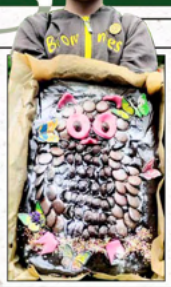
the good life

Issue 73 — *The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3* — Winter 2023

Saturdays 9am-1pm
DECEMBER 16
JANUARY 20
Maple Road KT6 4AW
Surbiton Farmers' Market

Caine & able

● Surbiton Royal British Legion stars in Michael's Great Escaper movie p5



● Rose, eight-year-old star baker in the 10th Surbiton brownie unit, made this stunning owl cake to mark the departure after 40 years' service of Grey Owl Debbie Stubbington p5

James, 11, Alex,11, and Sophie 10

● Rishi Sunak missed a trick at his much-vaunted Artificial Intelligence summit at Bletchley Park. He could have done with the expertise and insight of this gifted trio, whose robot design won the UK World Robot Olympiad at King's College, London. The three are regulars at the Surbiton-based Beyond Blocks coding club p8

Surbiton wins the lot!

Surbiton has swept the board in the borough's townscape awards… the first time it's happened in six decades.

Every gong in the Kingston Society annual roll call of excellence went to the town: new build, refurbishment, ecology, and the people's choice.

It's the first time Kingston itself has been snubbed, despite the market town being awash with building work. Thirty nominations in Kingston, New Malden and Chessington were batted aside by judges who gave the new-build prize to Siden Mews, Brighton Road (**1**); the old Jewson's yard. The 16-home scheme is, they said, "well-scaled" and "with an architectural integrity you don't often see in small housing developments".

Best restoration? Broomfield Lodge, once St Matthew's parish school in Ewell Road (**2**), saved from demolition and beautifully preserved and repurposed.

The ecology winner was Berrylands Nature Reserve at the end of Raeburn Avenue (**3**); "an example to the rest of the borough of the imaginative way a local team can ensure landscape and ecology is addressed in a way that enhances appreciation of nature".

By a walloping margin, the people's choice category went to Queen's Promenade, where volunteers have returned neglected gardens along the riverbank to their Victorian glory, most recently creating a new sensory garden (**4**) at the Surbiton end of the towpath.

"It's a wonderful accolade from residents who clearly enjoy the prom's transformation," said Friends' chair Stefan Gross. "We're thrilled."

He updated the society on prom work at a ceremony where certificates, signed by the mayor, were presented. Full details at **kts.org.uk**

Tim Harrison

1

2

3

4

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Remembering the fallen

Milky sunshine pierced the clouds at 11am at Surbiton's war memorial as 1,000 people stood in silence in Ewell Road for the annual outdoor service before buglers from the Royal British Legion's marching band sounded Reveille. It was the first Remembrance Sunday led by the new Surbiton Hill Methodist minister, the Rev Vindra Maraj-Ogden. Afterwards, the church served tea, while the bar at Legion HQ, Hollyfield Road, was packed.

Surbiton

Long Ditton

At Long Ditton's war memorial, a dog accompanied the outdoor gathering. It may have been a comment on the singing by the congregated crowd, or perhaps it just wanted to join in the service, as it enthusiastically barked through O God, Our Help in Ages Past, and the National Anthem. However it respectfully fell silent as trumpeter Perry Wade from Tiffin School played the Last Post and Reveille, and while the Rev Kuhan Satkunanayagam of St Mary's led the prayers for those who are suffering in conflicts.

A stalwart of the occasion, 93-year-old Tony Gernon, pictured left, who served in the RAF in Kenya, Malaya and Germany, represented Long Ditton's Royal British Legion in Betts Way.

● A surreal proposal has been put forward by the developer which owns the Seething Wells filter beds – at the centre of a bitter wrangle with conservationists. Cascina is suggesting greening over the top, while constructing work spaces below. The public are being urged to have their say. Don't hold back! p6

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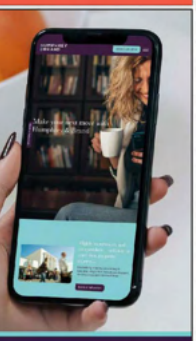

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Located by Berrylands train station

● Surbiton's cabbies don't know if they're coming or going. After 28 years of bacon baps at Wilders dinky deli in the station forecourt, it's now the vegetarian and vegan Busy Beans artisan cafe. It's proving a tough change for taxi drivers used to chorizo panini. Fresh sarnies start at £5.50, and there's a £4 coffee & croissant deal. Busy Beans has sister outlets in Epsom and Redhill. "Everything's vegetarian or vegan... no meat at all," said the manager.

Plough & Harrow returns

The Plough & Harrow, Long Ditton, reopens on Dec 5. The historic inn has its old name back. In the 1790s it was a tiny, thatched alehouse, but by the mid-1800s had a tiled roof and new wing. It has been gutted, refurbished and extended by Heartwood Inns, which has 21 pubs and bought the 230-year-old building in March. The last pint was pulled in what was then The George Evelyn in September last year.

There will be a cosy bar with double-sided fireplace, seats for 139 diners and an airy extension looking out on a landscaped garden.

There are picnic benches, 38 more seats in a garden room with retractable roof, and a new kitchen in the wing which once housed Walter Perkis's Victorian cycle workshop.

Lukas Ackermann, below, will leave The Cricketers in Cobham to run it. He said: "We'll serve fresh seasonal food daily, and a great selection of beers and wines too.

"House ales: Sharps Doom Bar, Timothy Taylor's Landlord and St Austell's Tribute. We'll also have one of my favourite Surrey Hills ales, Shere Drop. On tap, Guinness, Cornish Orchard cider, Peroni, Pravha, and Camden Hells and Pale."

www.ploughandharrowlongditton.com

Jane Grove

Winter warmer

Après ski without the ski? Hideaway, by Thames Ditton Marina, Portsmouth Road, is an 'alpine lodge' for winter with cheese fondue & schnitzel. Tue-Sun from 10am. **hideaway-surbs.co.uk**

● Trestle tables groaned under the weight of homemade cake and biscuits for a Macmillan coffee morning at Surbiton Royal British Legion. MP Ed Davey recommended the scones and cup cakes, the mayor Cllr Diane White added a touch of stardust, and your intrepid reporter indulged in a huge piece of apple cake – all in a good cause, of course. It was organised by Mary Parmar and Dawn Lloyd (pictured with the mayor), and it raised £722 for the charity which supports people going through treatment for cancer. "It's a great cause and a really good community event to get everyone together," said a delighted Cllr White, eyeing up a chocolate cake.

● Meet Ieva Dulkyte. The Lithuanian's soup stall at Surbiton farmers' market (Instagram: **@ievas_yummy_soups**) includes roast pepper & tomato. From £5. "I'm here each month, and do other markets as well," she said. "But this one's good!"

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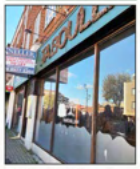
the good life

Editor: Tim Harrison

Set up at the start of 2012, the community paper for Surbiton, Tolworth, Berrylands & Long Ditton appears regularly from March to December. We deliver to 12,300 homes. Issues are also 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. Email **thegoodlifesurbiton@gmail.com** Between editions, follow us on Instagram (scan the QR code) and Facebook (**@thegoodlifesurbiton**) and check our website. Back issues at: **thegoodlifesurbiton.co.uk**

This paper is also available at Michael's shoe repairs; Shoes at Last; the cornerHOUSE arts centre, and direct by post (see above).

● I've got a crush on you. A young fruit fan pressed some of Toni Izard's Abundance crop at Surbiton's farmers' market, all harvested by volunteers, then distributed for jam-making, or turned into juice. More at **www.ttkingston.org**



● No sooner opened than closed! Lebanese diner Taboullah in St Mark's Hill is up for grabs; bigger than most at 2,475 sq ft, but is the £45,000 annual rent too daunting? Before Taboullah it was Mediterranean Tony & Frankey, which limped through lockdown. Many still fondly recall it as Magic Wok, the Chinese which was part of Surbiton life for three decades.

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Merry Christmas

Singles welcomed
The flock at St Mary's, Long Ditton, feature in a new promotional video urging single souls to attend church; divorced, single, widowed, whatever.

School reflects
Surbiton High used world mental health day to update that it now has two nurses, three counsellors and four mentors in the senior school.

Choir is recruiting
Audition-free choir Sing Now seeks new voices. Surbiton Methodist church, Ewell Rd, Tuesdays, 7.30pm. **sing-nowsurbiton@outlook.com**

Making wreaths
Festive wreath workshop with mince pies & mulled wine at The Antelope, Maple Road, Dec 4 & 5, 6.30-8.30pm. £55. Email **fleurieness@gmail.com**

Village hall chat
Quiz Long Ditton's councillors at the autumn residents' association meeting at the village hall, Ewell Road, on Wed, Nov 29 at 8pm.

Bazaar bargains
A free festive bazaar supporting artists & traders. Surbiton Club, 34 St James' Road. Sat, Nov 25, 12.30-5pm.

Writing guidance
Novelist Vesna Goldsworthy discusses the process of writing at BookBox in St Mary's church hall, Long Ditton, on Wed, Dec 13 at 8pm.

Alex's good cause
The Alexandra Drive shop parade in Berrylands has live music, Santa and stalls at a festive event, Sat, Dec 2, 4-6.30pm, for Kingston Samaritans.

Salon switches
Salon No13 at 13a Victoria Road changes for a day from hairdressers to market, with a host of local craft stalls. Sun, Dec 3, from noon-5pm.

Balanced appeal
The charity Balance, based in Ewell Road, Surbiton, which helps adults with learning disabilities, needs more befrienders. **balancesupport.org.uk**

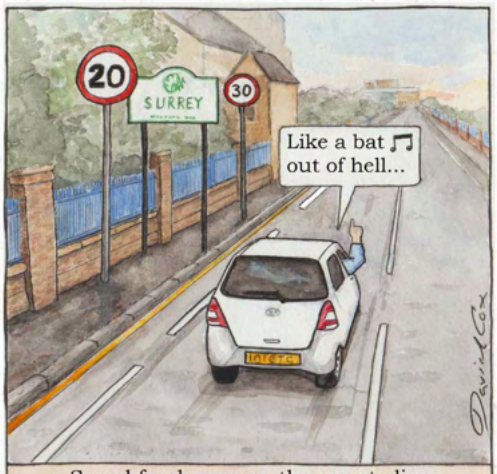
Time to cut back?
Residents are being urged to trim hedges and trees which overhang pavements after a partially sighted man was injured by brambles.

Grotto is opening
The Christmas fair at Grand Avenue primary and nursery on Sat, Nov 25 (noon-3pm) has Santa's grotto, live singing, country dancing and stalls.

Area's gathering
Surbiton neighbourhood committee next meets on Tue, Dec 12 at 7.30pm at Glenmore House in The Crescent. Agenda: **moderngov.kingston.gov.uk**

Meeting is the biz
Run a firm, or work locally? Join Surbiton Business Community's next monthly coffee chat: Fri, Dec 8, noon in The Duke, Victoria Rd. **meetup.com/surbiton-business-community**

SURBITON LIFE
by David Cox



Speed freak crosses the county line

Laurels and Hardy

Seeking literary inspiration? Try sitting at a desk, gazing at a view Thomas Hardy enjoyed.

A four-bed Victorian townhouse in Hook Road, named Hardy's Villa, by the spot where the novelist completed Far From The Madding Crowd, is for sale. It even has a secluded 150 sq ft writer's hut beyond the laurels, bamboo and acers at the end of the 130ft garden.

Bookcases abound in the house which displays a blue plaque noting that Hardy spent the first year of married life in St David's Villa, the next-door property, which was knocked down in 1960 and replaced by the Midhurst Court block.

Hardy's Hook Road stay lasted a year from October 1874, after the 33-year-old writer wed Emma Gifford.

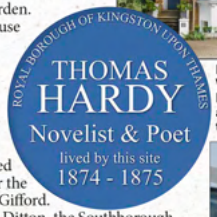
He wrote poems about Long Ditton, the Southborough area (then a rural idyll) and Surbiton itself.

Indeed Hardy thought of himself as a poet who only wrote novels to pay the bills. His house was over the road from a squat alehouse; an early forerunner of today's Maypole pub.

So many of the Victorian houses in Hook Road have been pulled down and replaced that No15 – known as Hardy's Villa and currently on the market with Seymours estate agents at £1.25m – is a rare survivor.

Hardy picked St David's Villa to rent because he was pally with Francis Honeywell, who had a piano shop in Surbiton Road. The Surbiton of the 1870s was a town of around 8,000 souls.

Tim Harrison



Hardy's Villa at 15 Hook Road and, left, the plaque

Keeping it clean for 40 years

Congratulations to Surbiton dry cleaner Roberts, which celebrates 40 years of trading on November 25.

"I opened it on my 40th birthday," said owner Robert Helliwell, proudly posing in the centre of a group of staff in the reception of the Claremont Road shop. You don't have to be Einstein to work out that somebody's also marking a significant birthday!

Robert thanked regular customers and long-serving staff who have supported the business so loyally.

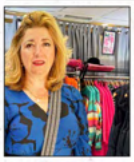
Bungling raiders target Boots

Two thieves targeted Boots, ransacking shelves before fleeing down the alley to the St Philip's Road car park as the Victoria Road store opened on Wed, Oct 25. One dropped his mobile, which police now have. "Baskets were scattered everywhere," an eye-witness told The Good Life. "You feel so sorry for shopkeepers."

Boots' manager said the battle against shoplifting was constant, adding: "We lose so much each day; no wonder so many shops are going out of business."

Ritechem, three doors down, was also recently targeted. Both have moved perfumes to secure areas to deter thieves.

● Looking for good-value pressies? King George Field Indoor Bowls Club in Jubilee Way, Tolworth, holds a fair with a mix of craft stalls, plus food and drink. The K2 stops outside and there is free parking. Sat, Nov 25, 10am-2pm. Adults £1, children free. **www.kgfindoorbowlsclub.co.uk**



● A new pop-up shop next to Sage's health store, run by Amanda Hamlyn (left), focuses on sustainable, affordable fashions. SW19 London appears one week a month at 24 Brighton Road, and includes Scandi brands, quilted coats made of recycled plastic, and cruelty-free Merino wool hats. Next dates: Dec 4-10.

● Surbiton's rubbish now goes into green dustcarts after Kingston Council switched to an all-electric fleet, with 27 new vehicles replacing diesel trucks in a move calculated to remove 554 tonnes of CO_2 a year… like taking 270 cars off the road.

The way food waste and recycling is collected is also changing. Up to now, each has gone into compartments in the same dustcart. Now two electric vehicles will be used; each able to stay on the road longer, and only having to go to the tip when completely full. "It's a huge milestone for climate action in Kingston," said Cllr Noel Hadjimichael.

A quarter of everything that ends up in general rubbish bins in Surbiton is food waste that could be made into compost and green energy. If all borough food waste was recycled, it would knock £800,000 off the collection bill.

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Regular meetings at the cornerHOUSE, 116 Douglas Road
surbitonhistoricalsociety.org

An inspirational sportsman

NOTABLE SURBITONIANS
Peter Harding

As Steve and Celia Harding walked up Wembley Way ahead of the 2016 Community Shield, they looked up to see the grinning face of their teenage son Peter beaming down from a giant screen.

"It was uncanny," admitted Steve.

Four years earlier, Peter had cycled back from Hollyfield School as usual, climbed the stairs to his bedroom in the Elgar Avenue family home, and had a life-changing accident. His heart stopped beating for 20 minutes.

"Walking upstairs is the last thing I remember," said Peter, now 26, who – with typical understatement – looks back on that moment as "a bit of a gear change".

Ambulance, defibrillator, ICU at St George's… and he finally came out of a coma with a brain injury that left him with serious physical limitations on the left side of his body.

Peter at Grand Avenue primary

But this Surbiton schoolboy was no quitter. Determined to continue playing the sport he loved (he'd been a promising midfielder for Surbiton Wizards and Corinthian-Casuals), he worked hard on his rehab, successfully trialled for regional teams, became part of the elite disability football programme, trained as a coach and then, on that August afternoon in 2016, was proclaimed FA Young Volunteer of the Year to an ovation from 90,000 fans, and a handshake from England 1966 World Cup hero Geoff Hurst.

It's been an extraordinary journey for Peter; an inspiration to those he coaches, and the youngest Notable Surbitonian we've ever featured.

From Grand Avenue primary to working with Gary Lineker & Co on Match of the Day, Peter encourages others to make the most of their lives, regardless of obstacles.

He has played trombone at Ronnie Scott's ("Mind you, I was never asked back!"), he was part of Fulham FC's development centre and played for Chelsea FC's disability team… walking out into a packed Camp Nou in Barcelona to be high-fived and hugged by Lionel Messi who, presumably buoyed up by meeting Peter, went on to score a hat-trick that day!

He played the White Rabbit in the cornerHOUSE's Alice in Darcyland panto, he was head boy at Hollyfield and he sums up the meaning of determination.

"Playing football was hard," he said, looking back to the early days after his life-changing injury. "My brain wouldn't tell my feet what to do; I hated it!"

He successfully applied to be part of the BBC's Get Inspired programme, gaining a work placement at Match of the Day, where he rapidly became a popular member of the production team.

He currently lives in Manchester, has a great girlfriend, Beth, is a committed vegetarian, and is on a mission to popularise disability sport, including amputee football, which features one-armed goalies and outfield players on crutches (if the ball touches a crutch, it's deemed 'handball').

Peter even served on the FA's Disability Board, shaking up the cosy chumocracy around the table by challenging them to implement a string of radical improvements to address real needs.

At an FA young leaders' forum he demanded to know why more disabled people weren't taking part in grassroots sport. "Why can't we?" he asked… spawning the slogan and website (**www.whycantwe.co.uk**) of a campaigning group which, among other things, works to improve stadium access for disabled sports journalists.

Back at Surbiton's cornerHOUSE, where he recently gave a presentation on his Why Can't We campaign group

The conclusion is that he would probably not have achieved half the things he has were it not for that fateful moment in 2012.

TV presenter Dan Walker describes Peter as "the world's cutest man". It's hard to disagree.

Tim Harrison

● Peter Harding, b Feb 25 1997

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Hop, hop, hooray!

Is your garden full of hops? A brewery wants to add Surbiton's to its fermentation tanks to flavour a golden ale sold at The Grove and The Antelope pubs. The beer is The Wanderings, and the Park Brewery (near Kingston's Cambridge estate) needs more wild Surbiton hops for next spring's brew. Director Frankie Kearns, below, said: "The Wanderings is a new beer with a community theme, made with wild hops from gardens around Kingston and Surbiton. Our aim is to roll it out annually, and increase the local hop count." Forty barrels were made this year, with the predominant hop variety being Cascade.

● Much merriment at the Surbiton Flyer's latest board; a plea for customers, with the offer of full training!

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Taking the salute – in the bar in Hollyfield Road

Surbiton's starring role

It's not every day Sir Michael Caine props up a bar in Surbiton, but the 90-year-old actor did just that in The Great Escaper, his latest film, which hit the big screen last month to great acclaim.

Sir Michael was at the Surbiton Royal British Legion social club in Hollyfield Road for two days' filming last year, when the venue was transformed into a bar in Normandy for the moving drama about real-life Second World War naval officer Bernard Jordan.

Bernard, 89 at the time, 'absconded' from his nursing home in Hove, East Sussex, to make a bold solo expedition to attend the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings in France after missing out on an official organised trip to the commemoration. His adventures hit the headlines in newspapers around the world.

Caine, a two-time Oscar winner who is one of only two actors who has been nominated for an Academy award in every decade from the 1960s to 2000s, stars in The Great Escaper with the late Glenda Jackson, playing his wife Rene, in her final screen role. The Guardian described their collective performances as terrific, and Caine's moving portrayal as 'knockout'.

Surbiton Royal British Legion chairman Mike Jackson said it was great hosting the film crew. "There were around 40 people here for the filming, but you wouldn't have known that they had been here after they left," he said. "Everything was replaced exactly as it was."

One of the most powerful scenes of the film occurs in the bar when Caine's character and co-star John Standing salute a group of German veterans, also there to honour their fallen comrades.

The Legion bar was filled again last week, after Surbiton's annual Remembrance Sunday parade and open-air service.

Surbiton Royal British Legion's sunflower and poppy display was on show as John Standing (left) and Michael Caine recorded the bar scene

The station sniffers

Who let the dogs out? Passengers at Surbiton station were caught up in a major anti-drugs operation as 20 officers stopped everyone entering the barriers to be sniffed.

It was part of a drive to break county lines; drug gangs using the rail network to send teenagers to peddle heroin and crack cocaine far and wide. Why Surbiton? "It's a busy transport hub," said a PC.

Grey Owl takes flight

There were cheers and tears at Surbiton Hill Methodist church hall, Ewell Road, as 10th Surbiton brownies bid farewell to Grey Owl Debbie Stubbington after 40 years. As Brown Owl, she turned up every term-time Tuesday evening before becoming first leader of the rainbows, then Grey Owl, a role she's had for the last two decades.

"Leaders and brownies will miss her enthusiasm, creative flair and fun approach to girlguiding," said current Brown Owl Val Reid.

Brownie Rose baked an owl cake for the party, and division commissioner Michelle Roberts presented a long-service award as well as gifts from grateful parents.

There were fewer girls in the Surbiton Festival parade this year, because of leadership issues. "It's a shame as we use it to recruit girls and volunteers," said Val. Though some units have closed, there are guides, brownies, rainbows and rangers in Surbiton, Berrylands, Hook and Chessington.

"We still have a healthy waiting list of girls wanting to be part of girlguiding, but we can't offer them places because of leadership shortages," said Val. Interested? **www.girlguiding.org.uk**

Gather at the tree

There'll be dancing, singing, carols and live music from pub singalong duo Baz & Dave at the Long Ditton Lights Up event on Sun, Nov 26 from 4-6pm.

Gather at the tree at the corner of Sugden Road and Rectory Lane for the festive lights switch-on.

Also promised: 1st Long Ditton Guides, St Mary's choir, and Scales & Tales performing arts group, together with stalls, a barbecue, mulled wine, games and a raffle.

Revamped hall opens

The ribbon is cut, opening a major refurb to St Mary's hall, Long Ditton; a top-to-toe redecoration plus new loos involving plumbers, sparks and builders coordinated by Terry Lynch of Telson Roofwise. Funding came from parishioners, Elmbridge Council (£15,000) and lottery (£9,750).

Ann Leeson and the Rev Kuhan Satkunanayagam cut the ribbon Pic: Sue le Roux

Clandon Wood

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Guildford in Bloom

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Have your say on filter beds idea

Cascina's vision specifies underground employment areas beneath a new sward of public recreational open space

Isle of Man property firm Cascina wants feedback on its proposal to turn Seething Wells' historic filter beds into recreational open space. Underneath would be a subterranean 'employment scheme' – although what it would house is not specified.

Share your thoughts on the vision for 10 of the 14 acres in Portsmouth Road via **surbitonriverside.co.uk**, by Dec 1. The blurb states: "Large areas of Surbiton have a lack of quality open space. Nearby Victoria and Long Ditton recreation grounds are predominantly grass, used for playing pitches, and access to the wider expanse of Hampton Court Park and Bushy Park is severed by the river.

"There is a great opportunity for Surbiton Riverside to address this, to provide a substantial area of high-quality open space with benefits to local residents' wellbeing.

"There is much design work to be undertaken, but at this stage we are keen to explore the principle of our approach."

Given its track record at thumbing its nose at conservationists' bids to protect the Sinc (site of importance for nature conservation), and Metropolitan Open Land, it's unsurprising the ideas are viewed with scepticism by those who champion its preservation and enhancement – not only for its historic importance, but its value for wildlife: 75 bird species and 11 types of bats.

Co-chair of Swag (Seething Wells Action Group) Tai Li-Ling said she welcomed the owners' acknowledgement of the importance of recreational open spaces "however the proposal removes all seven of the filter beds which are at the core of this unique site".

"There is a need for the heritage, biodiversity and protected species found here to be included in any proposal," she said. "We welcome this first step in engaging local community groups and the move to safeguarding this open space."

Swag's ideas have included preserving the filter beds as a wetland area with six water pools, boardwalks where people could stroll, sit and swim, and a hide for bird-watchers.

Seething Wells ward councillor Liz Green had mixed feelings about the proposal. "I see an advantage in the site not just sitting as a stripped-back eyesore for another 20 years, and I do believe the owners would do this, but it would remove all the heritage, and is the roof of an underground space really good enough for a nature reserve?

"What is the 'employment space' for? Archive storage or a data centre is a very different proposition to a distribution centre, for instance. And how would we pay for the upkeep of a nature reserve?"

The site has been subject to numerous unsuccessful planning applications as far back as 1998. One, in 2013, for 64 floating homes and a 92-berth marina, was refused by Kingston Council, and refused again on appeal after a high-profile public battle. Since then there have been numerous skirmishes between the council and Cascina over pesticides, pontoons for moorings, storage, removal of rubbish and upkeep of site wall and railings.

The filter beds were built in 1852 to provide London with clean drinking water after the 1838 cholera epidemic. Once Thames Water stopped using it in 1992 it became a wildlife haven before being taken over by Cascina.

Last month, the company advertised the site for rent – suitable for agricultural and forestry use – in Farmers Weekly. **Jane Grove**

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Lampposts double up

Surbiton is trialling 'smart lampposts' which double as electric car charging points; one of six locations in the UK. The council has been given £245,700 to test a new generation of lamp standards that also charge cars and boost wi-fi. If successful, the pilot (funded to March 2025) will expand to include traffic lights, benches, bus stops... even bins. Data minister John Whittingdale said: "It shows how wireless technology can enable innovation and better public services."

Megan's the star turn

Pic: Habitats & Heritage

Springwatch presenter Megan McCubbin launched the borough biodiversity partnership at Kingston Uni, discussing local authorities' role. "In this time of ecological collapse, they can drive forward nature's recovery, with benefits for wildlife and people," she said. "It's great to see Kingston Council is committed to becoming a leading borough for nature conservation."

Cllr Ian Manders, council chief executive Sarah Ireland and biodiversity officer Elliot Newton detailed projects including commitments to improve the Hogsmill, increase hedgehog numbers and rewild Tolworth Court Farm.

The partnership (made up of Habitats & Heritage, Citizen Zoo, ZSL, Community Brain, South East River Trust and the university) will prioritise habitat types and species, and harness community action to encourage conservation.

Rose Theatre CEO Robert O'Dowd

● Join a free Think Green round table on the circular economy on Tue, Nov 28, 4-5.30pm, at Kingston's Quaker Centre as innovators from fashion, construction, tech and food share their expertise. The aim: save resources, reduce environmental impact and identify like-minded markets and customers. The Rose Theatre's Robert O'Dowd addressed the first face-to-face meeting in Sept. Open to all borough businesses. **kingston.gov.uk/climate-change/climate-change-information-businesses**

Boost to pond life

The three main ponds in Fishponds Park, and the stream linking them, are to be restored in January and February, before the nesting season.

Work includes a pump chamber inlet, pond relining, silt reduction and bank protection. A pond-dipping platform will be built with new planting, fencing and better access.

Trees will be thinned out to reduce leaf accumulation (which causes algae) and improve light and air flow so the ponds can support more life. Established trees will be preserved and secured.

Friends' chair Rob Eyre-Brook said: "The state of the ponds has long been our biggest concern. This project will make such a difference." The £152,000 will largely be met by a levy on developers.

Biodiversity officer Elliot Newton will discuss the project at the Friends' agm at the Royal British Legion, Hollyfield Road, at 11am on Sat, Dec 2. All welcome. **fishpondspark.org/friends-of-fishponds**

Rob Eyre-Brook and Elliot Newton

Puddles plea for outdoor learning

Teacher Lauren reads Julia Donaldson's Room on the Broom

Walking in a wood collecting sticks and leaves, looking for tadpoles and frogs in a small pond, measuring trees, making dens and reading stories outdoors are all part of Muddy Puddles' mission to provide a rich learning environment for two to five-year-olds.

The not-for-profit pre-school, at Long Ditton Cricket Club's pavilion in Stokes Field off Betts Way, hopes to preserve its many outdoor and indoor play-based activities, as well as its nature, science, cooking and multicultural clubs with a GoFundMe campaign, aiming to raise £20,000 to secure its future.

Priya Morgan, treasurer of the pre-school, rated outstanding by Ofsted, said: "Due to Covid and rising costs, our hard-earned reserves have been depleted and government funding cannot keep pace. We face difficult choices and immense pressure, but our determination to nurture the next generation of our community remains as strong as ever.

"Muddy Puddles now stands at a crossroads and needs support to continue providing this outstanding service to the members of our community who need it most. Contributions will secure the future of our preschool and keep it running for years to come." **gofundme.com/f/muddy-puddles-preschool-needs-your-help**

● St Mary's churchyard looks top notch thanks to a gardening team which includes (left) Chris Howard, son James and Tessa Vallings. Parishioners have mown grass, trimmed hedges, tended roses, cleared fallen wood and reined in ever-encroaching ivy. "The aim is to keep the churchyard looking cared for, memorials accessible, with space for wildlife & wildflowers," said Peter Topp. Graves in the Long Ditton church, which has a silver eco award, include a Titanic victim. **stmaryslongditton.org.uk**

● Does a garden shredder sit forlornly in your shed? The Friends of Queen's Prom, who have transformed the riverside between Surbiton and Kingston, need it.

The group has a compost area in its pocket park, opposite Raven's Ait, to improve flowerbeds along the path.

"With a shredder, we could generate more compost on site, enriching the prom's soil structure and ecosystem," said Friends' chair Stefan Gross. Volunteer via **queens promenade friends.org**

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● Hats off to the crafters! Meet Winifred Sanderson, and the folk from the Elmbridge Crafters who created her. Winifred (at the corner of Elmbridge and Grand avenues) and sisters Mary (Elmbridge/Elgar) and Sarah (Grand/Greenfield) were magicked up by the Berrylands crocheters and knitters for Halloween in honour of cult comedy fantasy Hocus Pocus starring Bette Midler, Kathy Najimy and Sarah Jessica Parker. They also created Frankie the monster for a pillar box in Chiltern Drive near Berrylands station.

Raising a cuppa to Andy

Diane Northway and Alice Dalrymple fundraise at the Tarte

Customers ate wedges of baked chocolate tart and sipped coffee to help raise money for The National Brain Appeal which funds the diagnosis, treatment and care of those with brain diseases such as dementia, epilepsy and Parkinson's.

The fundraiser at the French Tarte in Maple Road was in memory of Andy Baxter, a part of the team at the French Table next door until his rare form of frontotemporal dementia prevented him from being able to work safely.

Andy, of Fassett Road, Kingston, still enjoyed a slice of tart and cuppa at the Tarte until his death in July at 55.

Andy's wife Alice, and sister Diane who works at the cafe, want to help raise awareness of frontotemporal dementia which typically affects 45 to 64-year-olds, impacting their personality, behaviour, language skills and speech.

"Andy was such a wonderful man," said Alice. "He really loved people, was a great mentor, and had a wicked sense of humour. The changes in him were very subtle at first; so subtle. A lot of people could also be living with this disease and not recognise the symptoms.

"That's why we want to raise awareness about it."

www.nationalbrainappeal.org **Jane Grove**

Hugs make smiles

Sue Littleboy, Denise Corbett, Debbie Phillips and Rita Nicholas with some hearts and hugs

Hearts and hugs festooned the railings of Surbiton Royal British Legion and Fishponds Park to mark World Mental Health Day.

Knitters and crocheters of the social club's Stitch and Natter group created the gifts to bring smiles to faces of folk walking down Hollyfield Road. Everyone was encouraged to take one to adorn a bag or use as a key fob.

The group, which meets on the second Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm and is open to all including those who have never knitted or crocheted before, began making them in February. Since then, 1,200 have been made; many given to local hospitals, care homes, RBKares, Mind, and CAMHS, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Organiser Denise Corbett said: "I spoke to one family who walked by with their children as we were putting up the hearts and hugs. They had just had a bereavement, so taking some hearts and hugs really lifted their spirits."

She explained that the project was part of the 'random acts of kindness' which knitters and crocheters do.

"Sometimes you need something to cheer you up. People could just take one, and put it in their pocket. Hopefully it will have made them feel a bit happier and cheered them up."

● Unwanted gifts could help the Fircroft Trust's Christmas party on Dec 13 go with a swing. Bring them to the charity at 96 Ditton Road, marked for men or women. "It makes Christmas special for the people we support," said Jill Fletcher Meloun. The charity supports those with learning disabilities, autism and mental wellbeing issues. Or you can donate to help provide food and entertainment. **justgiving.com/tfircroftt**

● A bereavement course aims to help people cope with the pain of grief. "We respond to loss differently, and although the journey of grief is individual, many aspects are common to all," said Susan Kang. The Bereavement Journey at St Matthew's in St Matthew's Avenue includes facilitated discussion groups. It begins on Jan 9, 2-4.30pm, and is aimed at those of all faiths or none. Call 07745 795395.

● Planners have vetoed 50ft phone masts in Surbiton green spaces; at St Andrew's Square, in a conservation area, and in the Burney Triangle, Burney Avenue. "I wish telecoms companies would work with us to find suitable locations," said Cllr Liz Green. "It would save a lot of stress and worry!" Deluged with objections, planning officers ruled both sites unsuitable. Cignal Infrastructure has six months to appeal.

● Tenancy advice? A drop-in service has begun at Surbiton Library so anyone with rent issues can see a Kingston Council housing officer in person. No need to book. "We're committed to making it as easy as possible for tenants and leaseholders to contact the housing service," said Cllr Emily Davey. "This is one way of making the housing department more accessible." Fortnightly at the Ewell Road library. Next dates: Nov 28, Dec 12, Jan 9 and Jan 23, at 10am-4pm, or book a timed appointment at the Guildhall by calling 020 8547 5000 or by emailing **housing.officers@kingston.gov.uk**

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● "I'm still pinching myself," said Andy Hoang, founder of Surbiton's Beyond Blocks, which teaches 7s to 13s coding and engineering with LEGO robots. "We won the UK World Robot Olympiad finals." James, 11, Alex, 11, and Sophie, 10, beat scores of others at King's College, London, qualifying them to represent the UK at the internationals in Panama... which they've had to decline as it clashes with their 11+ exams!

This year's theme was maritime ecology, with a marooned whale to be saved and brought to deep water, coral reefs to be repositioned, and cargo ships' waste to be taken ashore and placed in the right areas.

Teams were rewarded for reducing their robots' weight to be more efficient and environmentally friendly.

Beyond Blockers coach Kathryn Kelly said: "We had a great day, seeing everyone's different ideas and solutions." Alex turned 11 on the day – a great way to celebrate his birthday.

● Ever-observant snapper David Jacobson was fascinated to spot, while walking Scruffy, that the good people of St Leonard's Road have such valuable rubbish that they padlock it up!

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Cottage is to vanish

School Cottage in Hollyfield Road is to be demolished to make way for a four-storey building with seven flats.

The former caretaker's house sits in a lonely little spot next to the Surbiton Royal British Legion and in front of Avondale Gymnastics Club. It is opposite Fishponds Park.

Permission was granted by councillors on the Surbiton neighbourhood committee for the car-free development.

It is subject to 'conditions and informatives' which include secure and covered parking facilities (encompassing over-sized bikes), a request for electric bike charging facilities, and a requirement for the developer or owner to inform future owners of the flats, or tenants, that they will not be eligible to apply for permits if any controlled parking scheme was introduced in the road in the future.

Jane Grove

● Blow away the cobwebs of Christmas and put your best foot forward to greet 2024 by joining Surbiton Historical Society's free guided walk on New Year's Day, Mon, Jan 1, at 1pm. Darren Jhuboo will lead. Muster at Hinchley Wood station. The walk goes to Thames Ditton and back, with a stop at the Swan and nuggets of historical interest en route.

● Children in the St Matthew's CofE primary's gardening club donated the veg they'd grown from seed on the school allotment to The Community Fridge, Brighton Road, which tackles food poverty and reduces food waste. The harvest included tomatoes, runner beans, French beans, lettuce, sage, courgettes, cucumbers and a dozen marrows. "And they sold veg, flowers and strawberry plants to their parents, and will reinvest the profits in the plot," said Carole Eppleston, volunteer parent at the school in Langley Road.

● The Dittons' historic ties could be severed by a Boundary Commission bid to split Long Ditton from Thames Ditton and lump it in with Hinchley Wood in a Surrey-wide review to even up elector numbers.

"The clue's in the title, The Dittons," said Mark Herbert, of Long Ditton's residents' association. "This would separate Long Ditton from Thames Ditton; communities which have been closely linked since the Middle Ages."

He argues such change would waste money to fix a problem that does not exist.

Hello Long Ditton!

Nestled in the heart of Long Ditton, The Plough & Harrow (formerly The George Evelyn) has been lovingly renovated and its original name reinstated to bring this characteristic pub and lusciously large garden back to its rightful place at the heart of the local community.

Featuring a cosy bar area with a double sided fireplace as well as attractively designed dining areas in a new airy conservatory with glazed doors overlooking the spacious garden and a new garden room with a retractable roof so you can dine al fresco whatever the weather.

Why not come in and see for yourself? Bring your dog too! They are welcome in our bar and garden. See you soon!

Keep updated over on Instagram
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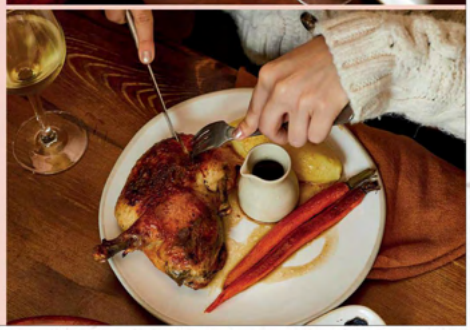


Raise a glass to Shoes at Last

Corks popped as Surbiton's Shoes at Last celebrated 20 years of trading.

Fashion guru Sarah Taylor poured customers glasses of Champers (yes it was the real stuff!) as they browsed the independent boutique's autumn-winter collection and chatted about how things have altered in Maple Road since 2003.

"It's changed a lot," said Sarah. "When I first opened there wasn't anything here; it was virtually tumbleweed blowing down the street. Now we have all these lovely restaurants, hairdressers, beauticians, bars... and of course the farmers' market has brought a real community feel to the area."

Sarah, one of the founders of the popular market which was set up in 2009, said she actually didn't think that with the impact of Covid, Brexit and war her business would survive.

However, thanks to her loyal

customers – and changing what she did from initially just selling shoes to adding handbags, clothes, accessories and gifts – Shoes at Last still thrives.

"It has really, really worked," she said. "People like the product, and like the fact that it's different."

Link to mosaics

Tarry when next in Surbiton station as the platform link bridge has 13 mosaics inspired by William Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience.

Surbiton Art Trail's Stephen Young, who champions public artwork, saw them in Lambeth, near the spot where the visionary artist lived between 1790 and 1800.

They captivated him, but were in disrepair, so he worked to secure funding for their restoration. With approval from the London School of Mosaic, which created them in 2005, he brought them, panel by panel, on the train from Waterloo, and RHACC's mosaic specialists Jo Lewis and Francia Hunt got to work at the Hillcroft Campus in South Bank. Unveiled by

Ed Davey cuts the ribbon, watched by Claire Mann

Surbiton MP Ed Davey and Claire Mann of Network Rail, the plan is to leave them in situ for five years.

College principal Gabe Flint said: "We're proud to have been part of the project, and able to use the space at Hillcroft to bring the mosaics back to life."

It inspired the adult education college to launch its own mosaic courses and Blake appreciation classes. View **rhacc.ac.uk/mosaic-william-blake-courses**

As The Bed Post marks 40 years as Surbiton's independent specialist, what are Lance Mead's top mattress tips?

- Visit a shop! If you buy online, you buy a picture.
- Size matters! Even expensive, luxurious mattresses can feel too small if you sleep with a partner. Buy the biggest you can fit in the bedroom.
- Don't rush. It's the piece of furniture you'll use most. And don't be shy! Kick your shoes off and test it in the shop, getting into your favourite sleeping positions.
- Don't be overwhelmed by talk of foams/springs/gels.
- Buy the most comfortable one you can afford. Most will last 10 years+. Spend £1,000 and that's still under 30p a night.

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

Suits you, Sir

When bespoke suits were fashionable it was not unusual for tailors to check possible back pain and refer clients to a chiropractor if they noticed that trouser legs were different lengths.

There are two types of leg length discrepancy. Not 'left and right' (that joke's been done), but physiological and anatomical.

The first, aka functional short leg, is created by joint dysfunction and muscle spasm. The second, aka bony short leg, is often the result of trauma such as a badly healed fracture, damaged growth plate or inherited anomaly. I know three generations of the same family who have the same leg which is short by the same amount.

Thinking about evolutionary pressure, there's no reason why our legs should be exactly the same length. If our ancestors had a significant discrepancy in leg length, say 6cm, they would probably not evade a chasing sabre tooth tiger, and be eliminated from the gene pool.

A smaller discrepancy, especially on rough terrain, and they might survive to reproduce.

Leg length discrepancy has only become a significant predisposing factor for back pain since we started spending more time on flat floors. Being on uneven terrain mitigates against the stress.

It's a good idea to check the wear pattern of old shoes before you throw them; asymmetry may indicate a leg length issue.

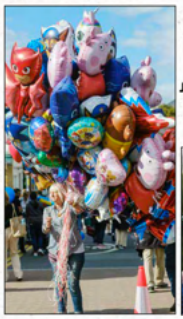
A famous low back pain sufferer was JFK. After years of pain he attended a chiropractor who gave him a heel lift to compensate.

I'm not saying this is why he was shot, but it's as credible as some theories.

On a personal note, I may be the oldest chiropractor in town, but I'm still capable of turning a few heads.

- **Neil Reilly is based in Berrylands. kingstonchiropracticplus.co.uk**

- **The annual Surbiton Festival was a huge success. In dazzling sun, the parade – led by the Royal British Legion marching band – was cheered every step of the way, while St Andrew's Square was packed with crowds enjoying food stalls and live music. There was dancing on the station forecourt and fun for children in Claremont Gardens. Victoria Road and St Andrew's Road had 100 stalls, all doing a roaring trade.**



David Jacobson took the pictures

Tallest tree hits 50

Young Keith McMahon did his forester's badge for 6th Tolworth scouts at the Southwood centre, Elm Close, Tolworth, in the summer of 1973. As Dutch elm disease had taken its toll, the slogan was 'Plant a Tree in 73'. All troop members were given seedings.

"I got a Norway spruce," he recalls. "I remember cycling home to Regent Road and was allowed to plant it near the bottom of the garden. It flourished. I put lights on it at Christmas. As it grew, ladders were required… and more lights. Now, 50 years on, it's over 60ft, and a tree surgeon climbs to the top to festoon it in lights!"

Admired in Regent Road, Park Road & Seymour Gardens, it's visible from the K2; just glance between the houses.

- **Left, a snap taken by the tree surgeon from the top. Above: in its festive glory**

● Work is well underway to add more flats above Lloyd's bank, by Surbiton station roundabout. A four-storey infill is being built in the courtyard of Claremont Court and St James Court to create four one-bed and three two-bed flats, while the space above the entrance in St James' Road will become two further compact flats. Meanwhile pedestrians have to weave through yellow-clad scaffolding below.

● It's a safe bet there'll always be bookies happy to take your cash, but Paddy Power has quit Surbiton. The betting shop in Victoria Road has shut, though the group still has 350 UK offices. "We review our estate to ensure we meet the evolving needs of customers, so decided to close some underperforming shops," said Paddy.

● Chastened by The Good Life pointing out that 'Stationary' means at a standstill, the houseware shop in Victoria Rd has (below) blanked out the 'a'!

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KINGSTON TOGETHER

Kids up before the beak

Ten and 11-year-old pupils at Christ Church primary, Surbiton, were up before the beak when their classroom became a courtroom in a visit by three magistrates from the local South West London bench.

They learnt how courts operate, how sentencing decisions are made and what a magistrate does.

Then it was over to them to take the oath, acting out a mock trial, and voting on the guilt or otherwise of two 'defendants'.

Magistrate and school mum Georgina Holloway said: "Our magistrates in the community programme gives young people a stronger appreciation of the role of the criminal justice system.

"The students were really engaged, and surprised us with their knowledge and perceptive questions.

"The way they considered the evidence was impressive. Hopefully we have some budding magistrates in the pipeline!" **Tim Harrison**

Listen out for ho-ho-hos in your street

Nothing heralds the start of the festive season quite like the Surbiton Rotary Club sleigh winding its way down local streets, piping out seasonal tunes. Once again, Santa and his elves will collect for local good causes.

Watch out for Father Christmas ho-ho-hoing down your road in Surbiton, Tolworth and Chessington from Fri, Dec 1 to Fri, Dec 22, from 6-8pm.

The club has collected thousands of pounds for local charities via Christmas collections over 50 years.

● Do you have what it takes to step into the big man's shoes? Even for a night or two? Or could you assist as one of Santa's elves? Email **surbitonrotary@gmail.com**

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

What's on at the Surbiton Royal British Legion

Our members' social club in Hollyfield Road, Surbiton, is open seven days a week. Come and have a look around! We have four full-size snooker tables, two bars, a café, and a function suite available for hire. We run bingo sessions, jackpot draws, raffles, darts competitions, race nights, ballroom dancing, pub quizzes, yoga, WeightWatchers and more. Plus, we show live sport on a big screen. We also have a busy events calendar - see below!

▼ December ▼

Friends of Fishponds Park AGM - Sat 2nd, 11am to 1pm. All welcome
Christmas Jumper Bingo - Weds 20th at 8.30pm. Prizes
Mega Christmas Meat Raffle - Sun 3rd at 2pm
The Other Guys (Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons Tribute Band) - Sat 9th. Doors 6.30pm
Gala Night - Members £5, guests £10. Includes fish and chip supper
Alix Anthony. Funk and soul - Sat 16th. Doors open 7pm. Members £3, guests £6. Christmas raffle draw
Children's Christmas Party - Sun 17th, 10am to 1pm. Entertainer, Father Christmas, face painting. £3 per child
New Year's Eve. DJ Foxy Paul - Hits old and new. Free. Members and guest tickets available

▼ January ▼

Full programme of activities including:
Meat and Money Draws - restart Sun 7th
Bingo - restart Weds 10th
The Great George Michael Tribute - Sat, 27th. Tickets go on sale on Dec 17th
We wish all the readers of The Good Life A Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Surbiton Royal British Legion Social Club, Hollyfield Road, Surbiton KT5 9AL
www.surbitonrbl.club ● 020 8399 3993 ● surbitonrbl@gmail.com

Saluting our Joan

Ex-Surbiton resident Joan Armatrading, who lived on St Mark's Hill in the 1970s, was celebrated at Kingston Uni in black history month.

Best known for Love & Affection, the singer is approaching 73, and has a recording studio in her Guildford garden. But in her early 20s she flat-shared in Surbiton.

She was one of 30 women highlighted in a 'Saluting our sisters' display on the Town House main staircase in Penrhyn Road... her name on the eighth step.

● Ewell Road writer Sarah Holding's sci-fi coming-of-age novel Blackloop (£8.99) follows her book Chameleon, and explores how adolescents cope with the aftermath of a freak electro-magnetic pulse in a story laced with black humour. She's a former architecture head at Kingston Uni. **sarah-holding.com**

● Scottish dancing is thriving in Surbiton. Surbiton & District Caledonian Society celebrates its 75th anniversary with music from the Craigievar band on St Andrew's night on Nov 28. Dancing takes place on Thursdays, 8-10pm, at St Mark's hall, Church Hill Road. You don't need a kilt, partner or experience, and you needn't be a Scot! **www.surbitoncaledonian.co.uk**

● There's something about a festive ghost story, such as Cellar Door Theatre Company's immersive production of Xmas Xarol. This retelling of Dickens' classic invites the audience to follow Ebenezer Scrooge round the cornerHOUSE as he is visited by three ghostly spirits. The promenade performance is at the arts centre in Douglas Road, Dec 13-16, 7.45pm. £16 (£14 concs), **eventbrite.co.uk** Search: Xmas Xarol by Charles Dickens.

Belinda the scientist

Lovelace Road medical writer Maya Kaushik has branched out and produced a book for ages 3-6 about a girl, Belinda, on a journey to discover why biology is so important.

Maya, eight years a Surbiton resident, did biology at Imperial and wants to encourage more girls to make science their career.

"I began learning illustration a year ago, and worked on this little book as a creative hobby," she said. **www.amazon.co.uk/Belinda-Biologist-Maya-Kaushik/dp/B0CJ4F382C/**

● There will be open auditions for the borough's top original playwriting festival in Feb. Now in its 15th year, the cornerHOUSE arts centre's oneACTS saw more than 70 original plays submitted by local writers by the deadline. A 12-strong judging panel picks a shortlist. Auditions at the Douglas Road centre: Feb 15 at 7.30pm and Feb 18 at 2pm. See the shows in week starting May 20. **thecornerhouse.org/what-we-do/oneacts-2**

Dancing Bridgerton

Learn to dance the Bridgerton way with lessons at Mrs Bennet's Ballroom.

Basic dance footwork and patterns are taught by Libby Curzon, a dancing mistress steeped in the elegant, yet somewhat unfamiliar, etiquette of the Regency ballroom.

"No experience is necessary; just wear flexible soft-soled shoes and comfy lightweight clothes," she said.

Novices' classes cost £10 on Nov 22 & Dec 6 at St Mark's church hall, Church Hill Road, 8-10pm. The next regular £5 classes are on Nov 29 & Dec 13.

It's murder in pantoland

A whodunnit comes to pantoland in January.

The Mysterious Murder at D'Arcy Grange will get those little grey cells working, with help from a moustachioed foreign detective.

Devotees of a certain TV sleuth may spot similarities in the cornerHOUSE's latest pantomime.

"It's a genre that seldom gets the 'he's behind you' treatment," admits author Phil Cooper. "But I'm sure our audience will jump at the chance to spot clues and offer their verdict on who is the guilty party."

A mash-up between Cluedo and Clouseau is promised with performances at the Douglas Road arts centre from Tues, Jan 30 to Sat, Feb 3, 7.30pm, with a Sat matinee at 3pm. Tickets £12 (£10 concs) via **ticketsource.co.uk/thecornerhouseevents**

Freedom gig

The pews of St Andrew's, Maple Road, were filled to acclaim Freedom Pulse, the Ukrainian exiles' brass band (who rehearse weekly at the Royal British Legion, Hollyfield Road) at October's free morning Thames Concert. The Legion's Matt Corbett filled in on drums. Music ranged from Eurovision winning song Stefania to an emotion-charged version of Gloria Gaynor's I Will Survive.

● Cantabile – The London Quartet – are a regular part of Thames Concerts' calendar, with a festive concert on Sat Dec 9 at St Andrew's at 7.30pm. Mike Pratt plays bass, with artistic director Ben Costello at the piano. Tickets: **thamesconcerts.com** On Sat Dec 16 there's a free farmers' market day concert at 10.30am, featuring Kingston Music Service's musicians. Then on Sat Jan 20, at 7.30pm, organist Benjamin Sheen presents works from his CD entitled In London Town, preceded that day at 10.30am by a free performance showcasing Southborough School's young musical talent.

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by Phil Cooper
Tues Jan 30 - Sat Feb 3 2024 Ticket Source
www.thecornerhouse.org

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2023-24 concert series: St Andrew's Church, Maple Rd, Surbiton
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Saturday 9 December
The acclaimed Cantabile (The London Quartet) sing seasonal songs + Mike Pratt (bass) and Ben Costello (piano).
Saturday 20 January
Concert organist Benjamin Sheen takes centre stage to present a selection of music from his CD, In London Town.
Saturday 3 February
Craig White (piano) and Sabine Sergejeva (violin) play works including by Bach, Ravel, Poulenc & Debussy.
Saturday 17 February
Voices and historical instruments combine as Endelienta Baroque, directed by Seb Gillot, present EarthSong.
Market days:
Free coffee concerts
Enjoy free 50-minute coffee concerts at St Andrew's at 10.30am on 16 December (Kingston Music Service) and 20 January (Southborough School).
www.thamesconcerts.com

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GB ski aim

It's quite something to hurtle down a mountain at upwards of 30mph. It's what 11-year-old ski racer Jolie Welsh loves doing, and hopes to do more of if she can get the sponsorship.

Jolie, of Pine Walk, Berrylands, began skiing at two. Nine years on, she's won the Eola GBR Series (five races in England, Scotland and Wales) and the British Champs in Wales, making her Female U12 British Champion.

Now Jolie aims to take it to the next level, with her sights set on a spot in the GB Children's Team, But she needs time on snow to achieve her goal.

"Sponsorship would make all the difference," said Jolie, who will live in Bormio, Italy, this winter season, training with Alpine Performance Racing while keeping up with her schoolwork online.

Jolie has appeared on TV's Ski Sunday with mentor and four-time winter Olympian Chemmy Alcott.

"Jolie is a special kind of athlete with a talent and drive that's rare," said Chemmy. "She's incredibly focused for someone so young.

"A full season at this point in her career is imperative to her fulfilling her vast potential."

Chemmy said the moment an athlete gets outside investment is the moment they can really start flying – which is why it's so important to have brands and companies on board.

To sponsor Jolie, email **skiteamwelsh@gmail.com**

Blues face life after Emma

Chelsea have major games looming as fans continue to come to terms with Emma Hayes' decision to quit the club she has managed for 11 years to become USA national women's coach on a £1.3million a year contract.

On Nov 23 Chelsea host Paris FC in the Women's Champions League at Stamford Bridge, while on Nov 26, they face Leicester at Kingsmeadow. Then, on Dec 14, they play the Swedish side Hacken, with the Bridge again the venue.

Awkwardly, word of Hayes' departure in May seeped through to a couple of the team's players before the rest of the squad officially heard. Chelsea were bounced into making a hasty statement as details of her appointment began circulating in the States.

Hayes held a huddle in the away dressing room at Walsall's Poundland stadium following the Blues' 6-0 trouncing of Aston Villa.

The search for a successor is under way, with the board drawing up a shortlist. A choice is expected to be made by Christmas.

Hayes has already coached at club level in the US back in the noughties, but with mixed success. The fear at Kingsmeadow is that Chelsea Women will suffer disruption similar to the fractures that followed the departure of Sir Alex Ferguson a decade ago after so many years in charge of Man Utd's men's team.

Tim Harrison

● Surbiton's game-for-a-laugh PCSO Emma Young braved the St Mark's Hill slope at Surbiton's Ski Sunday event, ice blocks on her feet. Others (below, right) weren't quite so adept! The mayor, Cllr Diane White, declined to try 'skiing' herself, as she was going on to represent the borough at a Westminster Abbey function that day, and didn't want to arrive plastered. As it were.

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