the good life

Issue 66 — *The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3* — September 2022

Saturdays 9am-1pm:
September 17
October 15
Surbiton Farmers' Market

It's always the other geyser...

A 40ft jet dwarfed the bus stop near Chessington World of Adventures... the most spectacular of a host of local pipe bursts undermining Thames Water's efforts to conserve resources in the drought.

As a hosepipe ban finally came into force, the most reported leak was in Surbiton

high street where, in the driest month on record, gallons ran down Victoria Road for three weeks until engineers were mobilised.

Early reports reached the firm on July 23... but it wasn't until mid-August that the road was dug up, with four-way temporary lights leading to long traffic delays in all directions.

Exasperated shopper Phil Cooper said: "Given we're in a drought, how many more thousands of gallons will go to waste before Thames Water gets its act together?"

In early July the firm urged customers to take shorter showers and turn off taps while brushing teeth. "It's important households remain responsible with usage," said Andrew Tucker, water demand reduction manager, without, apparently, a trace of irony.

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Romaine calm... Stear's has shut

After six decades of spinach, spring onions, sprouts and spuds, Berrylands greengrocer Martyn Stear has closed the family shop.

Martyn, wife Alison and sister Wendy, were the friendly faces at 155 Surbiton Hill Park, and say their decision has been heartbreaking, but inevitable.

CF & MC Stear was launched by Martyn's dad before The Beatles had a hit. "Who'll call us 'darling' now?" asked customer Jennifer Longhurst, recalling Martyn's traditional greeting to female shoppers.

The cost-of-living crisis hastened the end. As belts tighten, Surbitonians are eating out less... and 80% of Stears' business was supplying restaurants.

Another factor is staff shortages. "I do seven days a week, Wendy does six," said Martyn, right. "We just don't see the family as much as we should."

Closing the shop represents a major life change for the Stears, including daughter Natasha, who served at weekends, not to mention other team members Colette, Steve, Carl and Giles.

Martyn turned 65 last week, while Wendy will be 72 later this year. While the shop has shut (with no buyer yet found) the plan is to run fruit & veg stalls at the monthly Surbiton and New Malden farmers' markets, and supply Christmas trees in December.

Wendy said it was the 'two-potatoes-and-three-carrots' brigade she'd really miss; older shoppers on tight budgets who struggle to make ends meet as hard times bite. Almost all were on first-name terms with Martyn, Alison and Wendy. Tears were shed at an emotional farewell drink and slice-of-cake party in the shop at the end of August.

Martyn will miss banter with customers ("They're more like friends") and joshing with New Covent Garden wholesalers. But he'll have longer in bed. The alarm went off in his Chessington home at half past midnight, ahead of the van ride to Nine Elms.

• Continued on p2

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Don't drive here or you'll get a £130 fine!

Don't drive in Pine Gardens at drop-off or pick-up time for Christ Church primary school, or you'll get a £130 fine.

Number plate recognition cameras activate on Sep 12, with penalty charges issued from Sep 26, after a two-week grace period. Restrictions apply to the Berrylands road from 8am-9am and 3pm-4pm, Monday-Friday, during term times.

Only residents in the immediate zone, posties and carers are exempt. The penalty halves to £65 if paid promptly.

A consultation alongside Kingston Council's school streets scheme allows feedback until Nov 1 at **www.kingstonletstalk.co.uk/christ-church-school-street**

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● A new stall has popped up at Surbiton Farmers' Market, serving the makings of spicy meals. Chef Adam Marks makes sauces for Mr Vikkis, while his sister, pictured, sells the product. Bottles are £4, or three for a tenner. For recipes, visit **www.mrvikkis.co.uk**

● Enjoy soup? Bring some veg, and have a bowlful in Claremont Gardens on Sun, Sep 25, at a community event "inspired by the tale of a selfish king who changes his ways after tasting a soup made by villagers", asserts Ben Wilson of the Community Brain. The King's Soup, from 1pm, will raise funds for Kingston mayor's trust. It's the first time in six years that it's been held.

'Martian ship' refused

Aldi is to appeal the decision by Elmbridge Council's planning committee to refuse its bid to build a budget supermarket on the former Guy Salmon showroom site in Portsmouth Road.

At the planning meeting at Esher Civic Centre, Richard Khodabakhsh, property director of Britain's fifth largest supermarket, spoke in favour of the two-storey building with 926m² of retail space, 51 car and 18 cycle spaces, aimed at those doing the weekly shop as well as small top-ups. He said afterwards: "Naturally we are extremely disappointed that planning permission has been refused, especially as officers had recommended approval. It met all policy requirements, and in some places exceeded them.

"We have worked in good faith with Elmbridge Council to bring forward a new supermarket that will create jobs locally and provide low-cost, high-quality groceries for residents. We remain fully committed to investing in the area and are confident that an appeal will overturn the decision."

How it would look

Eighteen councillors voted to refuse the application, two backed it and four abstained.

Neighbours of the site, who came to watch councillors deliberate, heard Cllr Ananya Banerjee liken the design to a Martian space ship. "I have really strong reservations about the size and the volume," she said. "It looks like a Martian ship; it's like an alien's landed. The alien can't land because it is just not relatable to the local character. I can't support this."

Reasons for refusal included the adverse impact on properties in Westville Road, which backs on to the site, loss of conifers and their potential screening, and failure to replace a cycle lane.

The intensification of the site, with extended opening hours compared to its former use as a car dealership, combined with the design, scale and siting, would be out of keeping with other buildings in the area including the Grade II listed Angel pub and those in the Giggs Hill Green conservation area.

It would also have a detrimental effect on the viability of local shops in Thames Ditton and Hinchley Wood, said councillors.

● Is Tolworth in the grip of a backpain pandemic? The tally of aching bone relief centres between Douglas and Hollyfield roads is now **four** as Massage Harmony (right) joins Avenue Health, Surbiton Chiropractic and Sabayjai massage. "Is it evidence of hard-working locals, or just bad posture?" wonders reader Peter Dunkley. The parade has seen 'curry wars' as Prithi, Dosra and Sarada vied for the tandoori pound, while a coffee battle looms as Feedwell Cafe, Momo, Costa (in the Co-op) and soon-to-open Go Sip (left) percolate, not to mention Colibri Coffee in a Worthington Road shed. Go Sip, at 291 Ewell Road, was once Ewell Food & Wine, and more latterly Gina Interior Design.

Champions needed

As the cost-of-living crisis intensifies, foodbanks report a rise in demand... and a dip in donations.

More than 100 volunteers help at Kingston Foodbank (which uses a voucher referral system and has sites in Surbiton and Tolworth), but director Ian Jacobs says more help is needed from individuals, shops and companies, especially for food, hygiene products and cash.

"It is more than just a place where food is handed out," he said. "It offers emotional and practical support to people who, through no fault of their own, find themselves vulnerable."

Clients can get food (plus coffee and cake when they visit), fuel vouchers for prepayment meters and SIM cards. Between January and May it has supported 1,895 people and issued 140 Vodafone SIM cards.

Run from an office in Victoria Road, the foodbank opens in Tolworth on Fridays, 10.30-11.30am, at St George's church, Hamilton Avenue, while Mondays is the day for Surbiton, at Balaclava Road's New Life Baptist church, 6-7pm, right. For other locations, and ways to help: **kingston.foodbank.org.uk**

Stear's shuts after 60 years of fruit & veg

● Continued from p1

Martyn's 'office' was his man cave behind the shop – a shed where he could listen to Spurs matches in relative peace.

Charlie Stear opened the shop in 1962 with wife Amy, having run a shop in Rotherhithe (or Surrey Quays, as estate agents now prefer). The couple met when he rescued her from beneath a pile of rubble in the Second World War. Charlie got his fruit and veg from the old Borough Market.

On Charlie's death, Martyn took over. Stear's has always been 'green,' with produce placed in paper bags or direct into shopping baskets.

Hanging in a lean-to at the back were hundreds of invoices and receipts. There's a twinkle in Martyn's eye as he tells the story. "Thirty years ago, when my dad was running the business, he'd missed a tax payment. It wasn't a lot; £20 or something. Anyway, a taxman came down, and he was a right arse. He said he'd return, and he did. My dad had put all his market bills on four enormous strings. The taxman took one look and never came back!"

Quite legally, it was a tradition Martyn continued!

Tim Harrison

Top: Beat the taxman. Keep receipts on a rope! Above: Martyn's man cave

FAREWELL!

After 62 years, the team at CF & MC Stear has made the difficult decision to close the shop at 155 Surbiton Hill Park, Berrylands, for the last time.

We thank all of our wonderful customers for their support.

We wish everyone well for the future, and hope to see you around. We'll be at the Surbiton and New Malden farmers' markets.

With very best wishes,
Martyn, Wendy, Alison and team

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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 issues are 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 editions, 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... and by post. Details above.

Quiz and supper

It's quiz night at Long Ditton village hall, Thorkhill Road, on Sat, Oct 8, 7pm. £15 entry with supper and pud. Max eight to a team, waifs welcome. **stmaryslongditton.org.uk/events**

Life-saving gear

Locks at Molesey and Sunbury have defibrillators, thanks to the charity Ralphh, based in The Ridge, Surbiton, which honours Kingston Grammar School rower Robert Allen, who died four years ago.

Camp helps kids

A Hollyfield School summer camp gave free places to Ukrainian teens escaping war in their homeland. For 42 years Camp Beaumont has offered archery, arts and crafts and tennis.

A new clothes line

Surbiton's Poundland in the high street has had a major refurb so it now stocks a cut-price clothing range and has extra chilled food cabinets.

Pull out the stops

Robert Woolley, Royal College of Music prof, starts as the new organist at St Mary's, Long Ditton. Church chorister Caroline Yalden has been plugging the gap until his arrival.

Greener advice

Surbiton businesses can join a free How to Go Green webinar on Tue, Sep 20, 10-11am, run by Kingston Council and the local chamber of commerce. **tinyurl.com/5ymxxesk**

Power of flowers

A fun flower arranging Friday at St Mary's, Long Ditton, led to designs such as this. Other events include a cream tea and film show. More info from Joanne Hall on 020 8398 5637.

Go on a bat walk

The council's Sustainable September celebrates biodiversity with wild food foraging in Elmbridge Avenue, bat walks and Tolworth Library nature classes. **www.kingston. gov.uk/Sustainable-September**

New chair sought

Kingston Association for the Blind, which helps visually impaired people in Surbiton and across the borough, needs someone with management and leadership skills as a new chair of trustees. **www.kingstonassociationforblind.org**

Garden bar axed

A bid to build an additional serving bar in the garden of The Grove pub, Grove Road, has been withdrawn by brewery Greene King after neighbours objected on the grounds it would generate noise, rowdiness and parking problems.

Motorbike stolen

Police are investigating the theft of a silver and blue BMW GS motorbike from outside a house in Ditton Grange Close, Long Ditton. They have been analysing a neighbour's CCTV which showed it being taken from the driveway at 1.50am on Aug 14.

SURBITON LIFE

by David Cox

Hoping that one day their son will meet someone nice, settle down and raise some cockapoos of his own

Centre upcycles itself

The Circulatory has stopped receiving donations and will close later this month. However the recycling and repurposing centre at Chiltern Works, by Berrylands station, is open to browse and buy until Sun, Sep 25.

With a cornucopia of secondhand goods, upcycling has been the Save the World Club's waste-not-want-not mission. It has also housed a bike repair shop, and been the collection and distribution point to channel food to vulnerable families. It is moving to a furniture warehouse in Southsea Road, close to Kingston Uni. To contribute to the moving fund, visit **www.savetheworldclub.org**

"Three years ago, I fulfilled my dream to open a warehouse for goods that would otherwise have been buried or incinerated, to recirculate them back into the community," said eco charity founder Des Kay, above. "From antique grandfather clocks to rare books, tools to vintage clothes, we've been the destination for things weird and wonderful. As the warehouse filled up, we developed redistribution by sending containers to Africa, furnishing refugee houses and encouraging visitors to take essentials for a fraction of their true value at monthly socials, where music and barbecued veggie burgers added to the mix. We also attracted wonderful people who came to volunteer."

Des said he was excited about the future as his new space is three times larger than their current warehouse. Over 6,000 people visited The Circulatory, with 3,000 donating 20,000 household items and 3,000 seeking things to buy.

A thousand people in crisis have been given items for free while 1,200 tons of food and goods have been saved from landfill (including 600 tons collected from a dozen supermarkets). More than 40,000 meals have been provided to low-income, homeless and vulnerable people in the borough. Each week 700 people are fed. **Jane Grove**

Festival takes to the streets

Surbiton Festival is on Sat, Sep 24, with a parade at noon from St Andrew's Road, up the high street to Claremont Gardens. There are 100 market stalls in Victoria Road and St Andrew's Road, 10am-4pm, plus dancing and a brass band on the station forecourt.

There's live music from 10am-5pm in St Andrew's Square, where there will also be hot food and a bar.

Claremont Gardens hosts children's events, with a teddy bears' picnic, football shoot-out, free inflatables, and Punch & Judy. The gardens will also have classic vehicles on show, hot food, live jazz and other music, and a bar.

Pic: Colin Pizey

● It's a net loss to the town. After 22 years of repairing Surbitonians' computers, the no-fix-no-fee Metacube has shut. The Bulgarian-owned shop by the bus stop opposite Waitrose occupied what was once a Surrey Comet branch office. Faced with a lease renewal, the decision was made to close and the shop was emptied at the end of June. Hardware repairs are still possible via **metacube.co.uk**

Look around Surbiton's heritage

Take a guided tour of Surbiton and a look round a historic church as part of September's Heritage Open Days events. Free hour-long walks on Sep 11 and 18 (meet at Surbiton station forecourt at 11am) are led by a Kingston tour guide and take in the clocktower, Claremont Gardens, the old cottage hospital and other landmarks. Spaces limited. Book via **www.kingstontourguides.org.uk/contact-us**

● On Sat, Sep 10, from 10am-4pm, look round St Matthew's church, St Matthew's Avenue; a listed 1875 building with 173ft spire and 61ft high oak roof. Designed by architect Charles Luck, it has an interesting history. Its benefactor, William Coulthurst, decided on its unusual east/north-east orientation. There is some stunning stained glass including the five-panel sanctuary window installed in the 1950s to replace originals destroyed in 1944 by a flying bomb. "There's a self-guided tour," said Ian Davies, an organiser. Refreshments are provided. Phone the administrator 020 8390 5121 or visit **www.stmatthewskt6.org** for more about the church.

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SURBITON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ALL WELCOME!

Tuesday October 4:
Ralph Thompson from Kew's National Archives on *The Jacobites and International Intrigue, 1708-1759*

7.30pm (bar open 7pm)

Come to the cornerHOUSE at 116 Douglas Road, Surbiton

surbitonhistoricalsociety.org

Ex-mayor dies at 84

When his rich, sonorous voice boomed out, it made the windows rattle in the Guildhall debating chamber. Dennis Doe, a councillor for 28 years, a mayor and alderman, has died at the age of 84.

A governor of Tolworth Girls' School for 42 years (it dedicated an extension to him), Dennis lived in Kings Drive, Berrylands.

Both he and his widow, Carolyn, were preachers on the Kingston Methodist circuit; his reverberating voice making the need for amplification superfluous.

The third of three children growing up in a bungalow in rural Lincolnshire with no electricity or running water, Dennis gained a place at grammar school in Louth, becoming head boy as well as captain of cricket and athletics.

NOTABLE SURBITONIANS
Dennis Doe

He did national service in the army, becoming a sergeant, before going to university in Durham where he studied politics and economics, and met Carolyn. He was a good dancer – so good, in fact, that he taught dancing to others while at uni.

After graduating at 24, Dennis joined Shell in London, having a succession of roles in sales, planning and marketing. He and Carolyn married in May 1963 and settled in Berrylands, raising three children – Lalage, Charles and James. Two grandchildren followed.

Dennis was keen on gardening, while a favourite holiday spot was the Lake District.

After serving as a school governor and helping found Kingston Churches Housing Association, Dennis joined the Conservative party and, at 48, was elected a councillor in St Mark's ward in Surbiton and later Tudor ward in Kingston; his being an old-school, community-minded, one-nation brand of Conservatism. Having been a councillor for 17 years he was made mayor of the borough in 2003.

Past mayor Sushila Abraham and current mayor Yogan Yoganathan were among those at the service of thanksgiving for his life at Surbiton Hill Methodist church on August 9, which followed his cremation. The Rev Stan Brown conducted, while other Methodist preachers led prayers and read Dennis's favourite Bible passage (John 4:4-26).

Dennis at a London mayors' gathering and, below, as a rather dashing man in his 20s

As mayor, Dennis chose Kingston Hospital as his charitable cause, having five years earlier been nursed back to health there following a bout of life-threatening ulcerative colitis. He and Carolyn celebrated their ruby wedding anniversary four days after he was sworn in.

"It is a great privilege to be mayor, particularly mayor of the oldest Royal borough," said Dennis after his instatement. "It is a commitment of service, and I see it as an expression of my Christian faith. What I would like to do is to help Kingston be proud of itself."

Dennis was on a mission to eliminate any public spending he saw as wasteful or frivolous, questioning why the council spent £50,000 a year on ferrying the mayor around, and getting particularly aerated about the decision to swap an old mayoral Rover for a Merc with a smaller passenger compartment which, in Dennis's view, inadequately accommodated robes and regalia.

As a councillor, he chaired the highways and the education committees. After his term of office as the borough's first citizen he became a keen member of the London Mayors' Association.

Despite wearing a rather grumpy expression, he had – said son Charles, in his eulogy – "a dry sense of humour" and a love for Morcambe and Wise.

As well as his long service at Tolworth Girls', he was also a Kingston Hospital trustee for 16 years.

Tim Harrison

● Dennis Frederick Doe, b Jan 7 1938, d Jul 10 2022

Grief is the focus

We all experience bereavement. To help navigate that journey, St Matthew's church is hosting various events. There is a six-week bereavement journey course, a bereavement walking group, a bereavement cafe and a service of remembering.

All are free, and are at the church in St Matthew's Avenue. The course starts on Tue, Sep 27, from 2-4.30pm. Register with Susan Kang on 07745 795395, by Sep 20. It includes DVD input and discussion, and is being run following positive feedback about an earlier event.

"Sharing experiences makes this a really powerful course, and many have said how grateful they are for the way in which it has helped them move on in their journey of grief," said the Rev Helen Hancock.

Open to all, whether with a faith or not, participants are asked to commit to the first five sessions, with the sixth being an optional afternoon exploring bereavement through a Christian lens.

A bereavement walking group sets off on the second Wednesday of each month. The walks start from the church at 10am and return for refreshments at the Balance Cafe inside the church building. Details from Sue O'Hagan on 07907 184018.

A bereavement cafe meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 10 for 10.30am, providing a supportive environment.

On Sun, Nov 6, there is a service of remembering. It begins with refreshments in the church from 4-4.45pm. You can light a candle to remember loved ones. **www.stmatthewskt6.org**

Anneli Brett

Susan Rhodes talks about the historic palaces of Richmond and Kew

Talks are proving popular

Surbiton's historical society is pulling in the crowds. Extra seating had to be found when Susan Rhodes spoke about the palaces of Kew and Richmond in August. All are welcome to the meetings on the first Tuesday of the month at The cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road. It's £15 to join, with walk-ins paying a small fee.

The Oct 4 talk sees Ralph Thompson from Kew's National Archives speak on The Jacobites and International Intrigue, 1708-1759, focusing on support for the cause outside the British Isles, and outlining the many invasion plans that were hatched against Hanoverian Britain in the 18th century.

Full houses testify to the timelessness of experts in their field entertaining live audiences on stimulating topics. The society also has a large library of history books available to borrow.

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kingston.gov.uk/Sustainable-September

KINGSTON UPON THAMES

Protest trio: Hannah Gordon, 12, Scott Gordon and Evannah John, 12

Take to the streets!

Expect a big crowd when the neighbourhood committee next discusses the Tolworth Road low traffic scheme. Last time, 100 people with placards turned up to protest against plans to mitigate the knock-on effects of the temporary barrier at the junction with Red Lion Road.

The proposals included a bus gate in Thornhill Road, a barrier at the Cotterill Road/Dennan Road junction, and 'no left turns' in Red Lion Road.

In the end, after impassioned speeches and pleas from representatives of roads including Ellerton, Cotterill, Douglas, Thornhill, Tolworth, Red Lion and Fullers Avenue, the council pressed pause.

It is now in discussions with TfL to see if it is legally possible to close the northbound lane of Fullers Way North where it meets the A3.

It also set up an expanded monitoring group of road reps from other affected streets. Its findings will come to the committee on Tue, Sep 20 at 7.30pm at Glenmore House in The Crescent.

Ellerton Road resident Carina Manning said: "There was a huge turnout of residents at the meeting, despite it being the hottest day of the year; a clear sign of the strength of feeling against the council's proposals. The hope is that the monitoring group will ensure residents of all affected roads are involved in the decision-making process."

● The Tolworth Road barrier has **increased** speeding, despite the new blanket 20mph limit, say residents, citing council data. Stats for Red Lion Road, before and after the barrier, show a rise in eastbound vehicles driving at over 20. "It's so unsafe," said resident Liz Mitchell. "Council traffic counts show twice as many people speeding. It's only a matter of time before someone's critically injured." The figures are for cars heading from the A3 along Red Lion Road to Thornhill Road's mini roundabout. **Jane Grove**

MP saves Amelie's flight

As the days ticked by to newborn Amelie Edwards' trip to France to meet the family, parents Lloyd and Georgie were panicking as her travel papers were stuck in the passport office logjam. But Surbiton MP Ed Davey galloped to the rescue, saving the day for his Worthington Road constituents.

Georgie, who produced Amelie in early June, registered the birth and applied for the passport... but was told it could take 10 weeks. "It was so upsetting and frustrating," she said. "It was a difficult birth, and all I was looking forward to was taking my daughter to France to meet the rest of her family."

The MP's emails and phone calls did the trick and, with four days to spare, the passport arrived. "We're so relieved, and so grateful," said Georgie. "It really meant a lot that he was able to help us."

While delighted with the outcome, the MP is still angry about the delays. "It's appalling people are having to cancel holidays and lose money because this government can't get it sorted," he said.

● Runners from GoodGym Kingston will roll up their sleeves to clear land round a dried-up pond found in Vine Close. Club members (who add community tasks to their runs) will remove vegetation and litter. After a tour by resident Colleen Moore, Berrylands councillor Anita Schaper said it would be a place people could sit and enjoy the wildlife. If funding allows, the pond may be reinstated. "It was amazing to see the remnants of the old pond, with brick walls and footpath," she said. "We want to re-establish the walkway." It's a space, she says, that captures the imagination. "There's so much we can do to improve this area for residents." All welcome on Tue, Sep 13, 6.30pm. Tell Kingston biodiversity officer Elliot Newton, so he can bring enough tools. **elliot.newton@kingston.gov.uk**

Nets at the ready!

The Claremont Gardens pond is nearly restored, with just a new fence to come. At 400m², it was overgrown and neglected. Now reshaped, with a bentonite clay liner, it has native oxygenators and marginal aquatic and floating plants to support a healthy ecosystem with insects and other invertebrates. The fence will keep dogs out; fur can have traces of the flea repellent Fipronil, which harms insects and birds. The dipping platform lets children study wildlife without damaging the banks. Next up: pollinator-friendly plants, biobeds, a stag beetle loggery, hibernacula, bat and bird boxes.

Flats 'loom over skyline'

Residents are coming to terms with the prospect of two blocks of flats appearing on the Chiltern Works industrial estate, alongside Berrylands station. Bugler Homes has permission to demolish the existing warehouses and workshops.

It will build a five-storey block of 20 flats with commercial space on the ground floor, and a roof garden on top, plus a six-storey block with 23 apartments and parking for 21 cars at ground level. The mix is 17 one-bed, 17 two-bed and nine three-bed flats.

"Tower blocks incoming, folks!" warned resident Steve Ayling after it was approved, six votes to four, by Kingston Council. Berrylands councillors Jackie Davies and Anita Schaper, sitting in the public gallery, had put up strong opposition. Cllr Davies said: "I'd like to add that although we are not against modern design, these blocks of flats built in grey slate and yellow brick will loom over the skyline. They will dominate the area in a way no building currently does.

"We'll lose the sense of bucolic peace that currently greets those arriving in Berrylands from Lower Marsh Lane, and it will transform this charming area into another nameless grey-and-yellow built-up space."

She urged the council to reject the bid on the grounds of density, design, scale and unsuitability. After the planning meeting, Cllr Schaper said: "Although we were disappointed with the decision, we're pleased that the application contains around 40% affordable housing, which is really needed. We spoke out against the scheme mainly because of its height, representing local residents' views, especially those towards the western end.

"We managed to secure some additional conditions to address road safety concerns, and limiting the use of the rooftop area for late social gatherings.

"Feedback from residents has always been important to us, and we'll be keeping a close eye on this development to ensure the conditions are met."

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Open day heats up

With record temperatures recorded, and everyone talking about climate change, it was a timely open day at Hogsmill nature reserve, near Berrylands station.

Members of Surbiton & District Bird Watching Society lent binoculars to visitors, with 23 different species sighted from the hide in the first hour alone, including Canada geese, herring gulls, coots, crows, starlings, blue tits, reed warblers, collared doves, little grebes, goldfinches, tufted ducks and a sparrowhawk.

The dipping pond was popular, as was a game involving throwing fake poo into loos to win prizes!

Kingston Beekeepers displayed a case of busy bees, and sold honey. "It keeps forever," said Keith McMahon, adding that 2,000-year-old honey – still edible – was found inside Egypt's ancient pyramids.

The reserve is part of Thames Water's Hogsmill Clean Water Depot… an altogether cosier name than the Hogsmill Sewage Treatment Works of old.

Two-year-old Rose learns about bees from (left) Keith McMahon as Claire Patton-Kerr and James Kerr look on

Green shop event at Tolworth rec

Crafts, books, jewellery, felt fairies, candles hand-poured into salvaged glass and zero-plastic party supplies are some of the things you'll find at Planet Warriors' sustainable shopping event on Sat, Oct 8.

The market, 11am-4pm, at Tolworth Recreation Centre, is curated by Laura Pring, below, who runs Planet Warriors. "We run sustainability focused markets in the Surbiton area, where families can have a good time and do responsible shopping."

Entry is free, though the eco-charities taking part do welcome donations. "Our events are family-focused, with entertainment for the kids, a soft play area, refreshments and a food truck," added Laura. "The world's stock of natural resources is finite. There is no Planet B."

There will also be a Christmas event, same timings and place, on Dec 11.

Add a pond to beat the drought

A Surbiton gardener urges others to follow her lead and build a 'temporary pond', to help save water during the drought, and support wildlife.

"When it's complete, it will look amazing," said Anna Cunnyngham, who got the idea when visiting family in the States. "I saw their 'rain garden' and said 'I want one!' The water table has dropped, the earth is drying up, we have a hosepipe ban and there will be more summers like this."

A keen Tolworth allotment owner, Anna said that while many Surbiton gardens had butts to catch rainwater, most of the capture from gutters and drainpipes still just goes down the drain.

She will now feed rain at the back of her house in Broomfield Road into a shallow, unlined pond, 8in deep, and wide enough to take a rainstorm's worth – around 6ft x 10ft. The water soaks away but helps plants which like their roots to get a regular soak.

"If we all captured our roof water, a huge amount will soak into our gardens instead of being lost," she said. "This will help preserve a healthy level of water underground. A rain garden in full flower can give so much pleasure; hundreds of them could help save Earth." She advises searching online for 'Building a rain garden' for ideas and advice.

Row is still not put to bed

The row over the state of the water filter beds in Portsmouth Road continues with Seething Wells Action Group (SWAG) campaigners reaching out for support from London Assembly members to urge the GLA to protect the site's Metropolitan Open Land status.

Closer to home, neighbours worry that recent electrical work which closed Portsmouth Road to traffic was to install an electric box to pump the remaining bed of water. Six are already drained.

Site owner Cascina has appealed a notice by Kingston Council to repair the site's railings and clean up the area. It will go to court next month.

Over the boundary in Elmbridge, Cascina wants to build a pontoon with access ramp and footpath by the filter beds, and a single-storey commercial building with basement on the 14-acre site opposite the Nuffield gym. "We're maintaining the pressure," said Phil Renton of SWAG, who revealed that a Channel Five documentary maker is interested in giving the story a much bigger stage.

The next Seething Wells All-Party Working Group – which is open to all interested parties, and members of the public – will take place at 6pm in Kingston Guildhall on Monday, September 26.

Team clears decades of litter

Mature oaks at The Wood and Richard Jefferies Bird Sanctuary off Oakhill Grove provided welcome shade for 14 volunteers at a conservation day at the nature reserve behind Surbiton railway station. The 1.5 hectare site is a haven for wildlife in the heart of Surbiton; home to great spotted woodpeckers, nuthatches, song thrush, blackcaps, firecrests (one of our smaller birds), stag beetles and bats.

"Councillors, residents and council officers came with the long-term aim of establishing a wildlife volunteering group for the site, to improve the ecological condition," said Kingston Council biodiversity officer Elliot Newton.

"The day was a fantastic success. We cleared decades of litter on the site, which filled an entire van, and started to tackle some invasive species. We hope to run another volunteer session in the autumn."

• It makes you despair. This was the state of one of the benches in Victoria rec on a Sunday morning in August after a hot Saturday night.

Slugs, beetles & centipedes galore

Join like-minded people with an interest in field recording to identify and survey invertebrates at Tolworth Court Farm.

Surbiton-based Citizen Zoo needs your help to conduct community surveys on species at the 50-hectare site bordered by the Hogsmill River, Jubilee Way and Kingston Road.

The rewilding group believes the Tolworth green space can be one of London's greatest nature reserves, and needs helpers for its Rewild Tolworth Court Farm project, backed by Kingston Council and Tolworth's Community Brain.

Sign up to one or both of the survey dates on Fri, Sep 23 (freshwater invertebrates, harvestmen and beetles) and Fri, Oct 7 (soil invertebrate field recorder day for centipedes, millipedes, woodlice, earthworms, slugs and snails).

No experience is needed and training will be provided by Field Studies Council tutors. Participants must be 18 or over. For information, or to book on to one of the recorder days, visit **www.citizenzoo.org/our-work/wild-tolworth**

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● Barbara Evans, 96, centre, chats to Praveen, left, and Susan, right, from New Malden's Milaap Centre, of which she was a founder member, as Southborough Nursing Home, Langley Avenue, welcomed guests in care home week. Afternoon tea was served, and accordionist Tony Boyle played.

● Six new signs will greet visitors to Fishponds Park, Ewell Road. Designed by Tolworth artist Kellyanne Thorne, the main one gives an overview of the 19-acre site. Five smaller signs will help people explore ponds, woodland, hay meadow, community orchard and hedgerows, with detail on invertebrates, mammals, waterfowl, amphibians, reptiles, birds and rare plants. "We're excited to have secured funds," said Rob Eyre-Brook, chair of the Friends of Fishponds Park. "We're also planning signs designed by children from St Matthew's primary with advice on feeding the ducks and avoiding litter." The Friends won a £2,574 neighbourhood committee grant.

A room could save a life

Front, Hanna Pasechnyk, 41, and Olha Shalamai, 28, with Sue Pearce and David Easterbrook, and Anna the dog, 3

Have you a spare room for a Ukrainian refugee? Sue Pearce and Pia Hobart are asking Good Life readers if they can find room in their homes – as they have done – for those fleeing the war-torn country.

The Ellerton Road neighbours feel that the UK government's Homes for Ukraine scheme, which sponsors hosts to take in refugees, has disappeared off the front pages, yet thousands still seek safety away from the bullets, bombs and missiles that rain down on the country invaded by Russia six months ago.

Sue and Pia are willing to share their experiences and – if some would like to take it further – to help them negotiate the process of becoming a sponsor. "You might save someone's life just with your spare room," said Sue.

She and her husband David said having 41-year-old Hanna Pasechnyk stay with them had been a very positive experience, so much so that Sue is very happy to speak to anyone who might be considering it. "There may be some older people who would love to have someone come to stay with them, but can't cope with the internet and don't know where to start," she said.

And Pia added: "When you are taking a decision like this it's not easy, so having a bit of guidance is really helpful."

Both Hanna, a former process manager, and Olha Shalamai, 28, who was in customer support for an IT company and who is staying with Pia and her husband John, are keen for other refugees to find safety in Surbiton homes. "There are a lot of people who are still living in a horrible situation and they need help," said Hanna. Email **thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com** and we'll pass your details on. **Jane Grove**

A one-to-one training hub

A personal training studio opens on Sep 26 in Ewell Road. Fit Box is in the old Zedcarz minicab office, with its distinctive curved glass, next to the Surbitonian Grind cafe.

Fit Box already has bases in Weybridge and Staines, focusing on one-to-one training, coupled with nutrition and dietary advice.

The firm was set up in 2014 as a network of small studios. "It will be similar to our Weybridge concept, offering one-to-one fitness," said Iain Service, a finalist in UK bodybuilding competitions, who will take charge of the Surbiton branch.

If you want to train with a gym buddy, there will be cost savings.

"We have an option that if you want to train with a friend or a partner we can sort out a deal that will make it cheaper."

Major work is being done to transform the premises, but staff are confident it will be up and running by the end of the month.

Zedcarz (though with no sign of Stratford Johns) closed its minicab and courier control room at 118 Ewell Road last year when it moved to Tolworth Broadway.

It had occupied the building since the start of 2019. Before that it was Mogul minicabs. In the 2010s the premises were occupied by Neena Trehan, whose Spa Fabulous sold organic beauty products, including make-up and skin care treatment.

More info on Fit Box at **www.fitboxpersonaltraining.co.uk**

As a parting gift to Chiltern Drive, The Circulatory upcycling centre has donated flower & veg planters and hanging baskets to brighten the parade. Volunteers will water them. For the full story, turn back to p3

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

Muscling in on 35 years' work

Last month was my 35th year as a chiropractor… and that's as good a time as any for reflection.

In 1987 I was the first chiropractor in Surbiton and Kingston. There are so many now, I've run out of fingers and toes to count them.

When my children ask me what I did on social media back then, I tell them that I polished the brass plaque on the door and chatted to anyone who walked past.

Over 35 years I have sustained a great interest in the biomechanics of the pelvis, having written my thesis on the effect of sitting on the pelvic joints – a fascinating tome, still gathering dust somewhere! With that in mind, I have a favourite muscle. The Sartorius runs from the outside of your hip to the inside of your knee, which not only makes it the longest human muscle, but also makes it the most elegant.

It is named after sartor, the Latin for tailor, because of the crossed-legged position that tailors adopted… which led to a highly developed Sartorius.

It's how we get the term 'sartorial elegance'.

It is also diagnostically elegant, because persistent tenderness on the inside of the knee can be indicative of pelvic dysfunction, due to chronic tightness of the muscle as it tries to stabilise the pelvis.

www.kingstonchiropracticplus.co.uk

Pic: Darren Salanson

● Who's a pretty boy then? And the dog's quite cute too. Rector Kuhan Satkunanayagam of St Mary's, Long Ditton, reported no casualties from a recent pet blessing service. "Everyone enjoyed it, there were no accidents, and we processed out to I Wanna Be Like You from The Jungle Book!" Those not wanting to risk taking Tiddles into a den of Fidos were able to have mobile phone snaps of their pet blessed instead.

● Prontaprint, the design and printing shop at 30 Brighton Road, closed on Sat, Aug 20, to move to Link House, the shared office space at 140 Tolworth Broadway, opposite the tower.

Back-to-front shelter slammed

A new bus shelter in Ewell Road has been installed back-to-front, leaving passengers' legs and feet dangling in a downhill cycle lane where speeds can exceed 20mph.

It is, says resident Kelvin Foote, "the most moronically, downright dangerous" example of bus shelter siting.

Those waiting for a 281, 406 or 418 risk injury when rising from the seating in the shelter at the junction of Hollyfield and Ewell roads, the latest stretch of cycle lane to be completed. The Fishponds bus stop reopened in July after being suspended for more than three months.

"The legs of the people on the bus shelter's bench stick straight out into the cycle lane," said a furious Mr Foote, who was told by workmen that it was up to TfL (the body which runs the capital's transport network) to fix it.

But TfL is so strapped for cash that funding for any work is currently frozen. Meanwhile, council leader Andreas Kirsch is using the lull for a review of the Ewell Road scheme, mindful that the 'active travel' initiative has generated "negative as well as positive" reaction.

He insists an extended cycle lane network is a key part of the council plan to reduce car use for the good of the environment, though he does concede that feedback "will allow us to consider if any small but effective improvements could be made to parts of the route".

Anyone who uses Ewell Road – walking, cycling or driving – is urged to comment. Views of pedestrians are particularly welcome about the so-called 'Copenhagen' crossings on side junctions, which have prompted criticism over a lack of markings or textured paving, blurring the delineation between road, pavement and bike lane.

Warning signs on lampposts say pedestrians and cyclists have priority, but with drivers focusing on turning manoeuvres, these can be missed. Comment at **kingstonletstalk.co.uk/hub-page/our-streets**

Tim Harrison

When the shutters fall

It began at seven, when his dad gave him a Kodak Instamatic. Fifty-nine years later, Surbiton lensman David Jacobson has the prestigious initials ARPS after his name, joining an elite, exclusive band.

To become an Associate of the Royal Photographic Society entailed an expedition from his river road home to Bristol to present 15 mounted photographs to a daunting panel of experts, plus a statement of intent. It said: "The city at night can be a thing of wonder. Colours become intensified, shadows take on mystery, ghostly silhouettes stare out from steamy windows. Under the cloak of darkness the urban landscape morphs into something mesmerising, something otherworldly."

Over six months, he documented the beauty of the capital at night in a series of street photos resulting in 'Night Gallery'. "The judges were hugely enthusiastic," said David. So impressed, in fact, that the society's selectors asked to keep them as an example to future wannabe associates of the standard they have to attain.

A long-time admirer of American 50s photographer Saul Leiter, who was similarly enchanted by the shapes created by shop window reflections, David chairs Surbiton Farmers' Market, and has done professional photoshoots for The French Table and Shoes at Last in Maple Road.

Many Surbitonians will already have seen his work on display in the Surbeanton coffee shop. His Instagram is **@andmakeitsnappyuk**

Anneli Brett

David Jacobson ARPS and, above, two of the images which earned him glory

Rotary

Financial support for students to attend an extra-curricular course

There's still time for students to apply for an educational bursary fund from Surbiton Rotary Club.

The scheme gives **14 to 17-year-olds** the opportunity to take part in extra-curricular activities in 2023 to further their education and development into adulthood. It is open to students who live in Surbiton, or who are in full-time education in Surbiton, Berrylands, Tolworth, Hook & Chessington (KT5, KT6 and KT9).

Details and application form at **www.surbitonrotary.org.uk** (click on the Caporn Educational Bursary Fund logo). Deadline: 30 Sept 2022. Any queries email **surbitonrotary@gmail.com**

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Toni Izard speaks up for the cycle lanes

Pedaller of good news

The new cycle lanes in Surbiton are a real bonus to me. I feel much safer separated from the traffic - and driving is often slow-going. It's unfair to blame cycle lanes for exacerbating road congestion when vehicle numbers and their size are ever-increasing.

Some drivers feel they have more right to be on the road since they pay tax. In fact, around 80% of cyclists are also car drivers. I am one of them, which means we pay vehicle excise duty. It is based on emissions, so consequently cycles and electric cars are exempt. The Treasury allocates revenue to the NHS, schools etc, and roads.

Further funding comes from income tax, so we all pay for the roads whether we have a car or not. The entire Ewell Road cycle lane cost less than creating just one new roundabout, so it's actually good value for money.

People often say: "No one uses the cycle lanes." But I certainly do, and I see many fellow cyclists along the way. I now prefer making local trips by bike as I find it a quick way to get around, and free parking is always nearby.

We all want to be safe when walking or cycling. Recent Highway Code changes advise that motor vehicles should give way to pedestrians and cyclists at junctions, and the raised pavement designs at Browns Road and Langley Road help emphasise the need for drivers to take care.

The route is not an ideal design, especially at some bus stops (though it sensibly and more safely goes behind several). The shared path by the shops between Langleys and Surbiton Health Centre is not ideal either. The design was limited by space and funding, but is certainly better than nothing. Cyclists and pedestrians using it just need to be alert and considerate, and give way to each other.

The Office for National Statistics says that on average three pedestrians are killed by cyclists every year, while 430 are killed by cars. Shockingly, 15% of those fatalities occur on the pavement, so a pedestrian on the pavement is much more likely to be killed by a car than a bike.

Should we therefore ban cars on safety grounds? Of course not. But let's encourage more cycling; it's safer for pedestrians!

Fit staff spring into action

A 13-strong team from a Surbiton firm walked and cycled 60 miles to Brighton to raise more than £22,000 for Kingston Hospital's Born Too Soon premature baby charity and East Surrey Samaritans.

Both are causes dear to the hearts of staff at Spring Building Consultancy in Electric Parade. "We wanted to do something significant to mark 10 years in business," said Nevin Hutchinson, adding that the challenge had involved "spectacular blisters and saddle sores". Fellow director Nick and his wife Claire's children both received neonatal care at Kingston. **www.justgiving.com/team/SBC10yrDuathlon**

● Calling old boys from Surbiton County Grammar School, the original occupants of today's Hollyfield School, at the top of St Mark's Hill. There's a gathering at The Victoria at 7pm on Sat, Oct 15, preceded by a tour of the old school buildings at 1.30pm and a jam session in the school's music room from 2-6pm. Baz Hewson (pictured), an Old Surbitonian now living in Vienna, left in 1962, but recalls the old Aysgarth building on the school site, demolished soon after his time at SCGS. "We tricksters on the upper floors removed two of the steps from the staircase, so older teachers couldn't reach us," he recalled.

Halls adjoining

Think 'village hall' and you might picture a single-storey hut where the brownies meet on Thursdays. But Long Ditton's is the cathedral of halls; an interlocking network of rooms, used by the community for 134 years... yet many locals seem unaware of it.

It has four hireable spaces, each with its own facilities and distinct character.

The newest room is ultra-modern and just six years old… but it is one of the spaces from Victorian times which most excites the eight charity trustees who manage the complex, as it offers such potential to future users.

Built at the junction of Thorkhill and Ewell roads, alongside Long Ditton rec, the earliest two-storey hall opened in 1888 as Long Ditton Parish Room & Workmen's Club – deliberately sited away from its 'parent' St Mary's church, to provide facilities for use by a wider area.

The parish room (today known as the upper hall) thrived, hosting cookery classes, services, prizegivings, school events, teas, educational meetings and suppers.

However, the ground-floor workmen's club didn't fare as well, hamstrung by limits on alcohol sales in an area awash with pubs. Nevertheless, its private library was well used.

As Long Ditton grew, a second building was sited alongside, making an L-shape. Opening in 1907, it is today's lower hall, with a stage and the capacity to seat more than 200. In the Second World War it was requisitioned as a British Restaurant, a canteen staffed by volunteers to feed bombed-out residents and those in need of a good meal.

The hall was damaged by a flying bomb, but the community again rallied round and in peacetime the repaired complex reopened as Long Ditton Village Hall.

The most recent self-contained space was added in 2016; the Wallis Room, named after Dick and Sheila Wallis, who for 35 years were caretakers and trustees.

The oldest part of the village hall complex is the cream and white building on the right, which opened in 1888

Today's trustees are in the throes of upgrading the former workmen's social room on the ground floor, a deceptively large space which for decades housed the Ditton Football & Social Club, a sporting casualty of Covid. Renamed The Club Room, it is being adapted and beautified, with full disabled access and new loos.

Clockwise from left: The Club Room; a group of the hall's trustees; and the huge, multi-purpose lower hall

The ramshackle bar will go, as will the oche, still visible on the floor, from thousands of past darts matches.

Grants have been applied for to meet the estimated £100,000 cost, with trustees' chair Garth Glentworth keen to maximise use of the revamped room by encouraging more people to take advantage of its competitive rates. "We keep hire charges as low as possible," he said, adding that any financial surpluses are put to good use in the community.

Last year £7,000 was donated, with £1,500 buying Long Ditton's Christmas tree lights, and £1,000 helping buy a defibrillator at St Mary's church.

Top of the trustees' agenda, though, is spreading the word that this venerable, versatile building is a community asset. "Some people assume the council runs the hall," added Dr Glentworth.

Not that there's a current shortage of users. In addition to weekend children's parties, 60 groups hire the hall each week, with everything from badminton, zumba, ballet and judo, to gardening, yoga, table tennis and drama. The hall has also recently started staging wrestling bouts.

Trustee Cllr Nick Darby said: "I describe it as a real community asset for so many different activities. Community spaces are important; if spaces disappear, the community dies with it."

- **www.longdittonvillagehall.co.uk**

Tim Harrison

Birders gear up for new season

The Surbiton bird club's monthly programme resumes on Sep 19 with a talk on Sweden's elegant dancing cranes. In Oct the subject is British Bird Behaviour, and in Nov, Birds of Ethiopia.

There will also be shared car trips to Thorney Island and Langston Harbour, and midweek morning walks closer to home in Home Park and, right, the Hogsmill Nature Reserve. The next coach outing is in January to the original Wildfowl and Wetlands site at Slimbridge, created by Sir Peter Scott.

Talks take place at the fully accessible hall in St Matthew's School, Langley Road, well-served by buses. Members get in free, but visitors are also welcome, for a small contribution. www.surbitonbirds.org

College revamps course list

Hillcroft College in Surbiton is launching a new range of courses this month, building on a century-old tradition.

The campus, in a grand old manor house in South Bank, a three-minute stroll from Surbiton station, is part of Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College. It began its educational life in 1926, with 28 residential female mature students learning history, literature, social sciences and religion.

Today, alongside the women-only courses, are a host of new offerings available to all adults including art, digital, business, care, counselling and skills for life.

- Visit **rhacc.ac.uk/new-directions-surbiton** for details.

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● St George's Church in Tolworth is reviving its Meet Your Neighbour Community Fun Day on Sat, Sep 17, from noon-4pm.

Food from local cafes and restaurants will be served in the hall in Hamilton Avenue, allowing neighbours to reconnect and rebuild relationships after the pandemic.

Other community groups will join in the mix of live entertainment, stalls, barbecue and tea-and-cake refreshments, and there will be a bouncy castle and games. Free entry.

● The kindness of some folk goes above and beyond. Spotting that the recent hot weather might lead to a rise in pedestrian tiredness, one generous soul left this chair in Berrylands, thoughtfully slung across the pavement to make it simple to enjoy.

Pick of the crop

Meet new people and enjoy tea, coffee and a chat at an over 60s social group, with quizzes, talks and walks.

The Elderberries meet fortnightly on Tuesdays, 10am to 11.30am, (the next is Sep 20) at the New Life Baptist church in Langley Road.

Call group leaders Nigel and Christine Brockwell on **020 8224 1932** or just turn up to a meeting. The suggested donation of £4 per session includes refreshments.

● The jubilee street party in Cotterill Road raised £1,310 to help build a sensory garden to stimulate pupils at Dysart School. Principal Leigh Edser thanked residents who named their thoroughfare Cotteroyal Road for the day. "We look forward to seeing it when it's completed," said Ida Magnusson, pictured right, who helped organise.

● A set of perfect plums meant that allotmenteer Vic Choules lifted the cup on behalf of fellow Lynwood allotment growers in Long Ditton/ Hinchley Wood after they came top in Esher & Molesey Garden Society's show in Thames Ditton. While Vic, of Cleaveland Road, Surbiton, was judged to have produced the best plums, fellow diggers scored highly with a giant onion, produce basket and floral display. "The show was a great success," said society chair Jean Billett.

Block topped out

Three huge cranes still dominate the skyline of Tolworth as the first phase of a 950-home building project is completed; the work crew gathering on the roof for the topping out ceremony.

Signal Park has been rising; a key component of the Guinness Partnership development by the site of the Toby Jug pub, demolished in 2002.

Topping out is a traditional ceremony in which builders celebrate finishing the main structure. Part one of the scheme has 211 shared-ownership affordable flats.

Jon Milburn from Guinness was joined by councillors Mark Beynon and Helen Grocott, and Stuart Gibbons from contractor Lovell.

The rooftop event gave guests a chance to take a closer look at progress on the 11-acre site, once covered by low-rise government offices and the spot where David Bowie famously launched Ziggy Stardust 50 years ago.

Signal Park will include a bus stand, cycle hub and cafe by a public square, with new access to the station, plus gardens, a play area, shops and a community centre.

Air source heat pumps will provide green power, while the design has landscaped roofs with wildlife-friendly planting.

"Today marks an important point which sees us bringing this long-empty site back into use," said Mr Milburn. "This will make affordable home ownership a reality for over 200 households."

The Guinness Partnership was founded 130 years ago and is one of the largest affordable housing providers in England, with more than 64,000 homes.

A drone's eyeview of one new block, with the By-Pass in the background

Jon Milburn from Guinness, left, and Lovell's Stuart Gibbons share the topping-out honours

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We finish the week with 2 days of celebration on 24th and 25th with fun games, prizes and free refreshment.
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● With financial backing from Surbiton Rotary Club, the Alfriston centre in Berrylands Road is giving vulnerable housebound senior citizens help to keep their homes clean and tidy. Since being forced to close its day centre in the pandemic, Alfriston has switched to outreach, including the Rotary-backed tidy squad.

"We recognise how difficult it can be for some older people to keep their homes clean, and have seen the impact this can have on their mental health," said Surbiton Rotary president Jeremy Thorn. "Cleaners not only clean, but become the eyes and ears of Alfriston, alerting them to other issues."

The service is especially appreciated by those who live alone, and may not see visitors from one week to the next. If you know of Surbiton residents who might benefit from Alfriston's support, email **liam@mindinkingston.org.uk** or for more on Surbiton Rotary's work: **www.surbitonrotary.org.uk**

Liam Burke, Alfriston deputy manager, left, with Rotary president Jeremy Thorn

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Concert season starts

The **Thames Concerts** season starts on Oct 15, 7.30pm, with pianist Prajna Indrawati and saxophonist Manu Brazo (above) and music by Debussy, De Falla and Vaughan Williams, at St Andrew's, Maple Road, though if roof repairs are still going on it will shift up the hill to St Mark's, astutely parallel-booked by artistic director Ben Costello. "It has equal facilities and is perfectly suitable," he said.

A fixture in Surbiton's cultural calendar, U16s and students go free. Tickets on the door, or search for Thames Concerts at **www.ticketweb.co.uk**

Next dates: Nov 12, Dec 10, Jan 14, Feb 4 & Feb 18. Plus free 10.30am coffee concerts on market days on Oct 15, Dec 17 and Jan 14.

● Hone acting skills at workshops on vocal and physical technique, characterisation, improvisation and approaches to scripts.

They're geared to adults who have some acting experience but would like to develop their craft and enhance their performances. Led by coach and drama teacher David Lawson Lean, they are at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, on Weds, Oct 12 & 19, 7pm. £35 covers both. **www.ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents**

Pic: Scott Kershaw

● Pit your wits against QI elves Leyling Lee and Tara Dorrell, right, at this autumn's Surbiton Literary Festival. They'll reveal what it's like to work behind the scenes on the popular comedy quiz show, and talk about their latest books at the cornerHOUSE arts centre, Douglas Road, on Thu, Nov 10. The main event is a quiz with bar, nibbles and prizes. 7.30pm. Minimum four per team. On Sat, Nov 12, book illustrator Lydia Monks, left, tells the story of the ladybird's latest adventure in What the Ladybird Heard at Christmas, written with Julia Donaldson... plus live illustration. 10am. Booking & full details: **www.ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents**

Are you afraid of your voice?

Together with her teaching practice, Susan Higgins has, for many years, conducted choirs.

It is that experience that has led her to broaden her coaching range and offer voice production alongside her regular violin and piano tuition.

"As a student I had my voice trained at the Guildhall School of Music in London," explained the Victoria Avenue resident. "When trying to interest people in joining a choir I am often met with 'But I can't sing!', delivered with a look of horror at the very idea.

"This is sad indeed, as finding your voice and using it with confidence is one of life's great pleasures, promoting physical and mental self-confidence."

You can call Susan on 020 8390 1020 or 07400 587701, or email her at **susan.higgins@btinternet.com**

● Written and performed by Paulus, talent show judge of TV's All Together Now, the show **Looking For Me Friend: The Music of Victoria Wood** is a homage to the late comedy genius. Directed by Sarah-Louise Young, it's a nostalgic hour of entertainment. Paulus, a singer, comic and cabaret compere, will be joined on stage at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, on Thu, Oct 6 by pianist Michael Roulston. 8pm. £12. **www.ticketsource.co.uk/wholelottacomedy**

Singing retreat in Marrakech

Surbiton Salons artistic director Charles MacDougall, the choral animateur and vocal coach, has launched Rhapsody Retreats with soprano and conductor Charlotte Brosnan. Charles, of Ewell Road, and fellow choral director Charlotte, pictured, lead a singing retreat in a five-star riad in Marrakech, Morocco, in the old home of American-born jazz age superstar Josephine Baker. "It's aimed at community choir singers who enjoy a broad choral repertoire and the challenge of a mix of learning by ear, working with lyrics and sometimes with scores," said award-winning tenor Charles. "Anyone with a good musical ear is welcome, even if they don't read music. No experience needed, just a willingness to sing as part of a group."

There will be singing lessons each day, the chance to take pilates classes with instructor Amanda Brosnan, and to enjoy the riad's spa and plunge pool. There will also be time to explore the red city's souks, palaces, museums and gardens, dine out and take a day trip to the 18th century port city of Essaouira.

The retreat runs Oct 18-23, concluding in an informal performance in the courtyard of an arts centre. Visit **rhapsodysinging** on Instagram and Facebook or email **Rhapsodysinging@gmail.com**

● World-acclaimed slide guitarist Bryn Haworth performs at the cornerHOUSE on Sat, Oct 22. In a 50-year career he's backed Isaac Hayes and Jimi Hendrix, appeared with Led Zeppelin, Jefferson Airplane and Grateful Dead, and toured with Fairport Convention as well as doing session work for former Surbitonian Joan Armatrading. He'll play from his new album Ready Or Not.

Joining Bryn for a first-half poetry set, Liverpool poet Stewart Henderson and his wife, the writer and broadcaster Carol Henderson. They've previously played the cornerHOUSE with Roger McGough and Chris Difford from Squeeze. 7.30pm. £12. **www.ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents**

● Looks like Lukas Drinkwater is about to do just that with fellow musician Tobias ben Jacob. The producer and composer will hopefully have dried off for his gig with singer-songwriter Jacob at the cornerHOUSE on Tue, Oct 11. The 'new folk' duo's dynamic and emotionally charged energy has drawn comparisons with John Martyn and Danny Thompson.

● A month earlier, on Tue, Sep 13, folk and blues legend Wizz Jones performs. Wizz, who captivated audiences in the late 1950s with his guitar playing, is still at the top of his game. Look forward to a chilled evening in the presence of one of the stand-out artists of the British folk revival. Tickets for each 7pm gig, £12 at **www.ticketsource.co.uk/folkthecornerHOUSE**

● History talks resume at Shrewsbury House School, as ex-naval officer Gareth Glover discusses The Battle of Waterloo 1815. Tue, Sep 20, 7pm at the school in Ditton Road. Free, by ticket. He'll take questions and sign books. **tinyurl.com/2vcsjnua**

● Three Steptoe & Son episodes are on stage at the cornerHOUSE on Mon, Sep 12, 7.30pm in the recreation of a live radio recording of the BBC sitcom about rag-and-bone duo Albert and Harold. £15. **www.thecornerhouse.org/events/the-steptoe-son-radio-show**

● Adults interested in acting, storytelling or local history are invited to a one-day theatre workshop on Sun, Sep 18, 10am-4pm, to explore stories inspired by the heritage of Chessington Industrial Estate. Tolworth's Community Brain is running it at The Hook Centre, Hook Parade, as part of a project called From The Shop Floor, culminating in the performance of four plays. It includes firms such as Gala Cosmetics. Tickets: £5. "It's a chance to get a taste of a fun, alternative approach to community theatre," said workshop leader Ben Wilson of Malvern Road. Visit **www.thecommunitybrain.org** for details.

● The next cornerHOUSE poetry/cheese evening is on Fri, Oct 7, at 7.30pm, £6. If you fancy writing (and reading) a poem, the themes are Friendship, Treasure and The Fall.

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Saturday 15 October
Spanish saxophonist Manu Brazo and Indonesian pianist Prajna Indrawati join forces to play music from across the globe by Vaughan Williams, Debussy, Martino, de Falla and others.

Saturday 12 November
Hugh Cutting (countertenor), Rebecca Leggett (mezzo-soprano) perform a programme of German lieder, English art song and French mélodie, with Ben Costello accompanying.

Saturday 10 December
A welcome return as cellist Ben Tarlton performs spellbinding music by Bach, Britten, Crumb and Saariaho.

Further concerts on 14 January, 4 February and 18 February.

Farmers' Market Days:
Enjoy free 50-minute coffee concerts at St Andrew's at 10.30am on 15 October (Tiffin Girls), 17 December (Kingston Music Service) and 14 January (Hollyfield School)

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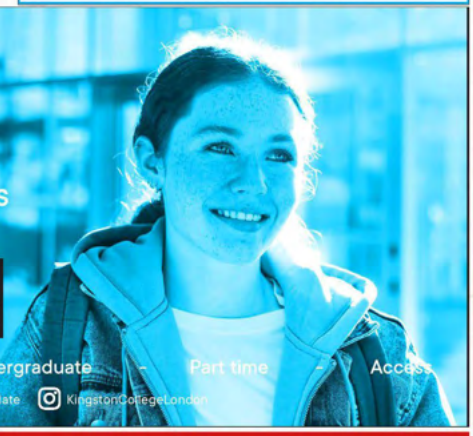

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Bowled over by club's facilities

Join ladies captain Vicki Harris and her bowling chums at an open weekend at the King George Field Indoor Bowls Club, to help celebrate its 50th anniversary.

Members will show visitors round the club in Jubilee Way and qualified coaching staff will introduce bowls to anyone who fancies a go. The emphasis is on fun. There will also be goody bags, games and prizes. It's on Sat, Sep 24 and Sun, Sep 25, 10am-3pm, rounding off a week where anyone can turn up and have a go.

The club has six rinks, changing rooms, bar, large social-restaurant area and parking.

As well as friendlies and competitions, there's also the chance to play other clubs. "It's good, gentle exercise, and it's very social," said Vicki. **www.kgfindoorbowlsclub.co.uk**

Vicki Harris ready to bowl

● Hoping to build on England's Euros win at Wembley, Chelsea Women launch their season on Sunday... not at Kingsmeadow, but at the 42,000-seat Stamford Bridge. The match v West Ham (kick-off 12.30pm) is live on BBC2. Although the Blues missed out on the Women's International Champions Cup in the USA, Guro Reiten scored the winner in the play-off, while newbie Eve Perisset was excellent. Also signed, defender Kadeisha Buchanan and outfielders Katerina Svitkova and Johanna Rytting Kaneryd.

● A session at the George Evelyn pub with brooms, not paddles, training at Kingston Royals Dragon Boat Club, a swap of WhatsApp tips and motivational messages from team captain Desiree Harris meant the Ditton Dragons were ready for Kingston Rotary's Dragon Boat Challenge.

The team of Long Ditton Infant and Nursery School parents, eight male, eight female, plus teenager Julianne van der Berg, 12, daughter of stroke setter Amanda, paddled to victory in the mixed boat final on the Thames at Canbury Park Gardens in Kingston.

"Ditton Dragons also qualified for the six-boat grand final, and came fifth out of 40," said delighted Desiree. The boat raised over £1,500 for a sensory garden at the Ditton Hill Road school. **www.justgiving.com/fundraising/DittonDragons**

● A team from Surbiton estate agents Humphrey and Brand also took part, for the Royal Marsden. **www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Lisa-Brand3**

800 enjoy a slice of history

Tolworth's Corinthian-Casuals, winners of the inaugural Egri Erbstein cup in Budapest in 2019 and this year's hosts, were defeated in the final by a late header from Sheffield FC striker Connor Cutts. Other teams in the football competition for amateur and semi-pro clubs, held at the Casuals' ground in King George's Field, were Hilltop FC and Budapesti AK.

"It was fantastic; a great turnout with more than 400 people attending each day," said Casuals' Dominic Bliss. "It was great to see such a crowd. As the finalists played each other for the first time since 1894, it really was a slice of football history."

The tournament, named after footballing pioneer, Torino manager and Holocaust survivor Ernő Egri Erbstein, celebrates football's power to cross borders and unite people around a shared sporting ethos and the noble tradition of fair play, still recognised today as The Corinthian Spirit.

Pic: Stuart Tree

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Pic: Ian Sigsbitography.co.uk

● After a six-year hiatus, one of Surbiton's more bizarre sporting events is back... Ski Sunday on the slopes of St Mark's Hill.

Thrill-seekers with blocks of ice strapped to their feet will descend the slope opposite the Coronation Hall pub on a slippery lino surface on Sun, Sep 25, 11am-1pm, imitating legendary racer Franz Klammer.

"If you thought skiing was reserved for the wealthy in Val d'Isère, think again," said Robin Hutchinson of The Community Brain. "We're democratising skiing while showing how, with imagination and community help, anywhere can be a playground."

Driving rain in 2017 and 2018, then Covid, explains the gap. Its return coincides with Surbiton Festival weekend. The event is free and you can sign up on the day. Wear padding!

● Surbiton Hockey Club players did well at the Commonwealth Games. Giselle Ansley, Sophie Hamilton, Sabbie Heesh (GK), Hannah Martin and Izzy Petter, who play at the club in Sugden Road, Long Ditton, were in the squad which won gold in Birmingham, beating Australia 2-1. England Men won bronze against South Africa. Brendan Creed, Dave Goodfield, James Mazarelo (GK), Stuart Rushmere and Tom Sorsby medalled. Ex-SHC's Zach Wallace scored twice in a 6-3 thriller.

● Wrestling returns to Long Ditton village hall on Sat, Sep 24. First bell: 7pm. The card includes British pro wrestler James Mason. Tickets: **tinyurl.com/592unfdh**

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