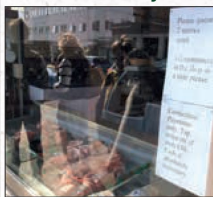


## Surbiton today: blossom and queues



From left: the clocktower; Jennings the butcher; Ewell Road blossom (pic: Paul Robinson); Waitrose queue; St James' Road

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## Life in lockdown

It's been quite a month. In coronavirus lockdown, Surbiton has felt like a parallel world. No traffic, no aircraft noise, no need for alarm clocks thanks to the deafening 5am dawn chorus.

But it has also been grim, with 200 extra admissions to Kingston Hospital for Covid-19 a week, and not everyone surviving. The council's register office was just open to record deaths – now you can only ring them.

With a lifting of restrictions now on the agenda, the

survival of small businesses that define the character of our shopping parades remains under threat.

Spring has crept in. The brief magnolia season came and went, the vivid pink cherry blossom pom-poms wave at empty streets, and the wisteria is racing to keep up.

Weeks are no longer punctuated by weekends, but instead by the enthusiastic Thursday evening ritual of applauding key workers, banging saucepan lids and shouting greetings to



Tenor Jem Sharples rounds off Thursday night's clap in Queens Drive

neighbours you haven't seen in years. Strangers happily chat to each other from a safe distance. Everyone's experiencing the wrench of separation, and somehow the missing clockhands on

Surbiton's famous deco station tower seem to sum up how life has altered. Overnight, the jobs that pay the least are the ones we value the most.

Continued p10

## Help town recover

Business and community figures have been holding online meetings to launch an initiative at helping Surbiton emerge from the pandemic with clear strategies for recovery and rejuvenation. Surbiton Together, chaired by Cllr John Sweeney, pictured, aims to pool the talents of residents, businesses and community groups. See p10



## Pandemic practice

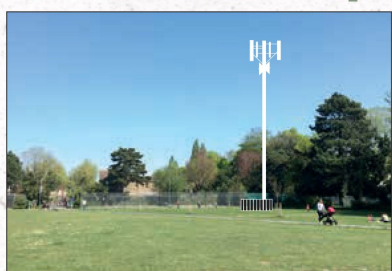
Surbiton MP Ed Davey says he knew of the 2016 pandemic drill, Exercise Cygnus, which highlighted shortcomings in the UK's readiness for lockdown. "This has been game-played," he said. "Every year or so we reviewed climate change, military attack... but the No1 risk was pandemics." An ex-colleague, Dr Phillip Lee, led the rehearsal exercise when a junior health minister.

"It has been thought about; they're not just making it up as they go along," said Sir Ed. "The question now is: 'What's the exit strategy?'" Full interview on The Good Life website.



● Jess, 3, outside her Effingham Road home, claps carers on Thursday nights: a nurse uniform over her PJs, tambourine, stethoscope and a piggy facemask (possibly a satirical dig at PPE shortage). Would Jess, already better equipped than many frontline NHS staff, like to be a nurse? "No," she said, firmly. Still plenty of time to re-evaluate career options, girl!

## Blot on the landscape



A proposed EE radio mast the height of two double-deckers, topped by dishes and antennas in a 500sqft 'compound', would blight Victoria rec, say protesters. The 82ft mast would dominate the eight-acre recreation ground, set up 130 years ago. It would sit on the grass near the Victoria Avenue gate. One of the town's best-used, most valued spaces, it has proved a lifeline during lockdown. EE wants better phone signals for train passengers. Full story p7

## Baker switches to shop trading

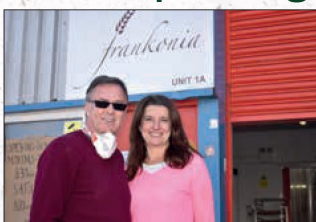
Frankonia, which supplied bread to Harrods, the Ritz, Selfridges and the Savoy from Tolworth's Red Lion business park, has reinvented itself as a shop for locals.

The artisan bakery run by husband-and-wife team Kevin Devine and Birgit Gunz can, at full tilt, produce 20,000 items a night, including croissants, muffins, loaves, cake and pastries, with a team of 14 bakers.

With wholesale orders dramatically down, individual customers are welcome, 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat.

The baker even supplied the Houses of Parliament ("Ed Davey's been a great help to us, plugging the business," said Kevin), but it's been a case of one door closing and another opening.

"We feel we've bonded with the community in a spectacular way;

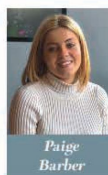
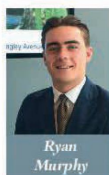


in fact we're quite excited about that," said Kevin of the surge in personal orders. "We can't express enough thanks to the people who have been coming to the shop and supporting us."

Frankonia's flour supply has held firm, and home deliveries are augmenting the shop trade.

"We're doing different types of bread boxes," said Kevin. "An artisan one, a big breakfast box and so on." [www.frankonia.co.uk](http://www.frankonia.co.uk)

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## Kingston Stronger Together



We are seeking donations of food from residents and businesses to help the most vulnerable members of our community during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic.

Visit [www.kingston.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.kingston.gov.uk/coronavirus) and click 'How can I help?' to find out how to donate.

If you are unable to donate food but would still like to help, you can pledge money to the 'Love Kingston COVID-19 crisis appeal' which can be found online.





● On the day before the French Tarte in Maple Road closed for the virus, Eric Guignard was declared Surrey winner in the National Bakery Awards. Eric, and wife Sarah, pledged: "We'll come back stronger and more resilient than ever!" The French Table and French Tarte, Surbiton institutions for 19 years, suspended business on March 20. Donning rubber gloves, David Jacobson took this snap.



## Dairy becomes shop

Morgan's Dairy, a family-run business for more than 70 years, has been adapting to these strange times by rolling up its shutters and creating a makeshift shop counter in the Red Lion Business Centre off Red Lion Road. And it's proving popular. "Have we got milk? Of course," said director Lara Morgan-Graham, pictured standing alongside cousin and co-director Hywel Morgan.

Their dads began the firm in grandma's house near Charing Cross Hospital in Fulham, but for the last six years sales and distribution has been in Tolworth.

Open Mon-Sat, 8.30am-midday, the dairy has milk, butter, eggs (most of the time), cream, yoghurt, orange and apple juice and cheese. Pitch up and join the 6ft-spaced queue, or order a doorstep drop-off if you self-isolate or are vulnerable. [www.morgansdairy.co.uk](http://www.morgansdairy.co.uk)



## Harts heads upmarket

After a major top-to-toe refurb, Harts Boatyard reopened... then succumbed to shutdown.

When it returns, Surbitonians will find it's being pitched at a more upmarket clientele, while retaining cheaper fixed-price lunch deals.

The Portsmouth Road eatery has new multi-level dining zones (inside and out, with some bookable as private party spaces) and a fresh menu from chef Jiri Matura.

Think tuna tartare, wild scallops with lobster and crab bonbons, lamb rack, charred octopus, miso aubergine bao buns. Plus there's a new standalone vegan menu.

Harts is part of Mitchells & Butlers (All Bar One, O'Neills, Toby Carveries, Harvesters) but, like Thames Ditton's Albany, it is designated a 'premium country pub' – the firm's poshest brand.

"We spent a lot of time arguing over colour schemes and fabrics," an insider said. "So Harts is trendier than The Albany, for example!" The old Harts was draughty, the new very warm. "There's



nothing worse than having to eat with your coat on," said our mole. There's a nightclubby feel in the evening; mood lighting, dark corners, cosy nooks. It's still smart/cas, but its fixed-price lunch menu broadens its appeal, and there's no doubting this represents serious investment in the local restaurant scene at a time when others are struggling.

A £21-a-head three-course deal operates Mon, Tue and Wed, with wine bottles £12. The outside patio has been revamped, to maximise enjoyment of summer Thames panoramas, and afternoon tea (with or without bubbly) is still a feature.

The staff are efficient and clued-up. Orders are taken via iPad and relayed direct to the kitchen, the food quality is superb (the pork belly crackling is heavenly) and fake beams cunningly act as disguised air-con blowers. But the napkins are paper – an incongruous choice for the most upmarket brand in the company's stable.

Intriguingly, chairs are designed for the broader bottom. Is Harts trying to make a point about the size of Surbiton diners, or merely being generous? Updates: [www.hartsboatyard.co.uk](http://www.hartsboatyard.co.uk) **Tim Harrison**

## It's more than just a gin

Meet Barbara, a pint-sized (10-litre, actually) vessel of warmth and loveliness. The traditional copper pot still, named after Felicity Kendal's character in 80s sitcom *The Good Life*, is at No 97, Maple Road, infusing botanicals to make the gin bar's moonshine, writes **Jane Grove**.

Juniper, pink grapefruit, earl grey tea, coriander, lemon peel, cardamom, orris root and pink peppercorn are added to a neutral grain spirit by restaurateur and gin whizz Sam Berry to make No 97's interpretation of a great gin. It's popular with punters for its aromatic finish of citrus notes and spice hint.

Barbara gives up her elixir five times a week, so 60 bottles to sell (or serve post-Covid) to customers. The Good Life gin has taken off, so Sam may have to up production or get a bigger still.

"We're proud of what we have created," said the entrepreneur, who owns No 97 and Italian neighbourhood restaurant Cento Uno next door. "I love a martini so we wanted a gin which could just be sipped, but works well with tonic too. We are

really happy with it." Sam said the whole premise of No 97 was based around gin. "We love gin – that was the concept of the restaurant – but after selling 150 types of everyone else's we thought well, Surbiton hasn't got a gin, let's make our own in small batches."

After initially outsourcing production, they decided to make it in-house. "It's becoming more than just a gin," said Sam, whose future plans include Mixologists on the Move (gin bar staff come to your home and either serve cocktails or run a gin masterclass).

Barrel-aged gin is also offered. "We've bought a whisky barrel from Scotland, and age the gin so it has whisky notes. You get the smokiness and peatiness, but it's not as harsh as gin is softer than whisky. We age up to three months to start with."

A 57 per cent navy-strength gin is further down the road. Though currently closed in lockdown, you can enjoy Barbara's product via a mobile speakeasy menu, with free delivery every Friday within a two-mile radius, or further afield for a £5 charge. Call **020 8390 0101** or email [sam@thegoodlifeginco.co.uk](mailto:sam@thegoodlifeginco.co.uk)

to order. Good Life gin (70cl) + 5 tonics is £30. You can also collect from Cento Uno; all collections are zero-contact. There is also a pre-batch cocktail range.



## Nor any drop to drink

Surbitonians have many things to look forward to when we emerge from lockdown – a new water fountain being one.

Thames Water, in tandem with the Mayor of London, has been installing water fountains, plumbing one in outside Nat West in Victoria Road – a sister to the one opened recently in Tolworth Broadway.

However, the shutdown has put operations on hold; both are now swathed in plastic.

Thames Water told *The Good Life*: "Given the fast-moving coronavirus situation, we've closed our public fountains, and paused installing new ones. It's so we can prioritise essential day-to-day services and respond to any emergencies during the outbreak."

"We hope to get our fountains back up and running very soon."

More on the fountains at [www.tinyurl.com/yd6afv3f](http://www.tinyurl.com/yd6afv3f)



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## the good life

Editor: **Tim Harrison**

Set up in 2012, the community paper for Surbiton, Tolworth, Berrylands and Long Ditton appears six times a year between March and November. In normal times we deliver to 11,500 homes.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, this issue is online only. We're always delighted to hear from you, whether it's about editorial or advertising, or joining our band of loyal volunteers

who help us deliver... when we can leave home! The email address is: [thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com](mailto:thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com)



Between issues, Surbiton news appears on Instagram (@[thegoodlifesurbiton](https://www.instagram.com/thegoodlifesurbiton)) and on our website, where fresh stories are posted most days, and where back issues are archived.

Special thanks to our advertisers, whose support makes this paper possible. These are tough days for everyone, and if we were allowed to hug you, we would.

[www.thegoodlifesurbiton.co.uk](http://www.thegoodlifesurbiton.co.uk)

In good times this paper is available at Michael's shoe repairs, Shoes At Last, Jennings, the cornerHOUSE, Community Motors & Stear greengrocers.

# THE BLACK LION

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We desperately miss you, our customers! You make our pub the heart of the community. We're keeping busy, cooking meals for vulnerable local people and Kingston Hospital staff. But until we can open again, join our Tuesday evening quiz on Zoom.

It's at 7pm, and it lets regulars see one another, and catch up. Email [marksheehy55@gmail.com](mailto:marksheehy55@gmail.com) and be invited in



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## MP treads lightly

If Surbiton MP Ed Davey shuffles by in slippers, it's because his favourite shoes are stuck on a shelf in Michael's repair shop in Claremont Road, waiting to be collected! "The good news? They're ready," said the cobbler. "The bad news? I don't know when we'll reopen!"

## Snacks delivered

Surbiton farmers' market regular Elena Weaver is selling 'saffins' (mini savoury muffins) online, home-delivering the gluten-free, mainly vegan, snacks. For delights such as feta, spinach & ricotta turnovers or macaroni cheese cups, visit [www.homeofsavoury.co.uk](http://www.homeofsavoury.co.uk)

## Picnics at home

Several Berrylands streets plan stay-at-home street parties for VE Day's 75th anniversary on Fri May 8. The bank hol (isn't every day now?) will see residents decorate houses in red, white and blue, and picnic in their own front gardens!

## A-B-C reasoning

Why did the now-demolished Hotel Antoinette switch to Antoinette Hotel? Former owner Hilary Buzasi explains it was alphabetically good for business. At its peak, 30,000 guests a year stayed in what were knocked-together houses. It opened in the 1950s when 26 Beaufort Road was bought for £7,100.

## Hot meal service

Niku bar & restaurant in Ewell Road has been preparing hot meals for NHS frontline staff at Kingston Hospital, the Met police, neighbouring Surbiton Health Centre, the maternity unit at Epsom Hospital and TfL bus drivers.

## Scout cash threat

A scout group's viability is in peril after the Dittons Fair on Giggs Hill Green was cancelled for you-know-what. It has been a community fundraiser in Long Ditton and Thames Ditton since 1956. The Dittons Scout Group (180 members aged six to 18) now faces – like many bodies – a financial shortfall.

## Swallows return

Bird watchers in Surbiton clocked the first returning swallows on Sat, Apr 18.

## Elliot talks voles

Surbiton wildlife guru Elliot Newton has shed light on hidden hunters and creatures making cities their home (voles, bats, dragonflies, woodpeckers) on the Earth Live Lesson YouTube channel. The council's biodiversity officer live-streams talks on the town's Library & Heritage Facebook page too.

## Walk route guide

Need a new exercise route? Instagram's @surbitonwalks has photos of points of interest, nuggets of info and directions. "We're happy if people like looking at the photos and are inspired to explore the locations while pottering out on their daily exercise. I think we're all looking at Surbs in a very different light these days."

## Mitch salon shuts

Brighton Road salon Hair by Mitch closed a month before lockdown. Vidal Sassoon-trained Michelle, ex-best new business winner, ran it for 11 years.

## Dental question

Surbiton dental practice Invisibrace has presented its locked-down clients with a conundrum. Q: If Jenny has 32 bars of chocolate, and eats 19 of them, what does she have? A: Probably cavities!

## Run out of room?

There are few more irritating things than running out of space after going to the trouble of making a helpful sign, so spare a thought for Boots, Victoria Road. It's just utterly infuriat



## Nest preserved after dad's plea

Plans to build a new apartment on existing flats in a Surbiton backwater were rejected after an emotional plea from a dad. When twentysomething Ellie Lucy bought her top-floor flat off tiny St Mary's Road, by the back garden of the Victoria pub, she expected it to remain the top-floor flat, her dad Mike Lucy told the town's neighbourhood committee.

She nicknamed it The Nest, the chef added, his voice cracking with emotion as he recalled the day his daughter moved in. But plans had been unveiled for a two-bed split-level flat on top, and that, said Mr Lucy, "would destroy The Nest".

Helen Greenhalgh, for the applicant, said the plan was in keeping with the conservation area and that the proposed new 'duplex' matched the stepped, balconied design of flats beneath. Building disruption would last four months, she added.

Councillors heard that Ellie's flat would lose some light as a stairwell window would be blocked, but Kingston Council planning officers (mindful of housing demand) recommended approval. It would, said officers, "make a small positive contribution towards the borough's housing supply".

Mr Lucy disagreed, saying two more storeys would "negatively affect Ellie and her neighbours". Councillors were split. Cllr Malcolm Self said: "If I lived in the flat beneath, I'd be objecting too because I wouldn't want the loss of light from my rooflights."

Cllr Liz Green, who said two decades ago she'd lived in a neighbouring flat, added: "I'm not particularly keen."

Cllr Sharon Sumner said it looked like the new flat was simply being "plonked" on the existing flats. The committee voted seven to four to reject the proposal after dubbing it "an incongruous design" that "sat uneasily on the host building". **Tim Harrison**



Haircut, sir?

The queues at supermarkets are about to shift to barbers and hairdressers, and Surbiton's newest barber is standing by, scissors aloft.

With unlucky timing, Rebaz Ali opened in the town centre days before lockdown.

Al Capone, at 74 Victoria Road (in the former flight centre next to Poundland) launched with a Wanted Dead or Alive poster in the window, which turned out to be a staff appeal for his five-chair salon.

Rebaz, a 34-year-old Kurd who lives near Our Lady Immaculate in Tolworth, has created a tidy, swish, well-equipped barbershop.

Basic haircuts are £11... but why, with such choice, should customers come to him?

"I'm a great listener," he said. "There's no need to go to therapy; come here instead!"

Rebaz studied biomedical science at uni before becoming a barber. The shop will open seven days a week.

## SURBITON LIFE

by David Cox



A volunteer takes the on-line version of The Good Life to those without internet access

## It tolls for thee: Simon keeps ringing

St Matthew's is without its Ellacombe chimes and service bell, stranded in a Leicestershire foundry, but it didn't stop music director Simon Hancock from a handbell peal in the garden of the rectory before his missus, the Rev Helen Hancock, live-streamed an Easter message to her flock.

"They should have come back in March, then... lockdown," said Helen, whose Easter sermon is still at [www.stmatthewskt6.org](http://www.stmatthewskt6.org)

"We can't wait for the real bells to ring out once things are back to normal, but for now we do the best we can!" added the rector.

Helen uploads a 10-minute act

of worship each morning to the church Facebook page and website. "People say it's a real help; an aid to faithful living, a support in difficult times."

"I introduced it when the lockdown happened."

Listen in to Simon's handbell rendition of the church bells at: [www.tinyurl.com/y8ur6q9j](http://www.tinyurl.com/y8ur6q9j)



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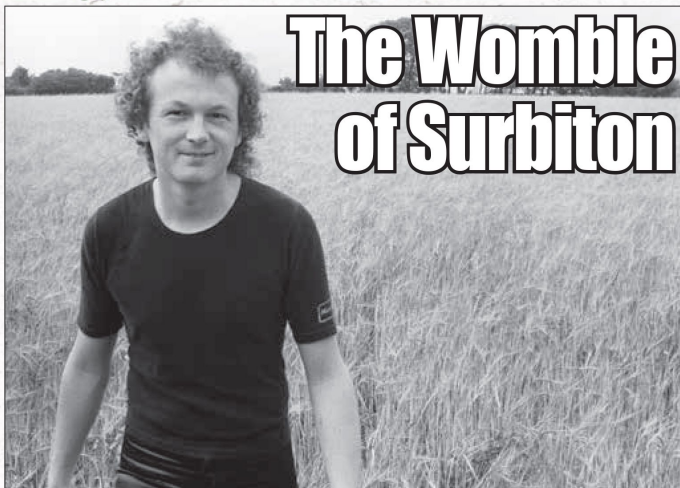


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**M**ention Mike Batt to people of a certain age, and they'll instantly respond: 'Womble!'

For years the singer/songwriter had an uneasy relationship with the furry grey litter-pickers of Wimbledon Common.

While they brought him fame and fortune and gave him a string of 1970s hits, they also pigeonholed him as a novelty act, and undermined his credibility as a producer, conductor and arranger.

Why would anyone take seriously a man whose claim to fame was prancing around on Top of the Pops (he was Orinoco), pretending to strum a guitar while wearing a ridiculous, whiffy animal costume?

Now 71, that mindset has changed. He looks back with pride on his days promoting the concept of recycling; a quirky eco-warrior, three decades before Greta Thunberg was even thought of!

So relaxed is he about Womble songs that several are included on a new two-disc 'best of' CD, wittily entitled *Mike Batt, The Penultimate Collection*.

Batt's canniest move, back in 1973, was to waive his £200 writer's fee for The

Wombles Song in exchange for the right to produce music ever after as The Wombles.

Hit singles followed, plus four gold albums and the accolade of spending more weeks in the UK's LP charts in 1974 than even Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*!

Given two days' notice before *Top of the Pops*, Batt's mum, Elaine, made six costumes for the band to wear.

### NOTABLE SURBITONIANS Mike Batt

Another track on Batt's new double album is his version of *Bright Eyes*, a phenomenal worldwide hit for Art Garfunkel, who first heard it played on the front-

room piano at 11 Langley Avenue, Surbiton. Batt might as well have named the house *Tobermory* as it was funded by Womble royalties (together with a jaunty bubblegum pop hit, *Summertime City*).

Born in Southampton in 1949, Mike spent his early life moving around the country. "My father was a local government civil engineer and we moved to York, Eastbourne, Coventry, Bradford and Winchester.

"From Winchester I tried to ply my trade as a songwriter, so I moved to London."

He answered an ad in *New Musical Express* and joined Liberty Records.

"I first broke through as an artist, and had hits, in the 70s," he said, adding that the request to write a theme song for a children's animation series called *The Wombles* changed everything.

"They were a source of great joy to me at the time... and finance! They got me on my feet. But it wasn't really what I wanted to be doing. I was trying to get away from the Wombles! The Wombles were a great big shadow over me at the time, even though I loved doing them."

Batt moved to Langley Avenue in 1974 (he'd previously lived on a houseboat in Byfleet) with wife Wendy and young daughters Samantha and Robin, both now in their late 40s.

As a songwriter/producer, he had success with *Steeleye Span* and the single and album *All Around My Hat* in 1975. Then, after writing *Bright Eyes*, the biggest-selling UK single of 1979, for the film *Watership Down*

meant Batt was suddenly back in demand.

"I was at Langley Avenue, and we were due to go into the studio the following day," he recalled. "Art Garfunkel had flown in the day before, and was going to come over at 1pm. But he went to the Savoy and fell asleep... so he eventually turned up at 1am!"

"I was doing the arrangement, but I couldn't finish it until I'd got the key he was going to sing it in. I was about to go to bed, so then I had to stay up all night writing it. I went to the studio the next day and recorded it, then stayed up the next night to do the vocals. It was two days solid."

In search of adventure, the family set off round the world on Batt's 128ft yacht

Braemar. "I was away on a boat for two years, thinking I was being very hippy. It was a life experience for the family, but it wasn't the best career move as I was just getting on the A-list of people asked to do film scores."

By 1982 the Surbiton dream had died. Back from the high seas and divorced from Wendy, he married Aussie actress Julianne White and had two more kids, a boy and girl, both now in their late 20s.

He began producing solo albums of his own. "They did well in other countries; Germany, Australia, South Africa, Holland. But in the UK I was still just a Womble, and they wouldn't let a Womble go on 'The Old Grey Whistle Test'."

He discovered Katie Melua (writing the songstress's biggest hits) and has conducted many of the world's great orchestras, including the London Symphony and Royal Philharmonic.

"The new CD is a sort-of story-of-my-life album," he said, explaining that it combined UK music with overseas hits, and songs he wrote or produced for others and has reinterpreted himself.

"I never became a Cat Stevens or Rod Stewart in terms of artist recognisability, and because of that I didn't have to tread a path that meant that I had to make a certain kind of music all the time; it set me free to do what I wanted. I did some classical. I conducted *The Planets*, I did some adventurous instrumentals.

"There are some tracks that people will say: 'Well, I've never heard that one', others that they'll say: 'I know that one and that one and that one'. It's a real smorgasbord of every type of music I've ever done."

Batt, appointed Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order in 2013, recently moved to Southfields. "I've spent my entire life being asked what it's like living in Wimbledon,

and I've always said: 'I don't know; I just wrote the bloody songs and wore the costume'. Now, living there, it's quite funny."

Mike Batt - *The Penultimate Collection* is released as a double-CD album on Dramatico on May 8.

**Tim Harrison**  
● Mike Batt, born February 6 1949



Mike Batt's Surbiton home, 11 Langley Avenue, and (black & white), in the 1970s, pictured by Michael Putland @michaelpotland.com

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# Former MP Dick Tracey dies at 77

Dick Tracey, Surbiton's MP from 1983-97, has died at 77. Elected three times, he served as sports minister in the mid-80s, and sat on the public accounts committee. He leaves a wife, Kathy, four grown-up children – Simon, Nicola, Emma and Polly – and several grandchildren.

A former Daily Express and BBC journalist, he entered politics in the 1970s, unsuccessfully contesting Northampton North in 1974 before becoming chair of Putney Conservative Association. He also joined the Wimbledon bench as a magistrate.

Surbiton's parliamentary seat became vacant in 1983 after MP Sir Nigel Fisher (who had a rocky relationship with the local Conservative association) decided to retire. Kingston Council's then leader Mike Knowles was tipped to be chosen as Tory candidate, so much so that the Surrey Comet's front page had already been set, announcing the news.

It was hastily rejigged after Dick unexpectedly charmed the selection committee. He swept home with 54% of the local vote as Margaret Thatcher won a 144-seat majority landslide.

An amiable, unflappable MP, he was always keen to fly the flag for Surbiton. Laura Marcus, who covered the area for the Comet, remembers a "poised, elegant, well-spoken, personable man", adding: "I found him very engaging and warm, and at his acceptance speech – which I attended – I could see at once why they picked him. He held the room. He always struck me as someone I couldn't imagine anyone not liking."

On the night of the May 1 1997 election, following boundary changes which created today's Kingston & Surbiton seat, he walked confidently up the steps to Kingston Guildhall's main chamber, where the count was taking place, only to discover that Lib Dem Ed Davey had pipped him by 56 out of 55,665 votes cast.

Despite being on opposing sides, Sir Ed paid a



warm tribute to his predecessor after learning of his death on March 19. "We were very sad to hear the news," he said. "He was a lovely man who will be much missed. Our thoughts go out to his family and friends."

A Wandsworth resident, invariably seen out and about in a flat cap, Dick went on to represent Merton on the London Assembly from 2008-16, where he was deputy leader of the Tory group.

As London Mayor, Boris Johnson made him his Thames ambassador, to expand the waterway's transport links. Boris fondly called him Old Man River! A convivial man with a great sense of humour, Dick remained in politics right up to his death, as president of Tooting Conservatives. **Tim Harrison**

## Council tax increases by 4%

Surbiton residents are having to pay £1.19 extra a week for bins, potholes, libraries and other services after the local authority raised council tax by 3.99%.

Add in fire and police, and the average Band D home will now be charged £1,945.15 a year.

Kingston Council blames a lack of funding from on high. In 2010 the borough received £66m from central government. Today that has dropped to zero.

It has prompted, says the council, "some very tough decisions". To balance the books, the local authority will have to make £32million in savings over the next four years.

It has listed its top priorities as looking after vulnerable people and improving air quality.



## Time to consider nursing

Now that it's more impressive to tell people you're thinking of becoming a nurse rather than an accountant, serious grants are available to students.

From September, Kingston College is giving £5,000-per-year grants to degree students studying nursing, midwifery and some other health-related subjects.

At a time when traditionally poorly paid jobs are finally being reappraised and recognised as the most important, the local further education college is offering big subsidies to encourage applicants to come forward.

The annual grant is non-repayable and non-means tested, and there's the possibility of an additional £3,000 a year being given towards childcare costs where relevant.

The college – five bus stops from Surbiton station – offers a range of access to HE diplomas, including Nursing, Midwifery, Paramedic Science and Science.

Access diplomas are one-year, full time or part-time and can fit around applicants' lifestyles. They are for adults aged 19+ who have been out of full-time education for some while.

They can also provide a route to undergraduate study at college or university. If you go on to complete a uni or college programme, the access loan is written off.

Full details at [www.kingston-college.ac.uk](http://www.kingston-college.ac.uk)

Nothing wrong with accountancy, by the way. But when did an accountant last get a round of applause in the streets on a Thursday evening?



Felicity Gracie-Herst teaching computer skills to youngsters at Long Ditton village hall

## Youngsters online

With many children being home-schooled during the pandemic, it poses a question for parents: should they be trying to steer youngsters away from computer screens, or should they be versing them in digital ways as early as possible?

Felicity Gracie-Herst has no doubt it should be the latter, and she speaks as someone who has taught computer skills to children as young as three at classes in the village hall in Long Ditton.

What began as a maternity-leave project broadened into a way of steering children towards safe use of computers for a woman who was a young convert herself.

"I wrote my first computer program at five, but never thought of it as a career until a mentor convinced me tech careers could be creative," she said. Having studied computer science at university and worked in the video games industry, creating games for mobile phones, she moved into creative computer coding classes for youngsters, using song, rhyme and storytelling.

Felicity's top tips for parents to keep under-8s safe on the internet:

- Be a positive role-model. Regulating your own screen time will foster good habits in your children.
- Talk about how you use your devices, for instance: 'I'm going to leave my phone outside during our bedtime stories.'
- Learn about your children's digital habits and adopt approaches to suit each one. Try not to instinctively criticise; offer more freedom if they prove they can be responsible within the rules.
- Use parental controls; your internet service provider will have simple online instructions.
- Empower them with skills to keep themselves safe and happy online. Teach them to simply turn the screen face down and find a trusted adult if they find something inappropriate.

## Where's our balustrade?

The elegant balustrade which once topped a historic Surbiton building has vanished, and councillors are to investigate. Queensborough House, opposite the station on the curved corner of Claremont Road and St Mark's Hill, matched the parapet of HSBC opposite, resident John Tellick told the town's neighbourhood committee.

After a flat was added on top, it has gone missing, he told them. "I complained, but heard nothing," he said, adding that the committee had some responsibility as it had approved the changes. Mr Tellick suggested that as it was unlikely the stonework could be recreated, a 3D-printed version might replicate the old look. "We've lost part of our heritage," he said.

The developer had pledged 'no adverse impact' when, in 2016, permission was given for a new two-bed flat above a building categorised as 'of townscape merit'.

Queensborough House was built in the 1820s, in the reign of George IV, nearly two decades before the first steam train chuffed into Surbiton. The 2016 planning application promised to 'reflect the hierarchy of the Georgian architectural vocabulary'. Quite. **TH**



Left, the balustrade in a 1924 snap. Below, how it looks today



## Improve wellbeing by 'wiping away' stress

Wellbeing courses can improve mental health during the stress of lockdown and, although Surbiton's adult education classes have been suspended, online experiments have started.

On Friday, April 24, for example, a one-hour relaxation class (2-3pm) promises to 'wipe away the stress of daily life' by

giving instruction on breathing, meditation, mindfulness and the importance of gratitude.

Places are restricted, but other sessions will soon be announced at [www.kingston.gov.uk/adulteducation](http://www.kingston.gov.uk/adulteducation)

With all activity on hold at the King Charles centre in Hollyfield Road, virtual experiences are

being improvised by tutors.

"Depending on the success of the courses, we do hope to extend them," said Annette Brown, community learning manager.

Last week the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Wills and Kate, added their voices to calls to safeguard mental as well as physical health in the pandemic.

## Roberts CLEANERS



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Don't undervalue our nurseries and garden centres, says Janice Cripps

## Be thankful for a hard-pressed industry



The benefits of gardening as a hobby are well documented; it provides exercise, boosts wellbeing and can provide spiritual sustenance in difficult times such as these. For many of us, trapped in our homes these past few weeks, the garden has been our saviour.

But are garden centres essential in lockdown? The Republic of Ireland thinks so, but the UK government is less sympathetic and, as a result, millions of plants are likely to be scrapped, horticultural businesses will go under and jobs lost.

This current crisis is a further blow for the horticultural industry which has had to cope with increased labour costs, increased energy costs (vital for glasshouse production) and more recently, increased admin costs as a result of Brexit. Did you know all plants have to have a passport now? The sad truth is that, over the years, the UK has lost much of its production base for growing flowers, shrubs and trees and we rely a lot on

trading relationships with Europe. We also rely on Europe to supply extra labour during the peak season. UK growers find it tough to sustain business, never mind make a profit, and they need our support.

To me, there has always seemed a mismatch between how we, as a nation, view the horticultural



industry and how we value our gardens. There have never been so many TV programmes on the subject and newspapers

and glossy lifestyle magazines are awash with articles on dream gardens and 'bringing the outdoors indoors'. Surely the industry should be thriving.

Recently I overheard a complaint about the cost of a standard-sized plant – an aster priced at £9.99. I wonder if that rather grumpy customer realised that plant may have taken 18 months to two years

to reach the garden centre. It would have started life as a seed, been divided and re-potted several times, nurtured for months in a temperature-controlled glasshouse and maybe taken several weeks to make its way from, say, Belgium or The Netherlands, across the North Sea to her local garden centre. Suddenly that plant is a bargain!

In this world of instant gratification, we totally undervalue the time, effort and skill it takes to grow plants, and the vital role of the horticultural industry. It would be nice to think we could increase our home production, but attitudes will have to significantly change first.

During the lockdown, Hill Park Nursery, Woodstock Lane North, has continued to supply and deliver plants, composts and other garden products. The nursery is one of the few remaining specialist rose growers in the UK; we're extremely lucky to have them on our doorstep.

Janice Cripps is a professional Surbiton garden designer.

For advice, planting plans, or projects – from concept to completion – visit [www.janicecripps.co.uk](http://www.janicecripps.co.uk)

● Congrats to Mary Parmar, Janine Martin and Eric Banks, the Surbiton winners of the council's annual community awards.

Mary, a volunteer for the Alpha Road estate residents' association, was praised for her dedication and support to those around her. She helps organise the estate's Christmas party for children, and outings.

Janine Martin's award began with a crisp packet. Her recycling drive grew and grew, and Sunray Recycle was born.



In the last year she has set up multiple community recycling points across the Sunray estate, and now further afield, and has also introduced the concept of building eco bricks with plastic packaging.

Eric Banks, Berrylands Scout Group leader and a lifelong resident of the borough, is revered by hundreds of young people. He has run more than 50 camps, takes charge of weekly meetings (often single-handed) and is renowned for his inventive

wide games, captivating stories and cooking competitions. In all, 16 winners were honoured by the mayor, Cllr Margaret Thompson, who said we all owe a great debt of gratitude to community-minded people.



## Prom pals become works of art

You'd know them anywhere. The three amigos: Keith McMahon, Julian Meers and Elliot Newton, depicted (pre-Covid) by illustrator Lisa Tolley at Queens Promenade's pocket park.

Tools Down, the fourth in a series for spring, shows the camaraderie and work of the volunteers who have cleared and maintained land around the caretaker's hut by the towpath. Others show a fence being painted, a cast iron heritage post being cleaned, and the ingenious adaptation of a chair as a planter for tulips.

The Thames Ditton artist explained: "Julian approached me at Surbiton farmers' market about illustrating the pocket park, and once I saw it I realised how unique and inspiring it was – from its scale, to the social history and the passion of the volunteers who have created it.

"For the first series of illustrations I have focused on the activities of the volunteers and their enthusiasm for the garden."

Julian Meers, chair of the Queens Promenade Friends, said there were two main aims of the pocket park: to transform what had effectively become wasteland and, most importantly, to do the transforming with the community.

"The community came first in my mind, the transformation second. That's why I love these pictures, because they centre on the volunteers and what they

do, and what they are about, and how they get on with each other. That, to me, is the most important part of what the pocket park is about.

"Lisa has got it, she has understood us totally. That's why they mean a lot to me – they are not just pretty pictures.

"Her detail is amazing. I am thrilled that she has taken such a keen interest in the pocket park and its volunteers; her witty

interpretations demonstrate the sentiment of the project so charmingly."

Julian said the Friends group hadn't yet decided on the best way of displaying the illustrations, but one idea was to have them on mugs and tea towels, so the volunteers could enjoy seeing the pictures at every tea break.



## When you walk, carry a bucket with you

Could you help water a newly planted community orchard at Berrylands Nature Reserve?

The group which helps maintain and nurture the five-hectare reserve off Raeburn Avenue needs waterers to tend fruit trees planted in January, and other saplings, while on daily walks.

"Usually we'd do tree watering as a group activity as part of our volunteer sessions, but with sessions on hold

during the virus outbreak, we can't do that at the moment," said reserve friends treasurer Andrew Irving. "We're hoping some people might be able to take a bucket, jug, watering can or bottle of water on their walk to make sure trees get the water they need."

Two types of watering are needed. "Fruit trees in our community orchard need a good regular soaking of about 20 litres a week (about two buckets' worth). Smaller tree saplings aren't as thirsty, so can get away with less... but there are more of them. They would ideally get two to five litres a week, when it's dry."

Depending on where you live, how you can transport water, or how often you feel like doing it, different patches will work for different people, he said. "Anything you can



do is hugely appreciated, and although we can't do it together as a group, families are welcome to water together. A perfect time to get the kids involved!"

Email Andrew: [berrylandsnr@gmail.com](mailto:berrylandsnr@gmail.com) or visit [www.berrylandsnaturereserve.org](http://www.berrylandsnaturereserve.org) Jane Grove

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## Litter-pickers pick up hefty grant

The Sunray estate's litter patrol has landed a £3,000 grant to clear cluttered, fly-tipped alleys and service roads.

The Sunray and Egmont Community Residents' Association was given £3,090 to tackle antisocial dumping in the maze of byways off Elmdene, Hazel Bank, Vincent Avenue, Rayleigh Drive and Knollmead. SECra is recruiting street reps to be 'eyes



Out on their one-hour walk, Doug and Jeannette James saw this decorated cross on the traffic barrier between Dunton Close and Southborough Road. "I imagine someone put it up for Easter," said Jeannette. "Though not a churchgoer, I found it strangely moving."



and ears' and identify problems in the service roads blighted by trucks depositing waste, and lazy muggles dumping mattresses – an issue that has worsened during lockdown as corporation tips have been closed.

Activists took part in the Great British Spring Clean event as part of Keep Britain Tidy, but the grant cash will help fund a more ambitious project to tackle alley dumping.

SECra's Paul Martin told the neighbourhood committee that fly-tipping was a big headache. "It's never been possible to physically clear all the service roads, so we are going to use a licensed waste company to remove all the stuff," he said.

Once clear, street reps will keep a watching eye, while motion-sensitive lights and CCTV will also help deter the dumpers.

Some of the service roads and alleys are to be enhanced with planted beds, and turned into safe play areas. "We're proud of our area," he said.

Councillors unanimously backed the grant. "It's amazingly ambitious," said Cllr Hilary Gander. Cllr Sharron Sumner added: "You're doing a wonderful job," and urged residents to make a second grant bid next year.

Cllr Diane White summed up the clean-up drive as "a brilliant community effort".



## Home-front heroines do their bit

Felicity Leicester sorts material to make scrubs and laundry bags for NHS workers and care homes



This is Felicity Leicester's front garden, and that's Felicity in the middle of it!

The green energies consultant from Long Ditton has organised a team to make scrubs and laundry bags for NHS and care home staff, with material for making PPE and bags arriving at KT Scrubbers for Carers HQ in Ditton Grange Close (aka Felicity's home).

"Thanks to 50+ wonderful community volunteers we've already received 150 scrub bags," said Felicity, who is used to galvanising the community into action.

One donation came from a 93-year-old in Long Ditton whose cotton quilt was owned by her great auntie, who served as a nurse in Syria in the First World War.

"It is now going to be recycled to fight the Covid war," said Felicity.

Thanks to Kingston Rotary Club and Kingston's Carers UK ambassador, material was bought and is currently being made up into scrubs, size-labelled and washed.

Batches will be distributed to district nurses in Kingston, the Royal Star and Garter Home in Upper Brighton Road and local GP surgeries such as Langley Medical Practice and Claremont Medical Centre.



Christine Appleyard, one of the KT Scrubbers for Carers team, is busy making laundry bags

"Carers, care homes, hospitals, and doctors surgeries in our community need scrubs and laundry bags to take their dirty scrubs home to wash," said Felicity.

"We can use pillow cases and sheets that are 50% or more cotton for the laundry bags. They have to be able to wash at 65 degrees plus. We also need binding for edges, a cotton-type wool to make cords/drawstrings, or the cord

itself. If anyone wants to make the scrub bags themselves, fold the top down about three inches deep for a drawstring to freely flow and to open and close."

Drop donations at Redroofs, 9 Ditton Grange Close, Long Ditton, KT6 5HQ. "If the material is plain, thick enough, and there is enough of it, it can be used for scrubs too."

Email [felicity.leicester@gmail.com](mailto:felicity.leicester@gmail.com) Jane Grove

## Hang it all

Expect more hanging baskets, thanks to a grant from the neighbourhood committee. Chiltern Drive, Ewell Road and Berrylands Road will get six, 16 and five respectively. Each costs £111, but the brackets are reusable. Victoria Road will get 30, Claremont Road



16, Brighton Road and St Mark's Hill 20, and Tolworth Broadway 19. In all, £3,000 will be added to £6,545 of ward funding to pay



for them. Meanwhile, Surbiton's firefighters have entered surprisingly recycled an old helmet, to create a rather fetching hanging basket of their own in Ewell Road.

## How would EE's boss like one of these on his lawn?

An 82ft (25m) mobile phone mast, the height of two double deckers, could appear in Victoria rec if the council gives the plan the nod.

The mast would benefit passengers on trains which use the line on the embankment by the Balaclava Road park. It would tower over users of the 8-acre space near Surbiton town centre, but also over neighbouring homes in a conservation area.

The pole would sit on a 14ft (4.3m) square concrete base in a 26ft x 20ft (8m by 6m) compound with fence, taking up a huge chunk of the park's southern side.

The planning application by Harlequin Group on behalf of mobile phone network EE has stunned residents who say most people in Victoria Avenue and Endsleigh Gardens, who would be nearest, haven't been consulted.

"Only a handful of us at the cul-de-sac end nearest the park have received any information," said Helen Swinburn, one of many Victoria Avenue residents opposing the bid, saying it would loom over homes and back gardens. "It feels like it's slipped under the radar, because it is going to affect hundreds of people who use the park too."

Helen said Victoria Rec was used by schools, nurseries, a community sports day, football and cricket clubs, and families with children, many who live in flats and need the green space to relax, play and exercise.

"It is a really valuable and well-used space – for a small park it is

fantastically well equipped. They have managed to cram in a cricket pitch, two football pitches, three tennis courts, a large play park and pavilion, and now Tarte in the Park does tea and cake. For a small park there is actually a lot going on."

Helen said families picnicked in the area where EE wants to plonk its mast, as it is quieter; away from the adjacent football and cricket pitches.

"Also a lot of people sit on benches around the edge, along by the embankment," she said. "No one is going to want to sit at half the benches now as they will be staring at railings and a massive pylon."

"Even though you are not allowed to object on the basis of health risk, people will worry about sitting under a mast or next to one and people will worry about children being near it."

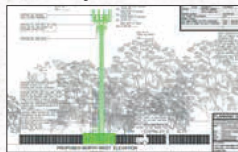
Helen said it wasn't just the footprint that the mast would cover, it would dominate the park itself. "For me, every time you walk in the park it would spoil the feeling of being in a little patch of nature. It seems outrageous that they think it's an appropriate thing to put there."

Victoria Avenue's Barbara Nash said the timing of the application over Easter and the lockdown seemed cynical, as no planning meetings are currently being held. "Also there is no mention of Network Rail land which, given the coverage is to benefit rail travellers, seems a strange omission."

Residents have appealed to MP Ed Davey and local councillors in

their bid to fight the mast. Cllr Diane White, on behalf of herself and fellow St Mark's ward councillors Liz Green and Yogan Yoganathan, said: "We consider the proposed location of the 25m mast incongruous to the open nature of the park. It would be an alien feature in a well-used park; it's siting and look are not acceptable."

"We do not believe the applicants have properly discounted less objectionable locations. Rather than look for the most suitable location, they have considered the cost of locating the mast on private buildings, where rent would be payable, and opted for the cheaper solution of public-owned land."



"We do not find it acceptable that cost, rather than appearance and people, is most important."

"While we recognise that under planning law health considerations are not allowed as a reason for refusal, some people do worry about the health implications of phone masts. This could lead to a reduction in use of the park, particularly by families and that is a wellbeing matter, both now and in the future."

The Harlequin Group, for EE, stressed that alternative locations

had been considered, and discounted for several reasons.

"Moreover, the continued provision of uninterrupted emergency services coverage – that the proposal will bring to commuters, residents and businesses in the area through 2G/3G/4G coverage is unquestionable from an economic, social and environmental perspective."

"This will not be achieved if this application is not approved by the local planning authority," it said.

The company, which identifies suitable sites for telecoms installations, said the primary purpose was to give EE customers the new 4G (and, later, 5G) service when using rail services west of Surbiton station, where there is a coverage gap.

"South Western Railway also utilise EE's 4G network for the connectivity of the on-board wi-fi on SWR services, so it is vital that there is continuity of coverage in order for the wi-fi to operate. The site will also provide coverage to the immediate area. As such, the proposal has been sited in close proximity to the rail to 'overlook' the vegetation that lines the railway."

The company said due to the area requiring coverage

along the railway line, the elevated height of the track and the height of the vegetation bordering the track, 25m was considered the absolute minimum height to provide 4G coverage to rail users and surrounding residential areas.

"Any reduction of height would render the apparatus redundant."

A previous bid, submitted by EE last year to Elmbridge Council for a point south of the tracks on St Mary's Road, was withdrawn after objections.

Barry Lomax, head of development management at the council, said the council would only consider the siting and appearance of the development.

Planning details can be found at [publicaccess.kingston.gov.uk/online-applications](http://publicaccess.kingston.gov.uk/online-applications), then search for reference 20/00809 or Victoria Recreation Ground.

Email comments about the proposal to [development.management@kingston.gov.uk](mailto:development.management@kingston.gov.uk) by Tues, Apr 28. You should include your full name and address and the reference 20/00809 on the email.

A decision, according to the council's planning department, needs to be made by the end of May. The application was made to the council on April 3, a week after the lockdown was enforced, and when planning meetings were suspended. Jane Grove

## A helping hand

Nearly 1,000 residents have stepped forward to help the community in the crisis. "We've been overwhelmed with the generosity of people," said a Kingston Council spokesman. "We're continuing to process applications. If you haven't heard yet, thanks for your patience; we'll be in touch very soon."

Kingston Stronger Together, a partnership of council, Kingston Voluntary Action and Volunteering Kingston, is recruiting helpers to shop, collect prescriptions, assist and ring people stuck at home for a chat.

There's a need for volunteers with specialist skills in social work and occupational therapy. To find out about being a volunteer and how to register, visit the council's website at [www.kingston.gov.uk](http://www.kingston.gov.uk) and search for its coronavirus page.



## Volunteer Q&amp;A

**What is Kingston & Surbiton COVID-19 Mutual Aid?**

The local branch of COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK ([www.covidmutualaid.org](http://www.covidmutualaid.org)), a network helping to connect people in need as a result of the pandemic.

**How does it work?**

People email us at [mutualaid.kingston@gmail.com](mailto:mutualaid.kingston@gmail.com) or call 07730 645147.

**What help can you provide?**

We deliver groceries, walk dogs, phone; whatever's needed.

**How can I become a volunteer?**

Email. No experience is required,

but read our safeguarding information before you start.

**Who runs it?**

It was launched by resident Kateryna Smirnova, quickly joined by others, including me; people who shared her concern about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the community.



Anna Mckean answers questions

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## An NHS hero

Dr Anton Sebastianpillai has died of coronavirus two weeks after coming off shift at Kingston Hospital. The geriatrician lived in Corkran Road and, despite turning 75 in January, was still an active member of staff.

Admitted to his own intensive care unit, he died on April 4.

Both Anton and Yogan Yoganathan, a St Mark's ward councillor for nearly 20 years and former mayor, came to Britain from Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) in the late 1960s, and made Surbiton their home.

Yogan called his pal "one of the NHS heroes", adding: "As usual, he offered to serve, and was working with patients affected by coronavirus at Kingston Hospital."

Surbiton MP Ed Davey also paid tribute. "I had the privilege of knowing Anton, a great NHS servant and author of superb books like his Illustrated History of Sri Lanka."

Dr Sebastianpillai's family now extends around the area. His brother Felix and wife Shantha live in Tolworth, while a sister, Dr Sybil Kumar, lives in Long Ditton.



The consultant qualified as a doctor in 1967 having trained at the Peradeniya medical school, just outside Kandy.

A director of a residential care home in Southampton, he amassed a huge personal library of specialist books on Sri Lanka... contributing to the shelves himself with his history book in 2014, a coffee-table tome (seriously – it weighs 4 kilos) written under the pen name Anton Sebastian.

He described himself as an "antiquarian, physician and author", and was a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in London and a popular conference speaker.

Do cyclists believe this strip is meant for traversing woodland animals?

## You've got a lane, why won't you use it?

Surbiton, we're in unprecedented times; a pandemic, striking fear into hearts (and bottoms, if loo roll panic-buying is anything to go by), and grim economic downturn.

So no better time to ignore all that and have a rant about cycle lanes.

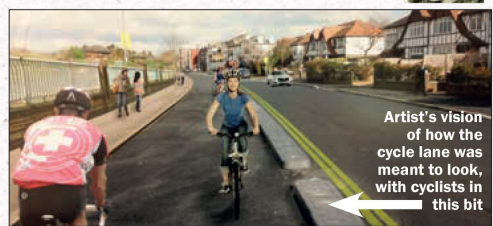
The intention was to make cycling more accessible, keep cyclists safe from motorists, and keep pedestrians safe from cyclists, right?

Then please explain why I was nearly mown down by a cyclist who was riding on the pavement next to the Portsmouth Road cycle lane?

You know, the widest and most obvious cycle lane in the universe, one that could not be more obvious if they shut off the road to cars altogether and lined it with a chorus of dancers singing 'Cycle laaaaane, it's a cycle laaaaane!'

What did that cyclist think it was? A separate road for very small cars? A superhighway so woodland creatures can traverse safely between Surbiton and Kingston?

If cyclists cannot understand the easiest cycle lane in the world, they haven't a chance of following the more convoluted lanes that are being bunged in all over the place.



The new Penrhyn Road lane, for example, chucks you off on one side of the road and wants you to dart across two lanes of traffic to join it on other side, during which you are presumably flattened by a 281 with the subsequent disruption caused by ambulances almost as disruptive as the disruption caused by building the cycle lane in the first place.

I wonder if anyone from the cycle lane design team has actually gone out and tried them, to see how feasible they are, because if they did they'd realise that in many instances they've created a journey that sounds like instructions from the 1990s children's show Knightmare.

Cycle for 10ft, take sharp left

round tree, cycle lane ends after 2ft, you're on your own in a miasma of peril and uncertainty for 43 seconds. Follow cycle lane over pavement and up a tree, fly over gorge, then cycle 100ft on a lane littered with pedestrians as the cycle lane has been painted on a pavement and – Oh dear – you seem to have smashed into a pedestrian and got hit by a raging ball of fire. Game over.

Either I've missed something about cycle lanes, or the design team are having a bit of a laugh. And in these dark times, maybe we all need to be cheered by the sight of a cyclist cycling up a tree.

Becky Mayhew

## A zest for life

Audrey Daniels, who has died at 87, spend her working life in Kingston Council social services; loved for her warm personality and her home-made cakes.

Niece Rose said her aunt was an ardent royalist and keen photographer, and even took snaps of The Queen if the monarch was on telly!

Born in north London to Frank and Isobel Plumer on July 9 1932, she moved to Surbiton and went to Tiffin Girls'.

Despite being "sociable and with a great zest for life", love eluded her until she turned 50, met Surbitonian Peter Daniels and tied the knot. The pair were mainstays of Surbiton & District Historical Society,



and lived in Hamilton Avenue for three decades. Peter predeceased her (obit in issue 33). Audrey died in Kingston Care Home on Feb 28. The order of service at the funeral at St George's, Tolworth, featured Audrey in the 1960s in red high heels astride a camel!

## New leader is ex-ITN

Liz Green has been replaced as Kingston Council leader by Caroline Kerr, below, elected two years ago in the landslide masterminded by the person she has supplanted. A former ITN reporter, Cllr Kerr joined the Lib Dems from the Tories after the referendum, and represents Canbury in Kingston. She won a tight secret ballot on the night the PM ordered lockdown, leading many to question the timing. Cllr Green called it 'navel-gazing', however she did wish her successor well. But pals described her as "guttled". One added: "It's so obviously

the wrong time to do it. It's unbelievable; it's a coup!" It is the first time in 20 years that local Lib Dems have voted out a sitting leader. Tory opposition leader Cllr Kevin Davis said the timing was "disturbing", while Liz Green's husband, Michael, tweeted: "Proud of my wife; she deserved much better."



● Surbiton station will soon be fully accessible from both sides thanks to a £350,000 grant. Lib Dems, including MP Ed Davey (in blue), claim credit after pressing for action for years. There is a working lift at the art deco station's front, but not from South Bank.

Now an old lift shaft at the back is being recommissioned, to transform life for those with mobility issues, pushchairs or bulky luggage. "I'm delighted," said the MP. "My family often use the station, and know how difficult



parents and those with mobility problems find using the rear entrance."

The cash is part of a £20m pot spread between 124 stations.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps called it "a key part of levelling up access for disabled people to transport, and opening up opportunities for all".



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Four friends set up Surbiton Coronavirus Community Response Group, and galvanised 350 volunteers into action. Cole O'Brien, Emily Kirt, Lourens Swanepoel, all of Lovelace Road, and Haidee O'Brien pooled their experience of the voluntary sector, social work, IT and business.

"The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive," said Haidee, who worked with children with disabilities before becoming a restaurant manager. She said the service was aimed at those without a support network.

After liaising with, and meeting, the council, Kingston Voluntary Action and Volunteering Kingston, to co-ordinate efforts, the group has been grocery shopping,

## Friendship fuels help group

picking up prescriptions, making friendly phone calls and distributing leaflets.

"It can be one-off tasks, but often, for groceries, service users need help on a more regular basis, in which case we will assign a volunteer to provide ongoing support," said Haidee. "After the initial task and feedback check, they are free to contact each other directly."

Volunteers fill in registration forms (accessed at [www.surbitonccrg.org](http://www.surbitonccrg.org)), and specify what they can offer. If people need support, they ring 020 3868 2626 or email

[surbitonccrg@gmail.com](mailto:surbitonccrg@gmail.com)

"We have 100 task requests logged currently, mostly for grocery shopping," said Haidee. Requests, tracked by admin volunteers, are graded for urgency. Then volunteers are sent the info, and a link to any safety information.

"After the first task has been completed, we call the service user for feedback and to check everything went OK," she said.

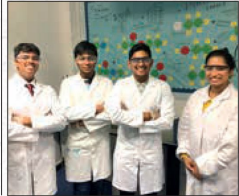
● **Des Kay's Circulatory**, in a warehouse by Berrylands station, delivers surplus food. In a month, demand surged 80%. [www.savetheworldclub.org](http://www.savetheworldclub.org)



Emily, Cole and Lourens from Surbiton's response team

## If you're in need...

Help for those without support from neighbours, friends or family is a phone call away. Kingston Council has a phone and online support service. Cllr Caroline Kerr, council leader, said: "We're focusing on people who haven't support from neighbours, friends or families." Visit [www.tinyurl.com/yepaoel](http://www.tinyurl.com/yepaoel) or call 020 8547 5000, Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm.



● Thousands of science goggles have been donated to Kingston Hospital and GP surgeries by schools to protect NHS staff.

"We're all immensely proud to be part of a collaborative effort to support our fantastic NHS colleagues in their brave fight," said Niall Smith, head of Southborough High, whose sixth form science students,

in goggles, are pictured with teacher Darnasha Yuvarajah. Siobhan Lowe, Tolworth Girls' head, said: "All schools were happy to be involved. We donated glasses to GPs too as they didn't have equipment."

Sophie Cavanagh, head of Kingston Academy, who organised the drive, said: "The response has been amazing; as

heads we know how to unite our communities and understand our civic duty." Goggles were sanitised before distribution.

Education Cllr Diane White added: "I'm proud of our schools, students and staff, for their kindness in providing goggles and showing their character and compassion at this difficult time."

## Estate agents battling on

Surbiton's independent estate agents will be glad to see the back of lockdown, but are making the best of things. James Batty at **Matthew James** said the team ([www.matthewjamesestateagents.co.uk](http://www.matthewjamesestateagents.co.uk)) had been working remotely, "fully connected via our leading-edge IT and digital phone system".

He said communication lines with current and future customers remained open, as did property management services for tenants and landlords.

"We're still receiving good levels of inquiries, we're able to provide extensive information about our properties and some virtual tours."

He predicts "plenty of activity in the property market" the moment restrictions lift.

At **Seymours** ([www.seymours-estates.co.uk](http://www.seymours-estates.co.uk)), John Flynn has an impressive new look to the office, inside and out, at the corner of Brighton Road and Victoria Avenue to show to customers when normal business resumes. He praised clients for being "calm and considerate of each other's circumstances", saying: "So far, all completions are on track to take place. On other sales, we are taking them as close as we can to exchange of contracts, and it will either be simultaneous exchange of contracts if the property is empty, or a wait until we're out from home."

Staff are working remotely from home.

**Greenfield** ([www.greenfield-property.co.uk](http://www.greenfield-property.co.uk)) has been relying on its online presence. Senior sales manager Glen Kalyuk said: "With so many people currently at home, we've seen a high number of inquiries, and are lining up viewings for our return." With Surbiton and Tolworth offices closed, staff work remotely from home, speaking to buyers, sellers, tenants and landlords.

"2020 saw a strong start to the property market in Surbiton, which resulted in a rise in prices," said Glen. "With so many people needing to move, and not currently able to, we are confident that it is going to be extremely busy time once lockdown is lifted."

Craig Currencey, at **Humphrey & Brand** ([www.humphreyandbrand.co.uk](http://www.humphreyandbrand.co.uk)), said that lockdown had proved oddly productive as it was easier to get in touch with solicitors as everyone knows they're at home!



## Small is beautiful

How are Surbiton's independents coping? By adapting to survive. Shops are resourceful.

After the election, Brexit and storms, Sarah Taylor had a lightbulb moment at Shoes at Last, Maple Road.

"From looking forward to spring, I suddenly faced closing down," she said. "Then, eureka! I asked my best-selling Australian brand, One Season, below, to send summer stock to my home, emailed, did social



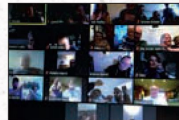
"We've exchanged on four or five transactions, and are working on another four or five," he said, adding that clients were understanding, and flexible, on agreeing move dates.

Frustratingly he is sitting on seven new properties ready to go to market, but without being able to take would-be buyers on viewings a logjam is building up. "Some properties have virtual video tours, but people won't buy on video view alone. However, we can offer video valuations and video meetings (to discuss, for example, whether it's worth putting in a new kitchen).

The firm books appointments via Instagram. "We want to connect with as many people as possible," Craig added.

Meanwhile director Lisa Brand is the point of contact for chats on landlords and tenancy rights.

**All Surbiton's estate agents united in praising the NHS staff and key workers in the pandemic.**



media, and was off!"

Her business grant came through from Kingston Council, now she looks forward to lockdown easing, and a strict one in, one out, rule when the shop reopens.

"We've all learnt lessons; keep positive, sense of humour, put others first."

At the Black Lion, Mark Sheehy's customers missed the Tuesday quiz, and convivial company. "And we desperately missed our customers, who make our pub the heart of the community," said Mark.

Regulars catch up on Zoom (top) on the online quiz, and exchange banter while trying to recall the county town of Derbyshire (it's Matlock).

As the pub's kitchens no longer produce lunches for customers, they make curry meals for hospital staff and locked-down locals.

Simon Smith Flowers by Surbiton station has become a greengrocer. "It's sad not working with flowers," said Sarah Jane, top right, who has been at the shop 13 years. "But I'm grateful we can help the community and deliver to people's homes."

At Wags N Tales cafe, fruit and veg is also sold and delivered, as well as packaged meal deals, plus wine, dropped at doorsteps, from a restricted,

but tasty, emergency menu.

Derek Hale, who ran a popular fruit and veg home delivery service, is turning his allotment production lines to nurturing tomato seedlings and making them available to his customers.

"I've turned to the only thing I was very good at," he said. "Growing plants from seeds."

Bed Post may have had to lock up its Brighton Road showroom, but it is still fielding inquiries by phone, taking online orders and delivering.

Everyone has had to switch to internet sales, but with their customer base also imprisoned at home (apart from brief exercise breaks), there's still scope to do business.

Stear the greengrocer and fruiterer in Surbiton Hill Park, Berrylands, is delivering, and taking orders by phone.

Community Motors still carries out safety checks and emergency repairs, with the focus on key workers, and the Red Lion Business Park seems busier than ever.

Meanwhile, everyone from Lallapalosa to Premier Cars to Hill Park Roses is delivering, delivering, delivering.

Tim Harrison



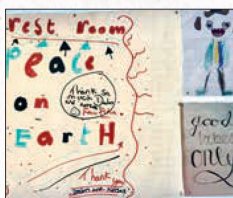
Sarah Jane, Simon Smith Flowers



## Kids' works of art help frontline staff to relax

Children from Effingham Road have made pictures to brighten up Kingston Hospital's 'Time Out' room, where 90 staff take rest breaks during the coronavirus crisis.

Kath Thacker, clinical lead paediatric physiotherapist at the hospital, asked children in her street to brighten up the outpatient clinic room, which has been redeployed during the pandemic to give staff a breather



Kath Thacker, left, and physio admin manager Jen Bunn in the 'Time Out' room

in "quite difficult and challenging" times. "Everyone coming in says how lovely and calm it feels," said Kath, adding that the walls had previously been filled with much less calming anatomical pictures!

"People say the children have contributed to making the room colourful, homely and less like a clinic."

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Cllr Sam Foulde-Hughes and Simon Green find themselves up before the beak



● How do you brighten up a network of alleyways on a housing estate? Ask street artists to create stunning murals, of course! That's what residents of the Sunray estate have persuaded local creatives to do, and the results are stunning, turning drab passageways into mini galleries. "So far we've had five done, and another five are



planned," said Simon Green, secretary of the Sunray & Egmont Community Residents' Association. "It has been paid for by donations from association funds and residents, but we are looking at future council funding or crowdfunding." Subjects include a parrot, fox and cat, but if you are arachnophobic beware the alley with the spider!

## Life during lockdown...

Continued from p1

Diaries are black with crossings-out... any scrap of space then filled with Zoom gatherings (mute button finally locals).

Burrowing into the back of store cupboards has heightened an appreciation of food, and unearthing odd finds. I'm still not sure what we ate on Thursday. And admit it; you've finally opened that 10-year-old bottle of limoncello.

Pub, cafe and restaurant kitchens have selflessly become supply centres for NHS and vulnerable resident meals. And while it might be a miserable time to take up plane-spotting, a sense of togetherness has reaffirmed community spirit.

Kingston Uni gave its lab masks and protective aprons (plus 16,000 pairs of gloves) to Kingston Hospital – a small example of the efforts being made everywhere around the area.

We now appreciate exercise. Surbiton has been good about sticking to social distancing rules, earning praise from borough police commander Sally Benatar. The only isolated breaches were on Queen's Promenade; inevitably a magnet on sunny days. Empty buses glide by, and with no L-drivers attempting



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three-point turns, it's like The Day The Earth Stood Still. While standing in the 6ft-apart Waitrose queue on Saturday morning, 30 buses went by, carrying a total of 25 passengers.

Kingston Council has risen to the task of communicating news via email bulletins, at a time when new leader Caroline Kerr has had to hit the ground running.

On March 23, libraries and well-used community halls closed. Most groups and societies had anticipated that, and had alerted their members. All library fines have been waived, and borrowed books extended until the end of time.

More severely, the tip (beg its pardon, the Household Reuse and Recycling Centre) shut on March 24, raising the spectre of increased fly-tipping... though everyone seems to be obeying advice to store waste until lockdown lifts.

A rise in the grass cuttings in green waste bins suggests how many people are using unexpected free time. Surbiton's gardens have rarely looked so well-tended.

NHS-supporting rainbows fill windows in houses with children, and some trees have been garlanded. Volunteering is on everyone's lips. The council has coordinated efforts, but it has been individual initiatives that have caught the eye.

The initial panic-buying that saw shelves stripped of sanitiser, eggs, loo roll and flour seem ancient history (the editor will still pay hard cash for a bag of self-raising).

Nuisance phone calls from overseas commen telling us, in heavy accents, that our computers are running slow seem to have evaporated. You wouldn't wish the virus on anyone, but it's great to have a respite from bogus call centres.

While some stalls in Kingston Market have remained open, Surbiton's farmers' market has been forced to suspend as Maple Road's pavement space is too tight for social distancing. It has vowed to return. Losing it – even temporarily – makes you value local treasures more.

One such treasure is Jem Sharples, the tenor from Queens Drive, Berrylands, who has added operatic performance to the Thursday night NHS applause round. Illuminated by torch-wavers at dusk, his recitals sum up neighbourliness.

Now, Who's for another glass of limoncello? It's really not that bad, is it? Is it?

**Tim Harrison**

● Stuntman Doug Robson perfects his Bo staff technique in a daily workout on Victoria rec. He has stunt-doubled for Colin Firth, Tom Hiddleston, Channing Tatum, Mads Mikkelsen and Luke Evans, and worked on Star Wars, Mission Impossible, Jurassic Park, Batman and Game of Thrones.

"It is a good way to get out, exercise and get some hand-eye co-ordination," said Doug, of Endsleigh Gardens. As filming is suspended, he's keen to keep fit.

A stuntman for 10 years, he has most recently been working with the caped crusader. "I was doing Batman before this all

happened, so it has obviously come to a halt now," he said.

As well as being a stuntman (training took two years), Doug is a yoga teacher, now holding online classes, Tues-Sat, with 'mini retreats' on Sundays. "It's on Instagram, 8.15am to 8.45am, 15 minutes of each, and it's free," he said. Join live or pick it up later on his website. "Then I run a full one-and-a-quarter-hour session on Friday which costs £5 to attend."

Doug has also done free videos on YouTube. For details about the yoga lessons, get in touch with him at his website [www.thedownwarddoug.com](http://www.thedownwarddoug.com)



## Surbiton develops a strategy for the future

Gaps were starting to appear in Surbiton's high street and secondary shopping parades before the virus

struck. Now a group of business and community figures, under the banner Surbiton Together, has been meeting online to discuss ways of rejuvenating the town, to emerge from lockdown with fresh impetus. Chaired by Surbiton Cllr John Sweeney, it has been addressing the high-street decline that afflicts communities across the UK.

"We're looking for ideas," said Cllr Sweeney. "There is fabulous talent out there, and I'm really keen to draw on it."

High shop rents (£45,000 a year is being asked for the former Starbucks in Victoria Road, for example) have been discussed, but also positive initiatives.

David Jacobson from Surbiton farmers' market said the market was a good model for harnessing goodwill and community spirit to create – for relatively little cost – projects to attract new business to the town, and engage its residents.

Robin Hutchinson, from Community Brain, said one effect of the lockdown was that

people valued local shops and neighbourhoods more than before. "Surbiton should be able to take advantage of that," he said.

With many expecting commuting to decline post-virus, there's a chance to tap into an increase in home working. "We have to sell Surbiton to people who live in Surbiton," said Cllr Sweeney, who welcomes contributions via email: [john.sweeney@kingston.gov.uk](mailto:john.sweeney@kingston.gov.uk)

Everyone agreed that it's the independents in Surbiton, Tolworth and Berrylands that are most treasured by residents.

Unlike Kingston town centre, Surbiton isn't a funded 'business improvement district', but there could be scope for CID (community improvement district).

Both short-term recovery goals and far-sighted revival strategies will have to be worked on. "This is a very long-term project," said Cllr Sweeney.





● Sneaking in before lockdown, photographer Chris Arthur's exhibition of pictures went on show in the Kingston Museum gallery. He took hundreds of photos of actors, focusing (see what I did there?) on his backstage National Theatre days, 1964-1994. Images included Michael Gambon, Laurence Olivier and Maureen Lipman, apparently aged about 12. The Balacava Road photographer has an archive of 80,000 showbiz pictures, mainly black and white. Local images include a 1970s shot from a production at Kingston's late-lamented Overground Theatre, which once flourished in Ashdown Road.



● Back in the day when people went to cinemas, members of Surbiton's Regency dance class went in costume to the adaptation of Jane Austen's 1815 novel, Emma. Led by Libby Curzon (left), and looking like they'd just stepped off the big screen, they munched popcorn and enjoyed Anya Taylor-Joy as the precocious matchmaker. With no dancing possible at St Mark's church hall, check out [youtu.be/gALHsJHcCkA](https://youtu.be/gALHsJHcCkA) to learn Mr Beveridge's Maggot, as seen on the BBC's Pride & Prejudice, complete with facemasks and gloves!



● Provided we're allowed out, the Thames Concert season at St Andrew's, Maple Road, will start on Sat Oct 17. Once artistic director Ben Costello has finalised the programme, it will be on the website [www.thamesconcerts.com](https://www.thamesconcerts.com)

Katherine Dienes-Williams, above, provided one of last season's highlights, putting the church's Hunter organ through its paces with works by Bach, Franck, Boulanger, Liszt, Vierne and Widor. The St Andrew's organ has history. First installed in 1927 in a church in Stroud Green, London, it was then transplanted to Surbiton in 1960. Some of its pipes date to 1881.

● Surbiton station stars in a documentary on the Yesterday Channel on Tues May 19 at 8pm when historian John King talks about its art deco heritage. John, author of *The Railways of Kingston upon Thames* (Kingston Museum shop, £4.95), said: "Most people walk through a station; but when you look at it, Surbiton is one of the best, probably the best, art deco stations on the national rail system. There are so many features you can pick out." The 10-episode series *The Architecture The Railways Built* starts on Tuesday, April 28.



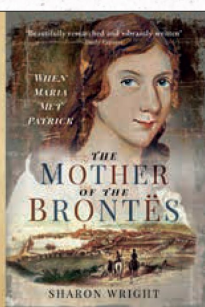
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## The chef's special

He can usually be found in the kitchens of Alfriston, the old folks' day centre in Berrylands Road, where, at 12.15pm, his lunches are gratefully gobbled down by the guests. But when darkness falls, chef Tim Carter slaps on a moustache, neckerchief and tassel hat, and declaims monologues to enraptured audiences at his boat club.

When lockdown lifts, the cornerHOUSE poetry regulars are looking forward to hearing the tale of Peregrine Foukes, from Tim's first published volume of *The Weybridge Sailing Club Monologues*.

The chef at the Surbiton day centre for 13 years, Tim, 63, has just published his second volume. It's on Amazon at £7.99, or cheaper yet via [Lulu.com](https://lulu.com) at £6.79.

A former pupil of Kingston Grammar School, Tim took to oration at a tender age – as this yellowed prize inscription from 1970 confirms.

"Each [monologue] evolves slowly over 12 years, as I write one a year to perform at the boat club," he explained. "In effect they're little one-man shows, which helps me sublimate my enduring need to show off occasionally." Wife Jenny prompts, if needed.

The spin-off books are richly illustrated with Tim's distinctive line drawings.

Tim Harrison



Tim Carter in a self-portrait from his latest book and, in nautical performing gear, clutching his new volume

The cornerHOUSE spirit is still alive, as all artforms are now available online.

The Douglas Road centre has switched to [www.thecornerhouse.org](https://www.thecornerhouse.org) until doors reopen, including verse from regular poetry nights, and some of the most popular plays from the oneACTS festival on the drama page.

The music page has tracks from Floyd Kennedy, and the visual arts page has clips of work by Terry Cripps. The film page has recommendations from the film club, and access to a full-length feature film by permission of director Claude Green, a Surbiton resident and member of the club.

"In coming days we'll have more," said Ian



## In the lockdown lounge

Out of the Corner, the monthly open-mic music talent showcase at the cornerHOUSE, is now virtual. "We roused performers to take part in an online version," said organiser Shelley Stevens.

"A number of our stable of talented young artists got back to us with YouTube links and videos of lockdown performances.

"Some were covers of classic tracks reworked and some original pieces," said Shelley, who has run gigs at the arts centre in Douglas Road for over a year.

"There was a huge amount of variety, from Sophie Edge (a Year 13 Hollyfield pupil who has had her A-levels cancelled) who created a beautiful rendition of The Long and Winding Road by the Beatles, to Eva Perrin Fontana's stunning original song Miracles.

"There was also an acoustic performance by Jason Lake of his single The Machine, out now, and an intimate performance by Liz Arcane of Joni Mitchell's A Case of You, and many more.

"As it was a huge success and created a unique and intimate moment, we hope to do it again on Thursday, May 21," said Shelley.

See the performances at Out of the Corner's Facebook and Instagram sites, or at [www.thecornerhouse.org](https://www.thecornerhouse.org)



## Arts transfer to website

Davies, praising Andy Moseley and Ant Kelly for transferring the material online.

● Kingston's Rose Theatre is also putting the arts online, and has launched #roseendures to help stay afloat in these dark days. But an original version of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof is going ahead – virus willing – in October.



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# Squeeze up, we have to fit a school in!

As Chelsea Women sign a new German midfielder ahead of next season, the club is faced with the prospect of 'groundsharing' with 1,000 pupils.

The council has approved a secondary school alongside the Kingsmeadow stadium, though it's puzzled Chelsea, who thought they were getting the ex-Norbiton sports ground to themselves after several seasons of sharing with AFC Wimbledon.

The school opens in 2023 with 180 youngsters, rising to 1,000. A CoFe secondary, 90% government-funded, it will reserve a third of places for the children of practising Christians.

It will be interesting to see how school and club co-exist. Potentially there are opportunities for facility-sharing and ticket discounts to suit both.

Meanwhile, the Wombles, who were meant to leave Kingsmeadow in May, can play their remaining 2019/20 fixtures at Kingsmeadow if it proves possible, even if it's behind closed doors, but streamed live for fans to watch at home.

Some of those fans set up a food donation point in Surbiton to assist self-isolaters in need.

The remaining Women's Super League has been abandoned, but there was time to sign Bayern Munich women's captain. Midfielder Mel Leupolz, 25, will wear No8. That's significant. At Chelsea it was last worn by former captain Kaz Carney, but has been unallocated since the Surbiton winger, now pundit, retired from playing in July 2019.

"It's such a big club, and I believe in the



progress Chelsea are doing," said Mel, now with a three-year deal. Manager Emma Hayes said "her best years are to come". Mel toured Stamford Bridge; a shrewd move, as looking at the more basic Kingsmeadow facilities might have seen her telling the cabbie to go straight back to Gatwick.

Her strengths? "I've a good eye for spaces, I'm always a fighter in the game, I like to play good balls to the strikers; I'm a team player." Mel does, however, talk of 'soccer', not 'football', something



Left: Mel Leupolz, Chelsea Women's new German midfielder, and (above) members of AFC Wimbledon's support group set up a food donation point in Victoria Road, Surbiton

team-mates will have to correct.

Looking over their shoulders, as a result of the signing, are first-pick central midfielders Ji So-Yun, Erin Cuthbert and Guro Reiten... although manager Hayes always welcomes competition for places, and tries to give everyone a fair crack of the whip.

Key to keeping everybody sweet is Chelsea Women's return to European competition in the 2020-21 season. That depends on how the season's loose ends are tied up. **Tim Harrison**

## Surbiton mourns tournament loss

This time last year, everything was being readied for the Surbiton Trophy, the tennis tournament that is growing in popularity and putting the town on the map for racket fans.

But the Covid-19 virus has put the kibosh on all tennis this summer.

Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club director Roy Staniland said: "We'd normally be preparing for the international tournament in a few weeks as the grass turns lush green."

"But we're in a very different place; the world is in lockdown and we can't see our loved ones or friends."

He paid tribute to the efforts of NHS and other frontline workers.

"They go way beyond anything we could expect them to do. When we turn the corner let's remember the fantastic community spirit, look after one another and support those who are struggling."

"Let's make sure we continue to praise all those who have looked after us so well and help make their lives slightly easier going forward."

"Keep safe and never forget what so many have done for us."

## Ks and Casuals' season hits the buffers

The season's over for Kingstonian and Corinthian-Casuals, who play at King George's Field off Hook Rise South, Tolworth. The Isthmian League Premier Division, in which the teams play, has been cancelled for the rest of the season.

Results will be expunged and there will be no promotion or relegation.

Kingstonian, 10th in the table, called it "an understandable, but premature, ending for the most memorable Kingstonian season in many years", adding: "Results may be expunged, but the 4-0 win at Macclesfield, the 3-2 win at Dartford, the 4-1 win at Weston-super-Mare, the 3-1 win over Woking, the 3-1 win over Corinthian-Casuals and the 1,460 attendance against Fylde will live long in the memory."



For Corinthian-Casuals, just four places off the bottom of the table in 19th place, the sudden end to the season has brought with it a sigh of relief.

All being well, they will now wipe the slate clean and start afresh later in the year.

## Playground review

When will Surbiton's playgrounds, normally so full of boisterous and excited children, reopen after the crisis?

The council decided to close all the borough's play areas, including the one in Victoria rec (pictured) "after the government's announcement on social distancing and the need to stay indoors".

Although the decision was still in force as The Good Life went to press, there are at last some hopeful signs that there could be a relaxation of the tight rules in May.

While parks and recreation grounds' grassed areas have remained open, playgrounds have been padlocked.

"We decided to close children's playgrounds in parks and housing estates," said a Kingston Council spokesperson. "But we do not plan to close parks as



continuing with physical activity is important for health and wellbeing at this difficult time, and we encourage everyone to do this in a safe way. We will continue to review this situation."

One way of gradually reopening playgrounds in parks and recreation grounds would be to ration play time and put a strict limit on numbers using each play area.

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● A fundraising campaign to help maintain Long Ditton Cricket Club (pictured, right, celebrating last season's treble) reached its target in 48 hours.

The club at Stokes Field in Betts Way, Long Ditton, achieved the £7,000 goal in two days flat, and was on £8,746 as The Good Life went to press.

Treasurer Richard Smith, who set up the fundraising campaign, said he and the rest of the club's committee were shocked, humbled and delighted by the generosity.

"This really is a special club," he said, adding that £7,000 had been chosen as the target as it was the income the club would lose over the next few weeks. "The club still has some costs, mostly to ensure our facilities are playable as quickly as possible when we return."



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