



Saturday March 21
9am-1pm
Saturday April 18
9am-1pm

Surbiton
Farmers Market

Issue 51

The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3

March 2020

I'm in the doghouse

When Dexter was fitted with a muzzle to stop him chewing everything, he simply ate it! **p5**

Two heads are better

Surbiton twins Liam, left, and Jack have made plenty of chums, thanks to a thriving local 'multiples' club. **See p3**

A remarkable new library has just opened, and the red carpet's been rolled out to Surbiton folk. **See p7**

Helping with the spadework? **See p6**

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New high street crossing?

Victoria Road looks set to get a new pedestrian crossing near the YMCA.

Surbiton's neighbourhood committee feels that a formal pedestrian crossing, controlled by lights, would be a safer option than a zebra crossing.

A group will look into it and report back.

Bus barrier threat



The council is threatening to install another hated bus-only barrier in a Surbiton street, risking the creation of scores of rat-runs down narrow surrounding roads.

"I'm shocked," said one resident of Thornhill Road, left, as The Good Life told her of the proposal for a 'bus gate' beside her home.

The last bus-only barrier was in Surbiton Crescent, near Surbiton High School. Inadequately signed, it filled the council coffers with more than £5million in fines from drivers – but is now considered a major public relations disaster.

● **Continued on p3**

Ciara fells 60ft maple

It was the sound of thunder, said Rob Higgins after this Canadian maple crashed through the roof of his parents' home. The 60ft tree sat majestically outside Paul and Ruth Higgins' house in Church Meadow, Long Ditton... until Storm Ciara. Mercifully, no one was hurt.

"It went through, and over, the roof and down the side of the house; we're at the mercy of the weather," said Rob. Tree surgeons arrived with a crane to remove the tree and tarpaulins were put in place to try to keep the water out as Storm Dennis then swept through.

The maple, one of a number of a similar age, was a sapling when the Higgins, now 83, moved in to the new-build chalet 52 years ago. A nearby cherry tree also came down in the storm, but fell on to the road.



2020

Surbiton
Farmers Market

Third Saturday 9am-1pm Maple Road

Jan 18	Feb 15	Mar 21	Apr 18
May 16	Jun 20	Jul 18	Aug 15
Sep 19	Oct 17	Nov 21	Dec 19

surbitonfarmersmarket.co.uk

Yoga helps teenage wellbeing

Yoga classes abound... but Carina de Wit focuses on teaching teenagers after she was badgered by girls she instructs in local schools.

"Teenagers suffer really bad anxiety and stress, and they asked me to set up classes outside school," said Carina, 32, of Langley Road.

"Yoga is a great preventative measure for mental health issues, and it's my mission to help out young people in our community."

Carina specialises in children's yoga, having run the Tatty Bumpkin classes in the area for the last couple of years. "I want to give teens a focus on themselves," she said. "Yoga helps them believe in themselves, so they can 'let go' and relax."



She says teenagers are under such pressure that they risk losing sight of their wellbeing. Yoga can improve teens' sleep patterns, making them happier and better able to learn. "Yoga is a self-care activity," she added. "It makes you more compassionate towards yourself, and helps create a more caring community."

It's also something Ofsted is warming to, as the schools inspectorate has moved teenage wellbeing up its agenda.

Her £10 yoga classes are at a studio by the carwash, 34 Portsmouth Road. Discounts for six. Email carinadewit1@gmail.com or call 07706 386 247.

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50 beers!

The 11th annual Hook Beer Fest is on April 24 and 25, usual venue – the scout hall in Verona Drive.

Tickets £7. There will be live music, and the pick of more than 50 ales will be complemented by 20 ciders and craft gins, at each of the three sessions. Last year, 1,000 people attended. Down the years it has raised £80,000 for charity. This year's good causes include the Princess Alice Hospice. www.hookbeerfest.org.uk

One for the a-fish-ionados

Farmers' market regulars, bereft since stallholder Kevin Oakman hung up his rod and line, are smiling again. Jack Johns of the Wild Fish Project is now a regular at Maple Road (the next is on Mar 21, after Storm Dennis forced February's cancellation).

The 34-year-old could talk the fins off a gurnard... and you may have seen him on the telly because Surbiton's new actor/fishmonger has been in Call The Midwife.

Jack studied drama at Bristol, then began helping on a fish stall between acting jobs, having learnt about seafood while working on Waitrose's fish counter as a teenager.

His best seller, when he can get it, is wild bass, but recent dreadful weather has restricted him to a mere 35 varieties of fish, when he'd usually stock 50.

He's so busy now that he's dragged his poor mum and dad out of retirement, and employs them! Top tip? Never buy a trout if it's not slippery.



He's the host with the roast!

Chef Raymond Fulton-Corrie serves up a tender joint of beef at the newly refurbished (both inside and out) Grove pub at the launch of its Host The Roast menu – where you can do the carving.

He also served a succulent leg of pork covered with crunchy crackling, a slice of which went down very well with your reporter!

The pub in Grove Road is now serving Sunday roasts with fresh veg and all the trimmings. Also on the menu is roast chicken and – further down the line – côte de boeuf and rack of lamb.

"It's like you would get at home, but without having to slave over a hot stove – or having the hassle of shopping for it, or doing the washing up afterwards," said general manager Kerry Pringle.

"It's all about sharing with family and friends. You will be hosting it. You can carve the joint yourself at the table or, if you prefer, we will do it for you." Large parties can order a choice of roasts. Order by 9pm on the Thursday for a slap-up meal on Sunday. Call 020 8399 1662 or email info@thegrovekt6.co.uk

Jane Grove

Dennis halts market

Storm Dennis, which dumped a month's worth of rain on Surbiton in a weekend, forced the cancellation of the Maple Road farmers' market for the first time in its decade-long history. One early violent gust of wind knocked over a large potted olive tree outside Cento Uno demonstrating what fate could have befallen the 26 stalls in the gale-force conditions. The next market will be on Saturday, March 21, 9am-1pm.



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the good life

Editor: Tim Harrison

Set up in 2012, the community paper for Surbiton, Tolworth, Berrylands and Long Ditton is now delivered to 11,200 homes. The Good Life appears six times a year between March and November. We're always delighted to hear from you, whether it's about editorial or advertising or joining our band of loyal volunteers who help deliver the paper. Email thegoodlifefurbiton@gmail.com



Between publications, you can keep up with Surbiton news via Instagram posts (@thegoodlifefurbiton) and through our website, where all the back issues are archived.

www.thegoodlifefurbiton.co.uk

Also available at Michael's shoe repairs, Shoes At Last, Jennings, the cornerHOUSE, Community Motors & Sear green grocers.



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Refugee flat plea

The council has asked any Surbitonian with an unoccupied self-contained two-bed flat to consider letting it for two years to a vulnerable Syrian refugee family. Kingston pays the rent.

Falklands birds

Paul Stanbury talks on South Georgia, Falklands and Antarctic birds at Surbiton's bird-watching club, Tues, Mar 17, 7.30pm, library hall, Ewell Road. Details: www.surbitonbirds.org

Swim in the rain

Ellerton Road's drains are so blocked that when it rains you could hold a swimming gala. So said resident Ernie Allen, haranguing the area's committee. Cllr Sharron Sumner backed his call for action. Investigation is promised.

Cats' kidney alert

Surbiton vet Vanessa Waite, of Vet4Life, Brighton Road, says antifreeze can lead to fatal liver failure in cats. "Due to its sweet taste, pets can drink it, or lie in it and ingest it when grooming," she said.



Singing directive

Snapper Chris Arthur, of Balacava Road, has a show of his National Theatre pictures, 1964-1994, including this one of Michael Gambon. Kingston Museum (entry free) until May 30.

It's all hard graft

The Edible Forest at Tolworth's Knollmead Allotments has given 60 trees to schools (including Tolworth Girls) and groups over the winter, and has been grafting almonds, apricots, apples and plums. Its ambitious target is for an extra 100,000 trees across gardens and elsewhere in Kingston borough, to combat climate change.

Bog standard gag

Stand-up comic Nigel Ng told an audience at the cornerHOUSE that the main difference between Surbiton and his homeland was the loo roll. "You have two-ply loo roll here... two plies more than we have in Malaysia!"

Market's coming

Tolworth's next food/craft markets are: Sun, Mar 1 and Sun, Apr 5, 11am-3pm. It's held on the Ewell Road slip road, near the Princes Avenue junction, opposite Our Lady Immaculate church.

Art of Florence

Surbiton Historical Society's annual programme is unveiled at the AGM on Tue, Mar 3, 7.30pm, when chairman Paul Lang speaks on Florentine art. On Tue, Apr 7, Mike Brown's talk is on the Spanish Civil War. Meetings are held in the library hall, Ewell Road.

Rhymes with soap

Hope, the dark and anger are the themes of a poetry night at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road on Fri, Feb 28 at 7.30pm. All welcome. £4.

Wags n Tales: as twin-friendly as it is dog-friendly! Surbiton twins gather for coffee, Gina's in the shades



Seeing double: the Surbitwins

A 'Surbitwin' mums' group is a lifeline for parents of multiples. Gina Roughan, mum to nearly-threes Jack and Liam, links to 40 fellow Surbiton mums of twins via WhatsApp, and she's assembled a top 10 survival guide of twin-friendly tips.

"I've been bowled over by the kindness shown to me by Surbiton locals from the moment I heard 'We're detecting two heartbeats' that fateful day in late 2016... when Mr Roughan almost passed out cold!" recalled Gina, of Westfield Road.

Helped through early days by hand-me-downs, lasagnas from neighbours, and pop-in visits from local charity Home-Start, Gina said the community rallied round and kept her sane when she needed extra hands... and adult conversation.

"My biggest saviour has been the Surbiton twin mums' WhatsApp group that I was lucky enough to connect with in those early, terrifying days," she said. "The tips, tricks and 2am tearing-my-hair-out support has been invaluable." Anyone interested in joining can Instagram @ginaroughan

Here are Gina's top tips for local twin-friendly places:

- Pizza Express staff always help, with space for double buggies, and high chairs that actually function;
- Molesey Boat Club brunch is in a great location by the river; perfect after a walk through Hurst Park;
- Baby Sensory, Thames Ditton. Our guaranteed trip of the week, it keeps them captivated for a whole hour;
- Baby football club at Hollyfield School (in Victoria rec in the summer). Patient, caring coaches;
- Tolworth gymnastics tumble gym – a great big secure soft space, ideal for all children, perfect for twins;
- ChotaKidz Softplay in Tolworth: a safe space with unlimited twin playtime rates;
- Jumping Jelly Beans, Surbiton Hockey Club: many activities, friendly staff;
- The Pheasantry, Bushy Park: squirrel spotting, ducks;
- Scenic Queen's Prom, or stroll through Fishponds;
- FARA Kids, Victoria Road, great for secondhand stuff. For big gear, A3 Baby Barn – they assembled our buggy and fitted the car seats.

Tim Harrison

Cont'd from p1 Bus barrier threat

The plan is for a CCTV-enforced bus gate to let the K1 pass but stop other vehicles driving up to Hook Road. It follows a decision to block the parallel Tolworth Road to traffic at Fullers Way North. Where will they go next? Odds on Thornhill Road.

Cllr Anita Schaper says that a bus gate sited between the Ellerton Road and Thornhill Avenue junctions, as proposed, will make drivers divert down Douglas Road past a junior school.

She fears new rat-runs will appear, one at the Douglas Road/Dennan Road junction where many children cluster to cross.

"I don't use this word lightly, but this is a catastrophe in the making."

Cllr Hilary Gander suggested moving the bus gate to the Red Lion Road end.

Surbiton's area committee will trial the bus gate after assessing the likely impact on Douglas Road.

Jane Grove

SURBITON LIFE

by David Cox

As the new year joggers rethink their resolutions...



...the woman who thought white fairy lights would look good all year round finally accepts she was wrong.

24hr marathon

James King from Sweat Society, Victoria Road, raised £2,300 in a weekend to secure his place in the London Marathon. He led classes for 24 hours. "People booked right through the night,"

he said. "Some came with coffee and doughnuts, one brought pancakes!"

He will run the marathon in April in aid of multiple sclerosis research because his nan has MS. She popped by to cheer on his final session.

● Five Surbiton High students have won places at Oxford and Cambridge as the school's Oxbridge programme reaps rewards. Two will study theology and linguistics at Cambridge, while three will go to Oxford, two to do biology, one to do law. Careers director Terry McDermott praised their "endeavour and resilience". Principal Rebecca Glover added: "The girls will leave us ready to embrace their future academic challenges."

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Two bad mice and a famous dolls' house

The Tale of Two Bad Mice is one of Beatrix Potter's most popular stories. It's about a pair of mice who trash a rather splendid dolls' house after sneaking in and finding the food is plaster and not worth eating. It's funny, anarchic and beautifully illustrated; just what you'd expect from a Beatrix Potter story.

What you wouldn't expect is the book's difficult birth, involving a scheming mother, an amorous editor... and a dolls' house owned by Surbiton resident William Fruing Warne (known to everyone as Fruing).

Beatrix began work on the story in 1903. She was 37 and still living with her parents in Kensington. She'd found the perfect dolls' house to illustrate it; one used by Winifred, daughter of her publisher, Fruing and built by his brother Norman, who was also her editor.

The Warne family lived at 25 Lovelace Road, near the Lovelace Gardens junction, 10 minutes' walk from the station. Beatrix asked to borrow the family carriage to visit, to make her sketches.

However, the domineering Helen Potter did not want her daughter to go to Surbiton. Firstly, it was 12 miles away, and anyway it wasn't the sort of town the Potters visited!

She also sensed a budding romance between Fruing's brother Norman and her daughter. She wasn't wrong; Norman popped the question in 1905.

Helen also hated that her daughter was

involved in the grubby publishing trade, and earning her own money.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit had been a runaway success, yet Helen took delight in putting a great, clunking spanner into Beatrix's plans by saying 'no' to Surbiton.

Frustrated and embarrassed, Beatrix wrote to Norman saying she'd have 'gone gladly' to draw the dolls' house, adding: 'I should be very sorry if Mrs Warne or you thought me uncivil. I did not think I could manage to go to Surbiton without staying to lunch!'

Norman wrote back. He hadn't given up hope that Beatrix might be persuaded to visit his brother's Surbiton home.

NOTABLE SURBITONIANS Fruing Warne

He suggested Mrs Potter accompany Beatrix and have lunch. Beatrix reluctantly replied: 'I don't think my mother would be very likely to want to go to Surbiton', stressing how 'disagreeable she can be when she takes dislikes'.

When The Tale of Two Bad Mice was published, Beatrix's illustrations were based on photos Norman had taken on a visit to his brother in Lovelace Road, a street favoured by successful men who commissioned huge family homes... few of which survive in a road dominated by flats.

Fruing Warne, wife Mary (the couple had married in 1898 in her home town in Gloucester) and their three children lived in Broomlea, at 25 Lovelace Road.

A substantial villa, as befitting the head of Warne & Co publishers, it had a terrace, balconies and huge garden. When he bought it in 1889 he renamed it St Brelade in a nod to the family's Jersey roots.

Norman photographed the dolls' house in early 1904, processing the snaps at Jones & Son of Surbiton Park Terrace.

Thanks to the photos, Beatrix was able to illustrate her book. But one picture was missing, of a character who appears just once and who conceals a significant secret that Beatrix took great care to hide from her parents. It's a police doll. He was borrowed by Beatrix from St Brelade when she came



Left: Winifred Warne with the dolls' house, as pictured by Norman Warne, her uncle. Above: Beatrix Potter's version in the published book (inset, below)

to Surbiton in 1904 to claim him.

Interviewed in later years about the creation of The Tale of Two Bad Mice, Winifred recalled Beatrix arriving at her family's home 'dressed very severely in a dark coat and skirt, with a highly-polished brown leather belt and men's shoes...and a man's umbrella'. She'd taken the train to Surbiton, against her mother's wishes, and walked to Lovelace Road.

Fruing's wife Mary welcomed her, they had lunch, then went up to the nursery. Winifred remembered Beatrix 'examined the dolls' house carefully and borrowed the policeman doll to copy'. She also recalled Beatrix left her umbrella behind, and that her father returned it to the office the next day.

Fruing Warne was not to have such a happy experience with the police. In 1917, 13 years after his firm published The Tale of Two Bad Mice, he was walking in London with his other brother Harold when a policeman arrested Harold for forging a £988 cheque. Worse

was to come. Harold had secretly taken £20,000 from the family publishing firm to shore up his fledgling fishing business in Jersey. He was sentenced to 18 months' hard labour at Wormwood Scrubs. Fruing, though exonerated, suffered aftershocks from the scandal. He had to sell Warne & Co's assets to keep the company from going under, and had to sell his Surbiton home too.

Beatrix, a hugely successful writer, stayed loyal to Warne & Co. She had suffered heartbreak when her fiancé

Norman had died suddenly of leukemia in 1905, just a month after proposing to her.

Beatrix was concerned about the upheaval a move from Surbiton would have on Fruing and his family. She wrote to him: 'It is dreadfully sad for you and Mary, I do feel sorry for you. But when she gets over the wrench of leaving a pretty home, there will be much less housekeeping in a smaller house.'

The family moved to 2 Dickerage Road, near Kingston Hospital, where there was no space for the dolls' house. Fruing offered it to Beatrix, as her fiancé Norman had made it, but she declined, suggesting it go to a children's hospital. However,

Winifred Warne remembers it ended up going 'to a neighbour'.

The house next door to Fruing and family was Ferney (at 23 Lovelace Road). It had been occupied by retired Tory MP John Freke-Aylmer, but when he died in 1907 it was bought by 32-year-old Leonard Bental, of department store fame, often dubbed one of 'the men who made Kingston'. He moved in with his wife and young children, and that may well have been the dolls' house's destination.

In 1917 (the year Fruing sold up) Bental moved again, to a vast mansion spanning numbers 1-4 Palace Road, Kingston. And perhaps a little bit of Surbiton literary history moved with them.

Beatrix died in 1943, at the age of 77. She wore Norman's plain gold ring for the rest of her life.

Julie Batsford-White
● William Fruing Warne, b Nov 9 1862, St Pancras, d Feb 11 1928 in Kingston



Actor David Bamber played Fruing Warne in the 2006 film Miss Potter

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Shops, bars and restaurants have long featured in Michael Sandford's life; for 13 years he worked for Terence Conran. Now the freelance interior designer has turned his attention to Maple Road – not the interiors, but the street outside. "Maple Road means a lot to me,"

said Michael, once of Cleaveland Road. "The parade has the most character in town, with great independent shops, restaurants, bars and pubs. And my kids went to the school opposite."

"I decided to draw Maple Road after a Surbiton station drawing started to sell

well. I did something similar when living in a small town in Norway. It was drawn in the 1990s and is now historical as buildings and occupants change."

The 73cm wide picture, drawn by pen in Michael's studio in Oaks Way, Long Ditton, is sold with or without the blue

sky and with a black or white frame.

The artwork is for sale at Shoes at Last in Maple Road and Farrago in Claremont Road, or can be bought directly from Michael himself. Phone 07712 397774 or contact him via his website, www.sandforddesign.co.uk



Dexter's appetite

When 18-month-old Dexter was fitted with a muzzle, to control his habit of eating everything in sight... the spaniel ate it! Surbiton vet Sebastian Griffin was confronted with one of his more unusual tasks after he checked the X-rays and discovered the chomped-up remains in Dexter's tum.

Sebastian was already aware of Dexter's insatiable, and undiscerning appetite.

There have now been four operations in a year, not to

mention three cases of induced vomiting to bring up items including a tennis ball, a pair of fishnet tights, a box of chocolates, duct tape, a plastic bag and a hair scrunchie.

"Dexter has needed four exploratory celiotomies, when a large incision is made down the tummy to identify all the organs within the body," explained the vet who works at the Brighton Road Vet4Life practice.

"Once the foreign bodies are located, the intestines are



incised, the foreign body removed and the intestines are stitched back together. Other organs are checked before closing and stitching.

"On other occasions, such as when he ate 12 chocolates, which could have proved fatal, the best way of dealing with Dexter was to make him sick. This involved an injection to induce vomiting. Of

course, this is never pleasant for a dog, but it is extremely effective!"

Sebastian's advice to exasperated owners Andrew and Teri Gumpert was to take Dexter to a dog behaviourist.

Andrew said: "It all started with him eating his way through the contents of one of my daughter's clothes drawers about a year ago, and it's continued ever since."

"We got him a muzzle but our older spaniel, Uncle Caspar, helped him loosen it to the point where Dexter could get his teeth into it, before proceeding to eat it."

"We hope it's a playful puppy thing and he'll grow out of it as at the moment we can't take our eyes off him for a minute. He's a beautiful, loving dog but he's also very mischievous."

And breathe

Citizens' assemblies are all the rage (there's a big one in Birmingham), but the Royal borough has stolen a march. Residents, some from Surbiton, joined an evidence-gathering event to improve air quality; a randomly selected panel meeting over two weekends at Kingston University to guide the council in cleaning up the air we breathe.

Forty residents were each paid £300 (plus lunch and travel) to hear experts and generate workable ideas. The Good Life had observer status.

Electric car guru Peter Frost said: "By 2025, no sensible person will buy non-electric. Petrol and diesel vehicles blow exhaust fumes into children's faces; each switch to electric improves the environment. Owners say they're nicer, quicker, quieter, cleaner and cheaper."

Despite its leafy image, our borough has pollution hot spots; stats show that children in such areas lose two egg-size worth of lung capacity by age nine.

Air pollution is an invisible killer, and goes hand in hand with environmental damage, the assembly heard.

Environmental officer Peter Bond said 4,000 people in Kingston live in areas of illegally high nitrogen dioxide. Three schools fall in those areas. As well as car exhausts, one problem is increasingly fashionable open fires.

Local mum-of-two Sophie Hadfield works in a London hospital and said she saw the effects of pollution in patients.

Jon Fray (Kingston Cycling



Campaign) urged more 'low traffic neighbourhoods'. "Less traffic means less danger, and more people walking and cycling," he said, adding that sat-navs often take drivers down short-cut residential streets, increasing pollution levels.

Lucy Howard of Kingston Clean Air Now said Waltham Forest acted in 2013, cutting the speed limit to 20mph and encouraging cycling. It had increased the life expectancy of five-year-olds by six weeks.

Tim Rose called for car-free days in town, community bicycles, electric car clubs, zero-emission council vehicles, more car charging points, green zones around schools and tougher penalties for car idlers.

"We're all participants, and we're all victims," summed up Peter Frost.

The council is now assessing the citizens' assembly list, and will formulate an action plan. Last year, faced with a motorist backlash, councillors ditched plans for heavier car permit charges on gas-guzzlers and reducing electric car charges to zero.

Tim Harrison

Estate agent tops the charts

Independent Surbiton estate agent Humphrey & Brand tops the sales charts. In the quarter to January 2020, says Rightmove, the Claremont Road agency (next to Waitrose) sold more than the 62 nearest estate agent offices.

"We're delighted to be the top-performing estate agent in the area," said sales director Craig Custance. "We have a strong team with deep local roots, and the most current database of purchasers looking to buy."

She's a paperback writer

Surbiton author Sharon Wright's remarkable biography of Maria Branwell, *The Mother of the Brontës*, is out in paperback (Pen & Sword, £12.99) and is on sale at Surbiton's Regency Bookshop. It's a book everyone said couldn't be written, as so little was known about the mother of Charlotte, Emily and Anne. But Sharon, of Cleaveland Road, turned detective and proved them all wrong.

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● 100 volunteers turned up to plant community orchards at Berrylands and Fishponds parks. At Berrylands Park (site of the former Surbiton Lagoon), local residents, Fran Batt (Environment Trust), DoE award students and ecologist Alison Fure planted 11 fruit trees; a mix of apple, pear, plum, greengage and crab apple varieties. "They'll take a couple of years to fruit, but will be free to be enjoyed by the community," said Andrew Irving (Friends of Berrylands Nature Reserve). "The Friends will take an active care role." Get involved by emailing berrylandsn@gmail.com

● At Fishponds, near Mayberry Place, volunteers dug, planted, staked, caged and put mulch around apple, cherry, pear, plum and quince trees, guided by Lewis McNeill (Orchard Project) and Elliot Newton (Friends of Fishponds Park). Friends chairman Rob



At Fishponds: Val Tanner, Rob Haworth, Katy Reed and Nigel White

Eyre-Brook said the active volunteering "bodes really well for the future", with the community then able to share harvested fruit. He and Elliot Newton recently enlisted the help of Surbiton neighbourhood committee to give a Heritage Lottery grant bid, due to be made in April, the best chance of success.

Some plants thrive on neglect, others need cossetting, says Janice Cripps

These days, it's all about containment

Nothing gives a lift to a garden like a well-planted container; better, a group of containers, and at this time of year instant impact and colour is what's needed.

Sadly, a pot is not a plant's natural habitat, so give the precious darlings a sporting chance by following some simple advice.

Firstly, choose wisely. Vigorous fast-growing specimens will often romp away initially, then struggle with lack of space. If you're a lazy gardener, go for something easily pruned or clipped back; something that isn't too fussy. Dare I say it, some plants seem to thrive on neglect, like sedums and sempervivums, which have delightful fleshy leaves and come in a range of pretty colours.

In my garden, I've grouped them in a large shallow dish which I use as a centrepiece for my garden table.

Read and keep the plant tag; I can't stress this enough. It will tell you how big your plant will get and how much light, water, and food it will need. Never assume that because you've successfully grown, say, clematis before, you can treat every clematis the same way. There are over 200 species, and they differ widely in their requirements. It applies to other plants too.



The tag will also tell you about the plant shape and how it will grow. This is important when considering your container design and how to arrange plant combinations.

Don't cram your plants into containers that are too small. Without room to grow, they will

sulk, and you will spend too much time cajoling them into life with extra watering and feeding. Large containers are easier to look after, and don't dry out so quickly.

Use good quality, free-draining, multipurpose compost to retain moisture. Later, the nutrients in the compost will be eaten up and it will look pale and crumbly, like a bowl of old cornflakes. Then you must replenish, either by taking off the top layer and adding new, or repotting, possibly in a larger container, if the plant has grown or is struggling.

Regular feeding is important for most plants and adding a slow release fertiliser to the compost can be useful, but most plants tend to die through lack of water.

In summer you might have the chore of watering daily. You've watered enough when water seeps out below; not enough, and the plant will probably die!

Janice Cripps is a professional Surbiton garden designer.

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

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Being happy

Yoga teacher Lesley Muir says happiness is the key to everything, so she's called her Surbiton class Be Happy Yoga.

It runs every Tuesday and Thursday, 8pm, at Surbiton Methodist Tennis Club pavilion, off Manor Drive, Berrylands. "I've timed classes for 8pm so everyone who lives locally can get home from work, cook dinner, then come for some 'me time'."

Winter yoga is accompanied by candles and aromatherapy; in summer it moves outside.

"I have all the props, so their investment is minimal," said Lesley, of Cranes Park. "Some who began as beginners have been coming for nearly two years, and have now reached a very good standard."



All ages, interests and levels are catered for. Each week focuses on a different aspect - spine strengthening, hip flexibility, core, balance... Each includes breathing exercises and meditation.

"Regulars tell me they have their best night's sleep ever after yoga," said Lesley, who also runs 50-minute lunchtime yoga at Kingston's Rose Theatre.

Sessions are £8 as part of a 'pack'. Restorative yoga is soon to be offered in Surbiton. Visit www.behappyyoga.fit

100 car points

A hundred new electric car charge points will be installed in the borough. Currently Kingston Council provides 13. The council also plans to provide four 'rapid charge points' this year, paid for by Transport for London.

The council aim is carbon neutrality by 2038. Electric charging points are part of a multi-pronged effort to improve the overall air quality in the borough. Other moves include significantly increasing the number of safe cycle lanes in the borough (although work is invariably accompanied by short-term jams) and working with developers to create more electric vehicle parking spaces.

Cllr Hilary Gander called it "a key part of our pledge as a council to reduce our carbon footprint". She said more electric car charge points "is a big step in order to do just that".

The new charging points will be installed by Source London.

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Camp capers

An Easter camp in Surbiton offers children's activities from archery to zorbing. Visitors to Camp Beaumont (at Hollyfield School, Apr 6-17) will have fun and build confidence.

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Feel free to use new library

A remarkable new library, spread over three floors, has opened at Kingston University... and everyone in Surbiton is welcome to use it!

The Town House is the intriguing skeletal structure near the Surbiton/Kingston boundary in Penrhyn Road, opposite County Hall. There are no barriers, no swipe card gates and no security turnstiles.

Residents are encouraged to treat it as their own, as part of the uni's effort to engage with the community.

On the lowest library floor you can natter, the next level up is designated whisper-only, while the top floor is a quiet zone. Every desk and table has phone-charging and laptop-charging, and self-employed Surbitonians are encouraged to use the facilities (daily to 9pm, Sat: 5pm) like a free shared office.

As well as thousands of books, there is free access to dozens of computer terminals, helpful trained staff, plus cafes on the ground and top floor.



"We wanted an inviting, welcoming environment that would allow more opportunities for collaboration between the university, residents and businesses," said vice-chancellor Prof Steven Spier.

For a two-minute 3D tour, follow the links at www.kingston.ac.uk

The architect, Grafton of Dublin, is in the frame for architecture awards. It's well worth a visit, if only to look around and enjoy the views from the outside terraces to the river and Hampton Court.

A band for all weathers

You'll be able to enjoy Surbiton's youth marching band in all weathers... and they'll be able to enjoy staying dry as they entertain us.

The musicians have been awarded £2,450 to buy 62 waterproof capes to wear over their uniforms.

The capes (just like the young musicians themselves) come in all shapes and sizes, so the cloakroom at Surbiton Royal British Legion youth marching band HQ in Hollyfield Road will be filled with small, medium, large and XL versions.

The grant was approved unanimously by the council's neighbourhood committee after bandmaster Ron Spence explained that different sized capes were needed "to cover the continuous growth of the young band members".

The band, which was formed in 1965 as a boys-only outfit (boys and girls are equally welcome today), trains young people aged eight to 21 to play traditional instruments.

That, in itself, is a real boon to those who might struggle to pay for music lessons, as the instruments (insured for £150,000!) are loaned to the band members, but drill and parade teaching are also added to the mix at the twice-weekly club nights.

"Although it began as only boys, we invited girls in... and they now dominate," said Mr Spence. "The main aim is to teach young people music, but we also encourage them to perform."

The 47 band members, who wear the borough's colours on their uniforms, perform at the Surbiton Festival and the annual remembrance service, go on overseas tours and play at fetes and other gatherings.

Subs, and overheads, are kept low. Some of the uniforms - handed down through the years - date from the 1980s and are, Mr Spence admits, "a bit musty".

"The uniforms cost us £500 each, so these waterproof capes will help keep them pristine," he added. Interested in joining? Email Ron Spence at bandmastersrbl@gmail.com



● Heather Hathaway's snap of the band was a winner in the Capture Kingston contest. With others, it's on display at the local history rooms in the Guildhall (entry free, Wed-Sat) until March 8.

When Tom Houwen grows up, he wants to be prime minister. "Labour prime minister," the young Cotterill Road resident stressed.

An eight-year-old at St Andrew's and St Mark's, Tom, below, was at Surbiton station in January; the unlikely venue Sadiq Khan chose to launch his re-election campaign as London mayor.

Tom had a chat, got his autograph and listened as Khan outlined a string of policies, including placing strike-weary South Western Railway in the hands of Transport for London, campaigning against a Brexit 'no deal' and cleaning up London's air.

Tom joined 50 activists beneath



Win, lose, learn

A Surbiton school is not only in the top 10 for sport, but top 20 overall. Surbiton High is the sixth leading independent girls' senior school in the country for sport, with 70 teams and 3,500 pupil sessions a week. It is also the 18th overall top independent, says School Sport magazine. "Participating in sport is all about the journey," said sports director Sunita Pottay, who has just introduced football and cricket. "Learning to win and lose is an important part of the process." Principal Rebecca Glover called it "a clear demonstration of the tailored provision SHS offers."

Tom for PM!

the station's distinctive tower as Khan described the May 7 vote as a two-horse race between Conservatives and Labour, and asked Lib Dems to "lend us your votes" to keep out the Tories.

Tom told Khan: "I like politics; it's my thing!" before explaining that he wanted to be prime minister. "Not the next prime minister," Khan replied. "Presumably the one after that!"

Alongside the young hopeful were his mum, Ursula Barlow, and brother Jacob, 13. As the crowd dodged the replacement buses manoeuvring in the station forecourt, Khan was introduced by campaign manager Karen Buck and Surbiton Labour chair Conor Bollins.

"Every vote in Surbiton counts as much as votes in Tower Hamlets or Lambeth," said Buck. "Nothing matters more than having a Labour mayor of London." But why choose Surbiton to launch Khan's campaign? "You have one of the worst social housing waiting lists in London," she said.

With Khan leading the way, campaigners then set off on a Sunday morning canvassing trail along local streets.

Tim Harrison



Declared candidates at time of going to press:

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Undisturbed sleep

Waitrose has lost a planning appeal which would have let juggernauts come and go through the night after residents near the clanking delivery bay door begged for peace.

The Claremont Road supermarket wanted three articulated trucks to use the bay opposite flats in St James' Road between 10pm and 7am, but inspector Robert Hitchcock refused, ruling residents need a good night's sleep. A temporary permission expires in June 2023.

Waitrose's problem? Its subterranean service yard (including a giant underground turntable) is opposite two converted villas and beside St James' Court. When the up-and-over steel shutter rumbles open and shut, it wakes neighbours, as does the sound of the artic's idling and making air-brake whooshes as they manoeuvre in and out.

Mr Hitchcock ruled that residents should "expect to enjoy undisturbed sleep", and said the noise exceeded World Health Organization limits.

Waitrose argued that drivers were in radio contact, to give a 20-minute warning of arrival, so they didn't have to idle in the street. But Nick Barr, local tenants' association chair, said some juggernauts sat idling and unmanned as drivers searched for someone to open the door, while others sounded airhorns in the wee, small hours, to attract attention.

The supermarket says it's "a considerate and responsible retailer" which tries to get on with the neighbours, and that "only six" objections had been made. But the inspector ruled that residents' health and wellbeing was more important than night deliveries, even after the supermarket threatened that "the future viability of the business" might be at stake.

Mr Hitchcock rejected that. "I am not convinced that the satisfactory management of fresh produce could not be suitably exercised within the originally approved delivery window," he decreed. Mr Barr said he was delighted, and that common sense had prevailed.

Tim Harrison


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● Make masks and headdresses and join a procession to celebrate the joy of sheer nonsense on Sat, Feb 29, from St Andrew's Square at 2pm, where there will be music, food, charity bar, games and costume-making ahead of Seething Festival's grand procession, which will snake through the town centre at 3.30pm. Then there will be more entertainment back at the square until 5pm. Come in fancy dress to mark the 'legend' of Left Ganderson.



● The anniversary of Ziggy Stardust was marked by a red lightning flash on Tolworth Tower, 100 yards from where David Bowie stepped on stage at the Toby Jug on Feb 10 1972. With the blessing of Meadow Partners, which is turning the landmark into flats, half a dozen Community Brain stalwarts fixed sheets of coloured paper to windows in the top 14 floors to create the famous make-up flash from the singer's Aladdin Sane days.



● The bedlam that has afflicted Surbiton town centre since the top of St Mark's Hill was sealed off for roadworks is ending. By March 15 - contractors say - life should be back to normal. Buses have been diverted all over the place, and traffic jams in Ewell Road and up Surbiton Hill Road have been horrendous as the Go Cycle link between Tolworth Broadway and Surbiton (above) is completed as part of a £32million TfL-funded project.

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The editor and...

David Wilson, who edited the Surrey Comet for two decades in the golden age of local papers, has died at 83.

Born in Yorkshire, he joined the Bridlington Chronicle at 16. Applying for a job on the Hull Daily Mail, he met Barbara Porteous, who typed his offer letter. They married. In 60+ years, she never knew him without a moustache!

At 37 he became editor of the Comet remaining at the helm for 21 years; always a half-mast tie and open top button. The family (now with son, Tim) lived in Elmbridge Avenue, Surbiton, later moving to a new-build in Hinchley Wood.



Turan Duncan
May 6 1989 -
January 6 2020

Turan: Surbiton's BFG

Roald Dahl's Big Friendly Giant left a positive lasting impression. Surbiton's BFG, the same. Turan Duncan opted to cut his young life short in January, four months before his 31st birthday. His mother, Tanju, has called him "an exceptional man who suffered, and covered up, his deep depression and anxieties". She said that his smile "filled up my heart a million times over".

Funds are being raised in his name to help others at a low ebb.

At 6ft 3in, Turan towered over everyone at Richard Challoner School. In 2010 he gained a degree in dance and theatre at Chester University, and proved an exceptional actor.

Film roles included Vampires: Lucas Rising (2014) and a 2018 modern-day Romeo and Juliet.

Theatre ranged from New Malden's Green Theatre youth company to The Rose, Kingston (The Crucible, 2012, and Tess of the D'Urbervilles, 2013), while Taming of the Shrew won best play at the Brighton Festival.

At Surbiton's cornerHOUSE he had leading roles in Tartuffe (2014) and The Pillowman (2019), a tense thriller, playing opposite his younger brother, Reece, with Tanju directing.

His most powerful roles were in a UK touring production of Steven Berkoff's East, also directed by Tanju, between 2011 and 2013, and as Jesus in The Passion (2017). Every performance was physical, full-on, focused and filled with mesmerising energy. There were no half-measures.

Turan also directed, including co-directing the 2019 cornerHOUSE panto, and for four years was a popular Hook Library staff member.

At the funeral, pal Barry Locke recalled Turan's generosity with time, "endlessly encouraging, positively pushing, but always listening and never asking you for anything".

Celebrant Fiona Fowler called him "a beautiful man" who was "Surbiton through and through".

Dad Peter spoke of a happy, but wilful, child. He had urged Turan to study engineering, "so he went into acting". The fact that he turned out to be so good on stage meant that, as a father, he had learnt to trust Turan's judgement, adding that he was therefore also forced to trust Turan's judgement in his final decision.

In the corner of the family living room in Raeburn Avenue, Turan's soppy rescue Staffy, Maggie, still looks up from her bed whenever footsteps approach. Tickle her pale, speckled tum, and you're an instant pal... but her sad eyes tell you Turan's long fingers were the best.

Funds are being raised to counsel local young adults when crisis engulfs them. Contribute to Listen to Me at: tinyurl.com/vxgm6ap TH

● If you need immediate support, text HeadsUp to 85258 to connect with a trained crisis volunteer.

● You can call Samaritans free on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org



David Wilson
1936-2019

the composer

Len Stokes, the former head chorister at St Mary's, Long Ditton, now sings in a higher choir after his death at 91.

He was born in April 1928. His twin brother, Ken, arrived after midnight, so the grew up with different birthdays.

He grew up at 39 Fleece Road, and joined the church choir at seven, despite (a pal recalls) him having a decidedly average singing voice! He made up for that with his enthusiasm and lifelong ability to inspire others.

Len's dad died when he was 14, so he left school and went into the print trade. National service interrupted (he served with the Navy in the Med), but he spent 30 years as a hot-metal compositor at Knapp DREWETT & Sons in Kingston, printing the Comet.

He met Betty in 1949 at a Milk Marketing Board dance. They married in 1951 - the year he became a 'comp'. He was a real print room character: a natural joker.



Len Stokes
1928-2019

Tim Harrison

It's down to 1930s parrot fever

How did ring-necked parakeets come to Surbiton? New research into the raucous birds suggests it's not down to Humphrey Bogart filming African Queen in Isleworth in 1951, despite the popularity of the theory, or to guitarist Jimi Hendrix freeing a pair in Mayfair in the 1960s.

A Queen Mary University study shows it was small-scale releases over many decades which led to the birds making this area their home.

Using methods developed by criminologists, researchers pin the blame on 'parrot fever' reports in newspapers, leading panicked pet owners to free caged birds.

Findings state that repeated releases have led to colonies in areas such as Surbiton.

There are reckoned to be 17,000 of the birds (now



A Surbiton parakeet, by Paul Hunter

protected by the Wildlife Act) in the London area. Male birds have distinctive black necks.

The earliest recorded sighting in the wild in the UK was, in fact, in Norfolk in 1855.

Compelling evidence is a 1932 Middlesex County Times article reporting that a parrot disease scare the previous year, in which psittacosis infections were said to be threatening human health, had led to many pet owners freeing caged birds, rather than destroying them.

Further 'parrot flu' scares in the 50s led to more releases. Surbiton's parakeet population is believed to be part of a concentration that thrived around Esher Rugby Club.

The parakeets are resourceful, setting up in 35 countries across five continents. Your word of the week? **Synanthropic**. It's when birds thrive in proximity to humans, especially enjoying back-garden feeders, which reduce the need to forage.

"The birds have not needed the help of rock stars or movie stars," concludes the survey.

It is illegal to release them into the wild, but not much can be done now. That bird has flown.

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College eyes up expansion

A Surbiton college has revealed a glimpse of plans for five new blocks in its leafy grounds. Hillcroft adult and community college has yet to apply for planning permission, but an artist's sketch of a series of new buildings emerged at a

recent meeting of the town's neighbourhood committee. It shows new structures on the four-acre site in South Bank, near the Glenbuck Road exit of Surbiton station. It was once the garden of the Grade II listed 1877 mansion at the heart of the college now celebrating its centenary.

Currently the grounds contain the rather ugly 18-bedroom Powell House block, which would go. Until plans are submitted, it

isn't clear if trees would be lost... but there is precedent for buildings on the proposed site. It once contained a private 230-seat theatre, The Gables, built before Surbiton Assembly Rooms, where RC Sherriff, of Journey's End fame, honed his craft in the 1920s.

Gabrielle Flint, Surbiton resident and Hillcroft principal, told Surbiton neighbourhood committee that the college's roots were in giving working women an education, paving the way to higher education studies.

The first college was in Beckenham in 1920, but it moved to Surbiton in 1926, with 28 female mature students learning history, literature and religion. The theatre was bulldozed before the Second World War; the Glenbuck Road flats occupy part of the site.

"We don't want to be a 'selfish giant'



Headed 'concept', this sketch of Hillcroft reveals five new buildings in the grounds. Below left: Google image of the existing site

in our four acres; we want to develop our community outreach," she said.

Cllr Diane White welcomed that. "We'll achieve more by working together," she said.

Cllr Sharon Sumner was suspicious, declaring that "until 15 months ago the college was looking to develop the site for housing". She fears the threat to green space.

Ms Flint said she wanted

councillors to see Hillcroft as part of Surbiton's infrastructure, urging them to "ask us and task us" in collaboration on tackling mental health, loneliness and inclusion.

Asked about proposals to build, Ms Flint said: "We have plans to make it a better learning centre."

Further discussion was curtailed by chairman Cllr Sam Foulde-Hughes, who said that it was not the appropriate forum to discuss possible planning applications. "Ah ha!" said Cllr Sumner. "So there is an application! Thank you!"

Cllr Mark Beynon and Cllr Liz Green expressed a wish to work together with the college on developing awareness of mental health issues.

Tim Harrison

£6,000 for charities

A handsome £6,000 was raised by Santa's 'milk float' sleigh, which toured Surbiton over 15 December nights, helped by volunteers from Kids Out, St Matthew's church and Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness.

"We're grateful to all who contributed," said Nigel White of Surbiton Rotary Club. "All the money will go to local charities."

The club meets at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Portsmouth Road, on the first Tuesday and third Tuesday of the month. All welcome. Email surbitonrotary@gmail.com



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Clare's award

Surbiton bookkeeper/consultant Clare Mannall's business has been named small practice of the year in her professional body's annual awards. Clare launched CEM six years ago for individuals, not-for-profit organisations and small businesses in the area. Now the Institute of Certified Bookkeepers' Luca award is on her mantelpiece. www.cembusiness.co.uk



Want to get your website to the top of Google? Ask a student at Hinchley Wood School! Sixteen Year 9s, split into four teams, built websites to get noticed in a web design and search engine optimisation contest organised by staff from Claremont Road firm Dotwise, who coached and mentored them.

Teams focused on specific foods – pretzels, muffins, pasties and yumyums – to build the most informative website and get the site as close to the top of Google as possible in seven weeks.

While the pasty team won (admire their site at www.hinchleywoodpasties.co.uk) all four teams reached No1 in Google for at least one keyword.

"The pupils impressed us with their creativity," said Gordon Smith of Dotwise. "Teams got in touch with local bakeries and websites to get backlinks to their website; a key way of boosting search visibility."

Criteria assessed included: number of days the website appeared in Google, highest position and design. There was also a creativity category.

"We learned so much," said one young winner. "Now we know what's required for real websites." Need help yourself? Visit www.dotwise.uk



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Anna's abstracts

Anna Dyson's abstracts provoke powerful emotional reactions; some ask for loved ones' ashes to be incorporated into them. "Children often want to touch my paintings; they find them sensory," said the artist whose (ash-free!) solo show *Flowing Colours* is at the cornerHOUSE, Apr 5-May 3. All welcome at the preview at the arts centre, Douglas Road, 7-9pm, Tue, Apr 7. Complimentary drink 'til 8pm.

● Artist and printmaker Louise Anderson is inspired by the natural world's stillness and peace. "Being in nature is like meditation; time is lost, and you're able to clear your mind; wipe the slate clean," said the ex-Kingston School of Art student who did printmaking at Putney School of Art & Design. A solo show, *What Window Are We Going To Go Through Today?* is at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, Mar 1-Apr 4. Preview: Tue, Mar 3, 7-9pm; comp drink 'til 8pm.



● Stones, broken shells, butterfly wings, feathers and bones are among found objects in Long Ditton artist Georgina Allen's work at the Piers Feetham Gallery, Fulham Road, from Apr 18-May 9. "I work from organic objects which have slightly surreal overtones," she said. www.piersfeethamgallery.com

● Harry Hill tries out his new hour-long show *Caveman!* at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, on Fri, Mar 13; Mon, Mar 16; and Tue, Mar 17, 7.30pm. It is, he says, a "play with no words and lots of noise". £10. Tickets: www.thecornerhouse.org

● Picture by Simone Kay, from Harry's cornerHOUSE show last year. A free exhibition of Sim's one-a-day observational pictures of local life is in the Rose Theatre foyer in Kingston until Apr 3.

Ready for your screen test?

A new acting academy puts the emphasis on landing screen roles. Led by producer Stuart Piper and talent agent Mark Jermin, **Stage & Screen** includes camera coaching, and is at Hollyfield School, Surbiton, with a free open day on Sun Mar 1. Aimed at seven to 18s, it runs on Sundays in term time (9.30am-noon), plus holiday classes and workshops. Past students have appeared in *The Favourite*, *Coronation Street*, *Les Mis*, *Game of Thrones* and *Gavin & Stacey*. Stuart, who attended Claremont School, Esher, said: "While there are a lot of theatre schools, few offer serious screen acting training, taught by industry professionals. I also hope it will be a lot of fun." As the drama school is linked to the talent agency, students also learn of audition opportunities. Visit www.stage-screen.co.uk



Berrylands mum Karen Ross uses the power of music to help young children develop.

She has the **Monkey Music** franchise for Surbiton, Thames Ditton and Kingston. For two decades it has offered music classes to children from 3 months to 4 years in the area. "There can't be many children in Surbiton who have not played *Where Is Monkey Hiding* or sung along with *Look At Monkey*," said Karen, who lives in Pine Gardens and whose own children attend Christ Church primary. "The songs are catchy, fun and incredibly clever in the way that they engage even the very youngest children." Karen, who has taught *Monkey Music* at St Mark's church hall for four years, trained in musical theatre before experiencing life in the City in recruitment, then working in marketing live music, comedy and visual art. "This is absolutely my dream job," she said. "And it's flexible, which means I get to drop my children at school!" She plans an expansion of existing classes this year. Book a free session at one of four age-appropriate classes at www.monkeymusic.co.uk/area/kingston-surbiton

oneACTs offer murder, robots and romance

● Robots, romance, murder, downsizing and gender reassignment are among subjects in this year's oneACTs festival, a week-long showcase of original writing.

Local playwrights, actors and directors bring eight new plays to the

cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road; four on one night, four the next, Mon Apr 27-Sat May 2, 7.45pm. Tickets £10 (£8 concs) from www.ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents

More at www.thecornerhouse.org

● Keep the children active and happy in the Easter holidays at a drama workshop where they will rehearse and perform a play in just four days. The workshop for eight to 14s is at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, Apr 6-9, 10am-5pm each day, with the performance after the final day's last session. The workshop is run by the well-established Kingston Junior Drama Company. £100 per child, £85 siblings. Call David Lawson Lean (01932 230273), email kingstonjdc@aol.com or visit www.davidlawsonlean.com

● The things we wish for, and how we achieve them (or fail to) is the subject of a performance by young actors from Kingston Junior Drama Company. The show, *Wishes*, is based on themes suggested by drama teacher David Lawson Lean. Eight to 14-year-olds wrote and developed the show, to be performed on Wed, Mar 25, 7.30pm, at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road. Tickets £5. Children attend free, but must reserve places. Email kingstonjdc@aol.com



In praise of drainpipes

Street furniture is as interesting to artist Jo Kheir as architecture. The former Virgin Media design head is as fascinated by lampposts and drainpipes as by her latest focus, the iconic art deco-style Surbiton station.

"It's about looking at things slightly differently," said Jo, who was putting the finishing touches to *Surbiton Station: Back*, when *The Good Life* called. "It is about seeing what's in front of you and how we live. It isn't always a conflict between historical architecture and modern clutter. I like typography, drainpipes, lamps; the kind of thing we often ignore, but are part of modern life, part of our landscape. We separate them, but they work well together."

The 44-year-old's first art show is at The Glass Room, St Andrew's church, Maple Road, on market day, Sat, Mar 21, 9am-1pm. *Surbiton From a Different Angle* has oil paintings, prints, photos and life drawings, for sale. "I've always seen places slightly differently, quite graphically; there's a design aspect to everyday things around us," said Jo, who has taught art having finished an art psychotherapy course. "I want to look at the architecture; the curves and shapes it creates - I love that." Tea and cake will also be available. **Jane Grove**



She has reservations

A Tolworth eco-poet has found unlikely inspiration in the central reservation of a dual carriageway. Lucy Furlong's book, *Sword*, focuses on the plants and debris in the middle of the A240 Kingston Road from Tolworth station towards Ewell.

Her prose poem *Skin of the Earth* begins: "Humans don't walk here. I see drivers stare at me through windshields and wound-down windows as they pass. One day a woman and a girl stop to look at me as I kneel to take a photo of red clover." Plants on the thin stretch between the lanes of traffic include achillea, bird's-foot trefoil, ragwort, red clover, buttercup, mallow, dandelion, daisy, plantain, teasel and bristly oxtongue, not to mention the very apt speedwell! They thrive alongside plastic bottles, cigarette butts, crisp packets and hub caps.

Lucy, who calls herself a "walking artist", says *Sword* is about

"reclamation and acknowledgement that this strip of grass, trees, cracked pavement, concrete and detritus is a place all of its own, important as part of the local distinctiveness of Tolworth", and that it should be valued and recognised as such.

It is, she says, a nature corridor for small mammals, birds, insects and pollinators. She draws inspiration from Victorian nature writer Richard Jefferies, who lived in Ewell Road. Lucy fears the grassy strip is under threat, as Tolworth's area plan talks of extending the striped Tolworth Greenway further along from the Broadway.

"This central reservation, which helps pollinators and other fauna find their way across the busy road from one green space to the other, must be kept and properly managed," she says. "It mitigates air pollution, and provides beauty."

Sword, by Lucy Furlong, is published by Sampson Low at £3.85 (incl p&p). www.lucyfurlongs.wordpress.com

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It's 7-up for Blues striker Sam

With just seven league games remaining, Chelsea Women's new signing Sam Kerr – the best-paid female footballer in Europe – is aiming to start them all alongside strike partner Beth England, to net the goals to give the Blues the title ahead of Arsenal and City.

The Australian captain, whose £600,000 two-year deal eclipses all other pay in the Women's Super League, even told manager Emma Hayes she's prepared to play between the sticks if it helps Chelsea to victory.

"Sam told me she's going to be the best, and most expensive, sub goalkeeper I'll ever have!" laughed Hayes, who has been impressed by the 26-year-old's selfless assists just as much as her scoring ability.

Next up for the Blues, Chelsea v Everton at Kingmeadow on **Sun, Mar 22**, at 2pm.



Sam Kerr

● As well as 8 and 16-mile races, Kingston Spring Raceday, on Sun, Mar 29 has a new 20-mile race. Eight-milers run one loop from Kingston via Hampton Court, Thames Ditton, Long Ditton along Portsmouth Road, Surbiton, to the finish line. The 16 and 20-milers run it twice, with the extra four miles heading out to North Kingston. All races start and finish at Kingston Market Place. The 16 and 20 mile races are ideal marathon training, four weeks before London, three before Brighton. All offer the chance to run on a fast, scenic route with great potential for personal best times. Visit www.kingstonraceday.com



Short pass, long pass & bus pass



So, you're a bloke of around bus pass age, and you feel you really ought to do a bit more exercise. Here's the club for you!

The Ancients FC indoor football group, which has been run by Dr Martin Wolfson (front, right) of Claremont Medical Centre for nigh-on three decades, gathers on Thursdays (8-9.30pm) to kick a spongy dayglo ball round Southborough School's

sports hall and keep active.

A dozen lads in their 50s, 60s and 70s form the nucleus, but fresh recruits are welcome for the aerobic sessions and crucial post-training tactical discussion and analysis in The Maypole.

"We pay modest money to a good state school, and we get some exercise," said 'Doc' (as fellow players refer to him).

www.meetup.com/ancientsfc



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Top table game

It's a sociable, challenging and fun sport, and there's a thriving club on Surbiton's doorstep.

Tuesdays are social nights and Wednesdays are league nights for Malden Table Tennis Club at St James Hall in Green Lane, New Malden, situated the other side of the Hogsmill River open space from the Surbiton Hill Park/Raeburn Avenue roundabout (closest station: Berrylands).

Chairman Saul Sheehan of Cadogan Road, Surbiton, says the 70-year-old club has 40 members of all

ages and skills.

"On Wednesdays we play mostly singles in the Thames Valley league, while on Tuesdays we have four tables up, and mostly play doubles," he said.

Fees are £50 for the winter season and £25 for summer, and members also pay £1 a night on Tuesdays.

Turn up, or learn more by visiting www.malden-table-tennis-club.co.uk



● Have a flutter on the gee-gees at a fundraiser at Crowne Plaza (once the Holiday Inn), Portsmouth Road, on Fri, Mar 27, 7pm. A charity Surbiton Rotary Club evening includes fish & chips and nine races on a big screen. A tote calculates winnings. It's in aid of Kingston Food Bank, Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness.

Kids Out and Topic of Cancer. Tickets £20. Email Jeremy Thorn at jeremy.thorn@hotmail.com or visit www.surbitonrotary.org.uk

● Easter Monday (Apr 13) sees a Tolworth derby as Kingstonian play Corinthian-Casuals at King George's Field, off Hook Rise South, at 3pm. £10, 60+ £6, students £4; U18 free at turnstiles by athletics stadium.



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