the good life

Issue 71 — *The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3* — July 2023

Saturdays 9am-1pm
JULY 15
AUGUST 19
Surbiton Farmers' Market

Imy makes cricketing history

Imy Neely is the first female captain of an otherwise all-male senior team in Long Ditton Cricket Club's 100 years. The 22-year-old is in charge of the 2nd XI County League side, meaning first-team captain Matt Baker, Sunday skipper Alex Naylor and Imy are all former colts at the club.

Imy began at Stokes Field as an eight-year-old, and is used to being the lone woman in the team. At the Surrey captains' pre-season, she was the only female in the room. "It's a bit crazy that I first started playing adult men's cricket aged 14!" she said. Cheer her on at 1pm on Sat Jul 8 at the Betts Way ground.

• Oliver, 4, joined the police in Beaconsfield Road; Holly, 8, enjoyed ice cream in Norton Ave; and the Elmbridge Crafters added ears to their local pillar box for the coronation street parties. **Turn to p9**

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Tributes paid to dad and son

Prayers were said and a silence observed at St Mary's, Long Ditton, as a community mourned the loss of father and son Shahzada and Suleman Dawood who perished in a mini sub on a dive to view the wreck of the Titanic.

The locals were among five lost when the Titan submersible imploded two miles below the surface of the North Atlantic.

Curate Alison Baverstock, who gives talks about the Titanic as the church has a strong bond with the 1912 tragedy, had spoken to Shahzada, 48, about the disaster which claimed 1,500 lives.

"He was friendly and very chatty," Alison said in church, adding that wife Christine (a business consultant and former residents' association road rep who had originally intended to be on the sub with her husband) and daughter Alina, 17, were in everyone's thoughts.

Both Shahzada, a director of two major Pakistan companies and a philanthropist, and Suleman, 19, who had finished his first year of uni in Glasgow, had visited the churchyard near their home.

Titanic victim Austin Partner, 40, of Ewell Road – one of the few whose body was returned to the UK – is buried there, beneath an angel statue.

Alison praised the empathy that the community has shown towards the Dawood family. She went on to contrast the all-out rescue effort for the stricken sub with the international response to the loss of 600 souls in the recent migrant shipwreck in the Mediterranean.

The Dawoods' neighbour Ellen Maby has been in touch with Christine via the St Mary's Road WhatsApp group, and spoke fondly of the "lovely, lovely family" that has lived beside them for eight years.

Ellen said it was almost unbearable to look up at Suleman's bedroom window, with the toys and books the teenager will never see again after the Father's Day treat on a family holiday to Canada ended so catastrophically.

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Salon is named best in UK

Surbiton's Salon No13 in the high street is officially best in the UK; a phenomenal achievement for Andrew Thompson (centre) and his crew, who scooped the ultimate hairdressing prize three years after opening.

The salon was also best in London, and best for blondes in London at the UK Hair & Beauty awards.

"I'm overwhelmed and shocked, considering we opened in July 2020 in the middle of the pandemic," said Andrew, 38, who decided to go it alone in lockdown when his ex-employer, Hair by Mitch in Brighton Road, shut. "I couldn't be prouder of a team who've helped me build the salon I always wanted."

The UK Hair & Beauty awards in Birmingham were the first he'd entered after setting up Salon No13 at 13a Victoria Road in the former Carphone Warehouse, with its separate hair-washing room, a mini art gallery and staff chill-out area in the basement.

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Market hits £100k milestone

It's already a town success story, but Surbiton Farmers' Market has hit another milestone... £100,000 raised for good causes.

Profits from stall fees have gone towards making lives happier and more fulfilling, including helping build interactive play walls in a children's area at Kingston Hospital, treating young carers to fun days out, training guide dogs, and supporting people with autism.

"It's is a red letter day," said market chairman David Jacobson. "Although we're known for championing small, independent producers and artisans, it's charity that's behind everything we do."

He thanked Maple Road businesses, volunteers, councillors and shoppers.

Mayor Diane White, formerly of Kingston Carers' Network, said: "The market generosity has made a real difference."

Founded in 2009, the market, on the third Saturday of the month, has up to 40 stalls and is run entirely by volunteers. As well as guest charities, it also responds to emergency appeals including the Japanese tsunami, Turkey/Syria earthquake and the war in Ukraine.

● Need a pick-me-up? Graciela Jimenez of Shrewsbury Close has created enerG bites, for a pre-exercise boost or to combat mid-afternoon slumps. The keen cook and Surbiton Boxing Club member wanted to make something tasty and healthy, full of carbs, protein, fibre, antioxidants and magnesium, that was different from the usual protein bars.

Her enerG bites are best eaten from frozen as the dark chocolate round the crunchy peanut butter and Medjool date vegan-friendly treats retains its bite. "Customers love the taste, and that it stops them binge-snacking on unhealthy foods," said Graciela. "Even those who don't like dates find them delicious!" The registered home caterer with the top hygiene rating will deliver. Each bite is £2 (min delivery order 10). For more info, or to place an order, email **enerGbites@gmail.com**

Choccy gooey cake!

Diddy Diners, founded by teacher/nutritionist Josephine Fernando of The Ridings, Berrylands, now sells its ecoactivity kits for children in Selfridges. Good Life readers get 10% off orders via **diddydiners.co.uk** using code GL10.

Designed as a fun cooking kit for children over three (with dried ingredients for Choccy Gooey Cake in a Mug or Magic Colour Changing Lemonade), they come with a colourfully illustrated educational activity booklet.

Josephine began offering recipes, lessons and workshops in 2018 to get children to eat healthily while having fun. She now works with Stroodles to provide edible tableware too.

Her goody bags are alternatives to plastic-filled party bags. "We're helping empower the next generation of eco foodie champions," she said. **Jane Grove**

● The Surbitonian Vine, the classy successor to a mixed bag of bars at 12 Claremont Road, is open. Owner John Tiddy faced hurdles at each stage of a seven-month renovation, but the result is a jazzy, zingy mini miracle; cafe by day, and bustling bar by night.

● Surbiton's takeaway lovers have a new option in the main dining parade.

Gourmet Wok is opening in the old Pizza Hut premises at 55 Brighton Road, next to trenchermen's breakfast halt the Surbiton Cafe, and two doors from Naturally Chinese.

Gourmet Wok offers Chinese and Asian eat-out dishes, cooked in kitchens behind the counter. The parade, once dominated by Transatlantic Plastics, is used to comings and goings. TaxAssist, at 57 Brighton Road, was once the short-lived Telepizza, and before that the curry takeaway Guru Express, whose dessert menu included 'Banana Fitter'!

Meanwhile, the Claremont Road parade opposite Waitrose gains specialist supermarket VFresh, with Chinese, Thai and Asian ingredients to fling in your wok. It's in the former Real Herbs Chinese medicine centre, forlornly empty for years.

Tim Harrison

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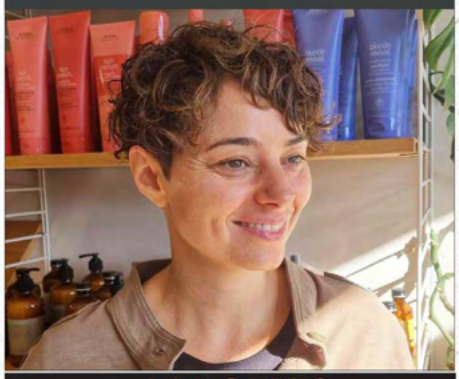

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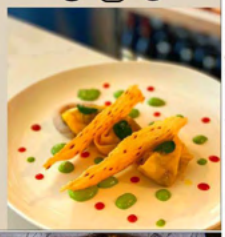

It's dog collar time

Bring Fido and Tiddles to a pet blessing service at St Mary's, Long Ditton, at 4pm on Sun Jul 9… or if your cat's a bit apprehensive at the notion, bring along a photo instead.

A bumper cheque

Former Berrylands ward councillor Sushila Abraham handed a £13,325 cheque to New Malden's Milaap multicultural day centre; a chosen charity in her 2021-22 mayoral year.

Silver Golf stolen

A silver VW Golf was stolen from Chadwick Place, Long Ditton, after thieves broke in and took the key from a handbag in the hallway.

Conversion therapy

Planning permission is being sought to turn the house at 20 St Mary's Rd, Long Ditton, into 11 one-bed flats.

Moley's memorial

A celebration of the life of Ian Mole, former landlord of Berrylands pub The Bun Shop (now Brave New World) who has died at the age of 73, is at 11am on Thu, Jul 20, at St George's church in Tolworth.

Seething meeting

Campaigners trying to save Seething Wells filter beds from development hold their agm on Jul 13, 7.45pm, at the Glasshouse, St Andrew's church, Maple Road. All welcome. The 14-acre site's future will be discussed.

Sunflower supply

Refugee Hanna Pasechnyk has raised £127 to aid victims of Ukraine's Kakhovka Dam breach by selling home-grown sunflower plants – her country's national flower – from the front garden of the home in Ellerton Road where she has been staying.

Wear the trousers

Surbiton's area committee is now chaired by Tom Reeve, with Peter Herlinger as his deputy. Peter's on the right, below, with the trousers.

Home's open day

Surbitonian Gardens, the new care home in Warwick Grove, opens to the public for tours on Thu, Sep 14, 10am-4pm to mark its first birthday. Book at **surbitonian.enquiries@anavogroup.com** or 020 8051 4410.

Grant is delayed

A decision on a £3,000 grant for Head2Head Theatre to put on shows for special needs children in Surbiton has been deferred by councillors who want to discuss it with the applicant.

SURBITON LIFE

by David Cox

Crufts for Lola

Lola, a three-year-old Bernese mountain dog/standard poodle mix, was named prettiest crossbreed bitch at a Kennel Club 'Scruffts' heat.

Lola (she's on the right, by the way) is with owner Loren Esling. The Cotterill Road pooch is now in the semis of Crufts itself.

"I can't quite believe it," said Loren. "It's amazing that our Lola, or Lola Bear as we call her, is going to be at Crufts. She came to us when she was eight weeks old, in February 2020. She was the best possible distraction when we went into lockdown. She certainly helped us get through that strange time."

Lola, who was judged on character, health, personality and temperament, is described by Loren as "naturally happy and playful, and always bounding about and trying to make friends with everyone". Better still, adds Loren, "she also has a clumsy, goofy side, that keeps us entertained".

Lola takes her place beside three other Scruffts class victors at Crufts 2024 at Birmingham's NEC in March where judges will determine which dog will be named family crossbreed of the year. We're keeping our paws crossed.

Station wins plaudits… but where's the lift?

Tolworth railway station has been applauded for its community projects… but campaigners say the real prize will be to open it to everyone. While Surbiton and Kingston stations enjoy step-free access, anyone with mobility issues is prevented from reaching Tolworth's platforms.

Passenger numbers are expected to rise dramatically when all the new-build flats in the area are finished.

South Western Railway chose Tolworth station to launch community rail week for its network, with MP Ed Davey joining the great and the good to endorse schemes promoting biodiversity and engagement. But the clamour is growing for physical improvement, with campaigners unable to grasp why developers who profit from large-scale flat-building aren't made to contribute.

Activist Rob Robb says he has the answer; an inclinator lift, like a cross between a stairlift and a conventional lift. "The stairs at Tolworth are steep and totally unsuitable for wheelchair users, and are a struggle for the elderly," he says. "But technology has come to the rescue with the inclinator lift which can be fitted over part of the existing stairs." He has explored its viability with the lift firm Kone, and is urging SWR to open discussions.

Community rail week marked partnerships between 100 stations on the network and adoption groups who improve underused areas. Tolworth partners with the Community Brain, which has equipped a kitchen by the forecourt (available to rent for £7.50 an hour) and created a wildlife plot.

● Tolworth is the forgotten bit of Surbiton, but things get done in Berrylands because that's where councillors live! So said Tolworth Road resident Rory Dunn in a heated Q&A at the neighbourhood committee in the war over through-traffic in the 'Tolworth triangle'.

Survey data revealed to road reps in the area bounded by Hook Rd, Ditton Rd, Ewell Rd, Red Lion Rd/Fullers Way N and the A3 shows 65% of cars are rat-runners. "Our roads would be cleaner, greener and safer if we could remove or deter them," said Liz Mitchell of Thornhill Road.

Matthew Haines from Ellerton Road said he was "alarmed, yet unsurprised" that so much through traffic used the streets. "We, and the vast majority of street reps, are committed to finding a holistic solution, and don't wish to return to unpopular and ineffective barriers," he said.

● The rainbow topper, knitted for Pride Month and placed on the pillar box at the junction of Elmbridge and Elgar Avenues, was destroyed by vandals. "All the hard work and effort by the Elmbridge Crafters club went up in flames," said Carol Gwilliams, founder of the crochet and knitting group. "I think, perhaps, they disagree with the theme. The one I did last year was wrecked after a week, so sadly it didn't come as a great shock."

● The delayed summing-up arguments of the village green inquiry will be heard in public at Long Ditton village hall, Ewell Road, opposite Long Ditton rec, on Fri, Jul 21 at 1pm. The same day, barristers and the inspector will visit the site on which Taylor Wimpey wants to build. Residents, who cherish the Green Belt woods and open space, seek 'village green' status to protect it in perpetuity. See the Long Ditton Residents' Assn Facebook page for updates.

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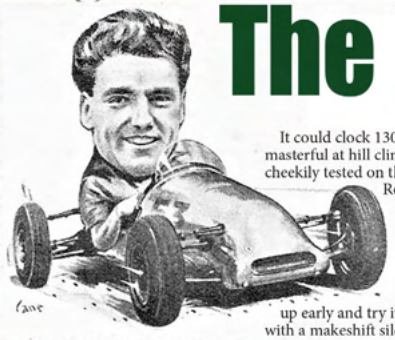
The boy racer



It's a century since the birth of John Cooper, the lantern-jawed, devil-may-care boy racer idolised by British teenagers in the 1950s. In 1932, at the age of nine, he got his first car; a single-seater built from garage scraps and fitted with a lawnmower engine.

Five years later, his dad gave him another, built around a tuned-up Austin Seven engine and capable of 90mph. John tried to test the 'No1 Cooper Special' at Brooklands, but was chased away by officials. He'd already done one completely illegal full circuit of the banked track at the age of 11.

In 1946, John and father Charles built their first proper racing car from a crashed Fiat 500, fitting it with a twin-cam motorbike engine.

NOTABLE SURBITONIANS
John Cooper

It could clock 130mph, was masterful at hill climbs, and was cheekily tested on the slope in Ewell Road by Fishponds; an impossibility today, what with cycle lanes, 20mph limits and jams.

"We'd also get up early and try it on the By-Pass with a makeshift silencer," John wrote in his autobiography. "Luckily, the local constabulary were on our side."

John drove it at Silverstone, the ex-RAF bomber airfield then morphing into a race circuit. But the Kingston By-Pass was John's test track of choice – and it nearly claimed his life.

John was born in July 1923 to Charles and Elsie Cooper of Fassett Road, Kingston. The Coopers lived there from 1914, just before the First World War, with the house being held in Elsie's name.

After serving in the Royal Army Service Corps, mechanically minded Charles did an apprenticeship with Acton car maker Napier, then set up Cooper's Garage in sheds by the Waggon & Horses, Surbiton Hill Road, opposite the assembly rooms.

Above: the '500 Club' at Cooper's Garage in 1947, with John circled in the centre, and dad Charles circled on the right. Left: little Peggy Harrison, John's junior school sweetheart

Charles was notoriously stingy, refusing to heat his workshop, even in the depths of winter.

In late 1930, when John was seven, the Coopers became the first occupants of a new-build at 49 Beresford Avenue, Tolworth. At junior school, John's passion for cars was rivalled by young love... a pretty girl called Peggy Harrison, a year older and living in Ellerton Road.

By 1934, Charles had sold his garage to mechanic Cecil Whelan, and moved to Hollyfield Road, then a cul-de-sac with a footpath to King Charles Road. He'd bought a patch of land and built several lock-ups near the Ewell Road junction where he and a small team repaired and experimented on cars. Ring the cream phone (below) at Surbiton & District Garages and you'd experience Charles's curt phone manner. "What? Who? Huh!" Slam!

John went to Surbiton County Grammar (on the site of today's Hollyfield) that same year, but left at 15, keen to pursue engineering. After a short apprenticeship as a toolmaker, he joined dad at what was now called Cooper's Garage (Surbiton).

That 500cc converted Fiat in 1946 was the first of many racing cars put through its paces early in the morning on the A3 by John, who had done a year's war service with the RAF.

"The By-Pass was a smooth, fast stretch of road with only moderate traffic and no ticket-hunting cops," John explained. "Today, of course, you wouldn't even get on the road with the makeshift, noisy exhaust we then used, but at that time we could get away with mayhem."

Fellow wannabe racers began beating a path to Ewell Road to buy £500 replicas of a car which could hit 60 in eight seconds. "We naturally said 'Yes', and took orders and deposits as fast as they came along."

In the first four years, more than 50 of what would now be known as Formula 3 racing cars were produced in Surbiton, but with only so many wrecked Fiat 500s to cannibalise, Charles and John designed a new racing chassis from scratch. Sterling Moss was an early customer, but Sterling's dad rang to cancel the order as his son was still only 16!

John Cooper's definition of a Cooper car was simple. "It has to start quickly, motor fast and keep going that way with a minimum of trouble."

Cooper Car Club member Ken Collins, who regularly drove a 1961 single-seater in historic races, told The Good Life: "Charles and John Cooper nominally ran the company together, but Charles very much had the final say. By all accounts he could be a bit of a tyrant, although he always apologised for his outbursts later."

John did most of the testing. Incredibly, to reduce weight and therefore improve performance, he wore neither goggles nor underpants when he raced!

In the early 1950s, roaring up the By-Pass, his long garageman's coat snagged on an open driveshaft and was ripped from his body, leaving him wearing a single sleeve. "If the stitches had been a bit stronger, I might not be here now," he told his dad.

Aerodynamic improvements were made by borrowing the wind tunnel used by the Hawker aircraft factory in Kingston. Tommy Sopwith, son of the Hawkers founder, was so impressed he ordered a car.

Though Charles's Surbiton works were dark and dingy, he somehow instilled loyalty in his underpaid employees, who numbered 35 at the firm's height. Work often spilled out across the pavement. Doreen Wells, a pupil at the school in Hollyfield Road, remembers having to step into the road on her way home as mechanics sprawled across the pavement.

Nine-year-old John behind the wheel of his first car in 1932

John drives the No1 Cooper Special, aged 11. Dad Charles is in the middle of the watching trio

Cooper's Garage, Hollyfield Road, 1954

The garage in the early 1960s and, left, the Langley Road overspill site

In 1954, when Cooper was the world's biggest maker of pure-bred racing cars, the iconic curved HQ was constructed in Hollyfield Road; its look mirroring the shape of the car bodies. Today, with this English Heritage blue plaque, it's Ivey House, base of Porsche specialist Charles Ivey.

ENGLISH HERITAGE
The former works of the COOPER CAR COMPANY
Winners of the Formula One World Championships in 1959 and 1960

Pressure on space at Hollyfield Road meant that the Coopers also took over the old Langley Motors garage in Langley Road, next to the Baptist church, for overspill production.

Uncertainty over petrol supplies in the wake of the 1956 Suez Crisis had boosted demand for more economical family cars, and the era of the Mini had arrived. Pipe-smoking John tried out a prototype. "Once you sat in the car and drove away, you immediately became part of it," he said.

The Mini was then the shortest wheelbase car ever built, yet could accommodate four, handled like a sports car, could park in tight spaces and was easy to get in and out of – a point which particularly appealed to women owners.

John Cooper suggested to Alex Issigonis, designer of the Morris Minor and Mini, that an improved Mini be built with a 1000cc engine (not the old 850cc), better brakes, two-tone paint job and less spartan interior. Given one to transform in Surbiton, John did the job in two weeks. The Mini Cooper was born in July 1961. Mass production began at the British Motor Corporation's Longbridge plant, near Birmingham. Customers paid £100 for the first Mini

Jack Brabham at Silverstone in 1960, with John, left, helping to push

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Coopers, with 7,000 produced in the first year. John got a £2 royalty for each car sold. It was a Swinging Sixties design classic, owned by Beatles and Royals, and in 1969 it was used by Michael Caine's gold thieves in crime caper The Italian Job.

Buoyed by the publicity that followed Stirling Moss's 1958 victory in the Argentine Grand Prix at the wheel of a 2.2-litre Cooper, profits rolled in. John and wife Paula bought 16 Kingsdowne Road (a plot now filled by two large homes). It was a brief stroll from the garage, and the ideal place to raise children Christine, Mike and Sally.

In 1959 and 1960 the Australian Jack Brabham, by now owner of the garage opposite Hook's North Star pub, won back-to-back F1 world titles in a works Cooper-Climax. All was going swimmingly.

Then, late for dinner in 1963, John was haring home up the By-Pass at 100mph in a prototype twin-engined Mini. As he neared his turn-off, a ball joint snapped, a rear wheel flew off and the car somersaulted down the fast lane. When John came round he was in Kingston Hospital with a fractured skull and major back injuries. The ambulance crew had thought he was dead.

Police rushed Paula to his bedside. Charles was also summoned, and didn't think his son would make it through the night. John, who had not worn a seatbelt, was out of action for six weeks and suffered serious migraines for the rest of his life.

Yet demand for Coopers kept growing. Actor Steve McQueen visited Surbiton to buy one, staying at John's home. "He was with us three nights; I was moved to the box room," recalls son Mike, who passed his driving test in a Cooper.

As a six-year-old, Mike (now 68) remembered dad returning from weekends away with armfuls of silver cups. "'The house was full of trophies! My father built a room to put them in… but one time we were away there was a break-in, and they were all taken, including the magnificent world championship trophies."

Charles died in October 1964, and John, who found it harder to work without his gruff dad than work with him, sold the racing side to Chipstead Motors for £250,000. John leased his old HQ to the Met Police and Cooper Cars moved to Byfleet where, in 1967, an unknown 19-year old joined the team as a junior mechanic; Ron Dennis, later CEO of McLaren.

John sold the Kingsdowne Road house and moved the family to the south coast. Yet the old showroom remained a Mini Mecca. In 1968 Rodger Florio opened the Surbiton Mini Centre by the Upper Brighton Road railway bridge (famed for the HELLLLP Mini sticking out of the wall).

Business was so good that in 1971 Florio rented the old Cooper showroom from John at the corner of Ewell and Hollyfield. I interviewed Rodger in the compact showroom in the late 1970s. There were two cars in what today is the Smart Style barber shop: Ringo Starr's old Mini, equipped with twin fuel tanks to let the drummer drive from Liverpool to London without being mobbed at petrol stations, and a British racing green D-type Jag with a Coventry Climax engine. "Yours for £5,000, with full racing history," said Rodger. I rushed home and excitedly asked my father, but the notion was vetoed. Today that car would probably be worth £2million. Ah well!

Charles and John Cooper will be remembered as the racing car pioneers who revived rear-mounted engines. "It was just a hell of a lot more convenient to have the engine at the back, driving a chain," John explained. "We certainly didn't feel we were creating some scientific breakthrough!"

Bit by bit the cars evolved into the F1 beauty that Moss drove to glory in Argentina in 1958, against more powerful Ferraris. Being light, tyre wear was minimal, so Moss confounded competitors by finishing the race without needing a pitstop. Since 1959, no front-engined car has won the world title. Cooper cars democratised a sport which was once a rich man's domain. John's racing school at Brands Hatch trained 8,000 pupils, and he was made a CBE for services to British motorsport.

Today grandson Charlie, 42, makes e-bikes, while new Cooper models still appear. Driving a Cooper was, said the first ad, the most fun you could have with your clothes on.

Tim Harrison

• **John Cooper, b Jul 17 1923, d Dec 24 2000**

Steve McQueen & John at Brands Hatch, 1962

Charles Cooper in 1962, two years before his death

The Fassett Road semi where John was born

The Coopers were the first occupants of 49 Beresford Avenue

Sixties singing star Petula Clark, who grew up in Salmons Road, Chessington, poses with a Cooper 1500 in 1956

Clockwise from left: Jack Brabham wins the 1961 New Zealand Grand Prix, with John by his side; the Cooper works in Surbiton in 1960, with two Formula 1 cars under construction; devil-may-care John, minus helmet, drives the prototype 500 in 1946

Clockwise from left: John with Rodger Florio in Surbiton Mini Centre; the showroom; 16 Kingsdowne Rd, now two houses; Mike and Charlie Cooper, son and grandson

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Jess with her own rescue dog, Carter.

Jess is ultra sound

Surbiton vet Jess Harding has a new framed certificate; an NCert in surgical nursing. "I'm very proud," said the clinical nursing manager at Vet4Life, Brighton Road. "I love radiology and using the ultrasound scan machine in emergency situations."

Practice manager Roxanne O'Brien described Jess as "a credit to the profession".

● 1st Long Ditton Guides could teach festival-goers at Worthy Farm, Glastonbury, a bit about camping. The guide unit for 10 to 14-year-olds, which meets at Long Ditton St Mary's junior school, Sugden Road, often takes trips to the country. They'll now be pitching a super-duper tent which sleeps 10 thanks to a £900 gift from Long Ditton Village Hall's donations committee.

More flats, less parking

The second phase of Signal Park by Tolworth roundabout will take total flat numbers to 1,200, rather than the 700 rejected by the council six years ago. Yet parking bays will be cut from 388 to 310 because, say developers, that's what the council decrees. The stats were revealed ahead of a planning application expected in October.

The first new owners of the 211 flats in the three Signal Park blocks, built by the Guinness Parnership, move in this week, with 40% of the one, two and three-bed apartments 'affordable'.

But it's Phase 2 (the ex-government building site and Toby Jug pub plot) that is vexing neighbours. Add in the Tolworth Tower site, and 5,000+ extra people will soon live beside the roundabout… all fighting over car parking spaces.

Guinness says Kingston Council and London Mayor Sadiq Khan now specify fewer spaces, to deter cars.

The newly unveiled plans improve landscaping, with Signal Park having a green spine and central garden. But the block envisaged for the Toby Jug site is 20 storeys; just shy of the tower's height opposite.

More consultation is planned before the formal bid goes in. Building is due to start in early 2025, finishing in 2030. Full plans at: **signalparkconsultation.co.uk/virtual-exhibition**

Tim Harrison

This house is in recess

Landlords in Surbiton are reconfiguring recessed entrance doors to stop homeless people settling in them. The long, glassy threshold of the former Rush hairdressers in Victoria Road has been shortened, and now moves are afoot to alter the old M&Co where the occupant has made a 'nest' with furniture and a potted-plant garden. His 'sofa' is a handily placed bench. The building (10,600sq ft of space over two floors) is being let by RK Real Estates, which wants £230,000 rent a year, but may sub-divide. The agent's website shows the building with its temporary 'tenant' in situ.

● Showing how fragile life on the streets can be, a shrine marks the memory of Anthony Chesterman, who held court between the pillars of HSBC, opposite the station. Flowers were left alongside a white-painted heart announcing Anthony died on June 7, with a note relating how friendly he was. Anthony once lived in Tolworth, where, a while back, he was given a charity-shop suit and a barber gave him a free shave to attend his father's funeral. A pal who regularly talked to Anthony left a rose and can of beer "as he was a very lovely man and a good friend".

● After another car crash at the cross roads of Effingham Road/ Windmill Lane, action has been demanded. This time a three-car pile-up on Jun 13 involved an Alfa Romeo, Mercedes-Benz and Vauxhall. Police, ambulance and fire attended, but luckily no one was badly hurt. Kathee La Hood of e-bike shop Torque Electric said: "If my husband had been 10 seconds earlier, he'd have been crossing."

Mark Herbert of Long Ditton Residents' Assn said: "Surrey County Council needs to sort this out. There are no crossroads signs on Effingham Road and sight lines are terrible from Windmill Lane." Cllr Nick Darby wants the junction safety-reviewed and markings refreshed.

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● The cutest art deco house in Surbiton is for sale. The bungalow with the distinctive circular porch entrance in Grove Road is unique... a building which stops passers-by in their tracks, and which has been coveted by developers for decades.

Dwarfed by mansion blocks and apartments, it brings to mind the home of curmudgeon Carl Fredricksen in the 2009 animated movie Up. Encircled by skyscrapers, he attaches balloons to his humble home to flee the threat of assisted living!

The bungalow was built in the autumn of 1929 on part of the former back garden of a house in Cadogan Road. The first occupants were Stephen and Gladys Bartter in 1930, say local records. After seven years they sold to a Miss Coleman, and there were five different owners between 1936 and 1996.

The current owners (the third generation of the same family to live there) are now moving out of the area.

The freehold on the two-bed, one-bath bungalow is being offered by Seymours at £1million. The Bartters would have been intrigued.

Give us back our bins

A petition is before councillors calling for a return of paper and glass recycling after communal bins vanished without consultation.

The council removed bulk skips from Waitrose car park as it says they fill too quickly, create a mess, and are superfluous thanks to kerbside waste collections in all streets. Yet the mess (pictured above) persists.

Labour's James Stanton presented the petition to Surbiton's neighbourhood committee, adding that he lived in a flat which did not have regular recycling collections and that he, and many others, relied on those bulk bins.

Addressing councillors, Mr Stanton called the bins' abrupt removal "unclean and ungreen" and said it could only worsen fly-tipping.

He accused Kingston Council (LibDems 43, Others 5) of making false promises about comprehensive kerbside recycling collections, citing Upper Brighton Road as an example. He added that it was impossible for many residents to drive to the tip in Villiers Road, Kingston, to use recycling facilities there. As well as calling for the bins' restoration, the petition asks for better consultation with residents in future.

This has proved an uncomfortable episode for the all-LibDem Surbiton committee. One insider told The Good Life: "Had Surbiton still been Tory, and the recycling bins had been removed, we'd all have been outraged!"

Altitude cheerers have attitude

Altitude Cheer have won a place at the prestigious Summit 2024 Championship in Orlando, Florida. The Tolworth cheerleaders' Avalanche team (age range 11-15) qualified in Barcelona for next May's prestigious US event. Head coach Maddie Garry, who won the world title with Team England in 2017, said: "Avalanche performed with such enthusiasm and passion! It was a fantastic routine and I loved watching all the hard work pay off on that floor."

Altitude Cheer run cheerleading and tumbling classes for all ages from four upwards at Tolworth Recreation Centre. It also runs summer camps in July and August. Email Maddie at **altitudecheerleading@gmail.com** or visit **altitudecheerleading.com**

● You don't have to be a Surbitonian to be Royal borough mayor... but it helps. New chain-wearer Diane White says she's "loving every minute" of her year in office, following Yogan Yoganathan and Sushila Abraham. Cllr White, the 189th mayor, has lived in the area more than 25 years. Until recently she was chief executive of Kingston Carers' Network. Her good causes are Kingston Charitable Foundation and Voices of Hope. "It'll be a joy to work with them," she said.

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MP pops up to read a story

CBeebies Bedtime Stories producers take note; Ed Davey is good at reading children's stories. The Surbiton MP captivated three-year-old Archie Hardiman with snippets from pop-up book Peekaboo! Tractor at the opening of the Little Free Library in Hobill Walk on the Alpha Road estate. The free outdoor library for adults and children (you donate or take books) was made by resident Kelvin Andrew, replacing a 2017 version. The original was well used, but closed in lockdown, and was then vandalised.

Alpha Road residents' chair Mary Parmar said: "Everyone loves it; they were heartbroken when it closed, but now our library's back!"

Storyteller Ed said: "This is great for residents on the Alpha Road estate. I hope lots of people use it; it's something for the residents to be really proud of."

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Crowning moments

Pinning the diamond on the crown, decorating cakes, a scavenger hunt and lots of homemade food kept kids occupied and adults happy in **Alexandra Drive**. After finding pictures of a street party 50 years ago, **Beaconsfield Road** residents were spurred on. The bake-off competition was won by Iris Earl, 10, with her double chocolate creation. The CotteRoyal pound, **Cotterill Road**'s events currency, raised £1,000 for The Prince's Trust and Turkish earthquake relief. Highlights included the Throne Room for royal attire pictures, a guitar rendition of God Save The King by Jake Collisson, 9, a 40-litre keg from The Park Brewery, comedian Brandon Palmer and songs from West End singer Mirja Martin and musician husband Adam. There was a global vibe to a BBQ and food-sharing party in **Dunton Close** including Albanian, Greek, Indian, and Chinese dishes. Residents of **Hamilton Avenue** are looking forward to finding other excuses for more street celebrations after their coronation bash was such a success. Neighbours and friends joined in with games, shared BBQs and Pimms. The sun shone and a lovely spread was enjoyed at **Highfield Close**'s street party, while **Kings Drive**'s crowds enjoyed 90 minutes of organised fun courtesy of Lesley and Ken Jackson. The event went into the evening with the Coronation Concert televised on a makeshift screen. Children had fun playing underarm cricket, tennis and smash ball pole in the street at the **Kings Road** celebrations. The ice cream van called by, there was lots of food and drink, a cake sale, raffles and £175 was raised for Mind and Samaritans. At Southborough Nursing Home in **Langley Avenue** families enjoyed a special lunch and lavish afternoon tea. **Manor Drive** neighbours had a tug-of-war, singer Agnes Jones entertained, Kevin and Chris O'Connor led line dancing, there was a fancy dress competition and an egg & spoon race. A bake-off was the main attraction in **Norton Avenue** with Ann Thurgood's coffee cake the adult winner and Zach and Poppy Goessen, 11 and 8, winners of the children's section. Kids dressed up and there was a great turnout for the **Oaks Way** party, while George IV was crowned instead of Charles III at the Strictly Minuets coronation do in **Portsmouth Road**. Members of the group, which performs baroque dances at St Raphael's Church, put their own period style on to the celebrations and dressed up for the occasion. Cheese-rolling, a slow bicycle race and postponed Easter egg hunt featured in **Pound Close**. Many a party has been enjoyed in **Rushett Close**, but the coronation bash, from 11 to 11, was one to remember. A cake competition, dog show, badminton, three-legged and egg & spoon races were followed by the legendary Rushett Close relay race. More than £150 was raised for good causes. Sid the dachshund won best dressed dog at the **St Matthew's Avenue** street party while the Child's Play nursery school provided a children's entertainer. A tug-of-war with five local coppers, races, face painting and a quiz were popular in **Tolworth Road**. At the Royal Star & Garter, **Upper Brighton Road**, events included live music and an indoor 'street party' lunch followed by a singalong. Open mic slots, a bouncy castle, an ice cream van and cake-baking (which raised £200 for the Skye High Foundation) were highlights of the day at **Woodlands Road**. Cocktail and cake competitions were a hit in **Worthington Road**. "It was great that children could play football and cycle in the road together," said Lloyd Edwards.

Top: it's always sunny in Hamilton Ave. Left: coronation spread in Southborough Nursing Home. Below: Edward Horrocks holds the Strictly Minuets carriage centrepiece

Clockwise from top left: a coronation sponge at Beaconsfield Road; barbecue time in Dunton Close; Jake Collisson, 9, plays God Save the King in Cotterill Road; a table of food at Highfield Close; Ken at the Royal Star & Garter; Zach and Poppy Goessen, 11 and 9, the junior bake-off winners in Norton Avenue; Alexandra Drive's pin the diamond on the crown; partying in Kings Road; Iris Earl, 10, bake-off queen of Beaconsfield Road

Niamh with Sid, best dressed dog in St Matthew's Ave

Ann Thurgood's cake was the toast of Norton Avenue

Rose, 5, is bubbly in Oaks Way; right, patriotic Louis, 8, in Worthington Road

Clockwise from above: Jill Fletcher enjoys her Pimms in Rushett Close; Alba, 3, is crowned in Woodlands Road where neighbours Kate Patterson, Antonia Procter and Laura Shaw enjoy refreshments; shirtsleeved bobbies in Tolworth Road; pals together in Pound Close

Flynn, 5, decorates cakes in Alexandra Drive; groaning table in Cotterill Road

Tug-of-war in Manor Drive

The scene in Kings Drive

Google tries to rename Berrylands street

Council officers have been ticked off for adopting Google's version of a street name, rather than the real one. Chiltern Drive runs uphill from Berrylands station before morphing into King's Drive and finally becoming Avenue South at the King Charles Road junction. But some algorithm at Google Maps has dubbed the stretch from the railway to the roundabout by the Berrylands pub 'Station Way', though no such name exists. Highways officer George Vickers ate humble pie at a neighbourhood meeting after presenting councillors with a list of resurfacing proposals, including Surbiton Hill Park 'from Station Way to Raeburn Avenue'. "Er, that should be Chiltern Drive to Raeburn Avenue," he corrected after Cllr Liz Green glowered at him over her glasses.

They're gunning for you

Think cops aren't checking your speed in Surbiton's 20 zone? Think again. At the Upper Brighton Road junction with St Matthew's Avenue a traffic cop trains his speed gun on drivers. Ones heading downhill towards Hook averaged 30mph, and got a 'calm it' motion from the copper. Surbiton-bound cars averaged 40, and were stopped and fined. "Drivers still think they're on the A3," muttered the officer.

● It's been a good year for Beyond Blocks. Andy Hoang's company, which teaches seven to 13-year-olds coding and engineering by designing Lego robots, was a Kingston business award finalist and won ex-Dragon Theo Paphitis' small business Sunday initiative in March. Now he's won best startup in the national Club Hub awards for kids' activity providers. Beyond Blocks was also nominated in two other categories.

Pic: Adrian Burrows

"For a guy who set up a business to teach kids to build Lego robots, I'm lost for words," said the former physics teacher. "I never expected this level of attention." Andy, of Cranes Park, founded the Surbiton club with after-school classes, robotics events and camps, two years ago. **beyondblocks.co.uk**

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

Remember to disco up the aisle

Protect your back this summer if you're flying off somewhere. Don't pack too much – a vested interest here as I know my wife always reads this.

If possible, pack multiple smaller bags, distribute weight evenly and be mindful when loading up the car.

Airport trolleys can be pulled as well as pushed. Use both arms when pulling so you are symmetrically loaded. Use two trolleys so one poor soul isn't struggling with everything.

Concentrate at the baggage weigh-in. It's not a race, no matter how many are in the queue. On board, move around every hour or so. Prolonged sitting is a predisposing factor for back pain. Make toilet trips an expedition. Take the chance to move, and disco dance your hips along the aisle!

Under no circumstances let your head loll forwards if you fall asleep – that's an excellent way to injure your neck.

Pack a small towel in your hand luggage and roll it up like a sausage. Intermittently use it as a lumbar support or neck pillow.

Remember the baggage reclaim area is worse than a rugby scrum. Keep clear of other travellers as they often lose any sense of decorum with the frenzy of getting their bags first. Take your time, use your legs to lift, and don't let the momentum of the carousel twist you around.

Above all, have a fabulous time.

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● The wheelchair-friendly path at Edith Gardens nature reserve has been overhauled by volunteers from rewilding group Citizen Zoo. The site in Berrylands is open, on request, to community groups who regularly bring visitors to boost wellbeing.

Green show a hit!

Visitors to Kingston's first Efficient Homes Show, at Hollyfield School, Surbiton Hill Road, were fascinated by the wealth of information on offer.

There were panel discussions by experts on products and green issues such as wall insulation, low-carbon homes and green jobs. Stallholder Donna Holt of Surbiton firm Electric4U said: "We had a very positive response; it was non-stop all day with people wanting information on solar, batteries, heat pumps and EV charging."

Another delighted with the response was recycling queen Janine Martin of Sunray Recycle in Tolworth. "The message is to make sure you put waste in the right place," she said. "There are many local places that will recycle the stuff that you think is rubbish."

Janine Martin, left, and Clive and Donna Holt

Cllr Ian Manders said: "Over 300 people came to find out how to improve their home, reduce their energy bills and help protect the planet. We had some great feedback from residents and businesses." He thanked Surbiton MP Ed Davey for opening the show.

● MP Ed Davey helps Queen's Prom Friends So-Shan Au and Phil Renton plant 100 sunflowers during a coronation Big Help Out event. Results in August!

● Artists Harriet Palmer and Sunnie Newby of Surbiton's Ninety-Five Prints have transformed the dull London River Yacht Club walls on Queen's Promenade with a bold mural, to the joy of Friends' chair Stefan Gross, and the acclaim of dozens who enjoyed the Promtastic open day on June 25. The mural is a backdrop to the new volunteer-created sensory garden, based on touch, smell, hearing, taste and sight; "a new Surbiton attraction," said Stefan.

● Two stag beetle loggeries and 80 whips of blackthorn and hawthorn were planted at the Wood and Richard Jefferies bird sanctuary off Oak Hill Grove by Surbiton Wildlife Group for the coronation Big Help Out. "It's a hidden oasis behind Surbiton station," said biodiversity officer Elliot Newton, keen to encourage tawny owls, badgers and bats. Get involved by emailing **surbitonwild@hotmail.com**

● Hebes, Cupressus, rose bushes, geraniums and begonias have been planted at Surbiton station after 108 plants were donated by the RHS to the Friends of Surbiton Station. Friends' chair Matthew Page said: "We'll be busy watering this summer." Join by emailing **friendsofsurbitonstation@gmail.com**

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King Charles site becomes dump

Travellers occupied the former King Charles Centre site, broke in and helped themselves to the building's electrical and water supplies… then left it looking like the corporation tip.

The group, attending the Epsom Derby race meeting, were moved on by enforcement officers, but not before they'd fly-tipped tons of rubbish, including 50 old car tyres. Hours later they drove three streets away and settled in the car lot in the Red Lion Road business park. Again they were moved on, firstly to Sutton, then New Malden, before finally leaving the area.

Kyle Hyams, of Coffee on the Corner cafe, sang the praises of the police. "Well done to local PCSO David who spent the day monitoring the site," he reported, as events unfolded.

The travellers' mess at the Hollyfield Road site still filled the centre's car park weeks later, while the building itself was flooded after attempts were made to strip out copper and lead piping, necessitating visits by Thames Water engineers.

The old King Charles Centre site was filled with rubbish

Keep green safe

Alexandra Millennium Green needs help to remain a charitable trust, safe from developers. "The problem is, I'm running out of helpers and trustees," said founder Roy Rathbone.

It all began when Tolworth Main Allotments were under threat. They were saved as remodelled plots, while the 12-acre green, beloved of dog walkers, was landscaped and a wildlife zone created. "After 30+ years I'm reduced to three trustees and two helpers, one of which is me," said Roy. "Having spent time and effort to protect it, I don't want it to be in jeopardy again."

Hands-on maintainers and willing trustees needed. Email Roy on **amgt2000@tiscali.co.uk** or call 07787 563 822.

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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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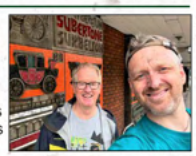
Keep mum! Sharon's talking

The next BookBox at St Mary's, Long Ditton, is Surbiton writer Sharon Wright's talk on Maria Brontë, the Brontë sisters' mum, on Wed, Jul 12, 8pm. Though eclipsed today by her progeny, Maria had an eventful life. Sharon's book, left, Mother of the Brontës, is discounted at the Regency Bookshop if you buy an event ticket. Or pay £7 on the door.

● Written a short play that deserves an airing, or fancy a go? The cornerHOUSE in Douglas Road needs plays for its week-long oneACTS showcase of original writing in May next year. Full info at **thecornerhouse.org** or email **cornerhouseoneacts@gmail.com** This is the 15th festival; a respected event in the art calendar. Keep it short – 15 to 30 minutes. A panel of judges pick from anonymised scripts, with full feedback given. Submission deadline: Tue, Oct 31.



● Washing up liquid and elbow grease have zhuzhed up mosaics outside Sainsbury's in Victoria Road thanks to Surbiton Art Trail's Stephen Young (right) and Queen's Prom Friends founder Julian Meers. The ceramic and mosaic relief panels were designed by husband-and-wife artists Henry Collins and Joyce Pallot in 1980.

"Public art needs to be maintained and not forgotten once it's installed," said Stephen.

The panels trumpet Surbiton's railway heritage, as well as local buildings, dates and historic place names including Subertone. There are also decorative details, one with two deer in profile on a coat of arms bearing an image of a tree.

● The Diary of Anne Frank is performed in the round at the cornerHOUSE, Sep 1-3. Based on Anne Frank's diary, it documents her life hiding with her Jewish family from the Nazis in an attic in Amsterdam in the Second World War. The diary was published in 1947, two years after her death in a concentration camp.

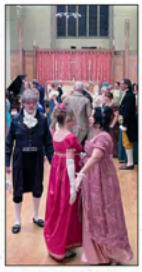
Director David Lawson Lean's own grandfather appeared as Anne's father in one of the early amateur productions of the play in the late 1950s.

He said: "It is a privilege to direct such a remarkable play." Tickets are now on sale at £12 (£10 concs) from **ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents**

● Not so much a pub crawl as a meander. Author, journalist and screenwriter Matthew Ogborn has written a guide to Surrey pubs with 20 of the best, easy-to-follow circular routes, from two to five miles, each starting and finishing at a pub. Matt, of Tolworth Park Road, includes his favourite locals: The Antelope, Maple Road; The Albion, Fairfield Road, Kingston; and The Spring Grove in Kingston. "The pub landscape has changed in the last 10 years. This book reflects ways pubs are luring punters back in," he said. "It also gave me an opportunity to explore how pubs have shaped the lives of their communities, and revel in the countryside around them."

● Surrey Pub Walks (Countryside Books) is at Regency Bookshop.

● Berrylands driving instructor Andy Langford has written Driving On – Are You Really Ready? as a follow-up to his 2021 book (above), Drive On When You're Ready. Andy, who lives in The Byeways and has taught learners for 30 years, says it's aimed at drivers who have recently passed their test. **andylangford.org**



● Surbiton's Regency dance class, Mrs Bennet's Ballroom, marked 10 years with a coronation ball, minueting in St Mark's church. Eighty from as far afield as Romania and Malta danced to music led by Andy Meyers of Kingston Chamber Orchestra, followed by a festive candlelit dinner and a costumed picnic next day in Painshill Park. Next classes: Jul 5 & 21, with a summer tea dance on Jul 30. More at **mrsbennet.co.uk**

● Diaries out! Thames Concerts restart at St Andrew's, Maple Road, on Sat, Oct 21, 7.30pm, with The Percussion Ensemble of London. Running since 1961, and enjoying a reputation for artistic quality and keen ticket prices, the monthly concerts have a parallel morning series, introduced by artistic director Ben Costello in 2015, to promote young musical talent. The first of these free farmers' market coffee concerts is at 10.30am, Oct 21, with Ukrainian brass sextet Freedom Pulse. **thamesconcerts.com**

● Good Life deliverer and musician Nat Cartier, 22, took a break from his Ewell Road round to play to sheep, crofters and locals in the Western Isles. Instagram: **@n.cartier**

Could you join the Belles?

The award-winning, all-women Berrylands Belles choir, who had a rapturous reception at their first overseas performance in Sweden, pictured, are recruiting.

Rehearsals for the singers, who perform pop, rock, folk, musical theatre hits and choral pieces, are term-time, Mondays, 8-9pm in Tolworth United Reformed church. All welcome, no experience necessary.

Founder, musical director and vocal teacher Bec Gresson (**becgresson@hotmail.com**) was delighted with the reception at the English church, Stockholm.

● Hannah Duncan's summer workshop, Sat, Jul 15, 3.30-6.30pm, at St Mark's church hall is "a playful afternoon of yoga, self-reflective writing and creative art", says the Douglas Road yoga teacher. Plus tea and cake. All levels welcome. **hannah.yoga/workshops**

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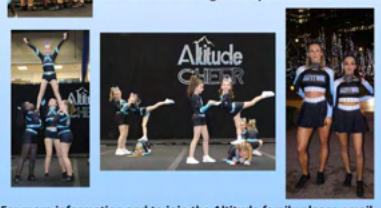

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Cheers! It's a new gym

There was a lot of high-energy pumping in Surbiton at the opening of a new gym, followed by celebration cocktails from Kingston's Bone Idyll. F45 Training in Brighton Road focuses on fitness for everyday life. The F in F45 stands for functional, while the 45 represents the minutes of a typical class length.

Two coaches are present at each session to supervise workouts one-to-one. It's personal tuition but in a group environment. Exercises are adjusted to suit individual fitness. Coaches teach use of the gym's impressive equipment range, while screen technology leads sessions.

"Whether your goal is performance or competition, aesthetics or just carrying a shopping bag, we'll train you," said coach Lia Hutchinson. The gym is open to anyone over 16. **f45training.co.uk/surbiton**

Players head off Down Under

Chelsea's Lauren James, Niamh Charles, Jess Carter and Millie Bright, pictured, are part of England manager Sarina Wiegman's 23-strong squad for the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand this month. Bright, who will captain the side, and Carter, helped the Lionesses win the Euros last year. Striker Sam Kerr wears the green and gold of Australia as she tries to inspire the Matildas to success on home soil. Also selected from the Chelsea Women's side who play at Kingsmeadow, are Melanie Leupolz and Ann-Katrin Berger, both in Germany's squad, while defender Eve Perisset swaps one shade of blue for another when she plays for France. Maren Mjelde and Guro Reiten have been called up for Norway, with Kadeisha Buchanan and Jessie Fleming on the list for Canada, and Zecira Musovic and Johanna Rytting Kaneryd for Sweden. Blues head coach Emma Hayes has been named Women's Super League manager of the season for the fourth time on the trot. England play Haiti on Jul 22. **Jane Grove**

● Dean Gaynor, below, has been appointed manager of Tolworth's new Corinthian-Casuals women's team. Dean used to coach men's Saturday sides. He's now putting together a squad to play in the 7th tier of women's football next season. "I'm looking to get the mentality right straight away," he said. "I believe in attacking football and players that will work hard for each other." Trials have taken place but more will follow. Female? Over 16? Interested? Email Casuals' general manager Paul Mitchell, **mitch@ccfcltd.co.uk**

● Need to keep the kids amused this summer? Think Wicked Wednesdays! Through July and Aug, noon-4pm, families can try bowling at King George Field Indoor Bowls Club. There'll be experienced bowlers to guide you and show you round. Ladies captain Vicki Harris said: "A two-hour session costs £3 per person. Bowls are provided; just wear soft-soled shoes." More info at **kgfibc1971@outlook.com** or **kgfindoorbowlsclub.co.uk** The Jubilee Way, Tolworth, club is the only indoor one locally. It marked its 50th anniversary last year. It has six rinks, a restaurant and car park.

Game, set, dispatch

You lot! Bed! And with that, Andy Murray's missus, Kim, took the kids home, so they missed seeing dad lift the Surbiton Trophy. Eight days of sun ended as a monsoon interrupted the men's final with Murray leading his Austrian opponent Jurij Rodionov 6-3, 3-1 at Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club.

When play resumed, Murray finished the job in 10 minutes flat with a 6-2 second set, having opted for the lush grass of Berrylands rather than the clay of Roland Garros in Paris.

But his four kids were whisked back to their Leatherhead home as the heavens opened; Judy Murray, a staunch courtside fan of her son, cradling her two-year-old grandson Teddie.

"My wife had to take the kids home," said the champion. "But this has been the perfect start to the grass season. The tournament has done an amazing job; the courts have improved since last year and huge thanks to the volunteers."

Club director Roy Staniland was "exceptionally happy" with the bumper crowds. Hollyfield School provided ballboys and ballgirls. Brit Katie Swan narrowly missed making it a GB clean sweep, beaten by Belgian Yanina Wickmayer in a tense third-set tiebreak. Murray went on to win Nottingham (where the kids **did** see him triumph) before a stumble at Queen's. **Tim Harrison**

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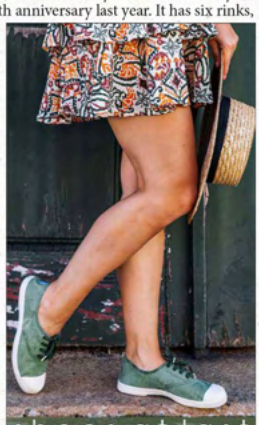

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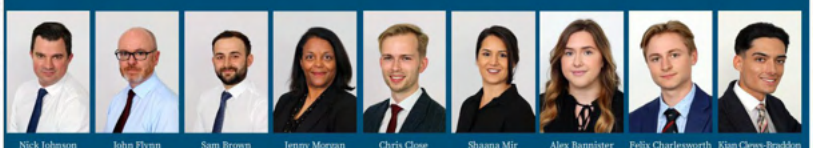

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