



Hands up!

● Face it, one year on, Surbiton can again work out the time after workmen clocked on, braved the chilly snap and replaced the iconic station tower arms, whipped off during the storms of 2020.



● Been doing your daily exercise? Bet you haven't outwalked Matty, who has achieved an amazing feat! **p3**



● Knock, knock. Who's there? This fine specimen is one of a series of birds that have flown in. Full story, **p10**

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Charity told to go

One of Surbiton's leading charities has been ordered out of its premises without notice or consultation, and it fears for the resulting effect on the area's mental health.

The Fircroft Trust was "devastated" to be told to leave the building it has leased for 40 years, and suspects Kingston Council, which owns 96 Ditton Road, is trying to "sell off the family silver".

The council says the 110-year-

old building isn't structurally safe, and declares that it not only supports the charity but commissions its services.

Fircroft, established half a century ago, says its offer to help pay for remedial work has been brushed aside.

While the council has pledged to assist finding alternative premises, nothing is likely to match the current home, with its 'man sheds' (an antidote to loneliness for men) and garden projects in the grounds.

Having a site with a large footprint gives Fircroft the scope to develop new initiatives. It also has supported flats elsewhere which allow those with mental health needs to live independently. The fear is that disruption to the work the charity does will harm the most vulnerable in the community.

"It's been a horrible shock," said chief exec Kay Harris. "There has been a structural issue at the back of the building, but it has been assessed over seven years. Then we had a letter out of the blue saying we can't use the building and have to leave."

● Continued on **p9**



● Is this how Tolworth Broadway will look in 2025, or has high-rise living had its day? The consultation meeting to discuss multiple towers in Tolworth takes place next week, and you are invited to listen or speak, **p10**



Standing, from left: Vi Pottinger, Kathleen Stafford and Kathy Jones, with, seated, Brenda Richer

● That annoying clicking sound you say you've heard while strolling down St Mark's Hill? It's coming from what you might call a tight-knit group of residents at Parish Court, led by 93-year-old Brenda Richer.

Prolific, precise and productive, they are all in the flats' knitters' club, making blankets for the dementia ward at Kingston Hospital, and helping to pass the lockdown hours.

But if you think Brenda's impressive, wait until you read about Sakina on **p10**

Fancy becoming Lord Tolworth?

Want to lord it over the neighbours? The ceremonial title to Tolworth is vacant (it also covers a chunk of Long Ditton) and is being sold by a firm which deals in unclaimed lordly monikers.

If you fancy styling yourself Lord Tolworth (or Lord Talworth, if you prefer the old spelling), it will set you back £1,750.

Also up for grabs are the Lordships of Ditton, Long Ditton, North Talworth and South Talworth.

Garden centre grandees with highfalutin notions might be interested in another vacant manorship... Lord Talworth Court.

Once secured, rights can be bequeathed in



a will, making a chosen son or daughter the next Lord or Lady Tolworth.

You can even apply to have the title added to your passport or credit card.

Dealing in lord of the manor titles is former Barclays branch manager Kevin Norris, 61, who calls himself 17th Earl of Northumbria and has run his niche firm, Manorial Counsel, for eight years.

He ferrets through old documents, legalises the use of titles via solicitors' papers, then sells to whoever pays.

You can't drive your sheep down Ewell Road or put your enemies in the stocks, but it might bag you a table at the Prithi when it reopens.

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Dave Bowell has an understanding wife. In Lockdown 2, the 83-year-old negotiated with Val, 81, to take up space in the garage of their Grand Avenue home to extend his model railway.

"I assured Val I'd leave clearance to the fridge and tumble dryer without needing to be a contortionist, and added 2sqm to the layout," said a chuffed Dave.

"It's great," said Val, loyally. She shares Dave's passion for trains including (pre-Covid) spectacular railway journeys to Canada, Australia and South Africa, as well as being members of the Mid Hants Railway Watercress Line. "I like coming in and having a look to see what Dave has done."

It's Dave's fourth or fifth model railway; the latest born out of November's lockdown when the weather wasn't good and the keen gardener didn't have much work. It's an 00 scale 1960s analogue set based on the Southern railway before the end of steam. "I named it Dingley Dell, from Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*."

He has two other stations built against the wall of his garage at the Berrylands home where they've lived since 1974: Badgers' Drift, and Midsomer End (inspired by the TV crime series *Midsomer Murders*).

The new set has teams playing cricket, a pavilion, pond, station, signal box, pub, hotel, greengrocer, newsagent, shoppers, a Royal Blue coach... the list goes on. And, of course, trains. The detail is intricate although Dave is modest about his achievements.

"I painted the sky, but you can get background scenes; in fact most are kits - they are quite sturdy and quite detailed and quite fun to make."

"The hardest job is the glazing, it's so fiddly. If you look carefully some of the buildings have even got curtains behind the windows, so there's quite a bit of detail. The figures are all hand-painted - it keeps my concentration up, I suppose."

"The really clever people make them from scratch. Some who build model railways like at Tolworth Recreation Centre's model railway show are fantastic. It is extraordinary the lengths to which they go."

Dave comes from a railway family. "My father and all his friends were on the railway. He worked at Kingston railway station in the booking office. Unfortunately he died in 1944, so my mother went out to work at the old goods office at Kingston. There was quite a big goods yard on the north side of the station, and that's where she met my stepfather. His father and brothers were on the railways, some in South Africa, so I was steeped in a railway family."

When Dave was 10, his stepfather brought home a Hornby Dublo 3 oval of track with an A4 locomotive, named Sir Nigel Gresley, and two coaches.

"I've been hooked ever since," said the ex-banker who talks about Surbiton station's history as one of Kingston's tour guides. "I didn't become an engine driver, as I'd imagined when I was young. However, I did enjoy a day on the footplate of the A4 class locomotive Bittern on the Watercress Line to celebrate my 70th birthday some years ago," said Dave, who describes himself as "the biggest kid of all!"



Jane Grove

Chuffed!

Drive-thru at the marina

Ever-inventive Surbiton restaurateur Sam Berry has launched a 'drive-thru' at **Hideaway**, Thames Ditton marina. Park and pick up in the car park off Portsmouth Road after ordering 20 minutes ahead via the Mediterranean eatery's website. Or just drive up and peruse the menu; walk-ins accommodated.

Brunch, lunch, sides and sweets are top-notch. I went for the pulled duck hash burger: confit duck hash, fried duck egg, plum sauce and chips; generous for a tanner. Add honey mustard slaw for £4. The editor really enjoyed a finger-lickin' Cajun crispy chicken burger (£11).

While waiting, sip a latte and dream of owning one of the boats moored in the picturesque spot.

Hideaway takeaway breakfasts are proving really popular with the emergency services - especially as bacon sarnies and coffees are free for all frontline workers.

"It's like a crime scene here at 9am with ambulance staff and police picking up their bacon sarnies," laughed



bar manager Dan Brannan at the restaurant's covered stall.

Open 9am-3pm Thu-Sun.

View menu and pre-order on the

drive-thru tab at www.hideaway-surbs.co.uk

Delivery service is also available.

JG



Exchanging hardcore with your neighbours

Reporting fly-tipping is easier. Kingston Council's interactive map lets you put a pin where the rubbish is, and add precise words.

"Rangers have noted a rise in fly-tipping in the pandemic," said Surbiton neighbourhood manager James Geach. "Residents can help by recording it on our website. The interactive map will let you know if it's been reported."

Visit www.kingston.gov.uk/flytip

The council aims to act within 24 hours, and will pursue tipsters. Items too big for bins can be taken to the Villiers Road tip (pre-book, www.kingston.gov.uk/recyclingcentre) or picked up (fees apply).

"We respond quickly; once rubbish is there it attracts more," said Cllr Hilary Gander. On private land, councillors often work with residents on annual clean-ups, such as Cllr Thay Thayan's Broad Oaks blitz in Tolworth.

"If residents pass on items to someone who needs them, it's no longer waste," said Cllr Gander. "Even rubble can become hardcore for a neighbour's drive."

Controversially, councillors voted to limit households to 20 tip visits a year from Apr 1, but ditched a £5 bag levy after public outcry. Pedestrians and cyclists will have special tip access in the last opening hour on Sundays.

A 'boundary charge'

on motorists entering

Surbiton from Thames Ditton,

Long Ditton and Hinchley Wood

would harm the town's shops and

restaurants, say opponents.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan

has asked Transport for London

to explore a £3.50 daily levy on

drivers from outside London,

to plug a gap in finances. But

independent Dittons councillor

Nick Darby said: "It would be

disastrous for those living near

the boundary, or who shop in

Surbiton or Kingston, or need to

travel to Kingston Hospital."

Car charge 'could threaten Surbiton shops'

Nicholas Rogers, Conservative London Assembly candidate and Surbiton resident, also opposes.

"Every day many thousands cross this boundary, but you have to look closely to find where London becomes Surrey; it isn't a factor in people's thinking," he said, adding that a grandparent who, say, drives six miles from Walton to Surbiton on weekdays to look after grandchildren would pay nearly £1,000 a year.

"Local shops and restaurants struggling to recover from the pandemic would lose valuable

customers as people decide to go elsewhere," he said.

Any boundary charge would not be implemented for at least two years, to let the economy recover from the pandemic.

There are 1.3 million vehicle trips every weekday into Greater London. A £3.50 levy would raise about £500m a year, reducing incoming traffic by an estimated 15%.

TfL finances have been badly hit by tube fare losses. "It's not fair on London that our drivers should subsidise the rest of the country's roads," said Mr Khan. Green groups welcome the proposal, and want the Mayor to go further with road-charging schemes.



panel before being incorporated in the soon-to-be-prepared local plan.

● Regeneration group The Community Brain is asking for input into a Tolworth-specific survey on Tolworth's green and open spaces.

"We'd love people's thoughts about what is important to them, and ideas to make it even better," said Charlotte Levy.

"The challenges of the past year have highlighted how important open spaces are to our mental and physical health and wellbeing." www.thecommunitybrain.org/local-spaces-consultation



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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. We deliver to 11,500 homes and the issue is also available to download on our website. 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. The email address is:

thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com
Between issues, news appears on Instagram and Facebook

(@thegoodlifesurbiton) and on our website, where fresh stories are posted most days, and where back issues are archived.

www.thegoodlifesurbiton.co.uk

This paper is also available at Michael's shoe repairs, Shoes At Last, Jennings, the cornerHOUSE, Community Motors & Stear greengrocers.

Good mood food

Eat well, Think well. It's a new adult education course on three Wednesdays, Mar 10-24, studying healthy eating and its effect on mood. Cost: £24. Free if you earn less than the London living wage (£21.157). <https://bit.ly/KAE-CL>

£50 per pothole

It costs £50 to fill a pothole, claims the Dept for Transport, announcing it has given Kingston Council money to repair Surbiton's pockmarked roads.

Extend the 281?

The London Assembly is being pressed to extend the 281 route, which ends at Tolworth Tower, to Tolworth station (as it did in the good old days, below), then do a loop of the Cox Lane/Davis Road business and industrial park.



An Oxbridge octet

Eight Surbiton High girls have landed Oxbridge places this autumn, bringing to 39 the tally over the last five years.

Catalytic thefts

Police warn drivers to be vigilant after more catalytic converter thefts: the latest from a Honda CR-V in Windmill Lane, Long Ditton. Targeted cars include Honda Accord and Jazz, Toyota Yaris and Prius, and Lexus RX.

Managing stress

Handle stress better via a free 90-minute online adult education session. Designed by the charity Action for Happiness, it runs on Fri Mar 12 (9.30am) and Tue Mar 23 (6.15pm). Sign up at <https://bit.ly/KAE-PIFHL>

Zooming history

Surbiton's historical society meets via Zoom in lockdown. Trevor Strong recently spoke on superstitions, and Jon Cotton on William Roots, the 19th century Kingston archaeologist. www.surbitonhistoricalsociety.org

Regency exercise

Regency dance queen Libby Curzon, aka Mrs Bennet, holds hour-long exercise classes online, with dance steps from a gentler era, until life gets back to normal. www.mrsbennet.co.uk

Support for youth

Aged 13-25? Feeling low? A free programme of nature-based help can build optimism and develop a sense of belonging. Five weekly sessions start Mar 21. www.thewildmindproject.org



Needling the MP

As a carer for his disabled son John, 13, Surbiton MP Ed Davey has had his first jab. The Lib Dem leader thanked the NHS teams and urged the 10 million people who care for loved ones to make sure their GP knows they're carers.

Flowering delight

Hanging baskets will brighten parades this spring in Victoria, Claremont, Ewell and Brighton Roads, St Mark's Hill, Tolworth Broadway, Chiltern Drive and Berrylands. The £8,736 cost will come from a ward funding pot.

Memory songs

Once a month online Singing for the Brain classes run by a local at-home care provider to counter dementia are free at www.homeinstead.co.uk/wimbledon-kingston/news-events

SURBITON LIFE

by David Cox



Checking with the council that nice curtains and a brightly coloured front door are still permitted

Matty goes walkabout

At the age of eight, Matty Nixon has done what few in the borough can have achieved. He's walked the length of every one of its streets.

What began as a fun way to exercise in the first weeks of lockdown last March became a fresh challenge as the Berrylands boy went further afield, ticking off roads in Tolworth and Surbiton on his trusty map.

"With no end of lockdown and school closures in sight, he resolved to see if he could walk down every road in the whole borough of Kingston upon Thames in the course of 2020," said proud dad Paul, who accompanied him on the far-flung bits of his adventure (mum Tess did the stints closer to home).

Daily walks around the borough continued through the summer until schools returned in September, then at weekends during autumn and winter. He completed his goal by finishing in Hook and Chessington on Christmas Eve.

"I reckon Matty did 200 walks in the year, probably averaging 3km each, so a total of 600km... over 100 hours of walking time!" said Paul, a marathon runner in his spare time and winner of the 2018 Thames Path Challenge – a 100km run between Putney and Henley.

The Year 4 pupil at Christ Church primary in Pine Gardens is now an expert on the borough's geography. His favourite area? Coombe, but he's still fond of his home patch, Berrylands, and also likes the Southborough estate's big houses.

Matty, who has worn out several pairs of shoes and socks in the challenge, hasn't stopped there. In the latest lockdown he's been walking the streets of Long Ditton, Hinchley Wood and Thames Ditton 'though it may take a lifetime to complete all the streets of Surrey,' laughed Paul.

Matty has a souvenir of his extraordinary feat: highlighted maps of the area grace his bedroom wall in The Ridings, and he has lots of photographs to remind him of his rambles.

A regular participant in Surbiton junior park runs before Covid restrictions bit, Matty had never really done much walking before, apart from some orienteering, of which he'd like to do more in future.

"I was really happy when I did it; I'm a keen walker now, but I didn't use to be," he said. "I was almost as bad as my sister [Holly, aged 5]. She's the sort of person who starts, but really doesn't do much at all. She's not going to grow into it. It's not her thing. She's like my mummy – she likes shopping, shopping, shopping!"

Matty's ultimate target? "Land's End to John O'Groats." He'll take dad with him, of course. A good chance for Holly and mum to do some more shopping?

Jane Grove

Council tax bills set to rise

Kingston Council tax bills are set to rise 5%, with Covid-19 blamed. The local authority is generally held to have had a 'good' pandemic compared to other councils, with strong communication to residents and well-organised aid for the young, elderly and housebound.

But services come at a price, and government funding only goes so far. More cost-cutting efficiency measures are inevitable.

Council leader Caroline Kerr acknowledged it "will impact residents", but pointed out that while Kingston received £66million in government grant in 2010, it now gets precisely diddy-squat.

"We have no choice but to raise council tax," she said.

Since the pandemic began, the council has distributed 20,000 cooked meals, delivered more than 1,000 prescriptions and offered mental health support to 358 people. In all, £39,500 has been paid out in business grants.

Tragedy of railway death

A railway worker has died at Surbiton station after being struck by a South Western Railway train while carrying out track repairs.

Tyler Byrne, 30, right, from Aldershot, was pronounced dead at the station after the incident at 11.30am on Tuesday February 9. A full investigation is under way by Network Rail.

Manuel Cortes, general secretary of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association, has been warning of the number of fatal incidents and near misses involving rail workers. "It is not acceptable that in the 21st century people go out to work and end up losing their lives," he said.



Man denies fake jab charge

The man accused of giving a 92-year-old Tolworth woman a fake Covid-19 vaccination will stand trial in the summer.

David Chambers, 33, of Hook Rise North, was remanded in custody by Kingston Crown Court judge Judith Coello after appearing by video link from Wandsworth Prison.

He denies two charges of fraud by demanding money from Kathleen Martin of Kingsmead Avenue. He also pleaded not guilty to one count of battery.

His trial has been set for August 9 at the crown court.



Matty Nixon, 8, with a map of his travels

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Forging ahead

Tolworth's 'smithy' was at the heart of the community until as late as the 1930s, playing a key role in local life.

In late Victorian times, the blacksmith was Charles Pennington Stanford, a strong, skilled man of standing who repaired tools, shod horses and created wrought iron designs, with his anvil and fire at the heart of the workshop.

Though no photos have survived, he lived until nearly 80, operating from a clutch of buildings on a site the size of three tennis courts at the corner of Ewell and Lenelby roads – near today's B&M Bargains store.

He'd followed his father, Charles Bythewood Stanford (born May 1816) into the business, and he in turn had acquired the Tolworth forge from his father Edward, who came from an Esher blacksmithing family dating from the early 1700s.

The 1841 census shows a 25-year-old Charles Bythewood Stanford lived there with Edward, 8, and Susanna, 5, the children of his uncle. Tolworth (or Talworth as it was spelt in those days) then consisted of 310 people living in 58 homes.

Considerable work was available as the area was almost entirely agricultural, and it was conveniently sited on the turnpike road, with traffic passing to and from Kingston. There were three journeymen blacksmiths in the area who are likely to have worked at the smithy.

Charles was not on his own for long. Emma Pennington of Cheam caught his eye, and they married in Kennington in 1845.

Tolworth was expanding. By 1851, 370 people lived in 70 dwellings, rising to 103 homes by 1881, mainly in Ewell Road and Red Lion Lane (later Red Lion Road), where the brickworks were located.

Charles Pennington Stanford (our Notable Suburbanian) was described in the 1881 census as a 'smith and farrier'. The 30-year-old lived next door to his widowed mother Emma, who had lost her husband in December 1863 when her son was 11.

Charles had married Mary Baldock, and the couple, according to the census, had a one-year-old son... inevitably christened Charles.

The business turned to cycle manufacturing during the late Victorian years. The

forge in 1891 was now listed as a bicycle works, with Emma, now aged 69, as blacksmith.

The number of buildings in Tolworth was almost 200, including St Matthew's school and a police station.

The side roads, Ellerton, Douglas and Worthington, extended south from Ewell Road. St Matthew's church stood in fields, but St Mary's, Long Ditton, had long been Tolworth's parish church.

In 1899, The Victor Iron Works, the site of the smithy, was owned by E [Emma] Stanford. The workshops were constructed of corrugated iron and there was a stable, valued at about £100 in total. The blacksmith's shop was built of wood and tiles. In addition there were several sheds.

There was also a house on the site. It had three bedrooms, two sitting rooms, a kitchen, a washhouse and a wc. The valuation for the whole premises was £640; £400 for the land and £240 for the buildings. The owner/occupier was John Stanford, who appears to have bought the property in February that year from Charles.

Charles and Mary's address was The Ferns, Ewell Road; the cottage (arrowed in blue on the map) built on a fenced-off part of the blacksmith's land. It was built in brick, with a slate roof.

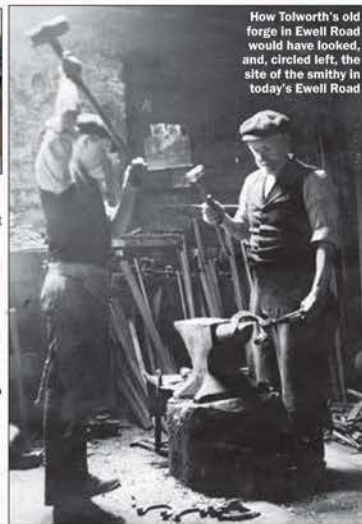
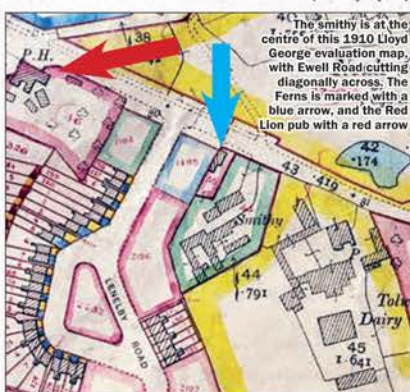
On the first floor were two bedrooms. On the ground floor were two sitting rooms, a kitchen, scullery, coal store and wc. The building was worth £188, the land £122; a total valuation of £310.

By contrast, the Red Lion pub (arrowed in red) was valued at £7,500. The pub stood where Sainsbury's Local is today, at the corner of Ewell Road and Red Lion Road. It was demolished in 2010.

In 1901, Charles is listed as 'farrier and smith' with John Stanford, in the adjacent property, as a 'cycle maker'. By 1915, according to

Kelly's Directory, the smithy site had become Stanford Brothers Engineering Works. It was still in business until at least 1933, when a court case was brought against John Stanford, then 77, who had not understood the current legislation regarding insurance for his workers. The

NOTABLE SUBURBIANS Charles Pennington Stanford



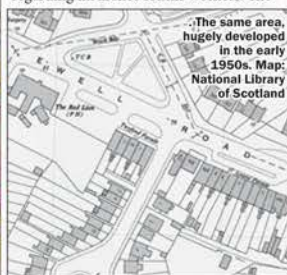
How Tolworth's old forge in Ewell Road would have looked, and, circled left, the site of the smithy in today's Ewell Road

area was redeveloped soon after, becoming part of Grand Parade.

The Stanford family business (there was yet another involved – Francis Richard – who ran a bicycle shop in Brighton Road and who also took on other engineering work) evolved as the requirements for ironwork changed over the century they ran the Tolworth forge.

I wonder if any ancient Stanford bikes are gently rusting in local sheds today? **Janet Heskins**

● Charles Pennington Stanford born Feb 1851, died Jan 26 1930. Mary Elizabeth Stanford, born c1850, died Dec 2 1920



Charles Pennington Stanford's tombstone in Surbiton Cemetery

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A great design, just not here!

A bid to demolish a home and build two contemporary houses in a lane off Southborough Road has been rejected by the Surbiton neighbourhood committee.

Permission to demolish Grange Cottage and build two, three-storey, three and five-bed detached homes was denied as the angular design and flat roofs would be out of keeping in the conservation area.

Neighbour David Twaite told the committee: "It's proposed to demolish an 1890 cottage and replace it with two ultra-modern buildings that are completely out of character with anything else in the conservation area."

"I'm concerned about the demolition of a historic building and the precedent

it sets." He added that the plots were significantly denser than anything else which has been approved in the Southborough area in the past.

"These properties are squeezed in."

He also said he had concerns over road safety as the lane was used by pedestrians and cyclists and there was nowhere for cars to turn; they'd have to reverse 100m back to Southborough Road.

Committee members

heard from council planner Alex Rosser-Trokas that a contemporary development in a heritage setting does not equal harm.

Cllr Liz Green said: "I think it is a fantastic design, but it is in the wrong place."

"Do I think the look of them will cause harm? Yes, I do think they will cause harm to the conservation area, because in Southborough (and I'm not worried about plot size or road safety here) the predominant style in that locality is very strong. To lose that style would cause issues. It is not that I dislike the buildings, it's just the location of them."



JG

Come to your Census!

The 2021 census is upon us, with the power to make an impact on day-to-day lives, including planning and funding everything from schools and doctors' surgeries to bike lanes.

"And it will give us fresh information to improve our understanding of the pandemic," said Emma Alberty of the Office for National Statistics.

It takes around 10 minutes per person, and can be done via computer, laptop, tablet, mobile phone, or on paper. It will be the first run predominantly online, with households receiving unique access codes via letter. Census Day is March 21, but once you have your code you can take part. You must complete it, by law. If you don't, you could be fined up to £1,000.

"After Census Day, field officers will visit households from which we've not received a form to give guidance to access further help if you need it," added Emma.

The census has been carried out every decade since 1801, only missing 1941 because of the war. Help is at www.census.gov.uk

A green Lent vision

St Matthew's church is urging its flock to make Lent a greener time, via eco challenges.

The 40 days have prompted 40 ways to 'spring clean your life' from Eco Church, the environmental group at the church in St Matthew's Avenue.

They include: Talking to your boss about making your workplace more sustainable; thinking about the meaning of 'stewardship'; writing to MP Ed Davey about climate change; joining a campaign to end food poverty; reducing artificial fibre in clothes in your wardrobe; buying secondhand; washing things less frequently; making your next car an electric... and finding a silent place to simply listen to the silence.

"This is about developing habits for life – ours and the planet's," says the St Matthew's group.

The list is at www.stmatthewskt6.org

A garden des res



What prompted most oohs and aahs from my relatives at Christmas? The bug hotels and bird tables I gave as presents; each unique, each a work of art, handcrafted by cameraman-turned-carpenter Tom Hooker.

Tom, usually found in a far-flung place filming wildlife for the BBC, took to carpentry when work dried up in lockdown. What began as a hobby has become another string to his bow: Wild Reclamation, making environmentally-friendly, sustainable wildlife products for the garden.

He produces bat boxes, bird tables, nestboxes, bee hotels, bug hotels, butterfly feeding stations and shelters, toad houses, hedgehog houses and hedgehog highway signs, bird mobiles, animal ornaments and planters – all from reclaimed, recycled wood. He can personalise them with attractive carvings and create ones to your own design.

He can also offer a 'beespoke' service – from turning an old bed into a bench to making a bin store with a living roof to blend into your garden.

"I enjoy it. It combines my love of wildlife and being environmentally friendly by keeping reclaimed wood out of landfill," said Tom who gets material from the Freecycle Network, donations, skips and carpenters' offcuts. "It reuses what would otherwise be scrapped, and turns it into something useful for wildlife. Plus it just looks good. Wood that has been aged sits into an environment much better than something brand new."



"I can make something that will hopefully last, be more attractive and give an added personal touch."

Tom, who can also give people advice on how to encourage wildlife into their garden, always loved nature as a child and was inspired by Sir David Attenborough's documentaries to combine his passions for wildlife with photography, travel and filming.

He has always been interested in woodwork, but was fired up by helping carpenter Gary Gautier create the Claremont Gardens bug hotel for the Surbiton Wildlife Group. Since then, the Adelaide Road resident has gone on to build bug hotels and wildlife structures in nature reserves such as Fishponds Park.

"When work stopped because of lockdown, I thought it might be a bit of respite; it's good mindfulness just working in the garage; escapism rather than sitting inside waiting for the phone to ring." **Jane Grove**
www.wildreclamation.co.uk or email tom@wildreclamation.co.uk

Station friends sought

Could you be part of a Friends of Surbiton Station group, to enhance the building and improve life for passengers? Kingston Council is uniting fans of the station, built in 1937 and one of the finest in the land.

"We're aware residents are keen to support the station and meet others who share that interest," said neighbourhood manager James Geach.

South Western Railway has a station adoption programme to allow friends' groups to work together. "Similar groups have worked with SWR to add planters and book swap schemes, create community spaces and help keep stations free from litter," added James.

Incentives include 20 day-return travel passes per adoption group, access to funding and training.

There's an annual conference, to meet other adoption groups.

Regular commuters, those interested in history and station architecture, and residents keen to improve the station can register at www.kingstonletstalk.co.uk/surbiton-station

"Having people involved creates pride in the building, reduces antisocial behaviour and improves travelling experience," said James.

First step will be an online meeting, with a group formed in late spring. Register by April 1.



● A two-bed duplex apartment can be built on existing flats, Surbiton councillors have decreed, despite pleas from a father and his daughter.

Plans for a two-storey rear extension at 5 St Mary's Road (just off Victoria Road) were refused in March last year as the neighbourhood committee felt they were "incongruous". A year on, the developers' revised scheme, to integrate the duplex roof with the main building, was agreed, 9 votes to 2.

Flat owner Eleanor McKay said she was nervous about a "two-storey, bolt-on apartment on top of my home". Her dad, Mike Lucy, added: "It is extremely similar to the design before. We really struggle to understand how it could be permitted with such minor alteration."

Cllr Malcolm Self said he took on board the objectors' points, but "we've got to assess this on its planning merits, and I do think the issue of incongruity has been addressed quite well".

The risk to Seething Wells

More than 10,000 people signed a petition calling for Seething Wells' historic filter beds to become a proper natural conservation site. It comes as an independent survey for Kingston Council declared the area 'at risk' of losing its Sinc (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) status – see p2 – as the current owner has removed vegetation, "significantly altering the value of habitats".

The report is especially damning of site maintenance from 2018-20, when grassland vanished, destroying the homes of species unique to the borough. Yet with urgent action, says the survey, the site has the potential to be restored. More surveying will be done in the spring.

Among bat species which call the filter beds home are the common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Nathusius' pipistrelle, noctule and lesser noctule, Natterer's bat and Daubenton's bat.

Built 170 years ago to provide clean water to London, the site is being championed by the Seething Wells Action Group, which wants it formally declared a nature reserve (backed by 90% in a consultation), with exploration of opening it up for public visits via a visitor centre, or more outdoor use, such as a lido. Housing was an option overwhelmingly rejected.

Cllr Sharon Sumner said: "Now is the time to dream big and, with public borrowing so cheap, the council could purchase the site for the community in perpetuity." The Save Seething Wells Filter Beds petition attracted 10,000 signatures.

Cllr Liz Green said she was pleased the filter beds had clung on to their status "as there was a real risk of losing it because of the mismanagement by the current owners".

She believes the answer is for the government to give the council the power to force the owners to properly look after the site, in terms of its biodiversity, and has been working with people in the Commons and Lords to try to achieve this.



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This charming snap of Willow was taken by mum Andrea Rawden as the three-year-old made her way over the footbridge to the Berrylands Nature Reserve.

Willow and her parents, who live in The Avenue, often spend time at the reserve between Raeburn Ave and Grand Ave (access off Stirling Walk or Elmbridge Ave).

"We enjoy walking to the nature reserve," said Andrea. "Willow asks most weekends: 'Can we go?' We love the fact that it is a beautiful, peaceful hidden gem."

Andrea said she and partner Nick enjoy escaping to a place where Willow can freely explore and be surrounded by nature.

Where will Willow wander?

"Our favourite is going to the woods, acting out stories and finding Gruffalos! We also love the pond and discovering wildlife while paddling in the Hogsmill." Andrea says its volunteers' hard work makes it all possible.

"We really appreciate them giving up their spare time to create this wonderful space!"

The reserve's compact five hectares has woodland, grassland, a stream and pond, making it a welcoming home for a variety of flora and fauna.

Flowing the length of the site is the meandering stream, a

tributary of the Hogsmill, where birds such as heron, egret and kingfisher can be seen feeding on minnows and sticklebacks.

You might also catch a glimpse, around dusk, of some of the reserve's resident bats on their daily hunt for insects over the surface of the water.

Areas of broadleaf woodland are composed of majestic oak trees, as well as hazel, hawthorn and blackthorn. Visits are often accompanied by the song of the thrush or the rhythmic drumming of a woodpecker.

The wildlife pond is a breeding

ground for frogs, toads, newts, damselflies and dragonflies, while the grassland borders' berry-laden bushes provide food for birds and small mammals. It's also a great area to walk the dog!

The space is cared for by the Friends of Berrylands Nature Reserve. You can get involved by lending a hand at a volunteering session or attending the discovering wildlife events (Covid restrictions permitting) that are on site. Or become a member and help co-ordinate the maintenance of the reserve.

Jane Grove
Email berrylandsnr@gmail.com
or visit www.berrylandsnaturereserve.org



From this...



No space for The Drifters to get out a blanket and sit under a boardwalk like this... but they could always stroll it.

Kingston Council is to fund a new boardwalk for Six Acre Meadow near Tolworth's Sunray estate.

The borough's oldest hay meadow provides a habitat for pollinators, including butterflies, bumblebees and hoverflies. It's also culturally important; by the spot Pre-Raphaelite John Everett Millais created Ophelia in 1851.

"It's important for nature, and for people to engage with wildlife on their doorstep," said Kingston biodiversity officer Elliot Newton. "Never more important than during lockdown."

He said access to the site had become limited, especially in winter, because of decay to the track. The invasive Himalayan balsam, which could have been tamed with better access, had run riot in an area which once hosted meadowsweet; fragrant plants with frothy clusters of cream flowers on long stems.

Fewer people using the woodland trail also resulted in antisocial behaviour and littering, said Elliot.

The £13,500 cost comes from the council's planning application fees



...to this

pot. The rotting wooden structure will be replaced with recycled plastic (see above), a material commonly used in publicly accessible green spaces as it does not degrade and requires little maintenance. It will be wheelchair-friendly and will be looked after by volunteers working to improve the site's biodiversity. It will also improve access for children at the nearby Liberty Woodland forest school.

The 65m boardwalk will be part of a circular route. "Being elevated, the footfall won't have the environmental impact it would if you were walking on the soil itself," said Elliot.

The work should be finished before the bird-nesting season.

Cllr Sam Foulde-Hughes welcomed it. "The case is twofold; families want to use the space more, and it is a place where there has been a lot of antisocial behaviour," he said.

Cllr Sharon Sumner described Six Acre Meadow as beautiful, and said it was one of her favourite places in the borough. She had small concerns about the sensitivity of the area as "biodiversity likes quiet", but she agreed children need access too, so she hoped that the right balance could be struck.

A gravel garden could tick a lot of boxes, says Janice Cripps ... and here's the aggregate score



It's likely we will be spending much more time in our gardens this year... and you may already be thinking: "How many of those extra hours can I spend enjoying that time, rather than facing the tedium of a never-ending list of garden chores?"

One answer is a gravel garden, because it ticks so many boxes. It's easier to maintain than a conventional mixed border, it works on a large or small scale and, on a practical level, is relatively simple and inexpensive to install. It is particularly suitable for a small front garden that needs to look good all year round and where options are often limited.

Gravel gardens are generally associated with sun-loving Mediterranean plants such as lavender, juniper, sage, rosemary and olives, all drought-tolerant plants which can thrive on poor soil in a sunny location. If you have a dry, sandy



soil, the conditions will be ideal. On a thick clay soil, or where there is a high water table, you will have to think more carefully.

The best time to plant is spring as young drought-tolerant plants, especially silver-leaved plants, hate sitting in cold temperatures with wet feet. There's no need to restrict your choice to Mediterranean plants; if the drainage is right it's possible to grow a whole range of exotic plants and combine them with shrubs, perennials and grasses to create a more contemporary style.

For a low-maintenance garden, you might rely on a large proportion of evergreen shrubs, ensuring there's plenty of space to show off a particular specimen or group of plants to full effect. As a general rule, a ratio of two thirds planting to one third gravel is good, but there is no reason why you can't plant fewer plants as long as they are arranged in considered, attractive groupings.

For a fuller or more seasonal, naturalistic effect you might choose to plant a greater proportion of perennials, grasses, bulbs and annuals, allowing self-seeding plants to flourish for a freer, more dynamic look.

The beauty of gravel garden planting is that it can be as simple or as varied as you want, depending on the look you're aiming for, and how much maintenance you wish to do.

Janice Cripps is a professional Surbiton garden designer.

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

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Postie celebrated on envelope

A letter has surfaced after more than a century, decorated with cute illustrations of the recipient, her daughters, the house to which it was sent, even the moustachioed postman; a key worker of his day. Popped in a London pillar box at 5pm on September 5 1901 (God bless legible, hand-franked postmarks), it arrived next day in Lovelace Gardens.

Essendene, before the days of house numbers, is the address to which it was sent, now simply 32 Lovelace Gardens, a five-flat conversion.

A pair of penny stamps become the windows of the house owned by Charles Fryer and his wife. Fryer was a Fellow of the Linnean Society and Imperial Service Order holder. Born in 1850, he was a world authority on fisheries (and had to live with plenty of ribbing about his apt name). Among his achievements, pioneering the pilchard preservation process.

The postie on the envelope has a high collar and wears a 'shako', a double-brimmed hat covered in dark blue cloth, with red piping, introduced by the GPO five years before our letter was posted.



Essendene, the house at 32 Lovelace Gardens

Restaurant stripped of its licence

The Laxmi restaurant in Tolworth Broadway has had its drinks licence revoked for repeated breaches of the rules.

Kingston Council was told that as early as 2018 the Indian/Sri Lankan eatery, which opened a year before, had not been complying with its licence because it was serving alcohol without meals.

Despite the issue being raised with the licence holder, the restaurant had "continued to ignore the condition that alcohol was only permitted to be served with food".

Antisocial behaviour resulted, causing annoyance to residents in nearby flats. After further complaints from neighbours, a final inspection was organised.

Two hours after the inspection team had left, however, it was discovered that Laxmi was still being run as a bar, not restaurant. The licensing sub-committee heard from the police and restaurant, and concluded that revoking the licence was the right thing to do.

Licensing Sgt Richard Compton said: "There comes a time when enforcement is the only option left."

Garage to be flats

Surbiton Hill Garage, the former petrol station and MoT centre in The Avenue, is to be demolished to make way for a block of flats.

The four-storey building, above a basement, will have nine self-contained apartments (one, two and three-bed), six car parking spaces (one disabled), 15 cycle spaces and landscaping.

Six objections were received from the 117 nearest properties on grounds of character, height, insufficient parking and privacy loss.

An application in 2014 for a three-storey building with two flats and office space was refused but subsequently allowed on appeal. Another bid in 2017 was granted, but lapsed.

Objector Christine Jackson of Manor Drive said she, her husband Nigel, and her neighbours already had to endure being overlooked by other flats built in The Avenue over the 40 years since



they moved in. "Surely we have a right to ask for the concentration to be kept to a minimum, maintaining the area's character?" she asked.

Eamonn Prenter, for the applicant, Mr M Daly, was encouraged by the neighbourhood committee councillors to maximise electric vehicle charging points and cycle spaces.

Councillors unanimously approved the plans.

Stephen's TV cycle challenge

A soldier left brain-damaged after a mortar bomb attack in Iraq, completed a 60-mile cycling fundraiser on national TV from his room at the Royal Star & Garter.

Wheelchair-bound resident Stephen Vause finished his virtual London to Brighton challenge raising money for Help for Heroes. To date he has raised £4,500, surpassing his original £1,500 target.

He started the 'Do 60 with Steve' challenge on Christmas Eve, with the final moments captured on film by staff at the home and shared by Lorraine Kelly on her breakfast show.

Stephen cycled three miles a day on a static bike in his room with the support of home staff who care for veterans and partners living with disability or dementia.

He has also been encouraging others to fundraise with him and received support along the way from celebs including Lord Sugar, Jeremy Vine and the Loose Women team.

"Help for Heroes is very important to me," said Stephen, who was 19 and on his first tour in Iraq with the 4th Bn The Rifles, when he suffered brain injuries in a mortar explosion

near Basra. The attack left him severely disabled.

Now 33, he said: "My injuries from a mortar attack were so severe that my life was in imminent danger."

"I have spent much time working on recovery and rehab since then, and will require support for the rest of my life. Help for Heroes has helped me a great deal and I wanted to do something for them, knowing it would help other veterans, especially at this tough time."

"While this bike ride is usually a one-day event, for me it was a six-week challenge on my adapted static bike, using my arms and legs alternately."

Help for Heroes has funded a bespoke wheelchair and specialist gym equipment to support his care.

Stephen has been living at the



Steve trains with Star & Garter chief exec Andy Cole

home in Upper Brighton Road, Surbiton, since 2015, where he gets round-the-clock care.

Royal Star & Garter chief executive Andy Cole said: "Stephen is an inspiration to all of us, and we feel privileged that he chooses to live with us at Royal Star & Garter. We're proud to be supporting him as he fundraises for another excellent military charity."

● www.justgiving.com/fundraising/steveslondonbrightonchallenge



● Cyclelink of Thames' Ditton, the bike repair shop run by Surbitonian Andrew Manning, has a new vehicle to transport bikes... and it's no van ordinaire. "We took a government bounce back loan to buy an electric van, in line with our low-impact ecological stance," he said.

The shop, voted Elmbridge green business of the year for two years, had signwriting done by Signarama in Hook Rise North. Bike collection will resume post-lockdown.

Greenfield

Happy New Year to all! Not the start to the year we had all hoped for but with the property market remaining open during the lockdown we have been surprisingly busy here at Greenfield. With the deadline for the stamp duty holiday looming we have seen many homebuyers wanting to take advantage of the opportunity and although there has been lower levels of new properties coming onto the market, there certainly seems to be plenty of buyers, making this a good time to sell! Our lettings team have also seen a busy start to the year. We are of course needing to limit the number of people viewing in one day and we are following strict guidelines to ensure we are minimising the spread of COVID. Face coverings are essential and we also ask buyers to sanitise their hands before entering a property. Our offices are currently closed to public but we are here, ready to take your phone calls and emails as normal.

We start 2021 with the opening of our new Land and New Homes office in Surbiton. We now have a dedicated team focused on selling new developments in and around the area. This is something Greenfield has had a lot of experience with over the years and with the increasing number of new developments being built, now is the right time for us to develop this part of our business.

Finally we would like to welcome Liz Gamlen to our lettings team. Liz has joined our Surbiton office and has a many years' experience in the industry. We are delighted to welcome her to the Greenfield family.

If you are thinking of selling or letting your property then please do get in touch. We would love to hear from you.

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How are Surbiton's businesses adapting to survive lockdown?



● **EMMA EGERTON**
At the start of 2020 Emma's vegan catering business, Little Ginger, had six major bookings for weddings and birthdays. All evaporated within a week.

"I thought, this is going to be a disaster!" she reflects. "Then people were allowed to go out and meet in the hot spring and summer, so I created a picnic-in-a-box to take to the park. They were really popular. It was like my catering, but on a smaller, individual scale."

Building on that, her business evolved round the guidelines. "In autumn people still weren't allowed parties, so catering went on the back burner. I had to be creative and offer Christmas treat boxes with vegan gingerbread and mince pies. Thankfully, they were popular enough to keep me afloat."

Being a one-woman band she's been able to make decisions quickly. "The impact of the third lockdown forced me to take a completely different direction. I started a monthly pop-up in the Community Brain kitchen at Tolworth station; something I'd not thought of." It forced her to take Little Ginger to new areas, and "discover my creative side". When it ends, she'll combine catering, boxes and pop-ups. www.littleginger.org

It's tough out there. Walk round Surbiton or Tolworth and you'll see what a year of lockdown has done to shops and services. Established firms as well as start-ups have had to change to stay afloat. **JULIE O'SULLIVAN**, who set up mapleroadlife.com so residents can keep track of what is open, talked to five local firms to see how they've fared



● **SARAH TAYLOR**
She'd just committed to investing in new brands and ordering a lot more stock when the first lockdown happened.

It forced Sarah, of the boutique Shoes at Last, to shut her Maple Road shop. She reflected for a week about which direction to take, when a supplier told her a large order was on its way. "I decided there and then to put the new stock of clothes online, so I could continue to trade."

A government bounce back loan and a grant helped keep her business of 18 years going. "They proved hugely helpful."

With the easing of lockdown in June, Sarah reopened.

"People were really pleased to get out; shopping in a real store was part of that."

With November's lockdown, Sarah started click and collect. "That really helped; I was a visible presence in the shop when people came to the door to collect. It was good to have a bit of socially distanced chat too," she says.

Tier 3 meant only opening for two weeks before Christmas. "That went really well, but I had

to shut again when Tier 4 kicked in, so I went back to click and collect. It's not ideal, I'd rather have people in the store, but it's the only way to keep going." www.shoesatlast.com



● **RICHARD HARDS**

The Tolworth chef was about to open his own restaurant in early 2020, when the sector collapsed. Richard parked his plans and, with photographer wife Kaylie, launched Boxed Local.

"We looked at our joint skill set to see what we could offer, created a menu, photographed the food and got the message out," says Kaylie.

"We launched early in the first lockdown, and were one of the first companies to deliver restaurant-quality food to your door."

Most larger restaurants followed suit, so Boxed Local adapted with weekly pop-ups at The Lamb.

"Our menu has also evolved to include more 'at home' kits, feasting boxes and, recently, a cook-a-long Valentine steak box with a 'how to' video, which was a hit."

Kaylie says it's been a boon being a start-up in Surbiton. "It's full of amazing small

businesses, all willing to support each other through this."

She's keen to stress the positives. "We have a new business that's growing each day. We've been able to get to know, and invest more into, our local area and have met great people while doing so."

New lockdowns have proved more challenging. "It's been harder as no one can escape being adversely affected by the pandemic in some way. We just try to keep the ball rolling and keep pushing things forward." www.boxedlocal.co



● **ADAM LEWIS**

Lamb landlords Adam and Liz Lewis were looking forward to another year running their pub, the Lambstock Music Festival and planning the Surbiton Food Festival alongside the Community Brain. The first lockdown pulled the plug as the pub was forced to close.

Says Liz: "We've been at The Lamb 13 years, and rarely take time off, so it was a novelty to be in an empty pub at a very long lock-in with the kids!"

They hosted online events, and had a virtual Lambstock festival. "We moved our business outside, created booths, Adam built an outdoor kitchen, and sorted out table service. We even got an app, which is something we'd never imagined having as we're a traditional boozer!"

"They were overwhelmed by the goodwill from the community. 'We changed our model entirely,'" says Liz. "That had pros and cons. Our service was, in some ways, more efficient with the app, but it

was less personal as there was no more chatting at the bar, which is hard as our ethos is all about socialising!"

Before the second lockdown the pub staged events with independent caterers they'd worked with when they had to provide substantial meals 'with a drink. "Collaborating with other independents is really fun as we all share the benefits," says Liz. www.lambsurbiton.co.uk



● **TIM STAUNTON**

Having taken over as general manager of The Antelope in January 2020, Tim's plan was to further improve service levels and make The Brewhouse the go-to local dining destination.

"The initial lockdown meant we had to close at short notice and cancel or postpone bookings," he says. "We had to reassure staff, and work to keep everyone employed in some way."

After liaising with licensing, the pub opened for food and drink takeaway, collection and delivery, amazing Tim with the support. "Reopening was a huge success. We had exposure to customers who may not have been before."

The team opened the Brewhouse restaurant in Tier 3, and offered collection and deliveries in the third lockdown. "Being involved in the free school meals in the autumn half term was a reminder of the hardship faced by some families in these unsettling times," says Tim.

Lockdown forced the pub to change the way it works. "Public feedback's been overwhelmingly positive. I feel they want us to succeed in whatever form we are trading," says Tim. www.theantelope.co.uk

Charity told to quit home of 40 yrs

● Cont'd from p1

"We offered to make a substantial donation towards repairs, but that seemed to fall on deaf ears. It seems very suspicious; I think they're selling off the family silver." Kay's exchanges with the council lead her to think "they just want their building back".

Her suspicion is that the authority is so strapped for cash that it needs to sell off assets to developers to balance the books. "I understand everyone's got to manage budgets," said Kay. "But at a time when mental health is the nation's topic of conversation, this could have been handled better."

The charity's legion of supporters are, said Kay, "very upset". Words of reassurance only go so far, especially to those who have only ever known the Ditton Road building as the charity's base.

"Kingston Council really values the work the Fircroft Trust does in our community," said the local authority. "Unfortunately their building can't be

used at the moment because the property isn't safe, and we are actively investigating the structural problems there."

"We want the trust to continue to thrive and are actively working with them to find them alternative accommodation for their immediate needs which they feel is suitable."

The council added that it commissions the trust to work with borough residents with mental health needs "and has commissioned extra services in recent months".

It acknowledges that Covid-19 has created a mental health crisis and that the charity's work is needed now more than ever.

Fircroft has asked the council if there is any reason why the charity can't undertake the structural work to the building itself... but says it hasn't had a response.

The Fircroft Trust has a care quality rating of 'Good' for the work it does to reduce hospital admission and suicide rates.

It relies on donations, some channelled through its charity shops in Tolworth and Surbiton, to provide some of its funding.

If anyone has ideas for alternative premises when the pandemic allows face-to-face support to resume, please email Kay Harris at office@thefircrofttrust.org



Kay Harris of Fircroft Trust

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● Jonathan Greensted has set up Pub Pledge to keep pubs alive through lockdown. Money given is repaid via discounts for pub goers. With 2,500 pub closures in 2020, he says the need is urgent. Cash is held in a protected account, with funds released for approved spending. www.pubpledge.com



Peace be with you

Surbiton peace campaigners joined colleagues throughout the country to put out flags to mark a landmark international treaty banning nuclear weapons. Backed by 120 member countries of the United Nations, it came into force on Jan 22.

"Sadly, the UK is not yet one, but we are campaigning to change minds," said Oakhill resident Rosemary Addington (pictured).

Kingston Peace Council/CND asked churches to ring their bells at noon on the day the treaty became law. St Matthew's was one that did.

● For more info about Kingston Peace Council/CND, email phillipjcooper@hotmail.com

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Remembering Frances

Surbiton MP and Lib Dem leader Ed Davey has unveiled a plaque and mosaic to commemorate Frances Moseley, a Berrylands ward councillor who died in 2012 following a battle with cancer.

The mosaic of a daffodil (a flower Frances loved) is on a wall near Surbiton Children's Centre Nursery in Alpha Road. Commissioned by residents shortly after her death, it has been repaired by local artist Kim Porrelli after it became worn and water damaged.

The work was paid for by the Alpha Road Residents' Association via crowdfunding.

Frances, pictured, a councillor between May 2006 and her death on December 18 2012, served on numerous committees in senior roles including being a champion for better housing.

"Frances was amazing," said Sir Ed. "She did so much for the Alpha Road estate. The fact that she is still remembered so fondly is why people wanted to make sure that the mosaic was spruced up."

"She was the epitome of a brilliant councillor."



Tolworth Tower site: how to have your say

This is how the Tolworth Tower site could look if developers Meadow Partners' plans are approved by Kingston Council. The model is housed for all to see in the shop window next to Costa Coffee in Tolworth Broadway.

As well as turning the existing tower into 261 flats, the plan is to build a second block with 136 flats and add a third with 102; so a grand total of 499.

Concerns have been expressed about the complete absence of 'affordable' flats. Cllr Sharon Sumner has tweeted her worries on that front, and about the lack of any significant improvement to the area's infrastructure.

This is all in addition to the Toby Jug site, across the roundabout, where 950 flats and houses are proposed.

The Tolworth Tower plan, set to dramatically alter the town, is on the Surbiton neighbourhood committee agenda for consultation at 7.30pm on March 11 (you can 'attend' the meeting at www.kingston.public-tv/core/portal/home)

To ask a question on the scheme at the meeting, email Kingston Council's democratic services officer Martin Newton at martin.newton@kingston.gov.uk or phone him on 020 8547 6086 before 10am on March 10.

The first five people who want to



ask their questions at the online consultation will be able to do so. A summary will be provided to committee members of other questions received.

The link to the planning application is also at Meadow Partners' website, tolworthtowerconsultation.co.uk

There you can find a webinar where the developer, architects and consultants discuss their vision for Tolworth Tower and the thinking behind the new blocks of 19 and 15 storeys, plus shops, offices and a public plaza. Most flats would be for sale, though the developer may rent some as well.

The M&S store and 132-room Travelodge would remain, but the overall car parking on the site would be reduced from 647 spaces to 344.

If approved, building work will last four and a half years, provided Phase

One (Tolworth Tower) and Phase Two (the additional towers) do not overlap.

The webinar answers many questions and there are artists' impressions, plans and drawings of how the Broadway would look. If you have questions, email Meadow Partners (feedback@tolworthtowerconsultation.co.uk) or call 020 3219 7957.



How Tolworth's skyline would alter, from ground level. The before and after look from the 1930s houses in Hamilton Avenue



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Here's a good yarn... the Parish Court ladies who cast on

All the ladies of the Parish Court, St Mark's Hill, knitting circle are impressive needleworkers... but Sakina Moosajee, right, is simply remarkable.

That's her with two of her knitted dolls. She's already made a fairy doll and a pirate doll, and has presented them to her delighted seven-year-old twin grandchildren.

Yet Sakina is completely blind. She has to type up the patterns on her Braille machine (a chore which saves her long-suffering husband, Farouk, from having to solemnly read every bit of coding out to her).

Her pals help out by advising on colours and assisting with any little

problems that arise. "But the end result is Sakina's work," said proud fellow resident Pauline Butcher. "She's a star!"

Like the other members of the knitting circle, led by Queen of the Needles Brenda Richer, 93, Sakina has been inspired to do great things in lockdown after the ladies began knitting blankets to brighten up the dementia ward at Kingston Hospital.

It was Brenda who suggested setting up the Parish Court knitters more than a year ago, and although the Covid-19 restrictions put a halt to the group's weekly gatherings, there's every hope those will resume soon.

Meantime, the clicking needles have been producing squares which have been joined together into blankets – at least 20 to date.

"Brenda's amazing," said the admiring Pauline. "She could knit for England! She turns out baby clothes, toddlers' jumpers, cot blankets, skin-to-skin squares for premature babies and their mums as well as toys."

As well as going to the hospital, her creations find homes through the Cancer Research shop, Shelter charity shop... and, her adored great-granddaughter, Lilly-Mae.

Brenda claims knitting keeps her mind alert, her fingers supple, and arthritis at bay.

If any knitted square doesn't pass Brenda's quality control test, it is donated to make Vi Pottinger's daughter's cat's afternoon naps that bit more special. Jagger, right, is the picture of contentment, paws outstretched and nuzzling down into a comfy, cosy weave.



Himali's birdspotting trail

Can you identify these hand-painted, enamel birds? Twenty-nine of them, created by Kingston School of Art graduate and Community Brain designer Himali Patil, pictured, now decorate the paths and bridges at Tolworth roundabout.

This wayfinding project leads from Tolworth Broadway to Kingston's largest nature reserve, Tolworth Court Farm Fields, where the real thing can be spotted.

"These stunning enamel, hand-painted birds are inspired by an Indian tribal artform called Gond art," said project co-ordinator Charlotte Levy. "It aims to highlight the area's local identity in its biodiversity. The birds are characteristic of those at the nature reserve."



Charlotte said that the new wayfinding signage was designed to encourage people to explore the area by walking and cycling, helping to teach them more about the local wildlife as well as directing them to places of interest.



Panto star is signing up

The star of many a panto at Surbiton's cornerHOUSE thought at first it was a scam when someone got in touch from the States requesting his autograph.

After all, no one had ever asked Richard Williams for his signature in Tolworth!

But it was for real, and Richard, right, who played the leading role in *Shirley Holmes and the Sound of the Basket Wheels* in the Douglas Road hall in 2015, will soon be part of a collection compiled by Sherlock Holmes fan Steve Mason of actors who have represented the Baker Street detective in different incarnations on stage and screen.

Richard's scrawl will join such illustrious names as Orson Welles, Michael Caine, Basil Rathbone, Benedict Cumberbatch, Stephen Fry, Roger Moore, John Barrymore, John Gielgud, Alec Guinness, Alan Rickman and Ian McKellen, not to mention Russ Abbot and Eric Morecambe!

Steve Mason, who lives in Denton, Texas, has amassed nearly 300 autographs at www.dfw-sherlock.org, with Richard's being one of the unlikely! "It's ridiculous, but very funny," said the Surbiton thesp.



● Youngsters from Lime Tree primary are mural specialists. Their art was used by Kingmead Homes on the site hoarding round the former health centre at Oak Hill Road. The theme was 'community and working together'. "As you can see, we have some wonderful artists in the making," said head Sue Hawker.

● A 'reading friends' service will counter isolation and loneliness. Befrienders will bring people together to read, share stories and chat online or by phone, with sessions starting with a poem, story or letter. A £9,000 grant funds teleconferencing (so no one pays for phone calls) and devices for those without them.

● The final three concerts in this year's Thames Concert season at St Andrew's church, Maple Road, had to be called off because of lockdown rules... but artistic director Ben Costello is already planning the next series, from Oct 16.

A sell-out audience enjoyed the Cantabile concert on Dec 5, where bassist Paul Morgan stepped in at the 11th hour after Mike Pratt contracted Covid.

A sketchy past

Surbiton chef, illustrator and poet Tim Carter has collected together the illustrations from his published after-dinner monologues, and presented them to their original scale... with an invitation to colour in the charming ink drawings.

Tim, who runs the kitchen at Alfriston, the day centre in Berrylands Road, includes some

of his verses in this new volume, to give the pictures context. His passion for the Thames shines through each sketch, with every image blending a mix of real and imagined characters, detailing their quirky relationship with the river. "I can think of no better memorial than someone laughing at one of my monologues after I've gone," says Tim - hopefully thinking a long way ahead.

● The Weybridge Sailing Club Monologues by Tim Carter, £8.99



What makes the fashion business tick?

Virginia Grose is one of those people who always looks effortlessly glamorous. It's probably something to do with her 40 years working in the fashion business.

The course director of Fashion Business Management at the University of Westminster has just published her second book, *A Practical Guide to the Fashion Industry: Concept to Customer*.

It's sure to be gobbled up by eager undergrads wanting to impress potential employers with their knowledge of the industry. It's also relevant to others too, Virginia says.

"This book is aimed at anyone who wants to go into the fashion business - at any age actually, because it is an overview of how the business works. But it was designed with first-year undergraduates in mind, or anyone who may have a lot of business background but who wants to understand how the fashion business works."

This is the second edition in the Basics Fashion Management series.

Subjects covered in this full update with new international case studies, interviews and attention-grabbing images of the catwalk, prêt-à-porter and couture, range from context and concept, product development, retail strategy, manufacturing, the supply chain, branding and marketing, social media, sustainability



and storytelling - the cogs which turn this vibrant, multi-million pound, fast-changing, global industry.

Virginia, who has lived in Elmbridge Avenue for 14 years, said sustainability was now embedded in the fashion industry and storytelling, particularly for luxury brands, and understanding the customer's lifestyle was becoming ever more important.

The academic, who forged a successful international career as a fashion designer and manager at Courtaulds Textiles before becoming a consultant and then a lecturer, is in discussions with her publisher about a new book on cashmere fashion.

She is also researching a PhD into a sustainable supply chain for cashmere in the UK and working as a joint author on her third book about fashion supply chain management.

"I still do a lot of mentoring of fashion brands too," she added. "You have to, you can't run commercial courses like fashion business management without being networked."

● *A Practical Guide to the Fashion Industry: Concept to Customer* (Basics Fashion Management 2nd edition), Bloomsbury, £21.99



An ode to Fishponds

Fishponds Park Image by Karen Thompson

The wind calls and the icy leaves skip through the air to the gentle rhythm of strangers' footsteps. Catching a momentary glimpse of naked trees they used to know and remembering, with fondness, their stories and seasons past. Greeting each other in the sky for a short stay, sometimes a dance, if they are lucky.

Nature is the stage for this silent - if slightly unpredictable - orchestra that wakes the sleeping ground.

We watch from the intimate audience, exhaling slowing, but our breath quickly disappears, like secret whispers, to join the impromptu performance.

We stand in the open air, stiller than we've ever stood, as the wind moves around us and only our eyes move with it.

Our busy minds temporarily forget, yesterdays and todays and tomorrows, as the cold breeze turns our noses slightly pink, like an early sunset sky.

At once, a quiet and satisfying crunch fills our expectant ears, as the wind closes its morning melody and the leaves tumble to their beds until the next curtain call.

We are content.

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Fans of Fran

Fran Kirby, right, reigning WSL player of the month and fans' favourite is, says manager of the month Emma Hayes, "doing everything I ask" and "goes above and beyond". The 27-year-old Chelsea striker missed England duty last week through injury, but aims to be back in league action this weekend as the Blues travel to West Ham, with Man City breathing down their necks.

Chelsea face Bristol City in the Conti Cup final on March 14, and are playing Atletico Madrid over two legs in the Champions League.



● Via the Chelsea Foundation, the football club has put £10,000 into pandemic support and is match-funding money raised by fans. Vanloads of goody bags will help younger supporters, while coaching staff are working on OAP fitness and reminiscence sessions to tackle loneliness.

Club's 100 years

It's centenary year for Surbiton Bowling Club at Alexandra Park. "We managed to organise some sort of schedule," said Alan Forrest, reviewing 2020. "But visits from other local teams were, of course, banned."

By keeping to 2m spacing, the club was able to enjoy last year's good bowling weather. "Now we celebrate our centenary on the ground we've used from the start."

The club has an archive, but asks anyone with info on the 1921 founding to come forward. Pandemic permitting, other clubs will be invited to share the celebrations, with commemorative gifts for all.

April open days are planned. www.surbitonbowlingclub.co.uk



Mike White bowls

A volume to laud Peter's whimsy

Surbiton football blogger Peter Dunkley (www.twogolcushion.co.uk) has produced a splendid collection of lively musings on the beautiful game. Peter, of Worthington Road, is a Palace fan (we all have our crosses to bear) and is making his mini volume available to Surbitonians for £2 (or £3 to include P&P if they live beyond the town, and he can't hand-deliver). Simply email him via his website.

My Favourite Game is now interesting mainstream publishers, and Peter is working on an expanded version with more stories.

"I like to approach the game with a mix of cynicism, fascination and humour," he says. The result is a charming series of thoughts that dot about like stray passes from a pub football team.

Peter began writing for pals, then asked them for their favourite matches. "I was pleasantly surprised by the quality and variety, and thought it would be fun to package it up in a book," he said.

● Sadly no room yet for my own top game: Chelsea 4 Liverpool 2, a cup semi at the Bridge, Jan 26 1997. The Blues, 2-0 down at half-time, brought on Mark Hughes. He scored, Luca Vialli netted two and Franco Zola finished a supremely satisfying comeback. **TH**



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