the good life

Issue 70 — *The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3* — May 2023

Saturdays 9am-1pm: May 20 June 17
Surbiton Farmers' Market

Roses could hold the key to whether or not a planning inspector recommends that a large part of Long Ditton should be given Village Green status, to protect it from being built on. **p9**

● She's eligible. He will be in 6 months. Where should newly crowned Royals go for their Covid booster? See **p8**

● A young team's bulb planting effort paid off! This stunning spring display brightened up Long Ditton.

● Shushma Patel, right, was overjoyed to be invited to Windsor Castle's coronation concert. Shushma, of PSM Pharmacy, Ewell Road, was selected as a Coronation Champion for years volunteering at a Hindu temple and tireless work serving the community. She also receives a special pin and a certificate from the newly crowned King & Queen.

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Happy Earth Day: the bins vanish!

Kingston Council chose Earth Day, when the eco-health of the planet comes to the fore, to remove Surbiton's only communal bottle and paper banks... because they were too well-used!

The local authority, usually keen to trumpet its greenness, gave The Good Life a terse statement saying all individual homes can recycle... an apparent argument against any bulk bins.

Waitrose, in whose car park the giant glass and card skips were sited, has had to take the flak.

Customer service staff have been berated by shoppers who combine grocery buying with recycling.

"The paper, card, can and bottle recycling banks were owned by Kingston Council; speak to them," said an exasperated spokeswoman.

The council said: "All residents receive a kerbside collection of these materials." Ward Cllr Liz Green went further, saying: "It's disappointing we've had to remove the bins, but it was being misused, likely by commercial companies due to the scale of material and speed the paper banks filled up."

Despite increasing emptying frequency it was still a mess, she said, with residents complaining.

Waitrose still does textile, shoe, battery, plastic bag and small electrical recycling, but it now fears a fly-tipping epidemic in its car park. **Tim Harrison**

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Bold vision for Tolworth

Imagine Tolworth pedestrianised, with a town square and subway-free access to a regenerated heart. The vision, outlined to the Kingston Society by campaigner Bob Phillips, pictured, generated positive noises from council planning chair Roger Hayes.

It would take huge investment, said Bob, co-author of the definitive history of the area, but the rewards for forward-thinking developers could be every bit as big.

He proposes "a leap of imagination", decking over the A3 and pushing more of it underground, pedestrianising part of the Broadway, creating a town square, turning the gridlocked roundabout into a lozenge shape to improve flow, and giving Signal Park residents (beside the bowling alley) subway-free access to shops, rather than being "a dysfunctional dormitory" on "a bleak crossroads".

He says the present wave of flat-building could yet turn Tolworth into a new, important hub for the Royal borough, rather than siting the vast majority of building projects within Kingston town centre.

He wants to see a market in Broad Oaks, the service road behind the shops, and through traffic diverted from its current course along the Broadway to its pre-1930s route, via the neglected spur of Ewell Road which runs to the north of the tower. Cllr Hayes applauded the proposals. He concurred that they'd need serious funding and developer input, but added: "We should talk more about this."

Bob believes the renovation of the once-blighted Elephant & Castle in London shows just what can be achieved, and says it's crazy to keep building Kingston town centre higher. Currently 18 of the borough's 26 earmarked development sites are in Kingston. "Doing things the way we're doing them will mean Kingston isn't Kingston anymore," he said.

Lidl denies high-street rumour

Lidl had scotched rumours it will open in M&Co's high-street site.

"We're **not** taking over M&Co," insisted the firm's spokeswoman.

However she didn't rule out another store nearby. "The area's on our site requirements list, and we continue to review options."

M&Co's discounts hit 80% before it closed last month

The M&Co manager, in the final week of trading after 13 years at 15 Victoria Road, said: "Yes, we've heard the rumours about Lidl, but we've officially been told nothing."

M&Co's two-storey fashion store shut on Sat, Apr 22, after a five-month closing sale; its discounts having risen fortnightly.

With stores in Kingston, New Malden and Chessington, the Lidl budget supermarket opened a 250,000sqft GB HQ in Tolworth last year, for 800 head-office staff.

Past supermarkets Gateway, then Somerfield, were former occupiers of the Victoria Rd site.

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Be a hi-vis hero

Help keep the Surbiton Farmers' Market running smoothly.

More volunteers are needed to join the friendly team (two examples, right) who greet market-goers at the barriers at either end of the monthly event in Maple Road, and who staff the organisers' stall.

Even if you can only offer an hour or two every now and then, you'll be helping sustain a hugely appreciated date in the town's calendar.

Find out more about assisting on the third Saturday of each month, by emailing **hello@surbitonfarmersmarket.co.uk** The next is on Sat, May 20, 9am-1pm.

Pub is going back to the future

A touch of French flair and soupçon of je ne sais quoi is coming to a 230-year-old pub in Long Ditton.

The White Brasserie Company, a family of British pubs with a French twist, has taken over the George Evelyn in Ditton Hill Road, which called last orders on Sunday, September 25.

The firm, which trumpets its "delicious seasonal fare, cracking ales and fantastic wines" aims for a November reopening after extensive refurbishment and building work.

For those anxious to still be able to drop in for a pint, Richard Ferrier, managing director of parent company Brasserie Bar Co, said: "We absolutely plan to have a pub/bar drinking space on one side, with a minimum of four cask ales on the bar.

"We also plan to add an extension at the back to create a large dining space with a new kitchen and a fun outdoor space for summer."

Richard said the pub may revert to its original Plough & Harrow name – which would be popular with locals.

"I must admit that we have spent some time researching the pub, and much prefer the Plough & Harrow as a name. We often restore pubs to their former names and it's likely we'll do so in this instance too."

The pub, White Brasserie's 21st site, is expected to have 139 covers inside, and accommodate 100 outside. As well as an à la carte brasserie-style menu, expect classic Sunday roasts with all the trimmings including bottomless gravy, and bartenders who know how to mix cocktails as well as pull a pint.

Jane Grove

● Regulars at Surbiton's Costa, one of a 2,800-outlet chain, were dismayed to see workmen gutting the branch at the Victoria/St Andrew's Road corner. "Don't worry," said the foreman. "It's staying... it's just a fresh lick of paint."

Coronation clash bumps food fest

A clash with the coronation and a shortage of volunteers has meant a rethink for May's Surbiton Food Festival. The village fete and foodie weekend in St Andrew's Square has been cancelled, but stalls showcasing Surbiton's culinary businesses and talent will now switch to the Seething freshwater sardine festival and the community sports day and fun dog show instead. Both Community Brain events are free.

The sardine festival in Claremont Gardens on Sun, May 14, 1-5pm, is an afternoon of live music, fine local food and drink, crafts and a barbecue. There will also be a parade at 2pm to Queen's Promenade by Ravens Ait to haul in the first supposed 'sardine catch' of the season.

Traditional games like tug-of-war, egg and spoon, and three-legged races feature in the sports day at Victoria rec, off Balaclava Road, on Sat, May 20. The dog show starts at noon. The event runs until 4.30pm.

Mice at market

Well, sort of. A trio of Hollyfield School young enterprisers sold handmade mouse mats at April's farmers' market in Maple Road. Marin Pehlivanov, 16, centre, said: "We buy the material, glue the layers, then cut to shape."

The non-slip base means it stays put on the desk. Mats sold for a fiver, not the £8 you'd typically pay elsewhere.

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the good life
Editor: Tim Harrison

Set up at the start of 2012, the community paper for Surbiton, Tolworth, Berrylands and Long Ditton appears regularly from March to December. We deliver to 12,200 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.
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Tasty morsels of foodie news in digestible chunks

In your own time

A month after the rest of the UK put their clocks forward, Surbiton time was still running an hour behind on the Claremont Road clocktower!

It's a primary need

Christ Church CofE primary in Pine Gardens needs a part-time £14ph clerk for term-time admin. Email Sue Watson: **office@ccp.rbksch.org**

Hole in the boot

Thieves failed to steal a black Range Rover from Church Meadow, Long Ditton, despite cutting a hole in its boot. They started the car, but couldn't manoeuvre it out as it was blocked in by a second vehicle.

Station heart units

Defibrillators are being installed at Berrylands and Surbiton stations, with staff taught how to use them.

Games at the fair

Grand Avenue school's summer fair is on Sat, July 1, noon-3pm, with stalls, games and crafts to boost school coffers. Adults £1, kids free.

Plant a free tree

Fight nature loss; plant a Woodland Trust tree, with five million free trees since 2020. Autumn delivery for schools and communities. "All you need is a small piece of land," said Vicki Baddeley. Visit **woodlandtrust.org.uk/freetrees**

A model guest

Author, journalist and former model Sandra Howard (aka Lady Howard of Lympne), wife of Tory ex-leader Michael, is at St Mary's hall, Long Ditton, on Wed, May 17, at 8pm, to talk about her novel, Love at War.

Heritage partying

Plans are being drawn up for a borough heritage festival in Sept. The council has opted out of the Open House scheme, but individuals can still apply. **kingstonheritage.org.uk**

Celestial sounds

Folk band Heaven's Lieutenants (all Long Ditton infants' parents) play St Mary's church on May 20 at 7pm to fundraise for the school. Entry £10.

Get fit in the rec

An outdoor gym at Alexandra rec (£50k), Vine Close community garden (£48k), noticeboards in Surbiton (£28k) and Fishponds restoration (£100k) will be paid for by an impact levy on builders. The neighbourhood committee agreed the funding at its Apr 27 meeting.

Copper is grilled

Elmbridge borough commander Insp Bert Dean was quizzed at a Long Ditton public meeting to address front-door vandalism in Effingham Road, Ditton Reach drug dealing and inconsiderate parking in Sugden Rd.

Unexpected boost

Cotterill Road's Christmas fund for Kingston Foodbank, generated by its street party, has received a £6,000 gift, raising the figure to £7,920.

SURBITON LIFE

by David Cox

Introducing himself as the only man on the course, he was disheartened when someone quipped: "There's always one"

New plan has zero parking

The hoardings round the old Cap in Hand at the Ace of Spades look as if they were assembled by drunks out of hurricane debris. Meanwhile the decaying 1934 pub, boarded-up for seven years, continues to rot away.

Three years ago, developer Mendoza proposed a 39-home scheme including spaces for 20 cars. The council turned it down as being too big, lacking affordable housing, blocking neighbours' light and liable to lead to local 'parking stress'.

Now a new name, Rico (coincidentally at a similar Isle of Man address), is promoting a revised 40-home project, with some affordable housing, a seven-storey block by the roundabout... but parking provision reduced to **ZERO**!

Though it has yet to be formally submitted to the council, the plans (on view at **haycroftmews.co.uk**) were recently aired at nearby Southborough School, to gauge opinion.

Why, the developer's reps were asked, did the long terrace of three-bedroom family homes in the plan have no parking? Is it realistic to expect every family to be carless, or might their vehicles end up in already choked streets nearby?

Indeed, could there not be a couple of levels of underground parking beneath the tower block?

Philip Cave responded: "Too expensive." The target is to sell homes to people without cars, thereby supporting Kingston Council's aim of reducing vehicle use.

Areas of green space have been incorporated in the revised proposal, addressing another concern from earlier, with a so-called eco-garden at the Long Ditton end. **Tim Harrison**

• Meet Tyler. He's chatty, lives in Surbiton, is now 19, and is one of the success stories of Anstee Bridge, which supports vulnerable local 14s to 16s who have social, mental and emotional health issues, building confidence via creative workshops. "It's great; you really get to know people," said Tyler, who found school daunting. A new charity arm, Friends of Anstee Bridge, has been set up to support its work. Visit ansteebridge.co.uk

• Fifteen-year-old Tessa Stanier and her chums are organising an eco-fair at St Mark's church on Sat, June 3.

Tessa, and four pals aged 11 to 15 from the church choir, will raise funds for the Blue Marine Foundation, which combats overfishing.

"The aim is to increase awareness about the environment and give people information on what they can do in their everyday lives to tackle the climate crisis," said Tessa, who is on the church eco-committee.

Local, eco-friendly small businesses will showcase products and demonstrate sustainability. Stalls ticking the waste-not-want-not box include a clothes swap, a pre-loved bike sale and secondhand books. There will also be a veggie cooking family workshop, a bike-powered smoothie blender and a pizza truck at the child-friendly event.

It runs from 2.30pm-5.30pm at the church on St Mark's Hill. Email **sasmecofair@gmail.com** to take a stall.

Nationwide goes part-time

The Nationwide – Surbiton's last building society – will only open Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat from June 19. On other days, customers have been told to use branches in Kingston, New Malden and Worcester Park.

Though there are no plans to close completely, branch manager Laura Baldwin adds ominously: "I'm unable to predict what the future holds."

Mondays and Thursdays are the quietest days at the branch by Sainsbury's at 63 Victoria Road, with footfall in decline as more customers manage accounts online. Surbiton's Halifax bank branch shuts for good next week. Barclays went in July last year; Santander a year before that.

• What better way to welcome the spring sun than a half-hour walk around Berrylands, admiring the blossom! Cllrs Anita Shaper and Jackie Davies topped and tailed the last, with more chat than the participants enjoyed in the Canterbury Tales. All abilities welcome on the fortnightly strolls. Text 07719 605604 for details.

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A director who ticks the Box

Britain's most prolific female film director – and the first to win an Oscar – grew up in Ewell Road, Surbiton. Muriel Box, the subject of a British Film Institute retrospective this month, won the academy award for best screenplay in 1945 for The Seventh Veil.

She loved the flicks as a youngster, and later overcame misogyny to blaze a trail for female filmmakers in an industry which saw women as onscreen eye candy or make-up girls.

Born Violette Muriel Baker in 1905 in Lime Grove, New Malden, the unplanned third child of Charlie and Caroline Baker, she was nicknamed Tiggy. Charlie was a 35-year-old clerk at London and South Western Railway's Waterloo HQ, augmenting his pay by taking illegal bets from porters and ticket collectors.

When Muriel was one, Charlie bought the large semi at 354 Ewell Road, with a 25-year mortgage he could ill afford. It was, Muriel said, "the epitome of middle-class respectability". Home life was stormy. Charlie, a pipe-smoking Tory, constantly bickered with the left-wing Caroline. Months after their move, Caroline discovered her husband was having an affair with a neighbour.

The house was at the edge of urban development in Tolworth, so Muriel played in buttercup-filled open fields or in nearby Alexandra rec. Half a dozen doors up was the Red Lion pub, while the tram terminus was diagonally opposite.

She went to St Matthew's primary, at the corner of Broomfield Road, where she was bullied for living in a posh house, rather than slumming it with the riff-raff in Red Lion Road.

Muriel revealed she lost her virginity at seven; not understanding what was going on when an older cousin, a summer guest, got into her bed. When the First World War began she became a boarder at Holy Cross convent school, Wimbledon. Times were hard; the family used a Tolworth soup kitchen.

"Highlights were visits to the cinema," she wrote in her 1974 autobiography, Odd Woman Out.

She went to the Coronation in St Mark's Hill, the Kingston Kinema (on the site of the Rotunda) and the Super, where she got in free as her mother knew the manager. Expelled from Holy Cross, she transferred to Surbiton High, ruled by a "white-haired martinet" Miss Proctor, nicknamed Procky.

NOTABLE SURBITONIANS
Muriel Box

At 16 her father urged her to train as a shorthand typist, but Muriel wanted to go into films. On a train, reading a copy of Picture Show, a man in the compartment struck up a conversation. He turned out to be a bigwig at Cricklewood Studios, and she got work as a guinea-a-day extra.

She learnt to dance at Surbiton's Margaret Barnes School (getting a discount as dad Charlie played violin in the band), and joined a Kingston choral society.

James Mason in The Seventh Veil, 1945

Muriel at 17

Muriel's home: 354 Ewell Road

Her break came at Welwyn Studios. The continuity girl fell sick, so she stepped in. She met Sydney Box after he submitted a script, and she retyped it for him. When he divorced his first wife, they married in 1935. Daughter Leonora was born a year later.

Most actors were women, yet most parts were for men, so they began co-writing plays and film scripts angled towards women. Sydney formed a film-making company and in 1941 (thanks to a scarcity of male directors during wartime) she directed her first short film, a documentary.

Their co-written movie The Seventh Veil, starring James Mason and filmed at Hammersmith's Riverside Studios, won the 1946 best screenplay Oscar.

In her diary she noted: "Far from being male-dominated, the technical crew I assembled was predominantly female. Never did I enjoy a happier, more carefree film."

The story of a concert pianist coercively controlled by her guardian, it was the highest-grossing British film of the year, seen by nearly 18 million people.

By the late 40s Muriel was an established director. She made 13 features and wrote 22, though Sydney often had to pretend to be co-director, before melting away when shooting began, as misogynst studio chiefs said a woman was incapable of directing.

Her first feature was The Happy Family, about a working class household battling to save their home from demolition. Her work included crime thrillers and melodrama, and she made Street Corner, the first docudrama about female police officers in London, in 1953.

Another intriguing film was Simon and Laura; a satire on the television industry, foretelling the advent of reality TV by decades.

Above: Muriel Box in the early 1940s. Above, left: on location with her first feature film, The Happy Family, in 1950. Left: During the shooting of Rattle of a Simple Man, 1964, with Diane Cilento and Sean Connery

But controversy dogged her 1964 screen adaptation of Rattle of a Simple Man, which fell foul of the censor as its subject was prostitution. It flopped. A move to Hollywood was overruled by American producers' prejudice. "The mere mention of my sex was sufficient to damn my prospects out of hand," she recalled, bitterly.

Muriel's marriage broke up. Sydney, her partner of 36 years, ran off to Australia with a nurse 20 years his junior. Muriel set up a feminist publishing house, Femina, turned to writing, and penned The Big Switch novel, exploring a female-dominated world. She married again – Gerald Gardiner, an ex-Labour Lord Chancellor – becoming a baroness.

Her grandson, another Charlie, recalled childhood visits to granny. "She was impeccably dressed; her hair like a sculpture, the house like a film set… and the first thing we always did was play with the Oscar. It wasn't held in any hallowed cabinet; we'd just roll it around the floor!"

Her films are typified by strong, complex roles for women. Women always had the best lines. Interviewed on the BBC's Woman's Hour in 1990, Muriel said: "All my life, if I'm being honest, I was a feminist from the word go." She died at 85.

Tim Harrison

• Muriel Box, b Sep 22 1905, d May 18 1991

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Surbiton's intriguing film history

Some of Britain's most popular films of the 1920s were made in Berrylands, in and around Regent House, a mansion which stood where Seymour Gardens is today... surrounded by a private 100-acre deer park. It was built in 1870 by Café Royal founder Daniel Nichols on the old Berrylands Farm. Nichols died in 1897, weighing an epic 36 stone. When his widow Celestine died in 1916, the grounds were bought by impresario Oswald Stoll, who based his film company there.

Large-scale films were churned out, starting with Comradeship, starring Gerald Ames and Lily Elsie, though Stoll later switched his main production to a converted aircraft factory in Cricklewood, allowing independents to use Regent House.

Surbiton residents complained about gunfire and explosions from the set, while the town streetlights dimmed when the energy-hungry arc lights were switched on.

In 1923 the Regent House studios were taken over by British Instructional Films, which made films until 1927. Then the house was demolished and the land redeveloped for housing. Today, all that survives is the ornate gatehouse, Regent Cottage at 19 Berrylands, opposite Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club, and the names Regent and Park Road.

The studios specialised in patriotic films, including Zeebrugge in 1924, Ypres in 1925 (for which trenches were dug across Berrylands to re-create the landscape where the first mustard gas attacks took place), Nelson (starring Cedric Hardwicke) in 1926, Mons the same year, and The Battles of Coronel And Falkland Islands in 1927.

So popular were they with the War Office that it lent troops from the East Surreys' barracks in Kings Road, Kingston, as extras for the battle scenes. Many films were given their first screening at the 600-seat Coronation Hall at the foot of St Mark's Hill, to gauge audience reaction and – if needed – make late edits before national release. The cinema opened on June 21 1911, morphing into the Roxy in 1947, the Ritz in 1955, a bingo hall, then a failed naturist centre and finally, in 1997, today's Wetherspoons pub, when it reverted to its original name. **TH**

Regent House in 1898 was simply vast, dwarfing the substantial homes in Park Road and Surbiton Hill Park

Extension approved

Neighbours of 2 Selsdon Close will soon see changes.

Surbiton neighbourhood committee says the garage of the 1970s townhouse, right, can be demolished, and replaced with a three-storey side extension and single-storey rear extension.

Residents of the close, off Avenue Elmers, objected, saying it would set a precedent. They urged councillors to retain the special character of the close; its symmetry and layout. "For its period it has a precious architectural design and we'd like to protect it from further adverse development," said Peter Binder.

But Alex Bristow, the property's owner, said: "To give us a family house with up-to-date facilities and room for hybrid working we've worked with our architect to design an extension that is sympathetic to the existing look and feel of the street and subordinate to the original property, meeting planning rules.

"We don't believe it can be considered an overdevelopment."

Approved, subject to conditions concerning nearby trees.

● Bob the builder? No, Bob the robot. Designed, built and programmed by young members of a LEGO robotics club in Surbiton, it won an award in a tournament held at Bosch's UK HQ. The children aged nine to 11 saw off competition from others up to 16 in problem-solving challenges to win the regional robot performance award.

Club founder and coach Andy Hoang, who teaches 7 to 13s coding and engineering by designing LEGO robots, said the team, the Minifigs, had done well, completing three runs on a robot table, negotiating 15 challenges and talking passionately about their research into solar panels.

"The children came from different schools. This was the toughest assignment they have ever seen," he said. "As lead coach, I'm extremely proud. This was our first competition team ever. We're now looking at entering the World Robot Olympiad in July." Visit **beyondblocks.co.uk**

Tributes paid to three guide leaders

Girlguiding in Surbiton has lost three leading lights.

Ruth Walmsley, 87, led 10th Surbiton Guides at Surbiton Hill Methodist church, and was district commissioner. She was made an MBE. Jean Wilkinson, who led guide units in Tolworth and was also district commissioner, died at 100. President of Surbiton district, she held a 60-year long service award. Mary Burrows, a brownie leader at Emmanuel and a Tolworth district commissioner, was in her 90s. Val Reid, 10th Surbiton brownies, said: "These three inspired many young girls on their girlguiding journeys."

More such dedicated leaders are needed.

Doc shouts 'Next!'

Sunray GP Tilaka Mohan, right, is retiring after 40 years... but Tamil speakers among the 5,000 patients registered at the Warren Drive South surgery will still be able to chat to other staff in their own language.

The 74-year-old qualified in Sri Lanka and came to the UK in 1975, restarting the practice from scratch as there had been a gap of more than a year after the retirement of the Sunray's previous GP Solle Freedman. She and husband Nav now plan to travel, and see more of their five grandchildren, although she will stay on for a few months, part-time, to ensure a smooth succession.

In tents experience

Surbiton adventurer Charlotte Ainslie is nearing the end of an epic walk of the Thames, from source to sea, camping as she goes and living on £10 a day.

The 18-day challenge covers 233 miles, averaging a half marathon distance each day, and sees her stroll along Queen's Promenade, which she knows so well.

"As I live in Surbiton I'm looking forward to coming through it," she laughed. She is supporting Thames Reach, which works to reduce the number of people living on London's streets.

She has already raised more than £4,000 at **www.justgiving.com/page/charlottewalksthethames**

● 1st Surbiton sea scouts joined 500 scouts and guides at Bentley Copse activity centre, Guildford, for a weekend of activities including laser clay pigeon, climbing, archery, bushcraft, adventure courses, pedal go-karts and a cave maze, before gathering round the camp fire and dancing away to a silent disco. "All great fun," said Toby, 10.

● Bowie fans are spoilt for choice when it comes to exhibitions. Kingston Museum, below, is staging a show focusing on the singer's launch of Ziggy Stardust in Tolworth. It runs until September. Meanwhile the Royal Festival Hall has a show devoted to, right, the creation of the Aladdin Sane 'zigzag' photo; the star's subsequent incarnation.

Robin gains freedom

Robin Hutchinson, founder of the not-for-profit Community Brain and charity Creative Youth, has been made an honorary freeman of the Royal borough; only the seventh to receive the accolade since its inception in 1972.

The 64-year-old, of Ellerton Road, Tolworth, who recently charted his health issues on Instagram, was given the honour for services to arts and community.

"We need more people like you," said mayor Cllr Yogan Yoganathan.

Robin, a former Labour councillor, said: "It recognises the amazing people I've had the honour to work with over the years at The Douglas Centre [now the cornerHOUSE], Ark in the Park, the Rose Theatre, Creative Youth, Fuse International, the Community Brain, SHEDx and recently Fusebox."

Robin plus avian namesake at the Community Brain wayfinding project, Tolworth

A scroll will be presented to him in July.

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Benchmark for life

A bench dedicated to Mike Tattersall, the force of nature behind the Alexandra Millennium Green, now overlooks the area he and his chums created. "We can even see it from our house," said daughter Sophie of Alexandra Drive, part of a close-knit group including Mike's wife Liz, who gathered as the Rev Stan Brown blessed the bench on what would have been Mike's 73rd birthday.

His ashes were scattered, then bottles popped to remember a community-spirited man who lived all his life in Surbiton, and died on Dec 10 last year having never fully recovered from Covid-19. "We have somewhere to go and sit and reminisce," said Sophie. "We've had so many people and friends already comment how lovely the bench is, sending us photos and messages of them visiting it."

Mike's children Emma, Roy and Sophie on the memorial bench

● To mark their 4th birthday, Queen's Promenade Friends are staging Promtastic! on Sun, Jun 25 at 2.30pm to show off improvements volunteers have made to the Surbiton-Kingston river walk. Explore the sensory garden, raven's view garden and Julian Meers Italian garden, named after the Friends' founder. Meet at the prom entrance opposite Grove Road for tours of the six gardens, and what has been planted. Good Life editor Tim Harrison will also share some nuggets about the prom and Ravens Ait.

You're all Torque

It's got to be the coolest store in Surbiton – Torque Electric is creating a buzz, not only for its e-bikes but for its upcycled chic. As well as stocking electric off-road, mountain, leisure, hybrid, commuter and folding bikes from Germany, Belgium and New Zealand (countries which lead the way on e-bike use), the store in Victoria Road next to Megan's, in the old Foxtons office, offers cycle maintenance and repair, from a simple tyre change to a full service.

The accessory range spans clothing, helmets, water bottles, state-of-the-art locks, GPS trackers with bike insurance and novelty mugs.

You can take an e-bike on a free 48-hour test to see how you like it. "The launch went really well, we're very pleased," said Long Ditton co-founder Kathee La Hood, who said the team was excited to bring the specialist showroom to the high street. For opening times and more, call 020 3904 2883, email **info@torqueelectric.co.uk** or visit **torqueelectric.co.uk**

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Hub fund plea

Central Surbiton zero-waste health store Sage is trying to raise £15,000 to help with its overheads and support a community hub in a space next door.

"We are looking for some short-term support to help us to keep our prices as they are," said Sage Parmar of the Brighton Road shop which sells organic, plastic-free groceries and ethically sourced, sustainable household products.

The Berrylands resident, who opened in 2019, said many small businesses like hers were being hit by energy, rent and price rises. She hopes crowdfunding will also support a pop-up space for community events in her old shop next door. Visit **justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sageshealthstoresurbiton**

● Fifteen volunteers planted 150 native river plants by the Hogsmill at Rose Walk nature reserve, Berrylands. Plants included ragged Robin, pendulous sedge, purple loosestrife and yellow flag iris. They also extended a dead hedge, one of three in the reserve. "It was a success, with near-perfect conditions; soft soil and warm temperature," said Citizen Zoo rewilding officer Ben Stockwell. "The dead hedging protects water vole habitat from footfall and dogs."

The lower, digitally manipulated image is what the Seething Wells filter beds could look like if the area was dedicated to wildlife, rather than the bleak state of the 14-acre site today. It came from Swag, the Seething Wells Action Group, which is campaigning to protect the biodiversity of the Portsmouth Road site.

"The image was created by a local artist," said a spokeswoman. "It imagines six pools with boardwalks where people could stroll, and a hide for bird-watchers."

The land is part of the Victorian Seething Wells waterworks which used to provide clean water for the capital. Its seven filter beds were decommissioned in 1992 by Thames Water and it is now owned by an Isle of Man firm, Cascina, which wants to develop. Swag has met the River Thames Scheme, set up to protect the river from flooding and improve access to green spaces, and proposed the scheme buy the site under a development constraint order.

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● A £1,254 grant will fund a website which the Seething Wells all-party working group will use to build awareness of the history of the Victorian waterworks off Portsmouth Road, chart interest and report updates.

● Southborough nursing home in Langley Avenue took residents and staff on a trip to Chessington Garden Centre to marvel at the flowers, and have fun trying to name them.

● Fed up with sky-high energy prices? The borough's first Efficient Homes show is at Hollyfield School, Surbiton Hill Road, on Sat, May 20, 10.30am-2.30pm. On show, technology and products to reduce energy consumption and carbon footprints. Exhibitors will showcase the latest in insulation, heat pumps, heat recovery systems, water recycling, solar panels, low carbon heating, electric vehicle charging points and environmental accreditation schemes. Cllr Ian Manders said: "If you want to cut your bills, come along." For free tickets visit **kingston.gov.uk/EHS**

● Two headless men repaint Surbiton station.

● A stunning vertical garden now surrounds one of the doors to the new homes in St Andrew's Road, just off the high street. Snapper David Jacobson took the shot.

40 years in bed!

The Bed Post, Surbiton's independent bed, mattress and furniture specialist, is celebrating 40 years.

The landmark gives owner Lance Mead immense pride; the original business was set up in 1983 in Kingston by his parents. The Brighton Road showroom's biggest competition is online, but with 40 beds on display, the real shop still has the edge.

"If you buy online, you're just buying a picture of a mattress, not the real thing," said Lance, pictured below. "Our customers can try things first, our prices are as keen as online, but with service and choice."

The Bed Post has adapted and outsmarted competitors to stay ahead. Twenty years ago wife Lorraine started making curtains, blinds and cushions, and now has her own compact but comprehensive space in the store, accounting for a third of overall turnover.

The business continues to grow, with extra staff taken on, and the shop window display is refreshed monthly.

"There have been big advances in bed production, with more technology involved," said Lance. "Natural fibres have always been better than foam; it's like the difference between a cotton T-shirt and a polyester one!"

The shop at 43 Brighton Road is offering a £40 anniversary discount for customers spending £400 or more in-store.

Signs of park life

Wordsmith Mary Trafford and artist Kellyanne Thorne stand by a wildlife sign they have created for Fishponds Park. Guided by council biodiversity officer Elliot Newton, they designed a large sign by the path into the park, and five smaller ones to help people explore the 19-acre site, its ponds, woodland, meadow, orchard and hedgerow.

Park volunteer Mary's text and Kellyanne's pen and watercolour paintings capture its invertebrates, mammals, birds, waterfowl, amphibians, reptiles and plants.

"The idea is to draw in people of all ages," said Mary.

Rob Eyre-Brook, chair of the Friends of Fishponds, said: "The artwork is stunning, and we're indebted to Kellyanne for donating her work for free."

The next project is to create signs about the park's history, and to deter littering. Both need funding. Email **fishpondssurb@gmail.com** if you can contribute.

Group keeps watch on local health

Keeping an eye on Surbiton residents' health is the charitable organisation Healthwatch Kingston, throwing the spotlight on the standard and quality of local services.

It takes its lead from feedback, encouraging health or care users to email **info@healthwatchkingston.org.uk**

Its role is to signpost available services, be an advocate in more complex cases and use gathered information to recommend improvements, which are then monitored, with details shared on its website (**healthwatchkingston.org.uk**), in e-newsletters and at meetings.

It also garners views of people who find it difficult to speak for themselves, via project work, to include those with disabilities and conditions that can make accessibility more complicated. It has had recent success in the fields of diabetes, long Covid and bereavement, as well as working to customise residential care.

● A couple who met while serving in the Army celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary with a slap-up lunch and a family party in the Royal Star & Garter home for veterans. Jack Keith, 91, and his wife June, 94, who live at the home in Upper Brighton Road and who are now great-grandparents, met at a dance in Scotland.

"I saw this beautiful woman walk in and thought 'Oh God, I'm going to marry her!' Luckily for me, the fellow she was with had to go early, so I went up to her, and that was it!" said Jack. "It's been a wonderful 70 years. I have a good wife; I can't fault her. I've been very lucky."

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● The former computer repair shop in Claremont Road will reopen as a new branch of a Wimbledon-based house extension firm.

● Surbiton's area committee has stumped up £4,015 to improve the look of the Burney Avenue triangle after biodiversity officer Elliot Newton, councillors and residents met at the junction of Burney and Ferguson avenues to discuss improvements. There will be a bug hotel, bird feeder station and pollinator planting, with volunteers replenishing bird food and watering plants.

● Care about a great community asset? Then help fund repairs to St Mary's church hall. The building, erected in 2007 behind the church in Church Road, Long Ditton, is in need of maintenance. Loos need upgrading, rooms need redecorating and the roof requires attention. The church, built in 1878 and finished in 1881, is also in need of TLC. Kingston Uni professor and curate Alison Baverstock, said the aim is to raise £50,000 to restore both buildings. **stmaryslongditton.org.uk/giving**

● Surbiton cancer survivor Isla Pontone, 19, right, shared her story with Dame Ellen MacArthur at the British Medical Association as the yachtswoman spoke about her cancer charity trust, which takes people aged 8-24 on inspirational sailing and outdoor adventures. Isla, now doing film studies at Manchester uni, first sailed with the trust as a 13-year-old in 2016. She now volunteers.

Mosaics bridge gap

Jo Lewis and Francia Hunt, left, artists in residence at Hillcroft College, work to restore 14 mosaics which will go on display at Surbiton station in the summer. The mosaic specialists are collaborating with a ceramist to restore and clean the artwork – an homage to poet and artist William Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience.

It's intricate work to match and cut glass, ceramic and porcelain tiles in areas which need repair. The mosaics were created by Southbank Mosaics (now the London School of Mosaic) between 2005-10 with 300 volunteers as an open-air gallery under railway arches near where Blake lived in Lambeth from 1790-1800.

If funding allows, more of the mosaic panels will be restored, with a rolling display on the walls of the bridge linking Surbiton station's platforms. Francia, who has worked with mosaics for 30 years, said: "I'm incredibly excited about this project. It's a big part of the history of London. It's fantastic the mosaics will be seen by so many in Surbiton."

The project is the brainchild of Stephen Young of Surbiton Art Trail, which champions public artwork.

He has worked for two years with the council, Network Rail, South Western Railway, Friends of Surbiton Station, Hillcroft College and the London School of Mosaic to bring the mosaics to Surbiton. **Jane Grove**

Living The Good Life

Check out the bright new murals on the pavilion at Victoria rec off Balaclava Road.

On the previously neglected west side, the artwork shows aspects of the recreation ground designers and illustrators Harriet Palmer, left, and Sunnie Newby like the most. It features dogs, a girl playing football, a tree, leaves, a nod to the Tarte in the Park cafe, and the words Living The Good Life which is, of course, synonymous with Surbiton.

"If an area looks nice, people treat it with more respect; it was always sad walking past and one side looking quite run-down," said Harriet of Surbiton-based studio Ninety-Five Prints. "We put something up that you can see all the way from the end and enjoy all the way through your walk."

Surbiton Art Trail, which enhances public spaces, commissioned the Living The Good Life mural.

On the other sides of the pavilion the fox, ladybird and toad, which had been damaged by graffiti, have been replaced by a blue tit and robin by We Are Sky High and a pack of cartoon dogs by ArtByRoo.

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Congratulations to King Charles III and Queen Camilla

Last year, we met King Charles (then Prince Charles) at a reception at St James's Palace to acknowledge community pharmacies and their important work during the pandemic.

Now we are celebrating his coronation. As King Charles III and Queen Camilla embark on the amazing journey ahead, the nation celebrates with them.

At this time, we also reflect on the couple's multiple visits to Neasden Temple in London as well as the Swaminarayan Akshardham complex in New Delhi, India.

We look forward to celebrating and marking this historic and momentous occasion at Neasden Temple in the presence of our spiritual leader His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj. As our guru, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, said: "In the joy of others lies our own."

This remains the philosophy of our life and our independently run, family-owned business, PSM Pharmacy.

We offer our humble prayers to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj and our Hindu saints and sages that the King and Queen are blessed with success and nobility.

And we wish everyone all the best during this great period of national celebration.

-Shushma and Rohit Patel

We've started spring booster Covid-19 vaccinations. Details here

● **NHS Covid vaccines have saved countless lives, kept tens of thousands of people out of hospital, and helped us live with the virus without fear or restriction.**

● **So, this spring, the NHS is offering a further vaccination to those at highest risk of severe illness from Covid.**

● **Those who can get a spring vaccination include people aged 75 and over (by June 30 2023), people with a weakened immune system, and care home residents.**

You are welcome to visit PSM Pharmacy in Ewell Road, Tolworth, to get your NHS Covid-19 vaccination. You can either book in advance or walk in.

Here at PSM Pharmacy, through our vaccination programme, we have had the opportunity to watch our community thrive and prosper over the last couple of years. We have been able to watch the generations come together, which has been truly inspiring.

And we have also been able to discover more about the history of Tolworth through the recollections of our patients; some who have lived in Tolworth for more than 90 years.

We have seen grandchildren assisting grandparents to get vaccinated and we have enjoyed meeting the 80-year-olds who were students at Tolworth Juniors, the 90-year-olds who remember the Odeon where Tolworth Tower now stands, and assisting a 96-year-old who walked in, beautifully dressed, immaculate despite the weather.

Covid-19 vaccination clinics have shown community engagement by encouraging people to come together to support a common cause. They have helped build stronger relationships between individuals and organisations - and benefited local businesses, too. Within the community, independent business owners, local traders and schools have felt the impact.

It has brought like-minded people together to tackle new challenges and how Tolworth has responded has been unique and special. We all want each other to succeed.

Our experiences at PSM have empowered us as a team to continue delivering the vaccination programme. You are welcome to visit our pharmacy at 388 Ewell Road.

The NHS will have written to you if you are eligible, but please make sure you reach out to us before the vaccinations end on June 30.

PSM Pharmacy ● 388 Ewell Road, Tolworth KT6 7BB ● Mon-Fri 9am-6pm & Sat morning ● 020 8399 3165

Runners turn into Wombles

Members of the Friendly Running Club pounded pavements, bin bags in hand, to collect litter as part of April's Earth Month.

It was one of the weekly 5k runs led by Rachel Bambrough, yoga coach and founder of paddle boarding outfit SUP4.

She motivates a group of diverse runners who like to be active, but who aren't necessarily aiming to run the next London Marathon.

Everyone can go at their own speed and there is the lure of a drink afterwards at The Antelope, where they start and finish their runs.

"The group started last year and is based on a model from Denmark, where there is no expectation of speed, distance or experience," said club member Sara Richardson. "It is about getting out and moving. There are no timings. All are welcome, whether walking, running or gliding on a mode of mobility."

The Friendly Running Club meets at 6.30pm on Tuesdays outside the pub in Maple Road. Simply turn up to join in. More on Instagram **@friendlyrunningclub**

● There was an LAPD escort for cyclist Francis Cade from Surbiton who pedalled 3,000 miles from Miami to LA with wheelchair racer Justin Levene, raising a stonking £168,000 for Get Kids Going! to improve sport access for disabled children. The 48-day ride entailed punctures and a bike frame crack, but Francis' dad Andy (of Long Ditton duo Baz & Dave) said: "The kindness of strangers kept spirits up". The last leg even had a helicopter escort! See **justgiving.com/fundraising/crossingusa**

A short hop to success

Marielle Bayliss says it is a dream come true to have her first book, **Frog's Bog**, at the Regency Bookshop.

The former actress of Elgar Avenue, who used to get to the theatre early to draft stories in the dressing room before going on stage, is also reading excerpts from her illustrated book at libraries, attracting three to five-year-olds who lap up the tale.

"Honestly, it still doesn't feel real," she said, adding that the book, the first in a series, was inspired by outings to Berrylands Nature Reserve and the Hogsmill. "When my twin daughters were born, I'd walk them around the reserve, after dropping off my eldest daughter at school, until they fell asleep in their pram. The nature pond had been built by volunteers a year or so before, and it became a favourite spot!

"On one walk with my eldest daughter she asked about the difference between a stream and a brook, and a pond and a lake. That became the initial idea behind the book."

Marielle said children love the rhymes and are captivated by the artwork by Mariela Malova. A second book is due out next March. Catch the author: Kingston library, Thu Jun 1, 10am; Surbiton library, Sat Jul 22, 11am; Hook library, Wed Jul 26, 11am.

● Hillcroft College in South Bank, Surbiton, has published its new syllabus for the next academic year. The college, which turned 100 in 2020, specialises in adult learning and has some women-only subjects. Its current courses cover practical, creative and academic subjects as well as English as a second language. Visit **rhacc.ac.uk** for new course guide and summer courses.

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The wars of the roses

A five-day, non-statutory public inquiry into whether Stokes Field nature reserve and One Tree Hill in Long Ditton should gain village green status has concluded. If successful, it would block any house-building. Thirty locals have had the chance to share their passion for the land beloved of generations of strollers, dog walkers and families.

"It's been so important to me while bringing up a family; an incredible resource on our doorstep," Rachel Warren of Oaks Way told The Good Life, in a comment typical of the heartfelt contributions.

"I fear for families in the future that they won't have that." Yet when planning inspector Stephen Morgan finally produces his report ("Anytime from one to six months," he told the paper), it may all hinge on rose cultivation.

Crowdfunding, coordinated by the Long Ditton residents' association, raised £50,000 in two months for a specialist lawyer and expert reports, with the case for village green status argued by barrister and Eddie Redmayne lookalike Paul Wilmshurst.

Across the table was gravel-voiced David Manley KC for Taylor Wimpey, which owns chunks of the site and dreams of a new 900+ home estate.

Mr Morgan heard evidence from both sides between Apr 24-28 at Long Ditton village hall, and his report will inform Surrey County Council's final decision. To win village green status, under the 2006 Commons Act, locals had to show, on the balance of probability, that **all** the area marked on a map for the new designation was continually used by significant numbers of people for sporting and recreational activity between 1998 and 2018.

Taylor Wimpey (which concedes that One Tree Hill itself meets the test) contends that as some of the contested land was used for rose cultivation, especially in the late 1990s, it cannot be protected.

One area of conflict is a stretch of land alongside Hill Park Roses, which has been next to Squires just off Woodstock Lane North since 1968, and was used as overflow rose cultivation for years. Oddly, the public had access, but simple neighbourly trust meant few of its fragrant blooms were pilfered.

The other area of issue is to the north of the mooted village green site; land owned by Elmbridge Council in this complex historical patchwork where even the CofE has dibs. Taylor Wimpey argues it was mere scrubland with a few criss-crossing tracks.

Inspector Morgan brought sturdy boots to the inquiry to do his own site visit, but also told The Good Life that he'd already made pre-inquiry scoping forays to the land.

Residents giving evidence (one brought a dog on the first day!) included Joanne Williams, who said: "We picknicked in the area." She recalled the rows of publicly accessible roses growing.

"You could walk in between them; it was nice to smell them."

Another, Emma Rising, of Sugden Road, recalled blackberrying with her sons.

"We'd be lost without Stokes Field; we love it."

Rachel Warren added: "I know people need homes, but we have to be so careful with these spaces. If we lose them, we'll never get them back."

Tim Harrison

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

Concentrate on your Spinecraft

Summer term is often when children start walking to school for the first time. The weather is hopefully a bit better and independence is flourishing.

So here are some top tips for better posture.

● **Straighten Up**

● **Bag it Properly** A rucksack is best. Carry on both shoulders, close to the body, like it's designed to be worn. Don't sling it casually over one shoulder – there is no point in developing back pain just to look cool.

● **Keep it Light** Edit contents every day, and just carry the essentials. Keep the weight inside it evenly distributed.

● **Best foot Forward** Have well-fitted shoes with a soft sole and good grip.

● **Exercise** The fitter you are, the less likely you are to hurt yourself.

● **Movement** Joints produce lubricant when they move, and spines are happy when they are moving. Limit TV and computer time to about 40 minutes, and then get moving and grooving.

● **Posture** Everyone's is good when they think about it, so focus on it. It's easy to forget about posture in the middle of a game of Minecraft. So remember your Spinecraft!

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Rediscover the joy of reading

When were you last read to? Really! That long? Get back into books via a 'reader leader' at a free shared session at the library, or at the Alfriston day centre.

The reading retreat scheme, overseen by Kingston Libraries, has Thursday sessions at Surbiton Library, Ewell Road, led by Rachel Donoghue. Since January it has built a loyal following of people who enjoy the shared experience of being read to.

"Can you remember when someone last read to you?" asked Rachel. "It may have been a bedtime story as a child, with Lewis Carroll or JM Barrie's words translated into vivid dreams of grinning cats or pirates, or both."

She believes shared reading helps connect with great literature, without the 'exam

pressure' to analyse the text.

"Group members often share personal stories and memories prompted by reading," she said.

A trained reader leader picks a short story or poem to read aloud, then the group has a guided discussion, though there's no pressure to contribute. "It's fine to simply listen," Rachel reassured. "Each session is unique, so there's no preparation or homework, and no requirement to attend every week."

Reader leaders are trained by charity The Reader, which runs groups in prisons, care homes and community spaces. "It brings people together, and books to life," said Rachel. "Reading aloud allows the text to breathe. Words seem to take on greater significance."

Research suggests being read to improves mental health. Wordsmith Stephen Fry describes it as "one path to greater happiness in life".

Pop along. Mondays: Kingston Library, 11am-noon. Tuesdays: Alfriston in Berrylands Road, 10.30-11.30am. Wednesdays: Tolworth Library, 2.30-3.30pm. Thursdays: Surbiton Library, 10.30-11.30am.

Tim Harrison

● Another tribute to the thoughtful souls who leave tatty chairs on pavements as seating for the less able... or to save a lazy fly-tipper a trip to the dump. This blue and white number in Balaclava Road had a back vent and single caster.

● **TfL is being asked to extend the 281 bus route over the Tolworth roundabout, beyond the Hollywood Bowl and along Jubilee Way into the Cox Lane industrial estate on Tolworth's edge, rather than terminating (as currently planned) by the new Signal Park towers. It would help the area's factories and office units fill job vacancies beyond Lidl's HQ by improving public transport links.**

● Darin, the oldest barber shop in Brighton Road, has reopened under new management... and has changed sides. You now wait on the left and are trimmed on the right. There's bold new ceiling lighting. "We're keeping the old name... for now," The Good Life was informed. "But it may alter."

● Are you a fan of our feathered friends? Fancy seeing nightjars on a Surrey Heath, watching waders on the coast or hearing skylarks overhead? Many discovered birdwatching in lockdown, others have had a lifelong interest. Learn more and meet fellow enthusiasts at Surbiton Bird Club. There are monthly talks at St Matthew's school by experts, car and coach outings to birding sites, and walks in Bushy and Richmond Parks, with car sharing. Members can use the Hogsmill nature reserve hides, near Berrylands station. Info, and a gallery of members' bird snaps: **surbitonbirds.org**

Christ Church became a jungle as 60 children enjoyed a holiday club. JungleMania, part-led by young people from church and community, included singsongs, joke-telling, challenges and crafts. For future events visit ccsurbiton.org

● Funeral firm Alan Greenwood & Sons, in Fleece Road, Long Ditton since 2011, is now appointment-only. Manager Lisa Linegar has moved to the Shepperton branch, and funerals are now handled by Claygate staff. "Everything remains the same," said area manager Alison Mills. The family-run company has 26 Surrey locations. Visit **alangreenwoodfunerals.com**

You could be part of history

Interested in history? Surbiton's historical society, one of the oldest in London, has monthly talks by passionate speakers. Susan Rhodes recently spoke on ancient trees, several in Richmond Park. This year's topics include Cinema in Kingston, Hawker Siddeley and Dickens' magic lantern shows.

It meets on the first Tuesday of the month at Douglas Road's cornerHOUSE, with the £20 annual fee giving entry to each talk, outings and a library (searchable online) of 300+ fine books. More at surbitonhistoricalsociety.org It's been part of Surbiton life since 1955. BACS £20 to Surbiton and District Historical Society (Acct 85158060, sort code 70 30 11). Your surname is the reference, then email ann.glover418@outlook.com to confirm.

● Surbiton high street's expanded gym Sweat Society, opposite The Victoria pub, has launched 'reformer' pilates classes to improve posture, reduce injury risk and boost core strength. The first class is free, followed by an offer of £72 for four classes. You can book via the Sweat Society app. All abilities welcome. Reformer pilates is similar to mat-based pilates, but uses a machine rather than simple body resistance. Sweat Soc runs more than 10 classes a week, growing as new instructors are added. **sweatsociety.co.uk**

● The Rev Vindra Maraj-Ogden, right, will be the new minister at Surbiton Hill Methodist church at the end of the summer when Stan Brown retires from the redbrick church in Ewell Road.

Born in Trinidad, she arrived in the UK 38 years ago, gaining a business degree and working in accountancy before ordination in 2005. She is a widow with a grown-up son.

After eight years in Surbiton, the Rev Stan Brown and wife Mary retire to Gloucester in September. He is a former chaplain at Kingston Uni.

Restored to glory

The most distinctive shopfront in the high street now belongs to a Surbiton financial advice firm, which has sensitively restored the building's historic interior.

Walpole Financial Management, which deals with all forms of financial planning, has done a top-to-toe renovation of the former Santander bank building at 12 Victoria Road.

Cornicing has been reinstated in the three-storey premises, original brickwork exposed and a boarded-up atrium revealed. The 1850s building (Grade II listed since 1975) has reception, meeting rooms and disabled-access loos on the ground floor, where Santander had its banking hall. Half a dozen Walpole advisers and three directors work in upstairs offices.

Walpole bought the freehold in a closed auction in which offers over £676,000 had been invited after the owner, who lives in north London, decided to sell up, post-Brexit.

Until last month, Walpole operated out of offices in Claremont Road. Before that it had spent several years near Berrylands station in Chiltern Drive, but its need for larger premises coincided with a decision to gain a visible high street presence.

The firm was named Walpole after Walpole Road, Surbiton, where the founder lived. "We've spent the last few months restoring the building to its former glory, and are now open for business," said managing director Oliver Slade, 43, pictured above, standing in the artistically recessed glassy entrance. "We handle all aspects of financial planning."

The building is still remembered by many Surbitonians as housing the old Abbey National building society.

It has long been admired for its distinctive Art Nouveau hardwood tracery and the wrought-iron scroll work which surrounds an oval medallion. Few realise it was originally hinged to lower as a blind to shade the morning sun. **TH**

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● This trio of wannabe Sam Kerrs were among 400 joining ex-Chelsea stars at the launch of Nothing Stops Us at Kingsmeadow, to get more girls into football.

● Congratulations to Surbiton race ace Peter Erceg, below, who achieved his first overall win in the British Endurance Championships at Brands Hatch two weeks ago, cementing his position as the UK's top amateur in his class. Based in St Matthew's Ave (speed limit 20mph!), Peter led from the start. The 52-year-old New Zealander, who has lived in Surbiton since 2011, switched from Porsches to Audis earlier this year, and is now gearing up to compete in four more rounds of the championship. Follow the progress of that dramatic orange Audi R8 GT3 LMS Evo 2 on Instagram **@teampbracing**

Corinthian-Casuals hope next season will be better under new manager Andy Gray, left, after being relegated from the Isthmian League's premier tier. Gray began his career with Casuals as a teen in 1983. "It's surreal to be back," he said. "This is the only kind of management job I'd have taken." Now 59, Gray played for Palace, Villa, QPR and Spurs, and won an England cap in 1991. He succeeds Brian Adamson, who took over at the King George V arena, Hook Rise South, Tolworth, in March after Justin Fevrier stood down.

● Open trials are being held to set up a new women's Casuals team. For dates, visit **corinthian-casuals.com**

A Blue goal

Chelsea Women have a frantic month with **7** games in **25** days... including the FA Cup final at Wembley v Utd on May 14. The double's still on despite the Nou Camp Champions League semi-final defeat.

● Rookie Maya Matthews returns to face powerhouse Livvii Grace in the women's wrestling division on Sun, May 21, but the main bout sees south London champion Jordan Saeed defend his title against contender Mark Trew. The undercard includes Connor Mills, Liam Judd and teen Cameron Khai at Long Ditton village hall at 5.30pm. **southlondonwrestling.com**

● Joseph Gonzalez was buzzing with his performance at the World Masters athletics indoor championships in Poland. Surbiton's 26.2 Road Runners Club member, representing GB in the 3,000 metres, pushed through the field from seventh to breast the tape ahead of rivals and win his heat.

The 54-year-old accountant from Greenfield Avenue, Berrylands, is now targeting competing in the European Masters athletics championships in Italy in September.

● Fancy learning tennis, or want to improve your game? Surbiton Methodist Tennis Club, hidden away in the heart of Berrylands, has an open day from 3-5pm on Sat, Jun 3, when you can look round the pavilion and grounds, play on one of the six all-weather courts (rackets and balls provided) and chat to members over tea and cake. "Play takes place all year round with sessions for ladies, men and mixed," said member Linda Bridges. "There's a junior club on Friday evenings in the summer months." Courses for beginners and returners are available, run by a club coach. Visit **surbitonmethodisttennis.org** or pop in on the day. Access between 11&13 Manor Dv.

SURBITON HILL METHODIST CHURCH

Tennis Club

OPEN AFTERNOON

Saturday 3 June
3-5pm
tea and cake at 4pm

Entrance between 11 & 13 Manor Drive, Surbiton.

All welcome

surbitonmethodisttennis.org

Come and try the game of Bowls - for FREE!

Taster Day

Saturday 20th May from 12.00

- Gentle exercise in the open air
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- Training & Equipment provided

Just come along. Give it a try. It could be your new sport & hobby. Flat shoes/trainers required

www.surbitonbowlingclub.uk
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Surbiton Bowling Club
Alexandra Recreation Ground
Alexandra Drive Surbiton KT5 9AA

Surbiton Bowling Club

Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club

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