the good life

Issue 64 — *The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3* — May 2022

Surbiton Farmers' Market

Saturdays 9am-1pm
May 21 & June 18

● Cooper the Westie enjoys the smells of spring. In fact, he's on a 'sniffari'. Owner Lily Gil followed Cooper's nose and started a new dog-walking service. p5

● Meet children's author Alex Milway (he's the one at the back) at Surbiton's new literary festival, plus a host of crime writers and a chance to nab book deals. p11

Tolworth roundabout's walkways are now home to this basilosaurus, aiming for a shark. More on the underground 'aquarium', p10

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Surbiton supplies Ukraine front line

A Surbiton shop has been cleaned out, restocked and cleaned out again by Ukrainians off to the front to defend their wartorn homeland.

Ranger in St Mark's Hill – one of a handful of remaining army surplus stores – is struggling to meet demand. "That entire wall went yesterday," said owner Andy Turner, waving at a display of backpacks, camouflage gear, commando socks and billycans.

Disturbingly, the first line to sell out was medical kits, followed by Kevlar bulletproof helmets, then kneepads.

Entire racks of uniforms have been bought by Ukrainian customers, and as quickly as Andy unpacks boxes of combat boots, they are sold.

Ranger has known busy times… but nothing like this. "It started the moment the invasion hit," said Andy, 68. "It just went berserk."

He has been giving discounts on equipment destined for use against the Russian invaders. "It's a desperate situation for the people with family out there," said Andy. "We're trying to help as much as we can. It's very tough."

Andy set up Ranger in 1988 in what had been a furniture shop at the top of the St Mark's Hill parade, opposite Bosco. He realised that there was huge demand for surplus military supplies having run stalls at street markets, airshows and agricultural fairs.

Slings, webbing, military survival pouches, kitbags… it seems that everything in Ranger's stockroom is now heading out east to help defend Ukraine from Putin's merciless assault.

Tim Harrison

...and it's goodbye from them

Sixty years of sausages, bacon, chops and mince come to an end this week as Jennings in Ewell Road closes. It's the conclusion of an era for a much-loved Surbiton institution which has supplied weekly meat, Sunday roasts, Easter lamb, hearty hams and Christmas turkeys to generations of shoppers. Why is the shop shutting? Read the full story on p2

● For nine years, Maple Works – Surbiton's only shared co-worker space – has rented desks and professional offices to 1,500 freelances who would otherwise be at the kitchen table, tapping away on their keyboards.

Now co-founder David Randall, pictured, wants the community to own the Maple Road building's freehold, to put it in a position of long-term strength. He is seeking crowdfunding investors.

Demand for flexible offices has boomed in recent years, a trend hastened by Covid. By raising capital to buy Maple Works, the business can attract match funding to be run by, and for, its users. Learn more by emailing **david@maplework s.co.uk**

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● Sunray Recycle scooped the sustainable business award at a chamber of commerce event at All Saints, Kingston, and zero-waste queen Janine Martin from Knollmead on the Sunray estate got poshed up in a crown of crisp packets, flashing earrings and upcycled gown by Janie Harland & Tessa Kind of Fusion Arts. Her 'carriage' was a South London Waste Partnership recycling truck, escorted by the street cleaning team! "I was utterly amazed to win," said Janine, whose group cuts landfill by recycling plastic through TerraCycle and other campaigns. "We also encourage repurposing and reusing!"

Peekaboo house

A new home has been created behind the large poster opposite the Black Lion... holes hacksawed out of the billboard for the door and window! The frame is still in situ, suggesting the ad agency may yet plaster a multi-sheet poster over it.

Until March it was simply a hoarding on a wall near the Maple Road/Brighton Road lights. But workmen cut holes into it.

Future dwellers could, suggests Julian Meers who took the picture, burst out of the door through a new poster, re-enacting Jack Nicholson's famous scene from The Shining.

Any estate agent faces a task to maximise 'kerb appeal', as bits of an old BT ad still flap in the breeze.

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Jennings: a valued gem

When the Jennings family took over 146 Ewell Road in 1962, there were 29 butchers in what was then Surbiton borough. When the maroon blinds fall for the last time on Sat, Apr 30, they'll all have gone. "It's sad, but now's the right time," said Kevin. "Everything comes to an end."

A mix of factors have led to the decision to shut the kind of shop that was once the mainstay of every parade. Brothers Alan and Brian, now 73 and 70, are retiring, but parking issues in Ewell Road haven't made trading any easier.

Kevin, who is Alan's son, and staff member Alison Black, fancy pastures new. Kevin, 44, says he'll miss the people, but not the early starts or 70-hour weeks.

A valued gem, Jennings took over Thomas, where Kevin's granny worked, and where the 13-year-old Alan had a delivery job.

All shops claim quality sourcing, but Jennings was the real deal, building trusted relationships with suppliers, especially in Scotland.

With its original tiling and tiny hatch which once housed a cashier, the shop was famed for its dozen sausage varieties. Customers with big freezers have been stocking up ahead of the final weekend.

The government says everyone should cut meat consumption by 30% by 2032, to counter the climate crisis and 'dietary ill health'. Yet, oddly, vegetarianism and veganism have benefited Jennings, with customers opting for higher meat quality. Future news at **www.cdjenningsandsons.com** or Instagram **@Surbitonbutcher**

Tim Harrison

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DIDDY DINERS & Caroline Rowett COACHING FOR PARENTS

Restaurant celebrates a decade

Naturally Chinese, the eatery at the corner of Brighton and Balaclava roads, is celebrating 10 years.

Co-founded by Amie Lee and Chiu Hoang in 2012, it began on April 5 with the slogan 'Our food doesn't do sleepovers', and a pledge to make everything from scratch, free from flavour enhancer monosodium glutamate.

A major renovation preceded the opening. Before that it had been another Chinese, Yumcha, and before that was a branch of the seafood chain Fish! From the start, Amie became the 'face' of the restaurant. Naturally Chinese's USP has been creating authentic meals free from msg, artificial colouring and additives. It was one of the UK's first coeliac-friendly restaurants, for wheat-intolerant diners. "No customer should feel left out because of dietary restrictions," says Amie. "Food that energises you makes you happy."

Natural food colourings such as spirulina and beets are used, sea salt replaces table salt, while chicken, eggs, broccoli and morning glory are organic. The dim sum dumplings are gluten-free. **www.naturallychineserestaurant.co.uk**

Classic feast

Alfie Smith's fab burger and brownie pop-up (Thu, Fri and Sat, 6-9.30pm) runs from a converted caravan via an alley by 126 Thornhill Road, or from Diana Gardens. The classic has a steak patty, rocket, red onion, tomato, pickle, sauce, cheese, bacon & egg for £8.50. A gravedigger by day, Alfie set up his takeaway last year after working in the John Lewis kitchens. "It's the way a burger should be," said Alfie, whose fare is top notch. Visit Alfie's Burgers & Brownies on Facebook, walk up or order on 07856 916309 + Deliveroo etc.

● Via collecting boxes at allotments (including Tolworth Main), Kingston Crop Drop sends surplus fruit and veg to community groups. Now Kelvin Foote of Ravenscar Road, the driving force behind it, is keen to sign up more growers… but also needs volunteers to collect and deliver. "Anyone with a car and an hour or two to spare," he says. From broccoli to chard, nectarines to rhubarb, all produce is welcome. But the urgency is for distributors.

Kelvin also volunteers at Alfriston, helping senior citizens. Call **07885 736836** or email **kelvin.foote@voh.org**

● Do your kids screw up their faces at the sight of broccoli? Are carrots and peas pushed to the edge of the plate? Are mealtimes tantrum times? Raising Adventurous Eaters may be the answer.

A two-part workshop in the St Andrew's church glass room, Maple Road, offers know-how plus a printed workbook of tips, exercises and ideas to set your child on a healthier path.

It's run by Josephine Fernando, right, of the Berrylands-based Diddy Diners (educational food kits for kids) and parenting coach Caroline Rowett. "It's for parents with children from 18 months to five years who are going through a fussy eating phase," said Josephine, of The Ridings. "They'll develop a practical toolkit to make mealtimes calm, with moments of connection." The workshops are Mondays (May 9 and 16) at 7.30pm. The course costs £60. To book visit **www.carolinerowettcoaching.com**

● Juliet Friday-Smith of Happy Hill Kitchen is looking forward to the Surbiton Food Festival. The Caribbean street food specialist is one of many local stallholders who will be serving up their fare during festival fortnight, now back in its old slot, from Sat, May 7 to Sun, May 22.

"The Surbiton food festival was one of the first events we experienced when we moved to Surbiton, and it's our absolute pleasure to be serving our Grenadian flavours at the festival for a third time!" said the Ellerton Road resident.

"The local people, community, talent and togetherness mean so much to us, and it's such an amazing event."

Festival highlights include The Sardine Festival (Sun, May 8, 1-6pm, Claremont Gardens); The Village Fete and Dry Hopped Beer Festival (Sat, May 14-15, noon-6pm, St Andrew's Square); and The Seething Community Sports Day & Picnic (Sat, May 21, noon-4pm, Victoria rec). During the fortnight there will be live music, plus events such as breadmaking classes and tasting sessions.

On Sat, May 7, the Bowden Smith Blues Revue perform live R&B at Surbiton Hockey Club, Sugden Road, Long Ditton. £10, 7.30pm.

For the full festival programme visit **www.surbitonfoodfestival.org.uk**

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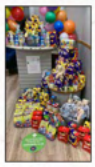

● Generous Nationwide customers made it an Easter to remember for scores of children as the Great Surby Egg Collection sprawled across the Victoria Road branch's floorspace. "They are beginning to snake out of the door," reported Julie Allan. As well as eggs, bags of clothes were donated for the Growbaby charity in Surbiton Road, which supports local families in need.

● To combat a rise in theft, Sainsbury's has built an electronic one-way security barrier at the entrance to the Victoria Road supermarket. However, there have been teething problems. On the first afternoon of operation, a schoolgirl indignantly protested her innocence to a bemused security guard after a high-pitched alarm sounded, apparently triggered by her hockey stick!

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the good life

Editor: Tim Harrison

Set up 10 years ago in 2012, the community paper for Surbiton, Tolworth, Berrylands and Long Ditton appears six times a year between March and December. We deliver to 12,100 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, follow us on Instagram and Facebook (**@thegoodlifesurbiton**) and check our website. Back issues archived at: **www.thegoodlifesurbiton.co.uk**

This paper is also available at Michael's shoe repairs; Shoes At Last; Cyclelink, Thames Ditton; the cornerHOUSE & Stears… and by post. Details on the left

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Hallowed spaces

St Raphael's church, Portsmouth Road, wants to create 14 off-road car park spaces, accessed by a new crossover.

Residents meet

The Long Ditton Residents' Association agm is at 8pm on Wed, May 25 at the village hall; refreshments to follow.

Balloon challenge

The Elmbridge Avenue sunflower and cake sale is on Sat, Jun 11, 11am-2pm at No160, with tomato plants, children's books, and guess how many balloons are in a car. Proceeds to Ukraine, and Grand Avenue School's sensory garden.

Garage redesign

The garage of 48 Upper Brighton Road is to be converted into a living room, with a single-storey extension added.

Cable is crocked

Tolworth, Long Ditton and parts of Surbiton were blacked out by a power cut for five minutes at 7pm on March 16 when an underground cable failed.

Hands-on salon

Hurrah! A new nail bar! The former Ajanta curry house at 114 Ewell Road will soon fill up with technicians applying gels, shellac and acrylics.

House springs up

A three-storey, four-bedroom house is to be built on land at 84 Ditton Road, diagonally opposite The Maypole pub.

Royal portraits

Have a selfie with Her Majesty! Oaks Way, Long Ditton, is holding a jubilee party on June 4, with a lifesize monarch who is happy to pose for pictures.

Shh! We're open

Surbiton Library reopened on Apr 8 after a two-month closure following the collapse of ceilings in two rooms.

Flower power

High streets are about to be prettied up with £8,499 worth of hanging baskets in central Surbiton, Tolworth Broadway, Ewell Road and Chiltern Drive, paid for with ward funding.

Exam stress aid

An online workshop will help parents support children through exam stress. It's on Wed, May 25 at 6.30pm. Details at **https://bit.ly/KAE-CLfl2122**

In the vanguard

Berryland's Save the World Club lent its van to Olga Proto to allow her to take medical goods for Ukraine to Dover after her vehicle hire fell through.

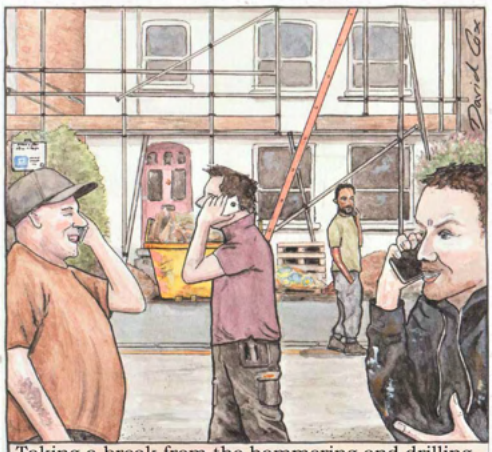
Recall the flicks?

Go courting at Surbiton Odeon? Dare to admit you visited Studio 7? Oral memories of Surbiton and Kingston cinemas are being collected for the archives. Mat Rosenberg, 07949 107023.

Market aids Kiev

Farmers' Market stallholders and shoppers gave £2,315.71 to the Red Cross Ukraine appeal. "Huge thanks," said market kingpin David Jacobson.

SURBITON LIFE by David Cox



Taking a break from the hammering and drilling to stroll up and down shouting into their phones

New station block?

Could a vast block of flats tower over Surbiton station's listed art deco buildings? A firm called Solum, which specialises in 'reimagining the way that railway land is used', is drawing up plans. Could the target be to build something similar to its Walthamstow Gateway block, completed in 2019 alongside Walthamstow tube station? It has 69 flats and a hotel. Another of the firm's 'reimaginings' has just opened at Twickenham station – a five-storey development of 39 flats, priced from £470,000 for a one-bed.

'Architects are drawing up plans for our neck of the woods, to submit to Kingston Council in six months' time, for a redevelopment of land 'adjacent to Surbiton station'. It is unclear exactly where. Solum was approached for clarification, but didn't respond. The most obvious spot is the station car park in Glenbuck Road, perhaps with underground commuter parking?

Solum, a partnership between Network Rail and Kier Property, says its plan would protect the existing station buildings. Commenting on the proposal, the watchdog Kingston Society points out that this should actually go without saying as the station is Grade ll listed.

Solum talks about creating a 'transformed ticket hall' while being 'sensitive to the art-deco style that makes the station so iconic', suggesting a possible development nearer to Victoria Road. A restoration of the existing art deco station buildings will, it is said, form part of any scheme. A public consultation will shortly be launched.

Tim Harrison

The 'Walthamstow Gateway' now dominates the skyline in east London. Is something similar destined for land near Surbiton station?

● Free beer! But only for commuters. To woo folk back on to trains, South Western Railway paid several bar tabs for after-work drinks rounds in Surbiton after a survey revealed 59% of workers said they missed socialising with colleagues.

● Looking different, Salon No13, Victoria Road, here as pop-up bar Saloon No13, with music and mauve lighting. Future dates on Instagram **@saloonnumber13**

Trophy for streetwise Matty

Matty Nixon, who has walked every street in the entire borough, has been given a special sports award.

The 10-year-old from The Ridings, who attends Christ Church primary school in Pine Gardens, was only eight when he completed the remarkable feat.

What began as a fun way to exercise in the first few weeks of lockdown in March 2020 became a challenge, eventually leading to him colouring in every road on his map before the year was up, with proud dad Paul accompanying.

Mayor Sushila Abraham presented Matty with the young person's sports cup, engraved with his name, at the Guildhall. He got a glass trophy to keep.

Matty, who wore out several pairs of shoes and socks in the challenge, still walks regularly, but mostly in parks and forests with the family's new poodle, Freddie.

"It was really exciting when I heard I was going to get the award," Matty told The Good Life. "And I got to see the mayor's chambers after the award ceremony... and the special room where they keep lots of old historical valuable stuff!"

● Now you see it, now you don't. One of Maple Road's century-old London planes was cut down on 'health and safety' grounds.

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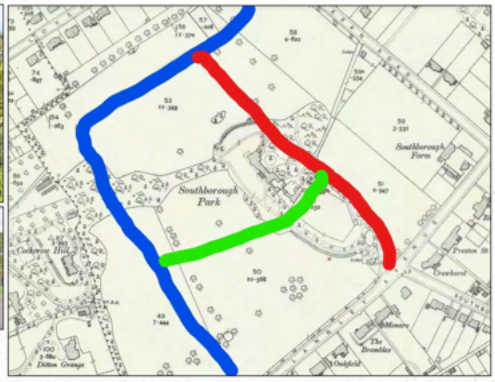
The new girl on the block

Southborough House

The stable block on the corner of Ashcombe Avenue and Southborough Close



To an early map of the Southborough Park estate have been added Ashcombe Avenue (red), Woodlands Road (blue) and Southborough Close (green)

The first house to appear on the hill in Surbiton was designed by John Nash and built in 1808 for Sarah and Thomas Langley. Today it's the Grade ll listed Southborough House, with nearly 8,000sqft of living space in the heart of the Southborough estate. The Langley name lives on in Langley Avenue and Langley Road.

Sarah was born an Arbuthnot, in 1765. When she was 19 she became a Langley after marrying wealthy merchant Thomas. The pair were living in Long Ditton when they commissioned Nash to create their 'grand design', becoming the first residents of Southborough Park (see map).

Southborough Farm was also built after heathland had been cleared to make it suitable for the big house and its estate. The farm, which had its own windmill, provided the family with milk, butter and poultry.

NOTABLE SURBITONIANS
Sarah Langley

The Langleys were not short of funds. Thomas was the son and grandson of London-based goldsmiths, and had inherited great wealth, including shares in the Hudson's Bay Company.

The town of Fort Langley in British Columbia, Canada (established in 1827) was named after Thomas Langley, then a member of the Hudson's Bay Company governing committee. The Langley family home was in East Sheen.

Two of Sarah's sisters lived near Southborough House (then known as Southborough Place), with their children, who no doubt visited her on many occasions. The farm buildings were demolished some time ago, but were still in use in the early 1900s.

The 10-bedroom villa has a distinctive green copper dome over the octagonal entrance hall, regularly glimpsed as a setting for films and TV series.

Nash, the architect of Buckingham Palace, Marble Arch and Regent Street, sketched out plans for Southborough Place in 1803, when in his mid 50s, in the style of the Venetian architect Palladio. The plans are held in the archive of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Detached, balanced and laden with marble fireplaces, it has three storeys plus cellars, and was completed 30 years before the railway cut a deep gorge through Surbiton Common, the event which would spur the boom in building and population in the area.

The vast attic space was occupied by servants who reached it up a perilous ladder and slept dormitory-style. They were allowed modest fireplaces to keep warm in winter.

You could look out of the house's upper windows and see the masts of Thames barges, and the chimneys of Hampton Court. In fact, you could stroll from the back of the house straight down the hill to the river.

So fond was Langley of looking out at Hampton Court that he insisted any homes built between him and Cardinal Wolsey's old palace should not have second storeys.

The distinctive copper dome above the Southborough House entrance

Nash, who was born in Lambeth in 1752, had a rather colourful life. His hat-mad wife Jane ran up a milliner's bill of £300, and had a fling with (and a child by) a Welshman who rejoiced in the name Charles Charles. The Nashes eventually divorced.

When Thomas Langley died in 1829, Sarah became the owner of the estate, and other land in Surbiton. Thomas' will stated that he was 'formerly of London and Long Ditton, but now of Southborough, Parish of Kingston.'

He was generous to all parts of the family, and beyond. Sarah was instructed to ensure that £100 was distributed to the 'poor of Long Ditton' and that £200 (the equivalent of around £25,000 today) was to be distributed between his servants.

Sarah Langley's name occurs alongside those of the Earl of Egmont and the Earl of Lovelace as a major landholder in the tithe maps of Surbiton and Tolworth in the 1840s.

Her father, John Arbuthnot, was of Scottish descent, from a junior branch of the noble family which had to make its own way in life. John was born in 1729, and was four when his father died.

Sarah Langley's father, John Arbuthnot

John married five times. His first wedding was in 1753, but Sally Cecil died six years later. In 1760 he married Ursula Fitzgerald, but she died shortly after giving birth the following year. Their son, also John, died unmarried in India.

John Snr wed his third wife, Anne Stone, in October 1762, and she produced 10 children: Anne (1763), George (1764), Sarah (1765), Charles (1767), Alexander (1768), Margaret (1769), Harriet (1770), Frances (1773), Robert (1773) and Thomas (1776). After Anne's death, Helen Fitzgerald became John Arbuthnot's fourth wife, followed, on her demise, by Anne Heard in 1791. The family lived on the Ravensbury estate at Mitcham, although in later life John lived on the west coast of Ireland.

He was also know for experimenting with agricultural instruments and practices, having some success in producing a fine crop of the madder plant for dying calico a deep pink shade. He died in Ireland at the age of 69, on December 27 1797, when our subject, Sarah, was 32.

Sarah and Thomas were childless… but not completely! They had taken responsibility for the illegitimate son of Thomas' brother Nicholas, a lad who bore the name Nicholas Garry (Garry being his mother's surname). Young Nicholas went on an expedition to Hudson Bay, travelling in birch bark canoes to re-establish the Fort Langley settlement. Nicholas Garry married Anne Phoebe Vesey, niece of Thomas and Sarah. In later life he settled in Claygate. The house that he inhabited still stands in Hare Lane.

Nicholas Garry drew up his will in 1831, although it was not proved until 1857. Having made his major bequest to his wife he continued: "To my kind friend Sarah Langley of Southborough, the widow of my dear friend and benefactor, Thomas Langley, deceased, 100 guineas as a mark of my regard and affection towards her for her kindness, almost maternal, rendered to me, which has produced in my heart an affection, devotion and gratitude that no son could more feel towards a parent and which feelings led me, before my marriage, to leave her, with little exception, all which I possessed." That is quite an accolade…

Sarah would not have received this bequest as she pre-deceased Nicholas Garry. However, she made bequests to his wife (her niece) Anne Phoebe Garry, a bequest 'for her own use', to be passed on to her children. This suggests a rift between Nicholas Garry and Sarah Langley, as he receives no mention. Both Anne Phoebe Garry and Nicholas Garry were living in Hare Lane in 1851, but some distance apart – Anne at 84 and Nicholas at 96, according to the census enumerator's numbering. They were both listed as 'married'. Nicholas was lodging with his previous man-servant, Peter Raven, who had accompanied him to Canada.

Family portraits are mentioned in Sarah's will. They were to be passed to her sister, Harriet Corkran (pictured left). There must have been a portrait of Sarah, but it cannot be traced. The person who took over the Southborough Park estate was Charles Corkran, son of Harriet. One of the new roads cutting through the estate bears his name.

With no surviving portraits of Sarah, this painting of her sister Harriet, five years her junior, is the closest we have

Over time, the original estate has diminished in size as new roads were built and populated with substantial properties, but the original house remains, as do the buildings that were the stables. These line a short part of Southborough Close.

A walk along Ashcombe Avenue gives a view of what today is Southborough House. At well over 200 years old, it is one of the oldest houses in Surbiton.

In 1885 Captain James Cundy and his wife bought the house and its lodges (now 25 Langley Avenue and 22 Corkran Road). He had been an army captain, but on retirement from active service was involved in Dents, which manufactured gloves. For many years he and Mrs Cundy made the grounds available to the children, teachers and parents of Christ Church, Surbiton Hill, for a day of summer games and other treats.

The 1911 census has the widow Elizabeth Cundy, aged 81, living with seven servants in the house that has 19 rooms.

As with Sarah Langley she had no children, and lived to the age of 90, passing away in 1920. Interestingly one of the beneficiaries of Elizabeth's will was James Carnegy-Arbuthnott. Was he, perhaps, a distant relative of Sarah, despite the slightly altered surname? The 1911 census showed that he was also a glove manufacturer.

Sarah Langley's will is long, mentioning many relatives to whom she was making bequests. She also left money to her closest servants, and new sets of clothes to those who worked on the farm. Money was left to the poor of Kingston, Surbiton and Long Ditton.

Sarah asked to be buried alongside Thomas in Kingston Parish Church.

Charles Corkran, to whom she left her estate, was a cricketer, eccentric and MP. He was also, presumably, the family member who could be trusted to care for the house.

Today the neighbourhood is protected by the Southborough conservation area. Southborough House sold five years ago for £3million, a figure that would have caused great amusement to the Langleys and John Nash. ● **Sarah Langley, b 1765, d 1852, aged 87**

Janet Heskins

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Pictured left, a photograph of Seething Wells filter beds five years ago... and how it looks today. Campaigners, demanding action to protect the historic 14-acre Portsmouth Road site, say it now resembles a Martian landscape. Members of Seething Wells Action Group (Swag) say owner Cascina is preparing the land for development, and cite leaked architect's drawings for 398 flats in six blocks of five to seven storeys, plus a 75-bed care home.

Kingston Council is not permitted to say whether a pre-application for permission has been made, but in recent weeks a digger has been stepping up vegetation removal and has scraped out gravel from the filter beds. Of the seven beds, all have been drained bar one.

Swag worries that the foundations of the wall and railings of the 19th century waterworks along Portsmouth Road may have been damaged, and that the retaining wall of the beds (the Thames is higher than the site's low point) may be compromised.

Cascina's agent Icon said that far from compromising the structure, it was protecting it. "The embankments must be kept clear to protect the structural integrity and eliminate the risk of a river breach, pavement collapse or structural failure," said Icon director Michael Graham, adding that the landowners had no option but to drain the beds and keep them drained to avert the risk of workers or trespassers from drowning.

Although it is both metropolitan open land and a site of importance for nature conservation, Icon believes that after a successful certificate of lawful existing use or development appeal in 2020 it established that Seething Wells was a 'brownfield' site. "The landowner has no intention to apply for and subsequently develop the site into a nature reserve," he added.

Sharron Sumner of Swag said: "Cascina have fought a war of attrition over the years." Referencing leaked images for a site which filtered water and protected London from cholera in Victorian times, she said: "I feel the density of what we are looking at – 398 units – is really quite large for this area of Surbiton. It is an overdevelopment of the site. I worry about how the infrastructure – and Portsmouth Road – will cope with such a large development. These are not homes for residents of Surbiton and Kingston – these are homes for multi-millionaires who will be moving into the area, so it isn't actually solving our housing problem by creating these homes at all."

Sharron said Swag was not against development of the land in total. It would look at potentially supporting something on the hard standing area – if it was in keeping with the neighbourhood – and as long as it left the filter beds as a nature reserve with some element of public access.

The group wants a community management plan involving Surbiton residents, businesses and stakeholders, and for the council to buy the site, either by agreement or compulsory purchase. "The site was built to save London from our last pandemic; that's why we need to save it."

Meanwhile Cascina's agent has applied for permission for four pontoons for 11 residential moorings on the site's river side.

A leaked image shows seven new buildings are proposed for the Seething Wells site

Following their noses

You can tell the dogs are in their element. Scampering away in Stokes Field... but not too far from dog walker Lily Gil as they nose around gleefully.

Lily, originally from Calgary near the Rockies in Canada, now in Vallings Place, Long Ditton, takes two-year-old Cairn terrier Mimi; Tully, a 20-month-old border terrier; Kelele, a two-and-a-half-year-old Cavachon, and Cooper her own Westie, for a brisk walk round the nature reserve.

Usually they go further afield: Esher Common, Epsom Common, Horton Country Park or West End Common's "lovely river valley".

"I like to walk in a different location every day of the week. It keeps things interesting for me and my furry clients," said Lily, who runs Sniffari Dog Walks. "All routes are quiet, away from roads and include terrain like woodland, ponds and meadows."

She has some 'secret' routes too, but all are GPS-tracked so owners know where Fido is. Photos and walk reports are included.

Lily is trained in canine first aid so owners' pooches are in good hands. "People are effectively giving you their children," she said.

Lily's USP? Sniffing. Dogs love to sniff out new things, so she finds plenty of fodder with interesting walks for eager snouts.

"They love the mental stimulation of doing what they are bred to do naturally; using their nose to track, explore and chase! I ensure each dog has a fun, safe and enriching walking experience.

"I've received lovely comments from owners on how their dogs' confidence has grown since starting Sniffari walks, and how it has calmed their dogs down!" Owners can opt for walks from 45 to 90 minutes, and pets come back scrubbed up. There's also a 'double Sniffari', equivalent to an all-day doggy daycare service. Factored in is an afternoon snooze, to avoid over-stimulation. Other services include overnight boarding and mobile cleaning.

Sniff out options at **www.sniffaridogwalks.com** **Jane Grove**

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Rewilding Tolworth

A one-year project to rewild Tolworth Court Farm will be launched at the cornerHOUSE on Saturday, May 14.

The event at the Douglas Road arts centre features presentations about the 50 hectare site opposite the new Lidl HQ in Tolworth, plus family-focused fun activities.

Surbiton rewilding group Citizen Zoo believes the neglected green space bordered by the Hogsmill river, Jubilee Way and Kingston Road can be one of London's great nature reserves... and seeks residents' involvement.

"Tolworth Court Farm can support biodiversity, secure an ecosystem to combat climate change and engage communities to care for the wildlife on their doorstep," said Kingston's biodiversity officer Elliot Newton.

The council, Citizen Zoo, The Community Brain and Kingston Uni are partners in the project, backed by GLA cash. Entry free (10.30am-12.30pm). **www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/surbiton/the-cornerhouse-theatre**

Bankers' hedge fund

A native alder, rose, hornbeam, hawthorn and blackthorn hedge has been planted in Victoria rec by a dozen Lloyds Bank staff to help attract brown hairstreak butterflies and improve nesting. Non-native laurels were removed while a litter pick ended the day.

Employee Volunteering director Stuart Forsyth said: "It helps the environment and the volunteers taking part get a lot out of it too."

Friends of Victoria Rec will see the 110 saplings by the path are watered, thanks to a tap installed free by Surbiton firm Plumb4U.

How to remain a healthy Surbitonian, with **Neil Reilly**

Tuck in to cordon bleu 'brain food'

It's now widely recognised that the pendulum has swung 180 degrees on bed rest for acute back pain.

Pre-millennium it was common for patients to be told to stay in bed for six, even 12 weeks. Then it became 'move at all costs, even when in acute distress'. I certainly see the wisdom of a few days in bed in the initial recovery phase.

Joints are designed to move, not just because movement helps produce lubricant but, importantly, as movement stimulates mechanoreceptors, and this is good for your brain.

A fifth of your brain is for cognitive function – what you're thinking – and 60% is input from sensors all around your body. Your brain loves this input... you can think of it as 'brain food'. Any movement is good but playing tennis, using the gym or taking an exercise class is like a corden bleu meal for your brain.

● **Chiropractor Neil Reilly is based at Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club, Berrylands. He can be reached via www.kingstonchiropracticplus.co.uk**

Nature club

Berrylands Nature Reserve hosts an after-school nature club for the summer term. The forest school, on Thursdays, 3.45-5.45pm at the reserve off Raeburn Avenue, has den building, storytelling, woodland crafts and pond-dipping.

"We hope it will foster a deep connection to the natural world as children see the seasons unfold," said Forest School Fern leader Kay Flissman. "It's a space to unwind, make friends and continue learning without the classroom."

The club (£15 a session for fives to 11s) will support child-led exploring and problem-solving, and develop confidence and independence.

Kay and colleague Laura Korte will also run clubs at the reserve on Thursdays for pre-school and home-educated children, 10am-noon for two to five-year-olds with a guardian, £15; and 10am-2pm for five to eight-year-olds, £30. Bookings for termly blocks. Paid trial available. Email **forestschoolfern@gmail.com** or call 07949 684617.

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● Learn to create eye-catching floral displays at a hanging basket masterclass on Fri, May 13. You'll be shown how to prepare it and how to select and position upright and trailing plants, plus simple tricks so flowers bloom for months. The class at Squire's, Woodstock Lane North, Long Ditton, is for both novices and hardy perennial gardeners. You'll leave with a self-styled hanging basket, spilling over with blooms and lush foliage. Tickets £30, with tuition, your planted-up basket, a cafe voucher and 10% off plants on the day. Book at the summer basket masterclass page at **www.squiresgardencentres.co.uk**

Club members on a trip to Wisley Spring Plant Fair

● The Surbiton-based English Gardening Club welcomes members to visit stunning gardens, swap plants and meet at garden centres (tea and cake is often involved). Membership free. "All you need is a car, WhatsApp [where gardening tips are swapped and outings arranged] and an interest in gardening!" said organiser Karen George of Herne Road. Trips are planned to open gardens, RHS venues and Chiswick Flower Market. Email **karen@karen-george.com** or visit **www.englishgardeningclub.com** or check out Instagram **@englishgardeningclub**

● Work has begun to renovate the garden at the Royal Star & Garter, Upper Brighton Road, to make it more accessible to veterans and partners living with disability or dementia. It includes planting raised beds, making a wheelchair-friendly nature trail and creating a garden room for family visits. Manager Helena Maher said: "Residents will have a beautiful area to enjoy the sun, garden, watch wildlife, relax or spend time with loved ones."

Clandon Wood

Burials, ash interments and nature reserve

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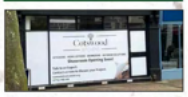
It's hard to keep up!

These have been turbulent weeks for Surbiton businesses. Here are some of the main changes

● Ethical garage Community Motors will close in June. Set up in the Red Lion Road business park in 2015 by (from left) Kevin Martin, Mark Wedd and Justin Cooper as a not-for-profit enterprise ('honest work at honest prices'), the firm has tested, repaired and maintained 5,000 cars and given 200 youngsters apprentice training and work experience. Soaring costs are blamed. "We wouldn't be closing unless we believed there was no feasible alternative," said Justin.

● The Blue Orchid bar (at 12 Claremont Road, next to Surbiton Health Foods) has closed, selling off its fixtures & fittings. It opened in 2017. Before that it was the Vinoteque wine bar, before that Xzyte, and way, way back, Corky's Wine Bar.

● Rush Hair, opposite McDonald's, has shut. It opened in April 2014 in the old Woodhouse furniture shop as a 12-chair salon. Everything was stripped out ahead of a visit from the bailiffs. Covid and falling income were blamed. The chain (which began in Wimbledon in 1994) was once 100-strong, but has now shrunk to fewer than 60 branches.



● Cotswood will open at 11 Brighton Road (between Wags and Seymours), offering fitted kitchens and bedrooms. Director Eamonn Murphy lives in Grand Avenue. It follows the death of the father of solo Surbiton estate agent Rhakesh Mahadeo, right. Rhakesh had run the business for a decade.

● The former Piano Warehouse in Ewell Road (above) is to be an organic fruit & veg shop, while a brick-built warehouse behind it (below) is to become four self-contained studio flats.
Access will be via a narrow alley between the Prince of Wales and the Masaniello cafe. Each flat is just over 430sqft, with its own front door, kitchen, shower and living room/bedroom. The premises at 111 Ewell Road sold pianos for 70 years. Piano Warehouse took over an existing business in 1995 as a Yamaha and Steinmayer main dealer. In April 2021 the lid closed; the business transferring to High Wycombe. Its client list was bewilderingly broad: Gianfranco Zola, Tom Robinson, Rory Bremner, Geri Halliwell, Sophie Ellis-Bextor, Peter Crouch, Emma Thompson, Alan Rusbridger, John Humphrys, Georg Solti, Hugh Laurie, Chas and Dave, even Coldplay!

● *Dreadful piano joke. E flat and B flat went into the Prince of Wales, but the barman told them: "We don't serve minors."*

● All 800 head-office staff at Lidl have moved into the £70m glass-and-concrete Lidl House at the Kingston Road/Jubilee Way junction in Tolworth; a 250,000sqft building which took three years to build. It has the largest number of electric car charging points in any UK location, solar panels on the car park, and loos flushed with rainwater.

● Two new shops will appear in what was the Tippetts motorbike dealership at 312 Ewell Road. It has been demolished (site pictured) to make nine flats, two semi-detached houses and the shops, with half a dozen car and 16 bicycle spaces.

It's a project by Cornerstone Homes of Claremont Road, which recently built 29 flats at the corner of Red Lion and Ravenscar Road, and converted the run-down, four-storey detached Victorian villa at 140 Ewell Road (behind zero waste shop Refillogic) into half a dozen, one and two-bed flats.

● Barclays is quitting Surbiton. The doors of 81 Victoria Road, between the Flyer and Clarks shoes, will shut on Fri, July 1. It's a year since Santander left the high street, which just leaves NatWest, Lloyds, HSBC, Halifax and the Nationwide in the heart of town. Barclays says 91% of its Surbiton customers now bank online, and only 162 people in the town physically use the branch. The nearest Barclays will be in Kingston and Esher. NatWest and the Halifax both have free cash machines, and the post office – across the road – offers many day-to-day services. Of all the traditional high street banks, Barclays has axed most branches, closing 650 in the past five years. Neither Tolworth nor Chessington has a single bank branch.

Pupils plant lime tree

A lime tree has been planted outside Surbiton library to replace the 100-year-old willow which split and keeled over a year ago.

Twenty pupils aged seven to 10, from nearby Lime Tree school, helped Kingston Council's biodiversity officer Elliot Newton plant the tree in the war memorial garden to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Each of the children in Years 2 to 6 of the South Bank Terrace primary school helped fill in the soil.

The event was attended by the mayor Sushila Abraham and her deputy Malcolm Self. Afterwards, pupils met the library team for storytelling. The chosen books? What Did The Tree See? about an oak, and Tidy, about a forest.

They were also lent books to take away and read. "The sun stayed out for the whole event and the children really enjoyed themselves," said school senior admin officer Lucy Philpot. "The children talked quite a bit about the fact that it was a lime tree with the same name as their school, but some hadn't realised that the school itself had been named after the lime trees growing in the school grounds."

20mph zone is active

Surbiton's blanket 20mph speed limit officially came into force on March 25 after contractors spent a month painting elongated roundels on roads and fixing reminder signs to lampposts.

Anyone wanting to dispute the new zone has until May 9, but will have to apply to the High Court.

Infuriated resident Dafydd Harries said: "There is significant evidence that 20mph zones do not work; they encourage rat-running and lead to higher average speed and more frequent accidents." He added that some councils which had introduced 20mph zones were now backtracking.

It affects every public road in Surbiton, Tolworth and Berrylands, including Ewell Road, Portsmouth Road, Hook Road and Brighton Road, which are all now limited to 20mph.

How will it be enforced? Police speed traps will be set up, with Lavender Hill magistrates' court (the court that deals with traffic prosecutions) dishing out fines and points.

It's very nearly time to vote

Polling stations open 7am-10pm for local elections on Thursday, May 5, across Surbiton... and there's also an Elmbridge Council election in Long Ditton.

Three extra wards have been added to Kingston borough, though there'll still be 48 councillors. Ward boundaries have changed, to reflect a shifting population, and a five-year increase of 8,000 voters.

Residents in Cadogan, Catherine, Grove and Uxbridge roads are now in a redrawn Kingston Town ward, while St Mark's ward will now be called St Mark's & Seething Wells because 'a significant number of residents identify as living in Seething Wells'.

Defining Berrylands may seem obvious, but the Boundary Commission wrestled with where to put the Alpha estate, settling on King Charles Road as the Surbiton/Berrylands boundary, rather than Ewell Road, so the library and fire station stay in Surbiton.

A bid to rename Alexandra ward as Hogsmill failed, as did an attempt to shift a chunk of Tolworth (bounded by Thornhill, Ellerton, Red Lion and Ewell roads) into a revised Surbiton Hill ward. South of the A3, it's now King George's & Sunray, not the suggested Court Farm, or Tolworth South & Sunray.

● For all Surbiton, Tolworth & Berrylands candidates, visit **www.kingston.gov.uk/elections-voting-1/statement-nominated-persons** In Long Ditton it's simpler: Liz Laino (Lib Dem) or Patrick Wylde (Con).

● They're fascinating to study, they're the world's top pollinators, and we're being encouraged to keep... bees.

One-day courses are being run by local beekeepers on Thu, May 19 and Sat, Jun 18 at the Kingston Beekeepers Association apiary in East Molesey.

Surbiton beekeeper Keith McMahon, well known to Surbiton Farmers' Market regulars as a honey enthusiast, explained: "We cover some basics on keeping bees, and open our hives to give participants an idea of what's involved as a hands-on insight into a fascinating world."

A place on the Can I Keep Bees? course is £75 with refreshments included. Email **admin@kingstonbeekeepers.org.uk** or visit **www.kingstonbeekeepers.org.uk**

Defiant council says it'll stick with shared roads

Ewell Road's controversial continuous pavement will remain, despite charities for the blind dubbing them 'deathtraps'. In response to Good Life questions following a serious accident involving a cyclist at the Langley Road junction, Kingston Council admitted contractors installed tactile paving for visually impaired pedestrians… then tore it up three days later.

"Tactile paving was not part of the design and was laid in error by contractors," said a spokesperson. "This was then rectified and the correct paving laid." But the resulting 'Copenhagen crossings' where cyclists, drivers and pedestrians share aesthetically pleasing, but demarcation-free, paving are – say opponents – dangerous for anyone without perfect eyesight.

The council said it would await a police report on the accident and "will pay close attention to any recommendations". It also pledged to "listen to feedback from residents and road users, including the visually impaired, on what adjustments can be made". So here's some.

Mariza Jurgens, manager of the Kingston Association for the Blind, said she unaware of any consultation. "What they forget is that when you're blind you need defined edges. You know where you are by getting tactile messages from the ground." She said visually impaired pedestrians needed a significant change between pavement and road. "If one is rough, the other one must be smooth, so you know you're going into a different space."

She added it was all very well making Ewell Road look beautiful, but not if it made it dangerous. "You can easily find yourself in the middle of the road," she said. "If we had been consulted, we'd have said tactile paving is most certainly what we need. And why raise the road? Wheelchair users are quite happy to use ramps."

She said that guidedogs were trained to go from kerb to kerb. "They don't understand raised pavements. They stop when there's a kerb, so the owner can say go left, go right, or go straight across."

The issue has also been highlighted by Kingston Talking Newspaper (a terrific resource which councillors can also listen to at **https://listen.talking-news.info/kingston**).

The Ewell Road/Oak Hill Crescent junction offers no hint of where pavement ends and street begins

Producer David Broughton said: "They should close the road until this is sorted. There is another of these deathtrap junctions at the junction with Oak Hill Crescent. Someone's head should roll at the council, or perhaps at the Department for Transport."

Kingston Council said it was "committed to making cycling and other forms of active travel safe and accessible for as many people as possible", adding that the 'continuous footway' design was used internationally, was "underpinned by best practice research" and had been reviewed by safety auditors.

Tim Harrison

● **Grants for defibrillators were awarded by councillors at a Surbiton neighbourhood committee meeting, with £1,926 agreed for Humphrey & Brand to site one outside its premises by Waitrose in Claremont Road, and £2,076 for the Royal British Legion to do the same at its Hollyfield Road HQ. Both estate agent and veterans' group will pay for their own London Ambulance Service-accredited training in how to use and check the defibrillators, which give an electric shock to restart a patient's heart when they are in cardiac arrest, giving them the best chance of survival.**

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Pedal power for Malawi

Keen on an African adventure? Join a group to cycle 500km through southern Malawi, taking in a safari and chilling by Lake Malawi en route.

The ride through stunning scenery will raise funds for Surbiton charity African Vision Malawi's programmes to support orphans and vulnerable people with education, jobs and health care in a self-sufficient community.

"Every penny goes to help the most marginalised in one of the world's poorest countries," said charity CEO Heather Palmer. "There are three optional hike days, six cycle days and two off-days, one on safari, the other by Lake Malawi. On the cycle ride there's an optional cycle up Zomba Plateau (10km)."

The trip finishes at Sam's Village, an education, training and employment hub, to see the charity's work in action and meet those benefiting from its maternity unit, vocational programmes, pre-schools, permaculture gardens and bicycle ambulances.

Pedal Power Malawi costs £1,750, incl food, shelter, bike hire and safari. Flights extra. You will also be asked to raise £1,000 to help the projects. Find out more at a presentation about the Sep 17-29 trip (Mount Mulanje hike is from the 12th) on Sat, May 14 at 10.30am at the HQ in Upper Brighton Road. Or email **heather.palmer@africanvision.org.uk** call 020 8287 8169 or visit **www.africanvision.org.uk/events**

● **Planning watchdog the Kingston Society is threatening to fight a bid by Hillcroft College to convert Victorian industrialist Wilberforce Bryant's Gables mansion into flats. The society wants guarantees to protect the grand building in South Bank in the Oakhill conservation area (by the Glenbuck Road station entrance), and laments the loss of trees, nature and wildlife. The college wants to sell off the old mansion to fund new college buildings on the site.**

Have your say in 5 May 2022's elections

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Boxing up for Ukraine

This box of medical supplies, held by Elena Ivanova and Iryna Karaban, is one of hundreds they have packaged to load on to vans and lorries bound for Ukraine. With pals Mariia Gordieieva and Tetyana Samina, they set up Save Ukraine CIC, collecting essentials for newborns, nappies, first aid kits, medicines, hygiene products, and food for orphanages and hospitals in the war-torn country.

St Mark's church on St Mark's Hill has lent meeting rooms to sort and store before supplies are taken to the Ukraine border for onward transit. They also work with partner Aliya Aralbayeva and her team who buy decommissioned ambulances to do the trips, loaded with Save Ukraine supplies. The ambulances are left in Ukraine for the hospitals to use.

All the women have relatives in towns which have been shelled by Russian artillery. "This is their way of doing something to help," said Mariia's husband Damian Damianov, who has lived in the UK since 1999. "They do what they can; this is their front line."

He praised the church, parishioners and wider community for their help. St Mark's vicar the Rev Robert Stanier said the church was happy to do its bit. "We honour them and want to support them," he said. "It is astonishing the effort these women have put in."

To contribute items, or help with the fundraising campaign, visit **www.facebook.com/SaveUkraineWithUs** **Jane Grove**

● A banner with the words Pray for Ukraine in the country's blue and yellow colours was torn down outside St Mark's church... not once but twice. "It was obviously deliberate," said Mr Stanier. "The staples on the noticeboard were strong. It's really quite depressing."

Aubrey marks his 100th

Surbitonian Aubrey Crawley visited our school to celebrate his 100th birthday, writes **Coco Brownlow, Year 10, Surbiton High School**.

At 18 in the Second World War he was a Royal Navy rigger. The best thing was "comradeship and lifelong friendships", but now he's the only one left. One harrowing wartime memory was seeing Japanese kamikaze pilots on suicide attacks.

Still a social man, even at 100, he lives in Surbiton, but takes the bus to Kingston as part of his daily routine, where he goes to McDonald's for a coffee, adding that "the incredible staff always offer me a seat".

Each Friday he takes his laundry to the launderette by bus. As expected, Mr Crawley is slightly doddery on his feet, and walks with a stick. Surbiton's young voices choir sang Happy Birthday. Mr Crawley demanded an encore, and sang along. He was given an enormous card made by Year 7 art students.

● I'd like Andy Hoang as my neighbour, *writes Jane Grove.* Andy, 42, of Cranes Park, is regional winner of the UK Neighbour of the Year award, for his selflessness in pandemic shopping for the housebound, helping neighbours with chores, and distributing surplus food.

The former physics teacher set up a WhatsApp group, now 100-strong, to stop supermarket food going to waste by distributing to needy families. He has also brought neighbours together with various events.

Andy, who runs Beyond Blocks, teaching robotics to local children using Lego, was chuffed. "It was such a surprise! I love my community and I wanted to help out wherever possible," he said. "I'm so glad that I could help people who needed it; even if it was only in a small way." He won the south west London award in an initiative by Co-op Insurance and Neighbourhood Watch.

● It has been more than two years since the first lockdown confined us to home and turned our world upside down.

Tolworth's Community Brain wants to collect your thoughts on how we have coped to create a piece of public art as a lasting reminder of an extraordinary time in our history.

"What we have lived through in the past two years, and its monumental impact, cannot be underestimated," said co-ordinator Charlotte Levy.

"It's been a time of pain for many, but has also revealed the amazing spirit and kindness of people."

Leave memories with your real name or a pseudonym if you prefer. The deadline is 5pm on Wed, May 18. More at **www.thecommunitybrain.org/two-years-since-lockdown**

Love reading?

Volunteers are being recruited to lead a shared reading group at Surbiton library. The Reading Retreat will involve weekly gatherings of up to eight, plus pairs of volunteers, and is being run with support of The Reader charity, which aims to inspire a 'reading revolution' and encourage enjoyment of literature.

Training is six half-day online sessions; the target being to run both in-person and online groups.

As well as Surbiton library, a group may be set up at the Alfriston day centre. For info, email **libraryvolunteers@kingston.gov.uk**

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Pret reckons it'll be a doddle

The high street premises which formerly housed delivery collection shop Doddle opens in the first week of May as a branch of Pret a Manger.

The sandwich chain has taken a five-year lease on 8 Victoria Road, between Headmasters and the British Heart Foundation charity shop.

It will pay £25,000 rent a year, plus £15,000 rates. The flats above are not part of the deal. It's Grade II listed, so consent has been sought for front and rear alterations.

Built in 1875, the 1,000sqft shop has a basement, though there are no plans to use it. There will be two pavement tables and six stool seats at a counter, for those who want to munch a BLT and sip an Americano while gazing out at the street scene.

There's a disabled-friendly loo (if the doorsteps are removed to allow in wheelchairs), and brickwork will be left exposed inside, 'to add character'. Out back is food prep, freezers and a walk-in coldroom.

The shop has sat empty since Doddle toddled in March 2017, after opening in a blaze of purple optimism in August 2015; a 'convenient online shopping collection point'. In the past it was Phones4U, a Quit charity shop and a cafe called C'Est Bon.

The concept of Doddle was as a late-opening place where commuters could pick up eBay and Amazon parcels which they missed while they were out at work. Pre-pandemic, 4.5m people used Surbiton station each year, so a handy pick-up point on the way home was seen as a good bet.

A changing room meant that mail-order clothes could be tried on... and instantly returned if they didn't fit.

Regency: a page-turner for 60 years

Now marking its diamond jubilee, Surbiton's Regency Bookshop is as it was in April 1962; friendly, knowledgeable… and cramped. Chief bookworm Pat Freestone-Bayes began as a Saturday girl in 1998, and now presides over the cute sliver of space at 45 Victoria Road, selling books of all descriptions, quirky greetings cards, wrapping and gift bags.

Then, as now, the oldest continuously operating shop in the high street supports local authors, hosts signings and gives generous discounts to book clubs. Ordered books arrive overnight. Pat is one of just three owners in 60 years; each continuing into the next person's tenure to ensure a smooth transition.

The original shop, opened by Egon and Eileen Lancet, was named after its distinctive bow-fronted window (some of the glass is still the hand-blown original). The Lancets also opened a similar shop in Esher… but Surbiton was the one that survived as it had higher footfall.

At first it sold books and records. Glance left when you're next at the counter and you'll see the soundproofed wall of the old listening booths!

Booksellers Association chairman Tim Godfrey began his career at the shop, which was taken on by Kira Parker. Ray Mustoe came on board, and finally Maltese-born Pat arrived, armed with experience from Waterstones, Borders and Banstead's established Ibis bookshop.

"We have a really loyal customer base," said Pat, proudly. Mums and children predominate, with children's titles a core strength. "Parents tell us we have many more children's books than, say, Waterstones, and we know children's books… it's where we excel. We curate everything ourselves; it's not done by some head office clicking buttons.

Pat Freestone-Bayes on her usual perch

"We engage with the children. We have regular little ones who come in on Saturday to spend their pocket money. They say: 'I really enjoyed that one, Pat. What should I read next?' You don't get that in larger shops." Pat, a new mum herself, is a key player in Surbiton's new literary festival (**p11**). **Tim Harrison**

● This ferocious Plesiosaur is one of the prehistoric marine creatures in a new mural under Tolworth roundabout – a great new free attraction. The Triassic Tolworth Aquarium, painted in the once-forbidding subway by street artists WeAreSkyHigh, fills the walls and ceiling near Barnsbury Lane on the Sunray estate. It formed part of the Community Brain's fortnight of prehistoric-themed events in Tolworth and Hook in April, including dino hunts, digs and arts & crafts workshops, a gig by The Reptiles and an outdoor screening of Steven Spielberg's dinosaur classic Jurassic Park in the Tolworth station forecourt. "We want to raise awareness of significant dinosaur fossil finds in Surrey and inspire people to think about amazing creatures that lived here in prehistoric times," said Ben Wilson.

Kingston College student Maliha, 17, designed this Bowie poster for the 50th anniversary of Ziggy Stardust's launch at the Toby Jug, Tolworth, and it was on display in a pop-up show in the Broadway. "It looks a bit scary," said the teenager, who aims to study graphics at university.

● After hoovering Kingston homes for five years, the local Merry Maids franchise plans to clean up in Surbiton. Owner Gary Rolfe, pictured, offers one-off springcleans or regular visits. Maids dust, vacuum and mop after an initial consultation. 'Deep cleans' suit students and tenants about to quit. **www.merrymaids.co.uk/kingston**

Becky Mayhew imagines

A coffee chat

I've wangled exclusive access to the conversation between Pret A Manger's boss and second-in-command Dave on opening in Surbiton.

Boss: Let's open in Surbiton!
Dave: OK, let me check. [Taps on huge futuristic computer, the type Q uses in James Bond] Ah, problem. Surbiton already has 9,531 coffee outlets.
Boss: Well, they sure love their coffee! We'll fit right in!
Dave: OK. You don't think Surbiton's coffee market might be a bit… oversaturated?
Boss: Look, there are approximately 47,395,021,749 coffee outlets in London. The coffee market is literally drowning in its own froth. We've successfully turned humans into caffeinds. I demand Surbiton! And I want to go opposite the Surbiton Flyer, there's a vacant lot there.
Dave: Yeah, but that's four doors from Nero's. What if everyone just keeps going to Nero's? I mean, their coffee is spectacular, and some would argue superior to ours, in fact I myself have the Nero's app and I don't have the Pret app. Hah, isn't that weird?
Boss: Ahem.
Dave: Sorry.
Boss: Nero's might pip us on coffee, but we have the holy grail… [holds palms to sky as though summoning angels]… the mozzarella and tomato croissant.
Dave: Good call, boss. It is magnificent.
Boss: Quite magnificent, Dave. As an aside, did you know that it is statistically hotter than the centre of a live volcano?
Dave: I didn't know that, but I'm not surprised. You know there's also a Costa up the road? And there's a…
Boss: Is there a Starbucks?
Dave: No, the people of Surbiton didn't like Starbucks, so it scuttled off a few years back.
Boss: Lol.
Dave: Boss, are you sure you want to move to Surbiton? What if just one more coffee outlet gives them too much choice about where to get their coffee, and their brains malfunction and they end up just having a glass of water?
Boss: Then we give them a glass of water with their mozzarella and tomato croissant.
Dave: [Awestruck] It's blue sky thinking like that that got you where you are today.
Boss: Look, we want to make the people of Surbiton as excited to see us in their high street as they are when they walk into an airport and we are the first thing they see. They walk into an airport thinking about freedom and adventure, and they see us and they think: Perfect! Our adventure starts here!
Dave: Except in Surbiton they may not be thinking about freedom or adventure, more about the pants they've just bought from M&Co.
Boss: So they get pants and a quality coffee and a delicious molten cheese croissant! What a life we can offer them!
Dave: You've convinced me, boss. Surbiton it is.
Boss: Good. Now go and get me a Nero's latte.

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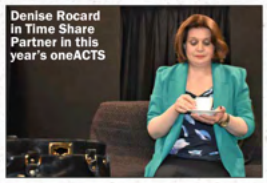
● The homeless, and Ukrainian refugees, will benefit from a recent show by artist Rod Pearson. The talented watercolourist of Portsmouth Road raised £3,840 with a cornerHOUSE exhibition of the neighbourhood, including street scenes, parks, the river, landscapes... and horses – a new subject for the artist who has been painting for 30 years.

● The second part of the cornerHOUSE oneACTS festival – a showcase of original playwriting talent – is staged in June. The festival, now in its 14th year at the arts centre in Douglas Road, takes new plays from page to stage. Kindertransport, robots, downsizing and a homicidal insurance salesman feature on Fri, Jun 10 and Sat, Jun 11 at 7.45pm. £11 (£9 concs) at **www.ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents**

● Part one is on Fri, Apr 29 and Sat, Apr 30. Info on the website.



Denise Rocard in Time Share Partner in this year's oneACTS

● Singer Dan Raza performs at ExCellar, Brighton Road, on May 21 at 7pm, a night after playing the wine bar-café's branch in Hare Lane, Claygate. The musician has opened for Joan Armatrading, and has two LPs to his name. Tickets £17.80 via **www.excellar.co.uk**

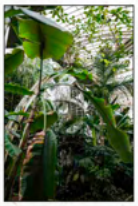
A jazz gig for Ukraine staged at the Berrylands pub by Surbitonian Bob Barter, left, pulled in 40 punters and raised £615. His quintet featured singer Jenny Howe, saxophonist Jimmy Hastings, drummer Eric Ford and bassist Mario Castronari. Bob, 94, played keyboard and sax.

Looking down in the mouth?

Retired dentist Gerald Feaver's whimsical memoir **A Little Book of Impressions** was boosted by Regency Bookshop queen Pat Freestone-Bayes on her regular Radio Surrey book slot. It is published by Troubador at £9.99. Gerald, whose daughters Clare and Abi attended Surbiton High, began writing after retiring in 2018. He hopes his mix of poignant, personal and amusing anecdotes will give a glimpse behind the mirror and drill to reveal dentistry's human side, and reduce fear of the reclining chair.

● Surbiton writer Steve Skinner's first published children's book aims at ages 3-7… unsurprising as he and partner Gemma, who live in Iris Close, opposite Fishponds, have a six-year-old son at St Matthew's School. **The Tortoise & The Porpoise** (a fiver on Amazon) tells of a tortoise on a cruise who falls overboard, but lands on a passing porpoise who rushes after the ship to reunite the tortoise family.

● Photographer Kaylie Mountford won silver as a first-time entrant to the RHS art and print show. The Tolworth Road lenswoman's portfolio focused on plants interacting with architecture, including this image, **Palms and Iron**. Her pictures were displayed at the Saatchi Gallery. "I'm over the moon," she said. Her images celebrate how plants "wind around ironwork and push up against damp glass surfaces". More at **www.kmstudiolondon.com**



● This Cleaveland Road house, captured by the Surbiton Sketcher, was in the same family for three generations. A fifth of each Sketcher fee aids homeless people, with £5,000 raised so far. Visit **Surbitonsketcher** on Instagram.

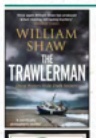
● Screen legend Julie Andrews still captivates as the voice of narrator Lady Whistledown in Bridgerton. She's serenaded in a candid love letter, Julie Madly Deeply, a cabaret with songs from musicals and tales from her life, written & performed by Fascinating Aida's Sarah-Louise Young at the cornerHOUSE, May 28, 8pm. **www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/surbiton/the-cornerhouse-theatre**

● Rock royalty Chris Difford, the Squeeze singer-songwriter, is at the cornerHOUSE on May 14 at 7.30pm. The lyricist of Cool for Cats, Up The Junction and Labelled With Love performs at the arts centre in Douglas Road, playing songs and telling stories from a 13-album career. Tickets (£22) from **www.ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents**

● The cornerHOUSE was sold out for surreal comic Harry Hill's four-night run that ended early April. Comedy highlights on the horizon include visits by Sarah Pascoe and Milton Jones.

● cornerHOUSE chairman Jeremy Thorn unveiled a plaque to 'mainstay & unique friend' Paul 'Lanky' Atkins.

Kids & crime lead literary festival



Regency Bookshop and the cornerHOUSE arts centre join forces to launch the **Surbiton Literary Festival**. Over two days, meet bestselling crime novelists plus children's author Alex Milway, and get books signed.

On Fri May 6 at 7.30pm, three crime writers discuss their books with panel chair Felix Riley. The trio are **JANICE HALLETT**, left, author of Sunday Times Crime Book of the Year 2021 The Appeal and new release The Twyford Code, **WILLIAM SHAW**, top right, whose new book in the DS Alexandra Cupidi series is The Trawlerman, while **SIMON MASON**, pictured below, introduces his Sunday Times Crime Book of the Month A Killing in November.

Then on Sat, May 7 at 10.30am, meet **ALEX MILWAY** and hear about his books, including his new Big Sky Mountain and best-selling Hotel Flamingo series.

Tickets are at different prices, depending on the book deals they are linked to. Book in advance to guarantee your signed copy. **www.ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents**

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● You may recall her as Miss Gossage ("Call Me Sausage") in The Happiest Days of Your Life, or as undercover cop Ruby Gates in St Trinian's. Joyce Grenfell was one of the greatest female entertainers of the 20th century. Now Ode to Joyce, a gem of nostalgia, recreates the setting of one of Joyce's stage shows as Cheryl Knight, right, captures her spirit. The cornerHOUSE, Sat, Jun 4, 7.30pm. £12 (£10 concs). **www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/surbiton/the-cornerhouse-theatre**

● Join Loraine Monk, right, for a Meet the Artist night at the cornerHOUSE on Tue, May 10. Loraine, a figurative artist, lecturer and printer, explores the threatened extinction of animals and re-imagines myths in her exhibition Metamorphosis at the arts centre.

The former artist in residence at Kingston Museum creates images using relief and etching print processes, carving and engraving into and under the surfaces of lino, paper, metal and wood.

Her work is inspired by social history, community and protest. 7-9pm. Free. Runs until Jun 19. Book a place at www.ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents

Folk nights are launched

Regular monthly folk nights are being introduced at the cornerHOUSE; the first on Tue, May 17 at 8pm featuring Dave Ellis and Boo Howard (pictured below). Dave started out in folk clubs in the 70s, taking his cue from, and hanging out with, guitar greats like Jansch, Giltrap and Renbourn. Early success and an album led to the Old Grey Whistle Test, BBC In Concert, gigs at The Marquee and supports to Rod Stewart.

Then he met Boo, who has one of those great voices that subtly blends rock, folk, soul and jazz in her own style. She plays bass guitar and keyboards too.

The next, on Tue, Jun 14 at 8pm is Granny's Attic; a young trio performing traditional and original songs and tunes. Tickets £12. **www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/surbiton/the-cornerhouse-theatre**

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● **Stand Up And Fight** comes to Long Ditton Village Hall on Sat, May 14. A night of professional wrestling action for the whole family at the hall in Ewell Road, opposite Long Ditton rec. First bell: 7pm. "We'll be raising money for the British Red Cross, aiming to break the £1,000 mark in aid of Ukraine," said an organiser. **www.tickettailor.com/events/southlondonwrestling**

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Members of the Supreme Bowling Club (formerly the Berrylands Bowling Club) are ready for the new season with spruced-up clubhouse and lawn. Last year they won the Kingston & District Weekend 4s league, and ladies pairs, triples and 4s. Club president Di Double was a singles finalist. The ladies also won the Sutton & District Bowling Assn Past Times tournament, and (**team pictured**) the Surrey Division of the Women's Top Club Competition.

The season concluded with bowls by candlelight... "great fun and a whole new experience for most," said women's committee secretary Jackie Davies.

The club is at King's College Sports Ground, Elmbridge Meadows, Berrylands. Reach it via Woodies Lane off Malden Way. "It's warm and welcoming," said Jackie. "Pop in and try it. No experience is necessary."

● Surbiton Bowling Club taster days are on Sat Apr 30 & Sat May 28, Alexandra Park. **www.surbitonbowlingclub.uk**

● Ember Sports Club, Esher, has a bowls open day on Sun May 22. Visit **www.embersportsclub.org.uk**

Run, Jose, run!

To the uninitiated, running may sound dull and draining, or even rather lonely.

But to those who pound the streets it can become a passion, even a way of life. Fifty-three-year-old accountant Joseph Gonzalez-Armas of Greenfield Avenue caught the running bug late in life.

In the summer of 2015, he decided to get fit and lose weight. Seven years on, he wears an England shirt, representing his country in half marathons.

Joseph, who played football, tennis and cycled as a young man, realised he needed to sharpen up after going for a slow jog with daughter Olivia. Soon his runs became longer and more frequent.

A couple of years later he entered his first marathon, joining 26.2 Road Runners Club (RRC) based at the Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club, Berrylands, to learn from more experienced runners.

His ambition grew and, backed by coach Kevin Quinn (Team Real Runners), he began his quest to run for the England Masters team. Last year he ran the eighth fastest half marathon in the country in his age category. In February, he gained his international vest at RRC's own Valentine's 10k race in Chessington, which also happened to be an England Athletics Masters (age 35+) qualification event.

Two weeks later, he secured his spot on the England half marathon team at Wokingham. His next England half marathon race is at Chester on May 15. He will represent his country against a field of the best Masters runners from across the British Isles.

He also plans to run the Berlin Marathon this year, and hopes to lower his PB of 2 hours and 46 minutes achieved at the London marathon in 2019 (Covid put paid to his second in 2021). "I still pinch myself at the thought I can run marathons at all," said Joseph, who has also competed in the 26.2 mile race in Brighton and Valencia.

From weighing 83kg and struggling to run for the K2 bus, to 63kg and competing for his country, he has achieved something he never thought possible.

"The truth is that with dedication and the right support environment it is possible at any age," he said.

● **Since 1980, 26.2 Road Runners Club (RRC) has warmly welcomed thousands of runners of all ages and abilities, at varying speeds and distances. Turn up on Mondays just before 7pm and join a group to suit your level. Wednesdays are for higher intensity sessions. The club also has a faster group for its more competitive members. Visit www.26point2.co.uk** for more.

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