

Cutting it fine

● Scything might seem as modern as a scene from a Thomas Hardy novel (an ex-Surbiton resident, by the way). But it's back... at Fishponds and Tolworth Court Farm. See **p6**



● She's found a way to get the next generation enthusiastically creating healthy, imaginative meals of their own. Turn to **p2**

● If you can't get to Surbiton Library, chill! The books can find their way to you, thanks to a team of volunteers. And there's now a local reading befriender service to counter isolation. Full story on **p9**




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Hedgehogs, smile please!

If you spot Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, ask her to pose! Hedgehog champions are being recruited to halt a decline which has seen two-thirds of this suburban favourite wiped out since 1990.

Volunteers in Berrylands and Alexandra wards will be given infrared motion-sensor cameras which trigger short video recordings. It follows a Surbiton neighbourhood committee grant of £3,000 to the Zoological Society of London.

The data will translate into a conservation programme this autumn to boost Surbiton's hedgehog population, and will also inform a council biodiversity action plan. Committee co-chair Cllr Anita Schaper said: "I'm delighted this has been approved. Often considered a gardener's best friend, hedgehogs are a vital part of our ecosystem,

and eat slugs and all sorts of bugs." Chris Carbone of the Institute of Zoology said: "We hope to create an environment in which people and hedgehogs can thrive side by side."

Volunteer for a garden camera, or distributing cameras or analysing data and film footage at www.tinyurl.com/hedgehogchampion

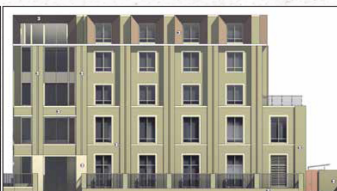
Area biodiversity officer Elliot Newton has made a short video with info on encouraging hedgehogs in Surbiton. Search Reading Nature Episode 10:

Hedgehogs on YouTube.

Tips include linking your garden to next door with a 13cm square hole in the fence or wall, putting an escape ramp in your pond, creating a wild corner, and clearing old netting. Visit www.hedgehogstreet.org and www.bighedgehogmap.org **Jane Grove**



From this...



...to THIS?

● The new design has the grace and style of a prison, but developers want to bulldoze a two-storey Victorian care home in Adelaide Road and replace it with a six-storey, 60-bed block.

Willow Grange Care Home, offering respite, nursing and dementia care at 1 Adelaide Road, wants to raze an 1840 building in the Claremont Road conservation zone at the junction with St Mark's Hill to swap it for a new-build incorporating a brain injury unit.

Cllr Liz Green didn't mince her words. "It's one of the most boring,

ugly designs I've ever seen," she said. "We want quality care facilities, but also beautiful buildings that reflect Surbiton's heritage."

"I don't want to see boring square boxes of buildings, with no features to bring them to life."

"If the current building can't be adapted, the new one needs to add to the street scene."

Plans are at publicaccess.kingston.gov.uk Search for 21/01313/OUT. Planners will make their decision by the end of July.

It's fun to exterminate

Surbiton actor Jess Hern has a key role in the new immersive West End hit Doctor Who Time Fracture, which includes recorded cameos by TV Doctors Tom Baker and Jodie Whittaker.

"I'm buzzing to be back after a year with no performing," said the 28-year-old; a child star in cornerHOUSE pantos. "I get to play an assassin... and kill people!"

The previews have seen diehard Whovians bowling up as characters from a TV show which is poised to turn 60. "They dress up, wave their sonic screwdrivers... they want to chat, they want to engage," said Jess, who loves the spark of live interaction.



Cybermen on the march in the show and, inset, Jess Hern

"It's a rare thing to be employed as an actor at all at the moment, so I feel very privileged. Whether you're a complete fan or haven't seen the programme, it doesn't matter. The audience's role is to be the hero, and save the universe. There are 17 rooms to explore, full of aliens, singers and weeping angels."

With daleks and cybermen to contend with, the 42-strong cast enacts a 1940 story, at the height

of the London Blitz, where a rift opens in time and space.

Devised by the people who made London's longest-running immersive show, The Great Gatsby (which also starred Jess) the production heralds the cautious reopening of theatre after lockdown.

The show, directed by Tom Maller with performances every day bar Mondays, represents a huge investment (and gamble) at a time of pandemic uncertainty. Tickets are £50 via www.immersivedoctorwho.com



● Shambling down the high street, Surbiton snapper David Jacobson spotted this sight, midweek lunchtime, and reached for his box brownie. It's a welcome change from 35 mopeds. "Waiting for his McOats' is the title he gave it.

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Press on! Laura's oils are fresh

Run by Laura Haag from Howard Road, Berrylands, an eco-conscious business has proved a popular addition to the regular Surbiton Farmers' Market stalls. "People are interested; fresh oil is not something a lot of people know about," said Laura, whose start-up, Seedling Pure Natural, fresh-presses oils for stronger flavours and higher nutritional value.



A health range was the initial focus, trying to reconnect people to a concept that has been around for thousands of years, but it has now expanded to include quality foodie oils for dressings.

www.seedlingpurenatural.com



Diddy Diners' Josephine with her young chefs Myla, 7, and Otis, 5

Jo's inspirational cookalongs

Diddy Diners, a Berrylands start-up helping children create in the kitchen, was dreamt up by ex-maths teacher Josephine Fernando, worried about a lack of nutritional snacks.

From teaching healthy cookery to youngsters, Diddy Diners Delivered was born in lockdown, so parents can have fun with their children at the stove without the faff of shopping for ingredients, while also learning about nutrition and science.

Each plastic-free, sustainable kit (ages 2 to 10) has two recipes; one main and a food exploration activity (eg Carrot & Apple Cookies and Magical Colour-Changing Noodles or July's Strawberry & Chocolate Quesadillas and Roasted Peas). Everything is free from refined

sugar, nuts and eggs, and contains fresh, seasonal UK fruit and veg sourced by Surbiton Hill Park greengrocer Stears. Gluten and dairy alternatives are available.

Accompanying the ingredients are cute illustrated booklets with recipes, stickers, activities and links to cookalong videos. Delivered, posted, or for pick-up from Stears, with fresh (£17+) or dried options (£13+), each kit includes a donation to Trussell Trust foodbanks.

"I hope to inspire parents and kids and remind people that food can taste delicious and be nutritious too," said Josephine of The Ridings. For Good Life discounts input codes GL10 or GL50 on checkout. www.diddydiners.co.uk **Jane Grove**

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Sage branches out

After her new refill/recycle/plastic-free zero waste centre and health store opened on Wednesday last week, Sage Parmar can reflect on a meteoric journey since she burst on to the scene in March 2019 with Sage's Health Store in Brighton Road. Her latest venture next door (in the old Surbiton Glass shop by the zebra crossing) eliminates packaging waste. It's hello to machines that make peanut, hazelnut, almond or cashew butter, refillable make-up in bamboo containers, bring-your-own-bottle milk, oils, vinegars and cleaning liquids. The old shop will sell organic fruit & veg and be her online HQ.


• A garden party with homemade food and music will raise funds for Surbiton charity African Vision Malawi on Sat July 10, 10am-6pm, at 31 Upper Brighton Road. "It's a relaxing day of therapies, yoga, tai chi, facials, reflexology, hand massage, manicures and games," said chief exec Heather Palmer. There will also be a raffle and stalls. Proceeds will support Malawi orphans. £1 entry (50p children). Full details: www.africanvision.org.uk




• Surbiton's former hardware store at 23 Brighton Road has reopened as Alchémé Wellbeing; an intriguing mix of personal training and yoga studio, and cafe. The front is a vegetarian eatery, with teas, coffees, kombucha, smoothies and juices, plus out-of-the-ordinary snacks such as protein balls, dates filled with almond butter and marinated tofu wraps.



Out back is a yoga studio (there's no membership fee - you simply book classes from £20), with fitness sessions for a similar price, while an osteopath is available every day. www.alchémé.co.uk



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• Local rumours about demolition work being carried out by Aldi at the former Guy Salmon Jaguar Landrover showroom along the Portsmouth Road in Long Ditton, seem to be premature.
"It's not being demolished; what they are doing is the investigative work, because right underneath the site is the culvert carrying the river Rythe," Dittons councillor Nick Darby told The Good Life.
The stream eventually ends up in the Thames after burrowing under Portsmouth Road by the Winters Bridge shops (Bachmanns patisserie, Bleakleys Tiles etc).
"They want to be quite sure they know exactly where it is before they eventually start doing any construction," he added.
In any event, there's still the little matter of the discount supermarket giant applying for - and getting - planning permission... and with traffic concerns, that isn't a gimme.

Cake in the community

A community cafe has opened at St Matthew's church, at the corner of Kingsdowne Road and St Matthew's Avenue.
It is initially opening on Wednesdays from 10am-2pm, offering homemade food, hot drinks, soup and a friendly welcome.
The Balance@St Matthew's Community Cafe is a partnership between the church and the firm that runs the nearby Woodbury care home.
It promotes independent living for vulnerable people.
Visit www.balance-support.org.uk

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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 12,000 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.

We prefer people

Surbiton post office in McColl's, Victoria Road, has terminated a year-long self-service machine trial. "It just wasn't generating enough money," said one staff member. It seems we prefer buying stamps from people not objects.

Job fair partners

A jobs fair saw Kingston College and the council offer advice on CVs and business start-ups. Staged virtually at Hillcroft College, Surbiton, on June 23, it focused on retraining and reskilling: broadening horizons on work options.

Striped success



Lucy Edwards, 16, was called 'a natural leader' by Young Enterprise judges after a Surbiton High School team won a digital award for making zebra-print tote bags.

Crumbs! Success!

A gauge of Surbiton Farmers' Market's success? The Baking Party stall opened at 9am with 400 cakes, and by 11am was down to a scattering of crumbs.

Bogus cop callers

Beware calls from bogus police officers, seemingly ringing from genuine numbers. The patter is that the victim's national insurance number is being used in fraud. Hang up, and wait a few minutes before using the phone again.

Market helpers

Tolworth's food, arts and crafts market (1st Sunday of the month, 11am-3pm) in the slip road opposite Our Lady Immaculate, needs volunteers. A retail chance for independent traders, and a community event, its dates are: Jul 4, Aug 1, Sep 5, Oct 3, Nov 7 and Dec 5. contact@thecommunitybrain.org

Fun in summer

Youngsters can join 'summer of fun' events next to the museum in Wheatfield Way, Kingston, Thursdays and Fridays, Jul 8-Aug 27. Themes include health, culture, environment, storytelling, wellbeing and heritage. Check [Kingstonlibraries](https://www.kingstonlibraries.org) Instagram.

Arty recruitment

Surbiton's bustling cornerHOUSE arts centre in Douglas Road needs bar and front-of-house volunteers after reopening. Email SuCollins@cornerhousevolunteers@gmail.com

A discreet code

If you are at risk of domestic abuse, you can discreetly signal your situation and get support at Boots in Victoria Road by giving a codeword at the counter. Search [Ask for ANI](https://www.boots.com) online.

Bikes in the frame

Sensors are being installed along Surbiton's new cycle lane network to gauge popularity and detect illegal use. "The more we know the better our work can be targeted," said the council.

A job incentive

Wavering about employing a youngster on universal credit? Kickstart pays Surbiton firms the first six months' wages. [Kickstart.campaign.gov.uk](https://www.kickstart.campaign.gov.uk)

Stress aid taster

A free, 90-minute online taster on Fri Jul 16 at 9.30am is a good introduction to courses run by adult education in Surbiton to cut stress and aid mental health. www.bit.ly/KAE-PIFHL

Do you feel safe?

How safe are women and girls when they're out and about? A council survey (it ends on July 6) will lead to an action plan. Go to [kingstonletstalk.co.uk](https://www.kingstonletstalk.co.uk)

Tropical theme

Long Ditton infant and nursery school summer fete (Sat Jul 3, noon-3pm) in the Ditton Hill Road grounds has a tropical theme, with beach games, live music, barbecue, plants and ice creams.

Meet your Cllrs

Surbiton's neighbourhood committee meets in person again at the Guildhall, 7.30pm on Wednesday, June 30.

SURBITON LIFE

by David Cox

Cartoons are on the cards

The man who makes Surbiton smile with his wry observations about life in the town - Good Life cartoonist David Cox - has produced a range of witty, distinctive greetings cards featuring his drawings. They're on sale at the Farrago gift shop in Claremont Road at £2.95 apiece.



Sweeter school air hope

Schoolkids and parents will breathe air, not fumes, if a cap on peak traffic at Christ Church primary, Pine Gardens, is imposed.

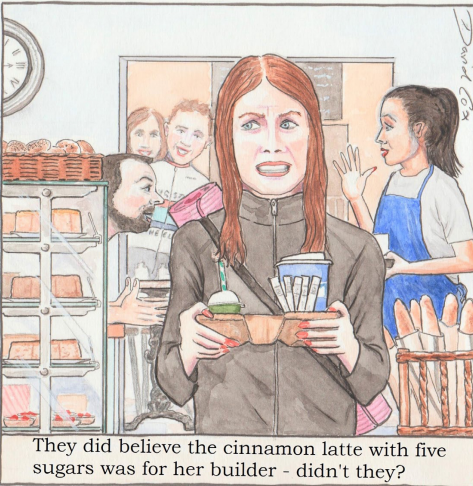
The council 'school street' scheme already covers several schools in Kingston, Chessington and New Malden, with a possible extension banning cars at drop-off and collection times near Christ Church being canvassed at Surbiton's next neighbourhood committee meeting, to be held on June 30.

Kingston Council is an early adopter of sensors to monitor

air quality near schools, targeting idling gas guzzlers which belch out pollution while waiting to pick up Archie and Allegra.

The aim is to encourage greener journeys via camera-enforced no-go zones at key times of day during the school year.

"Monitoring will help identify pollution hotspots," said highways assistant director Matthew Hill. "We hope new measures will encourage more people to travel sustainably, creating a safer, cleaner environment."



They did believe the cinnamon latte with five sugars was for her builder - didn't they?

Camping converter

At the start of the pandemic, Berrylands resident Andy Clifton found a new project... converting an old panel van into a camper van for the family.

Neighbours stopped to admire his efforts on the driveway of his home in Pembroke Avenue. Now it's become a full-time business for the 40-year-old former M&S buyer who has set up a workshop in Hershham. As Clifton Campers, he has nearly finished his third bespoke conversion.

When I called in he was busy fitting a solar panel to the van roof, but options are almost infinite: showers, loos, beds, bike garages, exotic colour schemes, water tanks, heaters, reading lights, chairs, sofas, hobs, fridges...



"I became fascinated by Instagram van converters," said Andy, who is married to professional photographer Annie and whose children attend Christ Church school.

He starts from scratch, insulating the bare metal sides and fitting windows and rooflights before turning the inside into a personalised living space designed to the customer's layout.

The Clifton family had always camped, but tired of 'wet tent syndrome' and opted for four-wheeled camping. "Why don't you make one?"

● The formal entrance flowerbeds of Victoria rec are now fully planted, thanks to the work of volunteers such as Tony Dale, pictured, assisting with the spadework.



● They're not stumped for ideas after the century-old willow split, and was felled, outside Surbiton Library. A replacement will go in the ground this winter, with schools picking the species, and helping to plant.

Annie rashly suggested. Now he offers three-month conversion turnarounds, with a typical secondhand delivery van (the one in the picture is a Ford Transit) costing around £15,000, with around £15,000 paying for conversion into a home-on-wheels.

With complete flexibility, customers can pick part of one design, and part of another, with each job teaching him a little bit more about conversion possibilities.

Most business comes from quirky campers' websites.

"I've come into it at a good time; I

get inquiries most days," said Andy. "As people can't travel abroad so much, it's becoming more popular to reconnect with the countryside."

Once the preserve of retired couples, campervans are now quite a young thing, with more families creating cool mobile homes of their own.

His own van is Luna (his two children chose the name), with most camper vans having names. The hope next year is to take Luna across to the continent. www.clifton-campers.co.uk

Tim Harrison

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Mine host, Mr Silcock

In later years he grew to resemble the pub he ran... the Toby Jug. Short, florid and rotund, George Silcock was entrusted with launching Charrington's first roadhouse, and an early Tolworth landmark.

Born into the hospitality trade in 1886, he was the youngest of eight raised by publican couple William and Caroline Silcock at the White Lion, Putney.

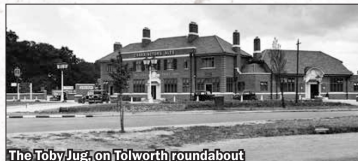
When Caroline died suddenly in 1901, William put George in charge of another of his pubs, the nearby Star & Garter, despite the fact that George was only 16.

In 1907, at 21, he took over the Clarence Arms, Kingston, where the main entrance to the Bentall shopping centre now stands. The next year he married 19-year-old Louisa Vicary. They had a son (also George) in 1911. When war broke out, Silcock volunteered for the Royal Flying Corps.

After the war the Silcocks moved to another new pub, the Fountain in New Malden, before he was headhunted to launch the Toby Jug in 1934. Soon he was building a pub empire, at one time owning the Sun, Dolphin, Three Fishes and Robert Peel in Kingston, and the Station Hotel, Richmond (where the Rolling Stones were the resident band).

The Toby, opposite today's Tolworth Tower, was an instant success – a favourite with locals as well as the passing trade on the Kingston By-Pass.

With its rose garden, bandstand and function room



The Toby Jug, on Tolworth roundabout

it was a focal point for the community and a venue for parties and dances.

Louisa fell ill in 1944, was treated at Hammersmith's Masonic Hospital (George was master of two freemasons' lodges) but died aged 55. Her ashes are buried in Thames Ditton. Eight months later came further tragedy. George Jr, a major in the Gurkha Rifles, died on active service in India in 1945, at the age of 34.

Though no bombs fell on the Toby Jug during the war, George had other troubles. He was fined for serving a diner a sardine in breach of food regulations!

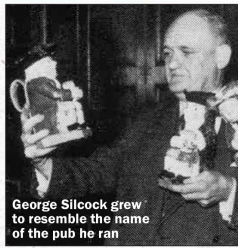
Two months after the Second World War, George Charles Silcock Ltd was formed to manage the landlord's pub interests, while another son, Peter, then in his mid 20s, began taking over the running of the business.

The Toby Jug, which went on to become a notable music venue, was a serious earner. When George Silcock died in 1956 at the age of 70 he left the equivalent of £2.5million cash, in today's money.

At the funeral at St Matthew's, Surbiton, the Rev Roy Chamberlain described him as 'generous, cheerful and helpful', adding: 'Many will carry memories of his friendship, encouragement and counsel on different matters in a long life, with much public service.'

Son Peter succeeded him at the Toby, installing a succession of managers. A decade after George's death, the 34-year family association with the hostelry ended as the company moved into hotel management. The old Toby building was pulled down 20 years ago. **Tim Harrison**

● George Charles Silcock, b Feb 14 1886, d May 14 1956



George Silcock grew to resemble the name of the pub he ran

NOTABLE SURBITONIANS George Silcock

Tables turned on 4-bed home

A bid to build a four-storey, four-bedroom detached home with a turntable for a car in the former back garden of a house in Maple Road has been refused by planners.

The site, pictured below, with access on to St James Road, is currently used as a small off-street car park. Kingston Council rejected the application, saying it would look incongruous and shoe-horned in; a 'dominant, overbearing visually intrusive feature in the street scene'.

The building would detract from St Andrew's church when viewed from St James Road, would compromise neighbours' outlooks and create loss of privacy for future occupants who would be directly overlooked by residents in Maple Road.

Daylight and parking issues were also factors. Forty three people objected. Neighbour Joe Luffman said: 'I'm pleased

the council has rejected it, I'd have been surprised if they hadn't. It's good to know planning policies protect the [St Andrew's Square] conservation area. I hope developers will see this and look to more suitable locations in future.'



● Congrats to Brian Gaff, who runs Surbiton's talking newspaper for the blind, on a richly deserved mayor's Covid award. 'I apparently received it for my work keeping it going in the last three lockdowns,' he said modestly. When the recording team could no longer use the Alpha Road studio, Brian organised home working. 'We still do that, but we can now access our studio again,' he said. Recorded with (sighted) producers John, Helen, Sandy and David, the service uses news nuggets from The Good Life and other sources. 'The pandemic's highlighted blind people's isolation; ours are sometimes the only voices they hear in a week,' said Brian. Anyone can dial in to the paper on 0330 2233452 or at listen.talking-news.info/kingston



Triple tower plan stalls

A bid to add two more high-rise blocks to Tolworth Broadway and build 499 homes in a project involving turning the existing Tolworth Tower into flats have hit the buffers as the council rejected plans by developer Meadow Partners.

Ten reasons were cited for refusing the scheme for the 22-storey block plus 19 and 15-storey towers, shops and a public plaza. They included lack of affordable housing, lack of three-bed units (contrary to Kingston's core strategy), loss of office, retail and amenity space and lack of a robust fire statement.

There were 305 objections, with 13 in

favour. Cllr Sam Foulder-Hughes said he was pleased it had been refused. 'I felt it was insulting to residents; offering nothing in the way of affordable housing, too few family homes and ignoring what residents have to say on height.'

'Tolworth is a place where people recognise a need for positive change. Residents are willing to listen to companies and developers, but they need to show them the same courtesy and deliver schemes which provide jobs, affordable

homes and respectful architecture.'

Fellow ward councillor Sharron Sumner agreed. 'I am overjoyed that this rapacious scheme has been rejected. I spoke to countless residents who expressed legitimate concerns over the scheme itself, the lack of social housing and the developers' lack of community engagement. The residents of Tolworth Close are especially relieved.'

'If the developer wants to bring forward an amended scheme I hope they genuinely engage with the community this time and include some much-needed social housing in their proposals.' The full reasons for refusal are on the Kingston council website at publicaccess.kingston.gov.uk/online-applications. Search for 21/00044/FUL

Work starts on Toby site

Nearly 20 years after the Toby Jug pub was pulled down, work is finally starting on the first phases of a huge housing project which will eventually see more than 900 new homes spring up in Tolworth.

Initially 211 'affordable' flats are being built on the land behind the Hollywood Bowl; a mix of one, two and three-bed homes due for completion in July 2023.

It marks the end of a sorry two-decade saga of neglect and bickering which started when Tesco demolished the 1930s hostelry to build a supermarket.

Thwarted in its ambition, the retail giant finally gave up its initial target of replicating its huge outlet at Shannon Corner, New Malden.

Now owned by the Guinness Partnership (one of the largest affordable housing providers in the land, with 65,000 homes), King George's Gate – as it has been

dubbed – will slowly appear on the 11-acre site in stages.

The Gate will have a public square, bus terminus, cycle hub and cafe in addition to flats and houses.

'We're delighted to have started construction,' said partnership chief executive Catriona Simons.

Lovell Homes, part of the vast Morgan Sindall construction giant, is doing the building work.

● A return to face-to-face meeting saw Surbiton's historical society welcome Kevin McDonnell to the cornerHOUSE on June 1 to talk on Epsom's 'forgotten cemetery', Horton Park.

A Friends' group trustee, he said 8,600 bodies had been buried in unmarked graves; all deaths from the cluster of asylums around Epsom, from 1902-1955. Volunteers are now working to identify them, and restore dignity to Europe's largest abandoned hospital graveyard. Visit www.hortoncemetery.org

On Tuesday, July 6, Cheryl Cates will talk about St Paul's Cathedral. New members are always welcome; simply google Surbiton and District Historical Society.

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Army uniforms? Tailcoats? The cornerHOUSE arts centre in Douglas Road needs specific items for its costume store. Email Jenny Hurworth at jeneworth@gmail.com

Tea and dancing

After a year of Zoom quadrilling, Mrs Bennet's Regency dance group is back with a summer tea dance at St Mark's hall on Sat, Jul 24, 2pm, with Covid rules observed. £10 ticket includes tea and coffee. www.mrsbennet.co.uk

Showroom shuts

Honda's curving Portsmouth Road showroom has shut, though there is still a servicing workshop in the road between Shurgard and the Crowne Plaza hotel. "We don't know what'll happen to the site," said Honda.



Nut & banana ices

Surbiton cafe The Surbitonian Grind in Ewell Road is ready for summer and is starting stocking ice creams from London dairy Hazell's Cremerie, such as peanut butter & caramelised banana.

Laundered lolly?

A hole-in-the-wall cash machine has been installed at the Surbiton Dry Cleaners shop at 21 Brighton Road.

A new lease of life

After 12 years' trading, Concept Vehicle Leasing at 126 Ewell Road has stalled. Its 850sqft office is for sale at £325,000.



It's branching out

Brighton Road, Surbiton, estate agent Seymours has opened a sister branch at 55 High Street, Thames Ditton.

Doing homework

One in five Surbitonians has been working from home in the past year, according to the Office of National Statistics, with 51% 'likely to work at home to some extent' from now on.

Fancy strolling?

The Good Life has increased its distribution to 12,000. Could you help us deliver, six times a year? Urgent need for: St Philip's Road, North Road, St Andrew's Road and Rushett Close.

A first solo shop

Jatinder Singh did his apprenticeship for eight years at the barbers next to Waitrose, but struck out on his own when Hair by Mitch became vacant. Now in Brighton Road, two up from the Black Lion, he's enjoying being his own boss.



The hard-working crimpers, originally from India, opens 7 days from 9am. "It's my first shop on my own," he said.

Friends check green use

How do you use the swathes of green space in Berrylands? What do you like about them and what improvements would you like to see? Or don't you visit them at all... and if so, why not?

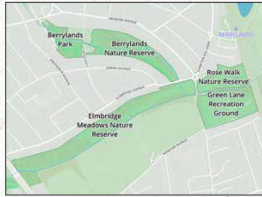
The Friends of Berrylands Nature Reserve, which runs regular volunteer events to manage woodland and scrub, maintain streams, ponds and paths, create wildlife habitats, control invasive non-native plant species, plant trees and bulbs, clear litter, and tend to local community orchards, has lots of ideas for five sites in the area. But the group wants to hear other views and learn from feedback on ways to improve access for all.

It also wants to learn about ways residents and visitors use and enjoy the spaces, how often they visit, and how far they travel.

"It would be great to get as much feedback as possible so we can then use this information to prioritise our own future work, and to help when seeking support for future enhancements from other organisations such as Kingston Council," said Andrew Irving of the Friends' group.

Areas under the spotlight are Berrylands Nature Reserve (aka Raeburn Open Space), Berrylands Park (the old Surbiton lagoon site), Rose Walk Nature Reserve, Green Lane Recreation Ground and Elbridge Meadows Nature Reserve. The group is running a short, online survey and would like as many people to take part as possible before the deadline on June 30.

You can find out more about the Berrylands Green Space Visitor Survey 2021 at www.berrylandsnaturereserve.org/visitor-survey or you can contact the green spaces by emailing berrylandsnr@gmail.com



● Husband and wife team Sam and Alex Berry have a new venture. The duo, who run three Surbiton restaurants: No 97, Cento Uno and Hideaway, are creating a distillery in the centre of Kingston following the success of their Good Life Gin Co micro-distillery which achieved £100,000 in gin sales in the past year. Based near the Turks Boatyard building in Thames Side, Bone Idyll will initially make Full Nelson navy-strength gin, Ziggy Sputnik vodka and Golden Boy spiced rum. Two 100-litre copper stills and 10 two-litre copper stills will be installed this autumn, and a cafe-bar area created. The target is to produce 75,000 bottles a year. From 2022, customers will be able to take distillery tours and gin cruises, attend a gin school, do masterclasses and make their own private-label gin. "It's the final piece of the puzzle. We are bartenders at heart and can't wait to open," said Sam. "Bone Idyll will explode out to the scene. We're ready to take on the world, and bring creativity back to premium spirits."

Spike worries health moguls

A sudden spike in Delta variant Covid cases among young people means all Surbitonians aged 19-24 are being urged to take a Covid PCR test. Kingston borough's cases overtaking former London hotspot Hounslow in early June, so a surge-testing blitz will run until June 30.

More than 90,000 test kits are being sent to secondary pupils, school staff and households in what Public Health England's Prof Kevin Fenton calls an "early preventative" move. Anyone who doesn't receive one is asked to book a test at www.nhs.uk/Get-Tested

"We need to act fast," said council leader Cllr Caroline Kerr. Kingston's public health director Iona Lidington told The Good Life that borough cases had risen in four weeks from 13 per 100,000 to more than 80. "It's largely been in young people," she said. Half term may have led to more social mixing among a generally unvaccinated cohort, triggering secondary school outbreaks. But a gradual easing of rules for older people who have had the jab could also be a factor. "It's a higher risk situation, which is why we've seen this fairly rapid increase in cases," she said, adding that although around one in three people had no obvious symptoms, they were still walking about and potentially spreading Covid unknowingly. Surbiton's closest test centre is Milner Road, Kingston. Info at www.kingston.gov.uk/surge The full local stats make scary reading. Visit tinyurl.com/4ytjskf



● The Good Life's favourite Friday afternoon signwriter has been at it again, with this gem near the Ace of Spades, or rather the A3 underepass. Touchingly, our yellow board scribe then apologises for any convenience! Carry on writing, mate. Spotting sign howlers makes lockdown bearable!

● A Berrylands-based national charity has made its first grant, to a school on the River Dee in Chester. RALPHH (Robert Allen Life Promotion and Healthy Hearts) improves safeguarding for those in physically demanding sports by funding defibrillators at key locations. It was formed after the sudden death of Robert, a national junior rowing champion and senior prefect at Kingston Grammar School. The defibrillator at Queen's Park High School, Chester, is for students, staff and a neighbouring canoe club and scout group, as well as walkers and runners on a river towpath. If schools in Surbiton want to do something similar, visit www.ra-lphh.org



RALPHH's Richard Allen, right, rowing coach Richard Cox, and Ruby Wilson, Freya Cossons, Grace Nugent and Sienna Taylor

Buckets highlight water plight

In one of the wettest Mays on record, six members of the local clergy highlighted the fact that much of the world struggles to access clean water.

By carrying buckets between churches (including St Matthew's and St Mark's) they raised awareness in Christian Aid week, before outgoing mayor Cllr Margaret Thompson was sporting enough to let herself be ceremonially drenched. The event has already raised nearly £20,000.

The Rev Helen Hancock of St Matthew's and the Rev Robert Stainer of St Mark's joined their counterparts from All Saints, St John's, the United Reformed and Methodist churches to walk five miles a day for six days carrying two buckets of water. It started with a litre in each, but rose to six litres by the end of an arduous week in an event encompassing water poverty and climate change.



A mayoral soaking and a bow, Helen Hancock & buckets

"We have been so pleased with the response to this fundraising initiative," said Helen.

You can still make donations by going to: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/kingstonchurches

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Scythers set to at Tolworth Court Farm Moated Manor, the nature reserve off Old Kingston Road. Twelve volunteers had lessons in the technique, then worked their way across the 2.4 acre site, skirting yellow meadow ant hills to prepare the land for cattle grazing this autumn.

Volunteer Jenny Day said: "It's good for hips and arms; we'll all have flat bums and slim waists by the end!"

Team leader Andy Robinson, community development manager for idverde, Kingston Council's ground maintenance partner, said: "The aim is to manage the entire meadow using traditional scything techniques. The primary reason is that we have a fantastic habitat for yellow meadow ants here." Heavy machinery would destroy the habitat, and disturb wildlife in the meadow and woodland.

The traditional technique will be used a couple of times a year and, if all goes according to plan, cattle will be introduced for a few weeks to graze.

"This time next year we hope to have a lovely traditionally managed meadow using scything, and the nature-based technique of cattle," said Andy. "It's fantastic to have this little haven a stone's throw from Tolworth Broadway." **Jane Grove**

Try this for scythes



● Biodiversity officer Elliot Newton led a scything workshop at Fishponds Park off Hollyfield Road to teach traditional hay meadow management before an action day of primping paths, removing brambles and picking litter.

The Friends of Fishponds Park plan to make a community garden with accessible paths for disabled people opposite the recently planted orchard by the Mayberry Place entrance.

It will be a joint enterprise with mental health and wellbeing charity



Voices of Hope, Kingston Council and green space contractor idverde.

The centrepiece will be the remaining rose bed, currently tended by runners from the GoodGym. There will also be raised beds for

community groups to grow veg, bio boxes, and a wild meadow border.

Voices of Hope will be involved in growing and tending the vegetables and will hold picnics in the garden.

"We're really excited about this," said Friends' chair Rob Eyre-Brook, seen here talking to volunteers at the action day.

"We're working with Voices of Hope, an inspiring charity with a fantastic track record on supporting some of the most vulnerable in our society, including those with mental health difficulties and those struggling to put food on the table through the lockdowns.

"The community garden will be a beautiful addition to our community orchard and will enable people, including those with a range of disabilities, to enjoy growing their own food alongside others."

Prom's new recruit

Raise your trowels to the Queens Prom pocket park opposite Uxbridge Road, which has a new recruit, outgoing mayor Cllr Margaret Thompson, who performed the official opening, cut a ribbon, planted a rose, toured the site and sliced a celebratory Colin the caterpillar cake. So impressed was she that she vowed to return and volunteer herself.

Spearheaded by Julian Meers, the Friends' group repaired the dilapidated caretaker's hut, restored paths, laid terraces, and constructed raised beds full of flowers and veg.

"They've reclaimed and repurposed almost everything; it's so innovative,"

said Cllr Thompson. "I'm a keen gardener and I'm looking forward to coming back to help."

The volunteers next target is the area by the ramp up to Portsmouth Road; a 50-metre bank with hedging, planting and woodchip trails for children.

● Julian Meers, whose vision is to see the positive effect of the Queens Prom Friends replicated along its entire length, has received a mayor's community award (right). David Jacobson, who nominated him, said: "Thanks to his relentless work over two years, a peaceful sanctuary now resides by the Thames, where volunteers, young and old, can meet for a cuppa and enjoy a good dose of mindfulness."



Think of olives, palms and artemisia, advises Janice Cripps Match plants to changing climate

As the focus on climate change intensifies, celebrity gardeners and the RHS urge us to conserve water and let our lawns turn brown this summer. With the climate becoming increasingly dry, perhaps we should think about how and when we plant... and choose plants which better suit our growing conditions.

Plants will always need water, especially when newly planted, but here are a few pointers to give yours the best start while displaying your eco credentials.

● Plant shrubs and trees in late autumn or winter when their roots are dormant. They won't suffer the stress of being planted, will need less watering and will be easier to maintain.

● Plant perennials in spring when the soil is still moist, and remember that small specimens establish more quickly and soon overtake larger ones.



● Before planting, improve your soil's capacity for good drainage by adding plenty of organic compost and digging it in deeply.

● After planting, add a thick mulch layer to retain moisture, protect roots, provide nutrition, and keep down weeds.

● Use fertiliser only when necessary; too much will encourage lush growth, making plants flop needing more watering, which in turn will make them susceptible to frost damage in winter.

Sadly, now is not the right time to restock your garden. But if you need to buy, there is a wide range of plants out

there which generally require less water.

Plants with drought-resistant properties can often be identified by looking at their leaves. As a rule of thumb, plants with silver or grey-green leaves tend to be drought-tolerant. Think of plants you associate with the Mediterranean, such as olive trees, palm trees and lavender (we dare to dream...).

Plants have developed all sorts of ways to conserve water themselves. Some, like lamb's ears and artemisia, pictured, have hairy or woolly leaves which trap moisture around the plant tissues. Others, like bergenia, have leathery or waxy leaves to protect against water loss, while succulents like sedums, yuccas and sempervivums store water in fleshy leaves.

It shouldn't surprise that strappy, grasslike-leaved plants survive on less water than their larger-leaved cousins, so bear that in mind next time you're buying.

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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Guildford in Bloom 2019 Gold Award - Best Site for Nature Conservation



Cemetery of the Year 2020 and 2019 Winner Natural Burial Category



Anyone for golf? Yvonne Grove roadtests a boot scooter with help from Martin Pain.

Making Mum more mobile

She looked like she was off to the golf course; sticks in the bag on the back of the 'buggy', focus on the first tee.

And the Motion Healthcare Alumina she was riding could have got her there, with a range of 15 miles at 4mph.

"Very comfortable," was the verdict of my 84-year-old mother, manoeuvring round the vast Wheelfreedom showroom.

The heaviest part of the 'boot scooter' (it comes to pieces and fits in a car boot) is 10 kilos, so even her daughter (no spring chicken herself) could lift it with one hand.

Martin Pain, retail manager at the mobility specialist in Chessington's Barwell Estate on the Leatherhead Road, guided us around the aids they stock: passive and active wheelchairs with the facility for powered add-ons; tilt and prescriptive wheelchairs; power chairs; folding scooters (manual and automatic); mobility, pavement and road legal scooters (up to 8mph); off-roaders; cabin cars; hoists; stairlifts; care

beds; sofas... and rise and reclining chairs which my mum made a beeline for.

"We're proud of the range," said Martin, who explained the company also offers in-house repairs in its own workshop.

"The customers' response has been amazing, and suppliers say there's nothing like this in the country. It is our job to assess what people need, then work from there."

Owners Giles Donald and Henry Cheape began the business after having trouble hiring a wheelchair. With no commission or bonus system, staff can impartially advise.

Only quality equipment is stocked, with short and long-term hire on all products, and try-before-you-buy offers.

"If someone is looking for a boot scooter but isn't sure, we can hire them out for up to four weeks. If they then buy it, we refund the hire," said Martin.

The firm also offers wheelchairs or scooters under the Motability scheme. Visit www.wheelfreedom.com **Jane Grove**



A green future?

Sixty people took part in an online event exploring how local business can best emerge from the pandemic, focused on climate change. Speakers included Virginia Grose, above, from Elmbridge Avenue, a uni lecturer and fashion industry expert who revealed that £140million of clothing ends up in landfill in the UK each year, with less than 1% recycled. She advocates six Rs: reduce, recycle, refurbish, resell, rent and repair.

Hosted by the council and chamber of commerce, the event was chaired by Forbes Low, right, chief exec of Kingston Chamber, "to help businesses grow back greener after the pandemic".



Neil Jennings of Imperial College warned: "We've been radically destabilising our atmosphere; the carbon dioxide level is higher than any time in the last 2million years."

David Randall, who runs the Maple Works co-working space in Maple Road, said there was increased demand for shared workspace for small businesses.

The message was that as consumers care about the environment, businesses which respond to that will prosper.

Nick Dawson of Voices of Hope ("The object of foodbanks is to close themselves down!") urged more to sign up to the not-for-profit Good Food co-op, backed by Kingston Council. When a veg box is delivered, a needy family gets a box free. www.goodfoodcoop.org.uk "Localism is on the rise, accelerated by the pandemic," said Mr Dawson. "People want to feel they're doing their bit." Relive the event on YouTube (go to [Kingston Chamber of Commerce](http://KingstonChamberofCommerce)).

Cul-de-sac has to wait

Residents of a Surbiton cul-de-sac must wait until July 6 for a decision on a new six-home project after planners extended the deadline on proposals to demolish this family home at the end of Graham Gardens and build three houses (each three-storey) plus a three-storey block of flats.

Neighbour Jayashree Ramu said: "This is a small cul-de-sac of seven houses. Additional development will be overwhelming. We already have problems with parking and bins, and the entrance to the property is narrow."

Surbiton Conservation Area Advisory Committee also objected, saying: "We have a strong objection in principle to this proposal which causes harm to the adjacent conservation area. It overdevelops the site with a density that is inappropriate for this area."

"Its height will significantly impact the privacy of neighbouring properties both inside and



outside the conservation area. From a design perspective, the proposal is completely out of character with the neighbouring properties and therefore wholly inappropriate in the setting of the conservation area."

Graham Gardens is a close off Upper Brighton Road. View plans and comment: publicaccess.kingston.gov.uk Search for **21/00951/OUT**

● Berrylands councillor Sushila Abraham is the new mayor. Last year's deputy took over from Cllr Margaret Thompson as the borough's 186th first citizen. "I'll be mayor for each and every one, and I'll be out and about as much as I can in light of the pandemic," she said. Mental health and wellbeing are her focus, with the Milaap multicultural day centre in Chessington and Anstee Bridge, Kingston (which supports young people with emotional needs) as her charities. The solicitor, who has had a practice in Ewell Road since 1999, became a councillor in 2013. A past neighbourhood committee chair, and trustee of Kingston Carers, her barrister husband Mathew is consort.



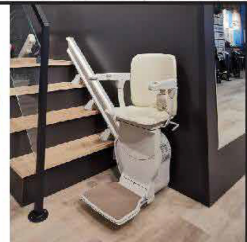
And doesn't she look the part! The new mayor in her finery

Dominic's seat in peril?

Long Ditton MP Dominic Raab is in danger of losing his seat if the Boundary Commission redraws the constituency map. His 23,298 Esher & Walton majority was slashed to 2,743 after a Lib Dem surge in 2019, but now the commission is proposing that Cobham and Downside (with 3,000 Conservative-leaning voters) switches to a neighbouring seat, imperilling the foreign secretary's parliamentary future. Surbiton MP and Lib Dem leader Ed Davey may also be affected by boundary revision, although his Kingston & Surbiton seat looks secure.

He could lose Old Malden and part of Motpark, but gain some of North Kingston. Views, by August 2, to boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk

● Move over Sky! The new name for sport is KTV. Tolworth's Isthmian League's Kingstonian FC will be filming highlights of next season's home games and interviews with team members. James Barrett-Sterling, formerly TV host for rivals Carshalton Athletic, joins pundits Jamie Cutleridge and Taimour Lay. KTV launches in July with reports from the training ground and pre-season friendlies. It's on the club's YouTube channel. Details at www.kingstonian.com



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Mild-mannered Becky Mayhew shares a few observations about the challenges of navigating Surbiton's revamped thoroughfare



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Warning: RANT ALERT. I got told to calm down about this subject recently, so gird your loins.

Let us speak of Ewell Road: that gridlocked Hellscape that needed no further tampering to make it even more of a happiness graveyard than it already is. Now they – and by they I mean the faceless geniuses at Kingston Council – have turned it into a gauntlet of death from which you should feel exceptionally proud, and lucky, to emerge alive.

Those megabrainers are so thoughtful they've given us options on how we'd like to meet our end on Ewell Road, and there is something to suit every taste. If you want your face sheered off, stand at the bus stop outside the library and wait for a passing cyclist to whizz through on the cycle lane that literally runs THROUGH the bus stop. If you'd rather have a heart attack, sit at the wheel of your car moving at 3mph behind the cyclist who has chosen not to use the cycle lanes... you know, the cycle lanes that have turned Ewell Road into a clogged artery squeezing cars through it like oozing fat, as you scream out of your window "USE THE \$@*!NG CYCLE LANE YOU *&!@!NG *@*\$*HEAD!"

Or, if you're adventurous and

Gridlocked Hellscape



would like to join the choir invisible by being mashed to a jammy pulp, simply dare to cross any side street leading off Ewell Road, as those smashingly imaginative guys at the council have decided it would be brilliant to pave over the entrances. I have three questions for the council: 1) Why? 2) Why? 3) Why?

I am unable to fathom the decision to make roads look like pavements.

My natural starting place while pedestrianising is the pavement. I've done loads of excellent thinking along pavements, so when I see pavement below my feet I tend to move along it in the traditional way, assuming I'm not about to be mown down by Sophia in her 4x4, but no, those spiffing fellas at the

council have made it so that Pavement Thinkers like me can stride ponderously into THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD because THE ROAD IS DISGUISED AS THE PAVEMENT.

Forget the rule that every parent teaches their kids to STOP AT THE KERB, DO NOT CROSS THAT ROAD, because on Ewell Road THERE IS NO KERB, so good luck to little Oscar and Tamara scooting merrily to school.

I'm sure the council isn't trying to turn Ewell Road into a gladiatorial feat for survival, and I'm sure there are really good councilly reasons for all of the above, but this mere mortal is struggling to think of a single one.

www.beckysaysthings.com

Just how have you bin?

Residents of Adelaide Road are baffled by a fault that seems to have developed in their blue-top recycling bins.

Many of the first-generation wheely bins, supplied by Kingston Council, have ruptured in exactly the same place – suggesting a common design fault, or similar cause.

"I noticed that a couple of my neighbours' blue waste bins had split," a reader told The Good Life. "Today, being blue bin day in Adelaide Road, I checked those that had been put out... and there are 17 split blue bins!"

Councillors have been informed, and are investigating. The council usually demands £15 for replacements. The only wheely bins affected carry the Kingston Council logo. One theory is that a defective lifting arm on the dustcart could have weakened the bins.



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● Ditton Squash Club has reopened. The not-for-profit club is running leagues and internal competitions, with doubles permitted. There is online booking, plus table tennis and racquet ball. All standards welcome. The two refurbished courts are at Surbiton Hockey Club, Sugden Road. Newbies' trial membership, £30 to end of Sept. Email dittonsquash@gmail.com or www.dittonsquash.com

● Train buff Jago Hazzard has posted a seven-minute video about the history of Surbiton railway station on his YouTube channel which has 110,000 subscribers. Jago, who also runs Tales from the Tube on Facebook, posts films about London's public transport. **Surbiton Station: An Art Deco Masterpiece** had 23,000 views in one day. Search for Jago Hazzard on YouTube.



He's the verger

Grass will grow longer before being cut at two Surbiton sites in a trial to help wildflowers flourish. Mowing less frequently by the Royal Star & Garter at the Langley Avenue roundabout will lower soil nutrients and create space for wildflowers to emerge. It is hoped meadow-like areas will form, and perennial wildflowers flourish as a source of forage for pollinators, including holly blue, large white and orange tip butterflies, and bumblebees. "Hopefully we'll start seeing increased biodiversity with perennial wildflowers – yarrows to yetches to trefoils – and dandelions and daisies," said biodiversity officer Elliot Newton, above. "We're trying to maximise the landscape's biodiversity." With 97% of the UK's wildflowers lost since the 1940s, the plan is to reduce soil nitrogen by restricting cutting to three times a year. "Hopefully next year we won't need to cut as much. We'll get less coarse grass. Actually over time you might only need to cut it once a year, which brings potentially less maintenance cost." Two Kingston Uni students will monitor eight sites in the Wildways project, including the verges in Kings Drive, Berrylands, to assess levels of carbon in the soil. Share views at www.kingstonletstalk.co.uk/wildways

The come-to-you library

If you can't reach the books, they'll come to you. The community library ticks thanks to 14 volunteers working out of the annex behind the war memorial in Ewell Road; a floor-to-ceiling store of large and standard print books, CDs and audio books to deliver to local residents.

Diane Gregory and Katie Erskine run the show, with boxes travelling by foot, bike and car. Some helpers are retired, some work part-time, some assist in their lunch hour, but after a Covid lull the service resumed in March.

"We deliver in boxes or bags once a month to residents who can't get to the library for whatever reason," said Katie. "We cater for specific preferences and authors as much as we can, or we have fun trying."

A typical response? "I've just received the books; thank you so very much – so many of my favourite authors, and also Cider with Rosie. Bless you."

Surbiton Library also has Reading Friends, pairing a befriender with a housebound resident for a weekly phone or zoom chat. "It's helped me feel less isolated," said one grateful user. "It's a very different experience to speak to someone I've never met; it's been really nice to get to know someone new. I hope we can meet one day!"

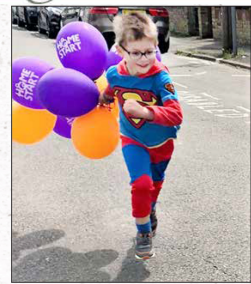
Other initiatives include delivering packs of clay and tools (with a local artist then telephoning the recipient to discuss projects), and working with a storyteller to compile residents' tales into a short book.

"We're also developing memory boxes with local themes and reminders of days past, to loan to individuals or groups," said Katie.

Do you have ideas? Do you want to volunteer? Email community.library@kingston.gov.uk



Desi Metodieva is ready to deliver



● Superman to the rescue. The community of Cleaveland Road came together for a day of fun and frolics, with a family relay race, cake stall full of home bakes, and a raffle with prizes donated by, among others, The French Tarte, No97, Laithwaites and The Fellowship barber.

It marked the start of fundraising by family support charity Home Start to highlight problems created by the pandemic. Stuntman Wade Eastwood has helped the group make a video. "It's about giving everyone a fair chance," he explained. More on the campaign at www.homestart-rkh.org.uk



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● A curious little shop on Surbiton station's forecourt has pulled down its shutters for good. Cash & Cheque Express, the pawnbroker at the end of the row at 85 Victoria Road, vanished on April 1. "There was no warning; it was there, then it just disappeared," said a neighbour. In a brief message, the shop declared: "It's with a heavy heart that we are closing. It's been a pleasure to serve the area." The shop bought gold, traded foreign currency (always pledging to undercut the post office opposite), pawned goods, transferred money abroad and offered short-term payday loans. It was part of an American-owned loan and credit chain set up in 2004.

Proof of the nanny state

● Three goats with appetites you wouldn't believe have been employed to control the summer weeds on part of the Seething Wells filter bed site; a welcome reintroduction of life after years of denudation...



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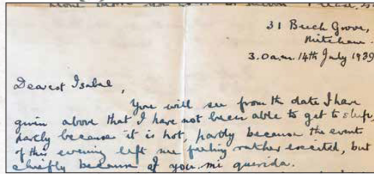
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Join the 3am challenge

Did you have a restless night? A campaign which champions old-fashioned letter-writing to counter loneliness at Surbiton's Star and Garter Home has launched The 3am Project, seeking words or art related to sleeplessness.

The inspiration is from an unearthed letter, timed at 3am and dated July 14 1939, from a Frank Baker to his love, Isabel. Polly Buckley is now looking for "things that keep us up or come to us in the middle of the night", prompted by the 80-year-old letter.

Frank wrote: "Dearest Isobel, You will see from the date I have given above that I have not been able to get to sleep, partly because it is hot, partly because the events of this evening left me feeling rather excited, but chiefly because of you."

You can read the full text of Frank's oddly moving letter, and details of how to enter the competition, at www.itstnotyourbirthdaybut.com

It is free to take part, there are cash prizes and a future exhibition is being planned to display some of the entries. But hurry; the deadline is June 28.

Aiamboree saw the launch of a three-mile Tolworth-Chessington scenic walk. The Celebration of Tolworth's Green Spaces event had live music and coffee and bakes from the Doorstep Coffee van and Museum of Futures' Rocky Street.

Reed Watts architects' stall tested the waters on an idea by Community Brain for leisure facilities and a lido at King George's Field, off Jubilee Way.

Toni Izard (pictured, inset, left with Steve Lucas and Surbiton Hill ward councillor Hilary Gander) said she'd roamed the fields of the walk before, but did a circular route this time as far as the William Bourne pub on the outer reaches of Chessington.

"We discovered a new cycle route to try. Beautiful meadows... so many varieties of grass; must return to identify them!"

The self-guided walk (you can do a shorter two-mile

Walkers are walking the walk



version) leads you through two nature reserves, a country park and past a vantage point overlooking a Roman villa site and the hunting grounds of King Henry VIII.

Wayfinding signs steer you through Tolworth Court Farm Fields nature reserve to the Bonesgate Stream, Castle Hill, Horton Country Park then Chessington

South station, where you can catch the train back to Tolworth.

A guide, illustrated by local artist Himali Patil, is full of wildlife and history. Printed versions are at stations (with a poster at Tolworth); the Baking Ideas hub by the station; in a leaflet holder at Tolworth Court Farm Fields; at the Museum



of Futures, Brighton Road; Sunray Community Hall; Court Farm Garden Centre and First in Tolworth market (next is on July 4).

The event also featured dinosaur mask-making, and a dinosaur hunt. **Jane Grove**

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Simply red?

Do you blush easily? While the odd rosy glow may be endearing, it's no fun if it happens all the time.

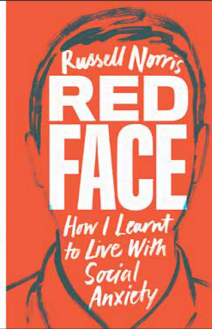
Russell Norris, a 41-year-old marketing copywriter from Beaconsfield Road, has written *Red Face*, a candid mental health memoir subtitled *How I Learnt to Live with Social Anxiety*.

"I thought it was time to be honest with myself and get it all down in a book," said the father-of-two, who has had to learn to cope with the issue since childhood, when he sometimes skipped school to avoid worrying encounters.

"I struggle in offices, and I've particularly enjoyed working from home; it's been a positive change for me," he said, adding that video calls had made life much easier.

"I've always been very quick to blush; it's been with me since I was an adolescent. The fear of turning red developed into social anxiety."

By consciously avoiding situations, sufferers are at a disadvantage.



"You might miss out on a career, or not meet your partner," said Russell, who added that it had been dubbed 'the condition of missed opportunities'.

The book encourages fellow sufferers to be honest with family members.

Russell's wife, Deep, didn't realise the full extent of his condition, or the history of

it, until he wrote the book. "It has helped to come clean to my partner and my whole family," he said. "And everyone I know!"

"Most people have been really supportive, although some of my schoolfriends now look back and feel a bit paranoid that they contributed to it. But I'm definitely not pointing the finger at all."

The official NHS advice on chronic blushing is 'wear more make-up... not an especially useful tip for most mainstream male sufferers.'

"I was disappointed by that," said Russell. "It shows a deep unconscious prejudice."

It is thought 10% of the UK's population have a social anxiety disorder.

Redface: How I Learnt to Live with Social Anxiety is published by the Kingston-based Canbury Press at £9.99. www.canburypress.com

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● Berrylands is at the forefront of combating the climate crisis. Learn more in a talk by high-voltage engineer Bob Dean. Bob, of Red Lion Road, will discuss issues around the climate crisis and his experiences on large-scale wind and hydroelectric projects in the UK and Africa, as well as what is being done right on our doorstep.

Why Berrylands? All will be revealed in *Fighting the Climate Emergency in North Wales, Mozambique...* and Berrylands at the Douglas Road arts centre at 7.45pm on Wed, Aug 4.

A month before that, on Wed, July 7 (also 7.45pm), cornerHOUSE chair Jeremy Thorn talks of his love for Robert Tressell's semi-autobiographical novel *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* and reveals a family connection in *How I Discovered That My Eccentric Right-Wing Uncle Owned A Seminal Socialist Text...* £4 per ticket at www.ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents

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● Childhood pals Emily Sandford and Barney Leigh have launched a podcast about their favourite films, from their Long Ditton bedrooms. *Hey Now! Hey Now!* (available at www.smarturl.it/heynowheynow) was started in lockdown by Emily, an ex-Capital FM presenter, and Barney, a marketing manager. "In each episode, Emily and I dissect an iconic movie, discuss our favourite quotes and finish with a trivia round," said Barney. The pair, both 28, have been neighbours in Oaks Way since the age of seven, and went to Esher College, then uni, together. Movies featured include *The Parent Trap*, *The Princess Diaries*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *10 Things I Hate About You*, *Mean Girls*, *Legally Blonde* and *The Devil Wears Prada*. The podcasts include interviews with cast and crew.

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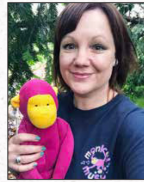
Hilary Walker was one of just six chosen to read at the online Montreal Poetry Prize Anthology launch... of 4,645 poems from 107 countries. Her work *We Are One* is about family links and changing roles. Hers is one of 52 poems in a new paperback (£10.85, www.vehiculepress.com or Amazon).



Hosted by the Department of English at McGill University (where Leonard Cohen was a student), the anthology is 'a window into the currents and breezes of contemporary poetry'.

Hilary has written poetry since childhood (her first was published at age 10) and has two contributions in Poetry Cheese (copies at Regency Bookshop in Victoria Road). She said she had gained confidence from cornerHOUSE poetry evenings: "A great opportunity to stand up and read to a supportive audience". The next poetry night at Douglas Road: Jun 25, 7.30pm.

● Karen Ross's Monkey Music classes for babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers (three months-four years) are back at St Mark's church hall, Surbiton Hill Methodist church & St Mary's hall, Long Ditton. First one free. www.monkeymusic.co.uk/area/kingston-surbiton



● A dramatic new mural below Tolworth railway bridge is the work of street artist and type fan Lionel Stanhope. Funded by Network Rail and Sunray Egmont Community Residents' Association, it was done with spray cans and tape. "I hope it will inspire pride and encourage people to respect railway bridges and other structures," he said. Mark Killick of Network Rail said it showed railway and community could work together, with Sunray's Simon Green calling it "an exciting addition".

The comedy angels

Elaine Blackmore and husband Graeme have been named Lockdown Angels in the WhatsOnStage awards. The duo, from Cotterill Road, set up *Whole Lotta Comedy* in 2019, touring pubs and hosting newbie and seasoned stand-ups, with punters paying what they could afford to attend the gigs.



During the pandemic they brought joy to many via socially distanced comedy nights at the cornerHOUSE arts centre between lockdowns when pubs were closed, and moving to videos and podcasts when they couldn't do live performances.

"We had no idea that anyone had nominated us and were amazed that we had won," said Elaine, who emcees the events while Graeme is in charge of the technical side of things. "WhatsOnStage have told us we are going to a West End show, although what and when we don't know! We are really excited to be able to get back to live theatre!"

Diana Alecu, who nominated the couple, said: "I believe that the time, effort and dedication for a community event that is free for the public and giving the artists a chance to make themselves heard is just fantastic. It kept us all entertained through some hard times."

Elaine, who has given more than 100 "amazing and talented" comedians the chance to shine, said she was very excited to announce that *Whole Lotta Comedy* is starting regular Sunday night shows from 7-9pm at The Castle in King Charles Road from July 4.

More details about upcoming gigs and performers can be found at www.wholelottacomedy.com

● A collection of lockdown-inspired tales, objects and mementos has been brought together in a book, *Personal Wonders*, a £10 paperback published by Kingston University Press. It includes the tale of a Surbiton toy collector who trawls Victoria Road charity shops for stuffed animals. Celebrating "notions of the everyday", as lecturer Cathy Gale puts it, the book - produced by Tolworth regeneration group The Community Brain - sums up the power hidden in the humdrum.



Drama's back on stage

Actors are treading the boards again at the cornerHOUSE. The arts centre in Douglas Road, which hasn't seen a production for nine months, is back with a flourish - a double bill of dark comedy over three nights in July.

Mastering Business by Dermot Murphy lets us in on a rollercoaster relationship between two drug dealers. But who owes what to whom?

Susannah Finzi's *Reunited* brings two former college team rugby players together in a pub run by bar manager Julie. The erstwhile teammates haven't seen each other for some time. How have their lives panned out in reality, and what will they tell each other? James Thomson stars in both plays alongside Shonesé Mercier (*Mastering Business*) and Rosalind Lonsdale and Ryan Anthony-Jones (*Reunited*).

Tickets for this Lean Theatre Productions double bill on July 1-3 at 7.30pm are £10 from www.ticketsource.co.uk/leantheatre Social distancing applies, refunds if Covid thwarts.

● Picture of James Thomson by Sheila Burnett



● Beaconsfield Road resident Paul Micklethwaite has written a provocative book taking a critical look at recycling. *Beyond Recycling* is the Kingston Uni lecturer's second volume after co-writing *Design for Sustainable Change*, which became a standard text for design courses worldwide.

Publication of it coincided with his becoming course leader of the sustainable design MA course at Kingston School of Art. "Recycling is a dangerous idea if it prevents us thinking more deeply about how we can respond meaningfully to the global crisis of unsustainability," says Paul. "This book is driven by frustration at the way recycling dominates conversations about sustainability."

The cover is of a skeleton holding bags of waste. Are we, asks Paul, recycling to our deaths? £21.99. Search for 'recycling' at www.routledge.com

● Nature and the seashore are recurring themes in Miranda Fuller's mixed media artworks. The illustrator and children's book writer, who grew up in the Isle of Wight, was encouraged to draw and paint by her mother, a commercial artist and calligrapher, and her father, an enthusiastic amateur marine architect.



Miranda, who paints and exhibits with Oxshott and Molesey art societies and MiMA, a mixed media artists' group in Reigate, has a solo show, *Here and There*, at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road over the summer.

Meet the artist, hear her thoughts and learn what inspires her love of colour, composition and texture on Tue, Jun 29, 7-9pm. Show runs to Sun, Aug 16. Covid limits numbers. Book at www.ticketsource.co.uk/the-cornerhouse-events Entry is free and exhibits are for sale.



Lockdown gospel

GP Julian Orton has written and released three worship songs with gospel music group Set for Salvation. Holy is the Lord (Save Me), Higher and Higher (I, I Wanna Fly) and Our Father (We're Going to Stand and Sing) based on the Lord's prayer are online as music and lyric videos.



Guest vocalists include Hanson Asiedu, and Katy Treharne, who sang in Phantom of the Opera in the West End.

Julian grew up in Walpole Road and has been a Ewell GP for 25 years. "This is intended as a ministry to churches to help them with services. Hopefully people will feel inspired and blessed by these songs," he said.

The writer, arranger, recorder

and producer of the Set for Salvation material is classically trained. For years he's led the music group at Surbiton New Life Baptist Church, but he has also ventured into live secular performance with local pop/rock covers band Set4.

"The spur for releasing the songs was the pandemic and lockdown," said Julian, who used to run the church youth group with wife Hilary. His gospel songs are on YouTube. Search for *Set for Salvation*.

MISSING



Our microchipped cat Mia went missing on Easter Sunday (4 April) at 6am, from Balaclava Road, KT6. If you have seen her, or have information, please call: 07411 379826. There is a reward for her safe return.



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Surbiton players join the navy

AFC Surbiton footballers are sporting Prussian navy tops, funded by a £250 grant, after defender Kevin Abbott successfully applied to his firm, UK Power Networks, for a sports award. "The old tops were getting a bit snug!" he said. "They were pink, and the numbers were falling off, so it's good to get new ones." The team play five-a-side on Tuesdays at Goals Tolworth, Kingston Road, and Chessington Sunday League matches at Long Ditton rec, Windmill Lane.

Watch for a local croquet winner

The lawns of Surbiton Croquet Club will stage the UK National Championships at Alexandra Drive from July 3-11. Half the top 10 ranked players in the land are Surbiton members (Reg Bamford, Samir Patel, Stephen Mulliner, David Maugham and Christian Carter) so a local winner is a real possibility. All games – singles and doubles – are free to watch. www.surbitoncroquet.org.uk



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U18s Cup champs with coaches Paul Sims and Stu Cantle, centre

A Surbiton sports academy's youngsters had the thrill of competing in a tournament at Champions League-winning Chelsea's Stamford Bridge stadium... and was declared best performing club in a competition of over more than 100 UK teams.

The Precision Pass football tournament saw seven KEY Sports U7s-U11s teams pick up four cups, a silver and two bronze awards.

"It was truly magical for 77 young players from the Surbiton area, aged six to 11, as they got to visit Chelsea players' changing rooms and walk out of the tunnel to the matchday anthem before kicking off in front of cheering supporters, just like professionals!" said Jaz Bond, head of the academy. "Words can't describe it, both as a very proud club owner and even more as a parent of two young players who went home as champions."

The academy, which trains in Victoria rec off Balaclava Road and plays matches at Long Ditton rec off Windmill Lane in the Epsom & Ewell Youth Football League, is no stranger to the big stage. In June 2019 it fielded teams in the Europa Cup tournament, played at Barcelona's Camp Nou. Visit www.keysports.org

Play for Reece's dad!

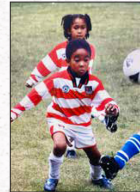
With his son in the England squad at the Euros, Nigel James has joined Kingstonian as manager of the U18s.



Nigel, father of Chelsea's triumphant Champions League right-back Reece and daughter Lauren (a Man U striker being courted by Emma Hayes to join Chelsea Women), is organising trials for young, wannabe professional footballers.

He has developed three of the Tolworth-based Isthmian League side's players and is looking to strengthen the squad with home-grown talent.

He's already brought a hatful of trophies to teams like Abbey Rangers and Hanworth Villa via the Nigel James Elite Coaching Academy. "It's a pleasure to work with such a huge club. The style Kingstonian first team play is the type of football my U18s will play," pledged Nigel, 44. "Hopefully I'll be able to show them the right way to get into Hayden [Bird]'s first team and progress from there." If you're between 16 and 18 and have ambitions in football, email Nigel at njelitecoaching@gmail.com and he'll invite you to a trial.



Left, young Reece and Lauren in Kingstonian shirts for a tournament. Right, the pair celebrate Chelsea's Champions League win over Manchester City in May

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● You can't get more English than a cricket match and clubhouse boogie. On Sat, Aug 14 everyone's invited to watch Long Ditton 1st XI play Horsley and Send CC at the Hogs' Stokes Field ground off Betts Way. Noon start. Then from 7.30pm there's a charity auction fundraiser for Neuroendocrine Cancer UK, a raffle and music by The Frets until late, £10 entry. Halloumi Bite and Hells Bakery cake stall will be there all day and into the evening. Then on bank hol weekend (Sun, Aug 29), the club's 20th anniversary President's Day competition takes place; six-a-side, five-overs, inter-club, starting at 11am. Bar all day, and food from Halloumi Bite.

● Kingstonian are launching a women's team. Spearheaded by Emily McCormack, 23, granddaughter of Ks 60s legend Johnny McCormack (211 goals in 273 apps), the club hopes to attract over 18s to the beautiful game.

Trials will be arranged and the ambition is to join a league. Emily, the club's equality and diversity champion, said: "The idea is to ensure women are able to benefit from, and access, equal opportunities to men in football. Starting the women's team is a crucial first step."

"Ultimately the goal would be to join a league, but obviously at this stage we don't really know which it would be. So the aim, at the moment, is to build up the number of players, so we at least have a sustainable team."

Anyone interested should email Emily at supporters@kingstonian.com or phone 07308 302923.

● Chelsea's Fran Kirby is the Professional Footballers' Association player of the year, lifting a trophy almost as big as she is! Kirby, 27, scored 16 league goals this season, and is now 10 away from Chelsea strikes. Blues Ann-Katrin Berger and Sam Kerr were also in the running.



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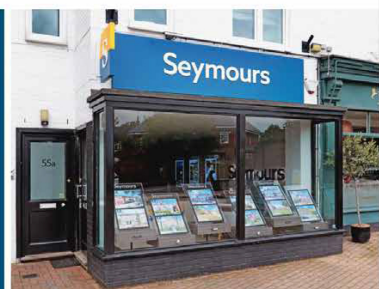
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