20). Learn more about the group by emailing ArtfulDodgersArt@gmail.com



Thames view by Matthew Sewell

100 not out

The cornerHOUSE film club's 100th member, Jane Whittaker from Long Ditton, was followed by the 101st... her husband, Mark. That's them in the middle of the picture. They enjoyed two Welsh-themed movies, How Green Was My Valley and Patagonia. "People appreciate the chance to enjoy cinema of all types as it was meant to be seen, on the big screen," said Barry Rocard. Coming up, Gallipoli, 8 Women and the Soviet classics Battleship Potemkin and Alexander Nevsky. The club licence restricts dates and times to members. Fee: £10 per vear. Details: www. thecornerhouse.org

Jamming

The Jammed, a polished tribute band, play mod classics at the Black Lion pub at the Maple Road/Brighton Road junction on the evening of Saturday November 29. Entry is free.

Truce night

A concert marking the 1914 First World War Christmas truce is being staged at St Andrew's church in Maple Road on Saturday December 13 at 7.30pm. Kingston Choral Society perform. Tickets: 020 8977 4801.

Your Christmas menu is sorted



Good neighbours: Steve Crawley and Nuala Farruggia at Hinchley Wood

The artisan bakery II Forno and next-door butcher's Stephen's are two reasons why Hinchley Wood's parade is so popular. Both are open up to Christmas Eve with a host of tempting choices.

At Stephen's, you can order free-range turkeys now, plus home-made pigs in blankets, and sausage varieties including pork and caramelised onions. Steve Crawley can also order more exotic meat and game, from llama to ostrich, elk to frogs' legs, zebra to crocodile.

At II Forno, no artificial sweeteners, colour or preservatives are used. "Just fine ingredients, and love," said Nuala Farruggia, who bakes dairy and egg-free scones, buns and doughnuts, and does a gluten-free range. Seasonal special is panettone, but it's the superb loaves that bring customers back week after week.

The pizza slices attract a hungry lunchtime trade. Stephen's and Il Forno; good reasons to pause in Hinchley Wood.

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Hong Kong gone

eople of Surbiton, we are in the midst of the greatest disaster ever to befall our fair suburb. Catastrophes of this nature are rarely seen in a lifetime. We are living a tragedy that even Shakespeare would have deemed too horrible.

Hong Kong House has closed. The Brighton Road takeaway, by the Lamb, which provided Surbitonians with scrumptious Chinese fare for over 15 years, has packed up and left. The family owners retired; the last prawn toast was fried; the last drop of black bean sauce squeezed from the

bottle; the lights turned out. From my fairly regular position at the bar of the Black Lion, I have not seen such human sorrow at a single event since the time the pub ran out of Young's.

I have watched grown men rub their hands together with glee at the prospect of postbeer salt and pepper ribs and shredded duck, then seen their little faces drop as they remember the crushing truth. I have watched them sigh wistfully over an old crumpled menu found in someone's back pocket; I have overheard conversations reminiscent of an emergency summit in the face of a universal cataclysm.

I must admit to only having sampled the delights of this Surbiton institution a handful of times - although I consider the 15-dish feast I devoured with chums on Valentine's Day qualifies me as a knowledgeable patron - but every time it was a gastronomic joy. Spare ribs and squid fried with a heavenly gubbins of salt, garlic and spring onion; strips of beef



lovingly sautéed in deep plum sauce; enough prawn crackers to stuff a pillow.

All gone. Snatched from our hungry stomachs. A cruelty that is as hard to swallow as a supermarket satay chicken.

If you are thinking: 'I don't even know what Hong Kong House is,' then you are one of the lucky ones. You obviously prefer Indian food, in which case you're extremely safe. But take a moment to consider those who have lost a crucial part of their weekends.

Perhaps comfort can be taken from the news that the old Blockbuster is going to be a German kitchen showroom; where once we left a pub on a Friday night and thought 'I really fancy some sweet and

sour pork balls', we can now think 'I really fancy a breakfast bar with a laminate finish'.

Perhaps the owners of Hong Kong House will take pity on the heartbroken, and come back to spread the special fried love.

Perhaps a replacement Chinese takeaway will open at the same premises, and there shall be a seamless continuation of Surbiton's seaweed consumption.

Or perhaps my friends at the Black Lion will stop being so lazy, and walk to the Magic Wok.

Becky Mayhew





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Shouting at the radio

The 'on air' lights came on after the 8pm pips, and Surbiton High was addressing the nation. "Welcome to Any Questions," said programme chairman Jonathan Dimbleby, as 500 people, packed into the assembly rooms, settled down for lively debate. Surbiton High student Emma Appleton was chosen to ask the first question, about alternatives to the under-fire Human Rights Act.

Subsequent questions came from Jenny Davey (tax inequality), Penny Vegting (NHS), Chris Stead (Stephen Fry's drugtaking revelations) and Sue Saville (who is the greatest living Yorkshireman?)

The panellists sat on stage in political order; Labour's Emily Thornberry on the left, followed by Baroness Williams, Michael Gove and finally, on the far right as they faced the audience, UKIP's Patrick O'Flynn. Sitting on stage alongside the chairman was producer Lisa Jenkinson.

"This is Radio 4 heartland," she said before the broadcast. "We try to pick subjects that get people shouting at the

Michael Gove divided the audience. When introduced, the former education secretary (succeeded by ex-Surbiton High head girl Nicky Morgan) generated goodhumoured pantomime boos. There were a lot of teachers in the audience!

The broadcast gave an insight into Surbiton's evening entertainment habits, with the programme – an institution since October 1948 – having shoals of local fans. "I don't have a television," the teacher next to me confided. "I love the radio."

It was also impressive to see so much interest in current affairs shown by students at Surbiton High School.

It was a shame that the warm-up question never made it to air. Following David Cameron's assertion that anyone going to bed with Nigel Farage at the next general election would wake up with Ed Miliband, the panel was asked who they'd like to wake up next to in May 2015.

Shirley Williams picked Gladstone, while Emily Thornberry said she would like to wake up to a Labour majority... prompting Dimbleby to comment: "That's an awful lot of people to sleep with."

Patrick O'Flynn earned a round of applause when he said: "Mrs O'Flynn is ideal for me!'

Michael Gove confessed he went to bed with his wife, journalist Sarah Vine, but regularly woke up with the family's white Bichon Frise puppy, Snowy. "My wife's often driven out by my snoring," he admitted, adding that children Beatrice and William regularly crept under the duvet alongside the dog in the morning.

Rowan Verity co-ordinated the event

for Surbiton High.

With 1.5million listening, the broadcast was a real feather in the cap for the school. Principal Ann Haydon said: "We were very excited to be hosting Any Questions, and particularly honoured to be welcoming Baroness Shirley Williams whose political career has spanned five decades." Tim Harrison decades."

Raise a G&T to Tony

Tony Paxman, a founder of Surbiton Residents' Association and a former deputy mayor of the borough, died suddenly last month while holidaying in Cornwall. He was 81.

A resident of Effingham Road, he was born in Chelsea in February 1933, and went on to train as an engineer. He had two sons, Kirk and Gary, by his first marriage, but it was his second marriage which lasted more than 40 years. In the 1960s he met Eunice. The couple wed in 1972 and moved to Surbiton. They ran a nursing home and a garage.

A great grandfather and a Formula 1 fan, Tony was deputy mayor of the Royal borough in 1982 when Cllr Joe Wrigglesworth was mayor.

According to the Rev Phillip Johnson, who gave the eulogy at the funeral at St Mary's church, Long Ditton, on October 29, Tony was also "world famous for his gin and tonics".



Catch the last post

Luckily nobody was popping an early Christmas card in the pillar box at the junction of Ditton Hill Road and St Mary's Road, Long Ditton, as a vehicle went out of control, sliced off one of the side storage boxes, then demolished the road sign.



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A 20 Lamenty

If I'm not doing 30 He shouts things rather dirty His manners he's forgetting; It's needlessly upsetting

The sign insists it's 20 He's choking on his venti And urging me on faster; We're heading for disaster

I let him overtake. That night I lie awake And ruminate on speed; Insomnia, indeed.

Morris Thain

all the difference between sanity and madness. Help is also needed to keep in touch with the gallant advertisers ahead of each issue. and check if their advertising copy needs

tweaking or polishing... so anyone able to

assist will be embraced warmly. I'm currently producing six issues a year, so it shouldn't be a big commitment. Also, more volunteer distributors always welcome. The email address follows. **Tim Harrison**

Published by The Good Life. To tell us about a story, or to inquire about advertising, email thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com or visit www.thegoodlifesurbiton.co.uk

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