

the good life

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Surbiton Farmers' Market

Issue 74

The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3

April 2024



Join the club
 Inspired by the thrills of the Six Nations? Be part of the next generation by following the lead of 11-year-old Harry Crow, left, of Cotterill Road, whose favourite player is... well, you'll have to turn to **p12**



● **That darn cat!** After going missing for two and a half years, Sushi has returned to the Tolworth family that had given her up for lost. The full story is on **p7**



● Ruby is already getting excited. In May, the five-year-old cockapoo will be setting off up St Mark's Hill with owner Kathee La Hood to attend Kingston's Efficient Homes Show. Kathee, who runs the Torque Electric bike store in Victoria Road (just celebrating its first birthday), is a stallholder at this year's show at Hollyfield School, and Ruby will be giving her mistress moral support, and showing off the roominess of bike baskets. Full story, **p6**



We'll be in shadow!

Surbiton town centre would be in shadow if plans for a skyscraper on the station car park go ahead. The proposed 17-storey monolith – 11 higher than the current tallest building in town, and only five short of Tolworth Tower – would rob the centre of daylight for much of the day, and dwarf one of Britain's best-loved modernist stations. Three other blocks would have nine, eight and six storeys, providing a total of 243 flats... but not a single parking space for

any of them. After a consultation, which passed many by, plans go in to Kingston Council in April. The watchdog Kingston Society dubs it 'a massive overdevelopment for this sensitive site'.

The ground-level 446-space station car park would be replaced with a 250-bay, six-storey version, accessed via a spiral ramp.

Opposition to the plan's sheer size is growing, especially as halving overall station parking will impact streets in Surbiton and Long Ditton.

The bid has been drawn up by Solum, a Network Rail and Kier Property partnership which develops transport hub brownfield sites using slogans such as 'Where Life Meets'. Its feedback

form asked visitors questions such as: Would you like to see high-quality design and architecture? and Do you want high-quality landscaping? No room for: Do you want a 17-storey tower block?

Today's loftiest buildings are six storeys, so critics say it would change Surbiton forever and overwhelm the Grade II listed station, which many cite as a reason for settling here in the first place.

With a general election looming, Tory hopeful Helen Edward has weighed in, accusing Solum of 'playing games' by proposing a 'ridiculous' height, to perhaps trim it by a few token storeys later on.

She says the precedent could lead to "a further cluster of extremely tall towers".

Tim Harrison



Want to dance like Surbiton celeb Erlin Boag and Anton du Beke? You can! Turn to **p3**

Cycle lane construction to resume

Work to finish Ewell Road's controversial cycle lanes resumes this summer after a pause in 2022 when Transport for London was strapped for cash. The £1.7m cost will be split between the council and TfL.

Segregated stretches will run both sides from Hollyfield to Red Lion Road, shared-use pavements from opposite Browns Road to the Carmella patisserie will be replaced by a new lane, while disabled parking bays and a zebra crossing will be sited near Dysart School, plus toucans at Elgar/Princes Avenue. Parking spaces will go, but a few side-street bays will be created.

It's Priceless

James Price has won a production design Oscar for the film Poor Things. James, of Cheyne Hill, created a Victorian sci-fi world where Bella Baxter (played by Emma Stone, who won Best Actress) is brought back to life by an eccentric surgeon. "This is crazy. I feel in the mood for love and custard tarts," he ad-libbed at the Oscars ceremony.

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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) 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).

● If you spend a lot on takeaway pizzas, maybe you should set up your own business? Live Pizza at 124 Ewell Road, opposite the Prince of Wales, is for sale, fully equipped from day one. There's even a stack of boxes to get you started. The premises are poky, but £225,000 will secure you the 82-year lease.

● The Surbitonian Vine, Claremont Road, is developing plans to create a hireable party space in the basement of the cafe/bar opposite Waitrose.

● Beanz meanz greenz. Station forecourt vegetarian caff Busy Beans reopened after closing for five weeks. "Holidays," said the manager with a shrug.

● Benedict breakfasts, notably the signature Avobenedict on sourdough with crispy bacon and poached eggs (£9.50), are the speciality of the new Avocadium cafe, where Ralph's used to be at 77 Surbiton Road. It's a first foray for 33-year-old Hungarian foodie Melinda Repos, with the window seats offering great people-watching and bus-spotting. The coffee is sourced from a family firm in Chiswick. The business began in a converted New Malden garage, pre-pandemic. Target market? "People who appreciate higher-quality cafe food," The Good Life was told.



● A £20,000 grant has created a community kitchen at Save The World Club. Backed by Kingston community resilience funding, its multi-function kitchen in Southsea Road on the Kingston/Surbiton boundary is a place to get a meal, make food and learn to cook. Tariq Shabbeer said its



main goal was to support those in temporary housing, homeless people and refugees. "This is a community cafe making meals using food we collect from supermarkets. We see around 1,000 people a month, and collect food from eight supermarkets." The workspace means people can be taught how to cook, prepare and share food. "These are powerful ways to anyone's soul and heart," said Tariq.

Pizzeria has a facelift

After more than a decade in the town, Surbiton's PizzaExpress has had a facelift. The eatery at the foot of St Mark's Hill still serves old favourites on hand-stretched bases such as American Hot and Sloppy Giuseppe, plus the children's Piccolo menu, but now in revamped surroundings. The marble-top tables and banquette seating are a feature, with any customer joining the restaurant chain's loyalty club receiving free dough balls.



● Il Mulino pizzeria in Ewell Road has been reborn as Anaaya, a Sri Lankan and South Indian eatery. It has a history of chopping and changing. Though most recently a Mediterranean joint, pre-pandemic it was the Grand Mangal Turkish diner, and before that Thanuska curry house. Oldies recall it as Saigon Chef, covering all bases with Indian, Vietnamese and Chinese dishes.



● Surbiton's Waitrose stopped baking loaves in March. "Too much trouble," said a staffer. Now it's only sliced, or pricey sourdough.



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Kebabbed!

A sudden rush of kebabbery means two new Turkish restaurants are expected to open in Surbiton in the next few weeks.

No97 cocktail bar and restaurant in Maple Road seems set to be a branch of the phenomenally successful Ramo's Turkish Kitchen, which opened in 2021 in the old Boots next to Asda in London Road, Norbiton.

Ditto for Wags n Tales, Brighton Road, tipped to be a Turkish diner, plus cocktail bar.



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Cafe's drinks bid

Cafe Rosa at the corner of Alexandra Drive and Raeburn Avenue, Berrylands, wants a drinks licence to sell alcohol Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm.

A ceremonial talk

House of Lords yeoman usher Brig Neil Baverstock is at St Mary's church hall, Long Ditton, to talk on parliamentary ceremony at the next BookBox on Wed, Apr 17, at 8pm.

Sunny roof request

Solar panels may sprout on Surbiton Star & Garter Home's roof in Upper Brighton Road. Permission applied.

New disabled bays

Expect to see new disabled parking bays in Douglas, Glenbuck, Ellerton, Thornhill, Red Lion and Ronlean roads, as one by 28 Cleveland Road reverts to being a residents' bay.

Mayor's charities

Maple Road's French Table hosted the great and good for dinner to raise £3,700 for mayor Cllr Diane White's chosen charities: Voices of Hope & Kingston Charitable Foundation.

New balls please

Surbiton Methodist Tennis Club in Manor Drive, Berrylands, holds an open day on Sat, Apr 20, 3-5pm, to look around, and enjoy tea and cake.

Cottage to alter

A mothballed Ewell Road brick-a-brac shop may go back to being a house after a bid to convert no129, in a row of tiny cottages built for dairymen.

Mrs Eggynk!

Hedgehog buff Pat Morris speaks to Surbiton birdwatchers on Apr 16, 7.30pm, at St Matthew's school, Langley Road, on the little mammals' love of eggs. See surbitonbirds.org

Home renamed

Thames Ditton's 1786 Grade II-listed Home of Compassion has been renamed Thames View by Aria Care. From 1912 it was a nun-run hospice, but after a £12m renovation it reopened in 2016 as a care home.

Dog bite warning

Police are investigating an incident in which a dog bit the arm of a nursery school parent in Maple Road as she pushed the animal off her one-year-old son, who was in his pushchair. Luckily, no serious harm was done.

Grinding out room

The busy Surbitonian Grind at 120 Ewell Road will reconfigure its interior, moving food preparation to the back to create more than 20 extra seats to accommodate its customers.

Surbiton meeting

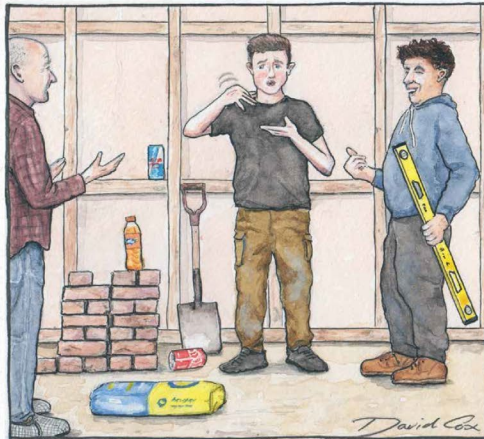
Surbiton's district committee meets on Apr 25, 7.30pm, Glenmore House.

No to gardens

A bid to turn unused land into gardens ringed by a 1.8m fence has been rejected. Residents of properties in Windmill Lane, Long Ditton, had applied to Elmbridge Council.

SURBITON LIFE

by David Cox



You ask young builders if they fancy a cup of tea and they think you're having a laugh

There must be something in the water of St Mark's and Seething Wells ward. It's already produced two mayors – Yogan Yoganathan and the current incumbent, Diane White. Now Cllr Liz Green, right, is mayor elect, and will become the borough's 190th first citizen in May.



How would you improve Surbiton?

Everyone has theories about making the town better... now the council wants to hear them. Surbiton's community plan is three years old and needs updating. Suggestions are sought to enhance parks, streets and open spaces, benefit residents, attract business and encourage community groups at kingstonletstalk.dialogue-app.com/ideas

Post your thoughts, and rate others. The plan will be updated in the autumn, based on all the feedback.

The council now has a draft plan for its public green spaces, using 11 listed themes from accessibility and sport to children's play and biodiversity. Residents' input is needed to determine priorities, and add proposals for improvements. Respond to the survey at kingstonletstalk.co.uk/green-spaces/green-spaces-action-plan by Apr 24.

A Berrylands tutor of primary-age kids is crossing Windermere in the Lake District in a 5k swim on June 9 to benefit the charity Mind. Peter Black, 60, of Endway, helps staff the Kingston branch's mental well-being phoneline. In 2022 he swam the Solent for Aspire, to aid adults with spinal injuries. To sponsor or support him, search for Windermere at mindinkingston.org.uk

Strictly's Erin has a new dance challenge

You could be the next Ellie Leach or Vito Coppola as Strictly dance pro Erin Boag launches Latin and ballroom dance courses in Surbiton and Kingston in April.

Erin, who was on the BBC's prime-time dance show for 10 years, will run classes in Hollyfield School, Surbiton Hill, on Monday nights from April 22 and Kingston Workmen's Club, Old London Road, on Tuesdays from April 30. The Kingston classes are a new venture for Erin and there will be a free introductory launch event on April 23, 7-9pm, for those who fancy giving dancing a go.

"I have the honest belief that everyone can dance, even if they think they have two left feet," said the coach and choreographer, whose professional partner, Anton du Beke, is now a judge on Strictly. "Some people pick it up quickly, others take a bit longer, and that's OK because that is what the absolute beginners class is all about. It is about having fun."

Styles such as waltz, foxtrot, tango, quick-step, Viennese waltz, cha-cha, rumba, samba and jive will be covered.



You don't need a dance partner, and you can progress through classes from absolute beginner to advanced beginner to improve.

"If you've ever wanted to give it a go, come along because I can guarantee you're going to love it. Whether you just learn a basic waltz, or a ballroom tango or a bit of a swing jive, you will go away smiling," added Erin, who lives in Surbiton.

One of Erin's dance enthusiasts, Carole Doran, said: "Not only do people learn how to dance beautifully, but it's exercise and a social experience. Erin always makes the classes fun."

It's £13 a class or £78 for a six-week course.



To find out more about dates and times visit erinboag.com/classes or email lessons@erinboag.com to reserve your place at the Kingston launch event.

Jane Grove

Wrestling with a parking quandary

A decision on the Browns Road parking permit zone must wait until more data is gathered. Today it operates 11am-2pm, Mon-Fri, in Browns Rd, Britannia Rd, Alpha Rd, King Charles Cres, Mayberry Pl, South Pl, Warwick Grove and Middle Green Close. Surbiton's area committee was told by Tony Viva of Browns Road Garage that if times were extended it would hit his business, and he might have to quit. But Josephine Laurence of Warwick Grove wants the times expanded as she finds it hard to park outside restricted hours. A reduction in parking spaces in Ewell Road because of a new cycle lane (p1) would also have a knock-on effect, she said.

Safer streets? Crossings out

Plans for a zebra crossing outside Tolworth junior school in Douglas Road, another in Tolworth Road and two more in Thornhill Road have been given the bum's rush. The council wanted to improve safety under its 'healthy streets scheme', but was given short shrift by residents who said crossings don't address the vexed issue of through traffic.

Sustainable transport lead Cllr Ian Manders was disheartened. "I hope it wasn't done on some kind of tactical basis; that people thought they could hold out for something better," he told fellow councillors, adding that TfL will not currently engage with the council (see p9).

Surbiton's area committee was asked to approve measures including raised crossings, speed indicators, traffic lights and SLOW road markings in the "Tolworth Triangle". It voted to devolve decision-making to highways officer Matthew Hill, in consultation with the committee.



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Nicola Tallis (pictured) on All the Queen's Jewels; how medieval queens came by their jewellery, and how it added to their status

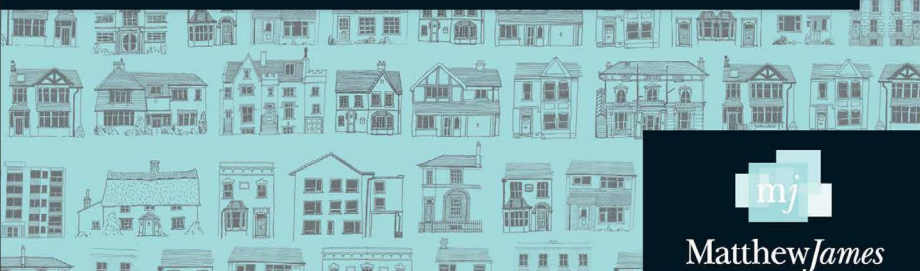
Tuesday May 7
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Champion fundraiser Nancy Vlasto, who collected from her mobility scooter while dressed as a pantomime horse, has died days before her 98th birthday.

For 40 years she lived in a chaotic bungalow in Avenue South, Surbiton, with Blossom, her equine alter-ego, stabled in the adjoining garage.

She embraced all causes. If famine or earthquake struck, Blossom would be saddled up, its head wedged in the scooter basket, before trundling round Surbiton and Kingston, brandishing a collection tin.

As well as international disasters she supported local mayoral appeals, St John

A stable life

Ambulance, Kingston's Rose Theatre, victim support and anything to do with health or young people. "If there's a drama in the world, I'm always out there to help," she'd say.

Born in Bayswater, the youngest of four, to parents who had met as First World War medics, it was perhaps inevitable that she'd enter nursing.

She trained in the Second World War, later branching into midwifery. By the 1950s she was living in Park Road, Surbiton, and working as a health visitor in the Kingston area.

As a child she rode horses, swam and played hockey, lacrosse and tennis. In her spare time in her 20s and 30s she played tennis at what is now Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club (becoming a committee member), and often swam in Surbiton Lagoon.

She moved to Oakhill Crescent after switching to teaching, working at Tolworth Infants, Dysart, Surbiton Hill nursery, and as an exam invigilator at Surbiton High. But her true passion was choral music and she sang with numerous choirs, becoming a regular chorister at St Andrew's in Maple Road.

In 1981 she moved into the bungalow in Avenue South. Eight years later, Nancy 'became' Blossom, dressing in a pantomime horse costume to provide entertainment at children's parties; her bubbly personality well suited to the role. However, severe arthritis made walking painful, and she took to a mobility scooter.

On early fundraising forays she tried to ride around with the horse's head jammed over her own, but it made navigation hazardous, and also terrified children.

She instead took to wearing the trunk of the horse costume while jamming Blossom's head in front of her scooter, the tail flapping behind, and often getting caught up in the wheels. Children were now merely baffled by the sight of a wonky horse careering towards them, its body detached from its head, while a batty old lady, seemingly squatting in the animal's collapsed mid-section, rattled a tin in their direction.

As Blossom, Nancy's first adopted good cause was victim support. Over 20 years she raised more than £125,000.

Having kept diaries since childhood, she collated her life experiences in a liberally illustrated autobiography, *What's Next?*, in 2011, after turning 85. "I felt it was the right time," she explained.

"Why the horse? "People come to Blossom when she's on the scooter," Nancy told me in 2012 after inviting *The Good Life* round for tea to try to help revive flagging book sales.

"The courtesy and help people give you is wonderful. People couldn't be more helpful; it's a very British thing. People reach things down to me from high shelves in shops."

An ebullient speaker on a shoal of topics at WI meetings, she was proud of her unusual surname. "My father was from a Greek family," she'd say. "It's helpful for me there aren't that many Nancy Vlastos!" Her funeral was conducted by the Rev Robert Stanier at St Andrew's. He spoke of her "relentless positivity", and how she "spread a lot of love, and did a lot of good".

Alzheimer's robbed her of lucidity in later years, and she was cared for in a nursing home. In keeping with her wishes, her body was left to medical research.

Tim Harrison

● Nancy Lorna Mary Vlasto, b Feb 1 1926, d Jan 5 2024



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Nancy in her nurse's uniform at Charing Cross Hospital

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How Brighton Road will appear after Brandon Tool Hire and the Museum of Futures are demolished, like Elton Park Motors, to make way for new homes.

Think supermarkets offer the cheapest prices? Sage, the independent zero-waste shop in Brighton Road, sells Brazil nuts for £2.49 for 100g (Ocado: £2.80). Sainsbury's charges £3.06 for 100g of Montezuma organic chocolate buttons, Sage £2.49. Waitrose, Tesco & Sainsbury's: 80p per 100g for organic coconut sugar, while Sage not only undercuts,

Sage advice

but can sell in smaller amounts, to cut waste. Bring your egg box back to Sage for a reload, and you pay £2.99 for half a dozen, rather than £3.75 at Waitrose. Which is why the glass trophy for top borough independent retailer sits on Sage's till counter.

A new look

Demolition has begun to make way for this £100m five-ward mental health centre on Red Lion Road's Tolworth Hospital site.



Building starts in the summer (pending final government sign-off), with a two-storey car park knocked down in favour of ground-level parking, and a two-way entrance replacing the current one-way system. It should all be open by 2027. Acacia unit, Lilacs, Ellis and Jasmines wards will be retained, and outpatients facilities will continue to operate. You can keep up to date by registering for monthly construction reports at swlstg.nhs.uk/redeveloping-tolworth-hospital



Ex-soldier Andy Cooke, 41, runs the London Marathon for the Royal British Legion. A member at Hollyfield Road, Surbiton, he's played the Last Post each year since he was 13. "I feel strongly about looking after veterans," he said. He runs the 26.2 miles on Apr 21. royalbritishlegion.enthuse.com/pf/andy-cooke

An artificial-grass terraced bank could soon form spectator seating at Surbiton Hockey Club in Sugden Road, Long Ditton, with Elmbridge planners also being asked to agree two new scoreboards. Beneath the terraces would be changing rooms with showers, loos and kit storage. International league rules demand facilities for game officials. Decisions are expected by May 2.

Yet more disruption

Both Ditton Road (between Ewell Road and Upper Brighton Road) and Southborough Road will be closed to through traffic for weeks as an old metal gas main is replaced with plastic. Ditton Road shuts on April 1 for seven months. Southborough Road will be closed from April 1-June 7 at the junction of Hook Road, with temporary traffic lights in Upper Brighton Road and Hook Road to manage flow past the site. Signed diversions will be in place.

"We appreciate roadworks can be frustrating," said Dan Brown, for the gas firm SGN. "However, this new plastic pipe has a lifespan of over 80 years, so once installed, Surbiton will be able to enjoy a safe and reliable gas supply for many years to come."

A defibrillator has been installed on the Alpha Road estate thanks to its residents' association. Chair Mary Parmar applied for Department of Health match-funding, and it was fitted by council partner Axis. It is just off Howard Road on the wall of Shamley block, near the caretaker's office. It gives a high-energy shock to the heart of someone in cardiac arrest, and could save a life. "Only one in 10 survive an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest in the UK, so defibrillators are vital," said Mary. People are talked through its use at the scene.



Dysart School, for four to 19-year-olds with severe and complex learning needs, is £2,000 closer to its £50,000 target for two new minibuses, thanks to developer Chancerygate and contractor Harmonix, which are building nine warehouses at Metroplex Park, Red Lion Road, Tolworth. Leigh Edser, head of the Ewell Road school, said: "We're thrilled with the help. We have a ULEZ extension as the vehicles are used by disabled people, but ideally we'd like to move to compliant vehicles." The minibuses take pupils on trips, such as horse riding, an important part of their day-to-day development. Donate to the appeal at tinyurl.com/Dysartfundraiser



Lovers of shopping trolleys and gold-coloured prancing horses will be dismayed to learn that L&V Fashion, the pop-up shop in the old M&Co, is closing. Work starts in early April on converting the first floor into a new gym. Then, in early summer, the prancing horses gallop back into the ground floor of 15 Victoria Road.



HR issues at work? Claire Watt's a good person to call. Claire, of Kings Road, Long Ditton, won 'excellence in professional services' at the Kingston borough business awards, having won the Surrey small business leader accolade in 2023. She set up Ditton HR in 2012; a consultancy for businesses without internal human resources support, and for bigger firms needing extra help. "Winning the awards has been very exciting, for me and the team," said Claire, who helps with all aspects of recruiting, employing, training and developing staff. "It is so rewarding to be recognised."

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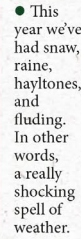
● A wet Feb and mild winter saw Surbiton's magnolias (this is The Mall) bloom early as pinks and mauves heralded the spring.



● Young Duke of Edinburgh award volunteers joined Queen's Prom Friends in Operation Spaghetti junction (named for the tangled road system resembling the motorway intersection) to clear bindweed and thistle infestation, and helped build a stag beetle loggery.



● A day some thought would never come! The last bollard was put on a truck on March 11, ending a two-month saga which gummied up Long Ditton, dented trade at Squire's garden centre and made navigating round St Mary's church a chore. A new Church Road water main now links Rectory Lane and Ditton Hill.



● This year we've had snow, rain, hailstones, and flooding. In other words, a really shocking spell of weather.



● Queen's Prom Friends aims to create a 'smile of sunflowers' along Surbiton's riverbank, and asks residents to sow seeds in pots indoors to plant out in May. "We're turning last year's sunflower festival into an annual tradition," said chair Stefan Gross. Preferred varieties: titan/giant single, lemon, autumn beauty, claret/chocolate & tiger eye (available as seeds at Sainsbury's). Go to Instagram @queenspromenade for Prom planting dates.



Bramble bash



Forty people, including Berrylands Scouts explorers, hacked back brambles and cleared the arena at Alexandra Millennium Green. "We had more brambles than room in the trailer!" said Mike Salmon, one of the new trustees aiming to restore the green to its former glory. The pandemic years, and loss of some of the original trustees, have left the much-loved space off Alexandra Drive needing TLC. The goal is to revive the area behind Surbiton Croquet Club to honour the founders' legacy and harness community energy to ensure it remains a resource for people and haven for wildlife into the future. Wildflower planting and the restoration of the pond are future projects. Join the mailing list at tinyurl.com/AlexMillGreen or volunteer via the Alexandra Millennium Green Facebook page.

Village people continue to wait

And still they wait for the inspector's report on whether village green status will be granted to a large area of green belt land in Long Ditton. Stephen Morgan held a public inquiry in April and July. It was hoped a decision would have been made by the end of last year. "Despite the passage of time, the village green team continue to be optimistic, hoping for a good outcome," said Paul Bartlett of Long Ditton Residents' Association. When it arrives, the report will go before Surrey councillors to determine the fate of the application.

Campaigners say giving village green status to Stokes Field nature reserve and One Tree Hill is the only way to rebuff developers. Pressure from the Save HWLD green belt group and Long Ditton councillors has already achieved partial success. "It's fantastic to know Elmbridge Council has successfully self-registered Stokes Field as a village green. Now we just need the same applied to areas like One Tree Hill," added Paul. "We wait in anticipation!"

Where does rainwater go?

Some of my favourite things about living in Surbiton are the friendly community, proximity to the Thames, green spaces and the SuDS (sustainable drainage systems) in Tolworth. The final example might seem odd, but in addition to being a Douglas Road resident, I'm Transport for London's engineering leader for pumps and drainage, writes *Nicolas Gruselle*. I work with a fantastic team of engineers to find sustainable ways of reducing flooding risk across TfL's network - specifically, at the moment, around Tolworth where work is being undertaken to improve the highways and public realm and mitigate the impact of large-scale residential and commercial developments planned for the area. We started on site in April 2023, and there have been three phases. The third will be followed by resurfacing work, which should be completed by mid-April.

Many of the projects our team works on support TfL's vision of being 'the green heartbeat' of London; expanding and improving the number of green spaces across our network. One project is introducing SuDS in Tolworth. In urban areas, rainwater on roads (and oil spills, tyre and brake wear from vehicles), is funnelled into drains. Where foul and surface water are separated, rainwater drains into the surface water system and is discharged into waterways. When it's not separated, it joins toilet, bathroom and kitchen waste water and is piped to Thames Water's sewage treatment works, for instance the site in Lower Marsh Lane. During heavy rainfall, the capacity of these pipes can be exceeded. Combined sewer overflows were developed to reduce the risk of sewage backing up in heavy rainfall, flooding homes and businesses.

Not only do traditional pipe and gully systems pose a threat to rivers and streams, they often result in surface water flooding when at capacity. SuDS is the solution! Surface-water flooding is the most serious climate risk to London. SuDS offer an alternative to pipes and gullies. With more paved surfaces in towns and front gardens, it's harder for water to naturally soak away. SuDS create natural drainage, reducing the risk of water pollution and surface water flooding by slowing rainwater flow in a way that replicates natural processes. Examples of SuDS are rain gardens and green roofs. As part of wider improvements in Tolworth, SuDS such as permeable paving and rain gardens have been installed at Tolworth roundabout and along Kingston Road. Rain gardens are shallow-planted depressions that collect and store rainfall, letting it soak into the earth before gradually releasing it into the piped network. They contain gravel to maximise storage and filter pollutants. The roundabout itself has three tiers of connected rain gardens featuring plants that can live in free-draining soil and which can survive the occasional drenching. Nectar-rich species increase biodiversity, and the area will be managed to encourage wildlife. As well as shrubs and grasses, rain gardens in Kingston Road have also been planted with trees which thrive in free-draining soil.

● tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/sustainability



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Crowd likely at efficiency show

The first Efficient Homes Show at Hollyfield School, Surbiton Hill Road, attracted 400, and more are expected at this year's on Sat, May 18, 10am-3pm. It aims to make homes energy-efficient while saving residents money and reducing the impact on the planet. Experts and organisations will showcase technology and services such as solar panels, insulation, retrofitting, thermal proofing, renewable energy, electric car chargers and e-bikes, with options for every home and budget. Organised by the council, Kingston Chamber of Commerce and Kingston Green Business Community, it is open to all; homeowner, landlord, renter or anyone interested in green careers. It is also aimed at people looking for efficiency savings in their business, or seeking opportunities to network. Free entry at eventbrite.com (search Kingston Efficient Homes Show).



What happens to waste water when you flush the loo or unplug the sink? Find out as Thames Water opens the gates in Lower Marsh Lane on May 30-31 for four tours a day so you can see

A tour of the U-bend

where the water goes and how it is processed. Hogsmill Sewage Treatment Works serves around 390,000 people, with nearly 4,000km of foul and surface water sewer pipes in the catchment area. You'll meet teams responsible for different parts of the process, and they'll show you how:
● Objects are removed that should never have been put in, such as wet wipes, nappies, sanitary items and cotton buds
● Human waste is separated from the water
● Sludge is recycled
● Clean wastewater is returned to the river
Reserve a place on a one-and-a-half-hour tour. Email: trudy.earl@thameswater.co.uk
● Where are the best places to site public charge points for electric cars? The council wants Surbiton residents to help. Add any suggestions and bright ideas to the mix by typing the word 'electric' into the search slot at kingstonletstalk.co.uk



● The Tolworth roundabout chaos has had a big impact. Kellie Williams, born on the Sunray estate and an on-and-off resident for 50+ yrs (longer, even, than the roadworks!), sums it up in verse.

Ode to Tolworth Roundabout

A big congratulation Must go out to TfL They have scored full marks In making our life hell They put out lots of cones; Oh they look so pretty! But they've done a proper job Of making traffic shi*ty They never seem to listen To what we have to say And they really just don't care We're adding hours to our day The best way to get around Is by using Shank's pony As all this standstill traffic Just makes us extra moany At Christmas cones were moved; We weren't sure what to do. A bit of festive respite Sent from TfL to you But as we all predicted On the Monday back to school The overnight cone fairy Put them back; it's just so cruel Weeks on, and they're still there. And we're still just in phase three With every different phase How much worse can it all be? But it's really no surprise For everyone to find Each phase is even worse Than the one we left behind According to the Mayor, Every journey matters... Except the one to Tolworth Which has left our nerves in tatters
Kellie Williams

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● Strolling round an industrial estate might not instantly seem an enjoyable prospect, but an informative guide by the Community Brain leads you on a three-mile loop from Chessington North to Tolworth via the Cox Lane estate and the site of the Gala Cosmetics factory.

● Organised? Love history? Have an hour or two to spare a month? Surbiton & District Historical Society needs you. It holds monthly talks (future topics include Gertrude Jekyll and Dick Turpin) and seeks a membership secretary after stalwart Ann Glover's retirement. The society, nearly 70, meets on the first Tuesday of the month at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road. "It's about keeping in touch with the members, collecting subs and assisting the treasurer," said Ann, who'll explain the ins and outs to a successor. Email chair Paul Lang on paulhowardlang1011@gmail.com

● A grand Victorian villa could become a nursery, plus supported-living flats, under new plans. The sprawling house at 8 Upper Brighton Road, built in the 1880s, is on an L-shaped plot and is currently subdivided into seven flats. Developer Rayman Jeetoo wants to make a nursery by extending the existing building (in the Southborough conservation area), then adding a dozen flats at the rear. The old frontage would be largely preserved.



● Advisory members are not needed on Surbiton's area committee, it has resolved. Before Surbiton neighbourhood councillors was a proposal that experienced outsiders be co-opted to improve the decision-making quality... but as members can already invite in experts if they choose, it was rejected. "It's better to get in experience as and when needed," said Cllr Thay Thayalan. Cllr Jackie Davies wondered, tongue-in-cheek, who'd even want to be an unpaid adviser, "fascinating as the meetings are".



The Monte Carlo winning Mini Cooper Pic: Stuart Tree

Mini rally arrives in Surbiton

More than 150 Minis including this iconic Cooper S which won the 1964 Monte Carlo Rally will line up in Hollyfield Road from 11am-5pm on Saturday, May 18, at an event marking the connection to Surbiton of this symbol of the swinging sixties.

There will be tours of the garage where racing driver and car designer John Cooper produced his sporty Mini Coopers (now the Charles Ivey Porsche garage), screenings of The Italian Job at the Royal British Legion, a heritage film with stories of the area, and showings of short films by Kingston College and Kingston Uni students. Other attractions include a vintage London bus, food and drink, craft stalls and performances from youth music charity The Basement Door.

The centrepiece of the Mini Moments Festival organised by Surbiton's Community Brain is a 60-car Mini parade from 1-2pm through the streets; one Mini from each year, 1964-2024. thecommunitybrain.org/event-details/mini-moments-festival

● Work restoring Fishponds Park has been delayed because of February's wet weather.



The Friends of Fishponds now hope the council's contractors will complete the £152,000 project by the end of April.

An aquatic dumper was deployed to move material around in the ponds to re-profile and desilt them and a woodland stream has also been created and a liner laid (right). Improvements have also been made to another stream and ditch which links the two ponds in the 13.5 acre space off Hollyfield Road.

"This should make such a difference to the park and is something we've been campaigning for for many years," said The Friends' chair Rob Eyre-Brook. "It is great to see such a substantial investment being made in improving and protecting this much-loved park for the wildlife and the local community."



Sushi tries to tell the family what she's been up to

Pussycat, Pussycat... where have you been?

The cat came back, the cat came back. Thought she were a goner, but the cat came back! After two and a half years, Sushi has returned home.

The 12-year-old short-haired tabby, who arrived at the Bonnichon home in Selbourne Avenue, Tolworth, as a rescue kitten, vanished in August 2021.

Son Etienne, then three, was really upset and mum Harriet and dad Nick put up posters in the area to publicise Sushi's disappearance in the hope someone might know where she'd gone.

After months of trying to find her there was still no sign of their lovable pet, so the family donated all her things to The Ginger Cat House rescue centre in Worcester Park, assuming their adorable Sushi was lost forever.

Fast forward two and a half years to a Sunday afternoon in January, and a phone call informed the Bonnichons that Sushi had been found. "We weren't sure if it was a scam to start with; we couldn't quite believe it," said Harriet, a marketing consultant. It turned out that Sushi had been spotted outside a house a few hundred yards away.

"She was in someone's garden only two streets away in the icy weather. A lovely lady reported she was outside in the cold to The Ginger Cat House Rescue," said Harriet.

The rescue team scanned Sushi's chip, alerted Voo Vets, and they phoned the Bonnichons and gave them the good news. "After two and a half years, she was back!" said Harriet. "Our son was over the moon and our daughter, Della, nearly two now, instantly took a liking to her."

Harriet said that they were now back to being a family of five. "We're so lucky to have her back and so grateful to the rescue team - it's an amazing charity." **Jane Grove**

● Gordon Bennett, the Maple Road bar and restaurant, is for sale, a quarter of a century after changing from being the rather gloomy Royal Charter pub. It's on the market (with alcohol and music licence) at £95,000, including fixtures and fittings, to take on a 25-year lease at an annual rent of £55,000.



As well as 60 seats inside, there's permission for a dozen pavement chairs in an area which comes into its own on summer evenings and farmers' market days. Upstairs is a trade kitchen with walk-in fridge, together with a bedroom and shower room, while below is the original pub cellar.

The Royal Charter, left, at 75 Maple Road, on the corner with Cleveland Road, opened as a beerhouse in the 1860s, but was rebuilt in the 1920s after being bought from the Isleworth brewery by Watneys. It became Gordon Bennett! (not forgetting the exclamation mark) in 1999.

● Fr Ignatius Edet has left Our Lady Immaculate, Tolworth, bound for a diocese in Texas. The Nigerian-born Chelsea fan, pictured, ordained in 2001, has been parish priest at the Roman Catholic church in the Broadway since 2018. "It's been an undeserved honour, privilege and blessing serving here," he said. Fr Michael Ezenwamadu replaces him, assisted by Fr Boniface Ayoo.



● Five of the eight adult learners on Surbiton High School's mature students' English course have passed their exams, despite it being their second, even third, language. Part of the school's outreach programme, the course teaches adults from Hungary, Hong Kong, Ukraine, Turkey, India and Chile. One successful student is a parent of a Surbiton High pupil. "It's heart-warming," said enthusiastic teacher Grant Allan.

● Kingston Charitable Foundation has been granted £3,000 to address inequality. Hicky Kingsbury told Surbiton's neighbourhood committee that 50,000 residents had already been given supermarket vouchers. "People struggle in what is perceived as a wealthy borough," added her colleague Justine Belcher. Cllr Andrew Wooldridge praised the charity for "picking up on the smaller things we might miss".

● Who says councillors have no clout? Days after Surbiton's Yogan Yoganathan demanded to know why the high street's free water dispenser was still shrouded like Tutankhamun, Thames Water unpeeled its bandages. The water firm, under fire for dumping sewage in the river Mole near Esher, first told The Good Life that Covid was to blame for the blue-topped fountain opposite Surbiton station remaining wreathed in plastic. But when Cllr Yoganathan complained, the wraps came off.



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● After 36 years, Expressions Haircuts has been snipped from its Victoria Road home.

Landlord Arif Ciku, who bought the freehold at auction last year, asked Trish Collins to go as he wants to renovate the building, including its spiral staircase basement.

Paul's Surrey Cobbler shoe repair business, in the other half of 30 Victoria Road, is unaffected as he has a long lease.

Trish has moved in with Amir Kampoori at Legacy, St James' Road (MP Ed Davey's barber of choice), having worked in her salon opposite Superdrug for three and half decades.

"I obviously must have started when I was about 10," joked the popular Northern Irish crimpier, who lives in Raeburn Avenue.

Expressions raised more than £25,000 for good causes in Tricia's reign. The shop was once a hippy hang-out as it housed a popular record shop in the 1960s.

Mr Ciku, whose business is Kingston-based, is the developer of the new flats above Costa at the junction of St Andrew's Road and the high street.



● The building which once housed Barclays has been reconfigured as two smaller shops, and successfully let. But anyone hoping for radical change in the high street will be disappointed as 81 and 83 Victoria Road, between the Surbiton Flyer and Clarks shoes, are set to become another estate agents' office... and another charity shop.

Annual rent for each is £60,000. The firm handling the lettings was coy about confirming names to The Good Life, but explained that the estate agent, opening in April, does not currently have a branch in the town.



Site blight fight has bite

Old vehicles and junk are accumulating on the Seething Wells filter beds site, say campaigners who want the historic area protected and turned into a reserve.

Seething Wells Action Group says Cascina, owner of the 13 hectares off Portsmouth Road, is in breach of a court order which requires it to paint railings and maintain the site. Swag opposes the latest planning application for the pump house (below) which proposes conversion to offices, plus car parking. "We've also submitted



recommendations to the River Thames scheme and requested it reconsiders its decision not to include Seething Wells in its plan," added the campaigning group's co-chair Tai Li Ling.

Swag meets on the last Monday of the month at 7pm at the Victoria pub in Victoria Road. Its next meeting is on April 29. All welcome, as the battle continues.

Playing board games?



Agents flout rules on sale and letting boards, and get away with it because of lax enforcement. The worst offender – named and shamed at a council meeting – was said to be Dexters, which has a board outside the library in Ewell Road.

Exasperated resident David Cox used Freedom of Information to ask how often Kingston Council had fulfilled its town planning duty to crack down on rogue boards in the last three years, and was informed: not once. The law, said Mr

Cox, requires letting agents to take down boards a fortnight after successfully renting... yet some leave them up as illegal adverts, especially outside flats, for months... even years.

"They're a blight," he told Surbiton neighbourhood committee, adding that it undermined any sense of community and made areas look uncared-for. Faced with a lack of will by the council to enforce the rules, he'd visited repeat offenders himself. "Does any councillor take it seriously?" he asked. "Agents use streets for free advertising!"

Committee chair Cllr Tom Reeve shared the concerns, while Cllr Yogan Yoganathan offered to accompany Mr Cox on visits to rogue agents, adding that some tried to blame lazy contractors.

Cllr Ian Manders had a surprise confession. In his gap year, many moons ago, he'd put up boards. "Worst job I ever had," he mused, adding that some agents left them in place as cheap storage. "It's one reason why we have a plague of boards," he said.

Mr Cox said that Dexters had tried to 'sell' the railway bridge before Christmas, with a board on the parapet. Now, he said, they're selling the library. "They basically do what they want."

However, Dexters denies breaking the rules. "We're selling the flat upstairs, above the library," the estate agent told The Good Life, adding that the sale board by the railway bridge at the top of St Mark's Hill actually applied to a flat nearby.

Informed that councillors were concerned, the dry response was: "I'm sure they are."

Cllr Reeve pledged to "do what we can" to tackle the issue.

Tim Harrison

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● Nicholas Barr, exasperated chair of Claremont & St James Court tenants' association near Surbiton station, says residents are at the end of their tether about missed bin collections.

Despite site visits by contractor Veolia, and assurances by Kingston Council head of contracts Sue Gregory-Johnson, bin-emptying is hit and miss. "Something smells rotten, and it's not just uncollected waste," said Nicholas.

A council probe found that two crews had been emptying the same bins! "It created an accidental bi-weekly collection," said Ms Gregory-Johnson.

Then the council website wrongly declared the service fortnightly!

Now the council blames building work and issues with parked vehicles for the chaos. "Until we get to the

reporting service is being abused by the council and its contractors is a waste of time," concludes Nicholas, who has enlisted local councillors' help to try to improve the flats' erratic collections.



● Surbiton scouts were among 500 brave souls camping out in sub-zero temperatures at Bentley Copse activity

centre near Guildford in February. Weekend events included tree climbing, air pistols, archery, adventure courses, go-karts, circus skills and tomahawk throwing, plus the traditional campfire.

Surbiton scout Flavio, 12, said: "I liked being with my friends; go-karting was fun and fast."

UK scout membership is over a third of a million, with surveys showing former scouts and guides are 15% less likely to suffer mood swings or anxiety.

● Are you at risk of dementia, do you have dementia, or are you a carer or family member affected by it? The community library runs a day of events entitled Living with Dementia on April 18. Diane Gregory explained: "It's aimed at people who have dementia, their carers and families, professionals who work in this area, and those who want to find out more on the subject or suspect that they may be exhibiting symptoms."

Activities include singing sessions, storytelling training, exercise classes, poetry and virtual-reality experiences. Dementia professionals and support groups will be attending, keen to chat.

It runs from 11am-3pm at Kingston Library on The Fairfield. A full programme will be posted at kingston.gov.uk/libraries with further information available from the community library team in Ewell Road, Surbiton, on 020 8547 6451.

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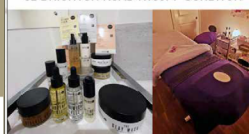
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281 is taking us for a ride

Tolworth residents who travel on the 281 are being taken for a ride! Buses regularly terminate at Surbiton, instead of the billed destination behind Tolworth Tower.

"It happens all the time," said one angry passenger after being dumped, for the third time in a week, at the bus stop by Claremont Gardens. "We don't even get into the middle of Surbiton; we're shoved off here! We're second-class passengers."

The 281 is meant to link Hounslow and Tolworth, but often chops out the last dozen stops before looping back to Hounslow at the station roundabout. Sometimes there's another bus behind, sometimes not, but as fewer buses reach Tolworth Broadway, gaps in

the service lengthen.

Rosie Trew, TfL's head of service, told The Good Life: "We're sorry some customers have experienced difficulties. The service has been affected by roadworks, and we're working with the operator to improve reliability."



This 281 will actually reach Tolworth... but the one parked behind has just thrown out all its passengers

... and why does TfL call the tune anyway?

"Who makes decisions about Surbiton roads - the council, or TfL?" asked frustrated resident Alex Oakes. "TfL," he was told. "They have the whip hand." Kingston Council transport lead Cllr Ian Manders' response didn't please the Thornhill Road questioner.

Why, Mr Oakes persisted, could the council ban left turns or install barriers at will, but daren't say 'Boo' to TfL on limiting through traffic that, he told the neighbourhood committee, is blighting Tolworth?

Cllr Manders said TfL insisted on waiting until the Tolworth roundabout roadworks were done before contemplating restricting traffic turning off the A3 by the recreation centre. "Then we'll pressure TfL," he said. "Their attitudes do change; they're not flies in amber." He said the key issue was that traffic can't leave the A3 at Hook's Ace roundabout, so cars use Fullers Way North.

"TfL effectively has a veto," said Cllr Manders. "It's disappointing, I know. It's a tennis match, but one where TfL do the serving."

Car wash with an inscrutable smile

Mona Lisa gazes down on staff at Thames Ditton hand car wash as they polish, buff and vacuum clean.

It's open seven days a week on the old Guy Salmon showroom site in Portsmouth Road, where the plan is to open a second-hand car dealership too. Aldi



had wanted to put a store there, but Elmbridge planners said no, and the supermarket lost an appeal over the impact on the conservation area and the nearby Grade II listed Angel pub.

The site of Kingston Hand Car Wash, further along Portsmouth Road, is now being redeveloped as six homes and two offices.

How to stay a healthy Surbitonian, with Neil Reilly

If you're going on a late ski break, beware of Day Three. The third day of a ski holiday is often disaster day.

Skiers become mentally confident but physically tired which can lead to imbalance between confidence and capability - and chiropractors don't like imbalance.

Here are some pre-ski tips to get you ready for the slopes:

- Activate muscles before you go away - squats, planks and cycling will all help.

- It's vital to stimulate your balance mechanism. Gently roll your ankles, on a wobble board if possible. Left to right for skiers. Forward and backwards for snowboarders.

- Jump to it. Jumping about on a mini trampoline is perfect preparation.

Day 3 warning

- Rollerblading is also excellent pre-holiday training.

When on the slopes:

- Warm up and stretch before you leave the chalet. Store skis in an upright position so you don't have to bend to pick them up. Don't start the day ripping it up on a black run.
- Take regular breaks. Don't exhaust yourself, and ruin the rest of your holiday.
- Stay hydrated, but avoid the booze - at least during the day.
- Take advice on boot fitting. If you are a bit 'knock-kneed' when you ski, consider a tapered heel lift.

- With acute injuries, apply cold, not heat - no matter how cold it is outside.
- Neil Reilly is based in Berrylands at the Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club. kingstonchiropracticplus.co.uk



The shelter under the floorboards



Pamela Higgins records Victory in Europe

Cellar gives up its wartime secrets

A remarkable record of the dark days when Surbiton residents sheltered from wartime bombers survives on the walls of a cellar. Under a rug in the living room of a house in Effingham Road is a trapdoor over a cramped cave where the Higgins family, plus assorted aunts, hid from the explosions.

The Second World War Blitz of 1940 saw London subjected to months of nightly raids by Luftwaffe bombers. The worst nights were October 9 and 10 when high explosives rained down on the area around Victoria recreation ground and Balaclava Road. A train heading towards Surbiton was derailed. In September and October that year, 19 Surbiton residents were killed.

Sheltered under the floorboards, the family recorded dates, details and thoughts in pencil.

The house has just been sold by HJC in Brighton Road (no mean achievement as half a dozen other estate agents had tried before), and it is hoped the new owners will preserve this intriguing slice of history.

According to the markings, the brick shelter was finished in October 1940. Those using it included William, Dennis and Pamela Higgins, not to mention Sally Bennett (who adds the detail 'Surrey's champion swimmer' after her name), Jack Jones, Pat Black and Tabbie her cat, Auntie Grace and Auntie Vi, and Vera Aggett with her three-year-old daughter Carol.

Pamela triumphantly added to the wall: "8th May 1945, VE Day", to record victory in Europe.

Thanks to help from the Surrey History Centre, The Good Life has established that the house was occupied by William and Violet

Higgins. When the Higgins left, the new owner added a poignant message to the cellar brickwork: "This house sold to Commander Ryland, 1st September 1949. The memories of war are left behind in this shelter. We hope it need never be used again during a war."

Explore local history at surreycc.gov.uk/surreyhistorycentre or at Kingston's local history room in the Guildhall. **Tim Harrison**



Under the rug, the hidden entrance

Grant will support young carers

Surbiton has chipped in £1,870 to help young people who care for older family members.

Kingston Carers' Network assists 850 youngsters in the borough and is organising an event at Chessington World of Adventures in November to share experiences and enjoy a day out, away from their duties.

Steph Baker, from the network, told Surbiton neighbourhood committee: "We rely on grants to keep the service up and running." As members unanimously agreed the funding, Cllr Yogan Yoganathan told her: "Keep up the good work; you are doing an excellent job."

- A well-run business group in Surbiton could boost prosperity, says area chair Cllr Tom Reeve, adding his two penn'orth to a discussion about creating a body to shout with one voice for the town. Up the road, Kingston First pulls in £1.2m a year, via a levy on shops, to promote the town. But if that model's a non-starter for Surbiton, an alternative local promotion vehicle may exist in New Malden. It's now being explored.

- Berrylands charity Ralphh installed its 23rd defibrillator in Latchmere rec, Kingston; a weatherproof life-saver on a café wall. Jane Allen represented at the opening.



- Eleven Surbiton High girls have Oxbridge course offers. "Superb," said head Rebecca Glover, standing, 2nd right.



A deep breath can ease stress

An active breathing course could help Surbitonians recover from long-term respiratory conditions. Run by Kingston's Voices of Hope charity, it helps manage stress, fatigue and anxiety levels, and improve mental well-being.

The original six-week online course, devised for long-Covid sufferers, proved useful for alleviating a wider range of conditions.

Respiratory disease affects one in five.

"We can offer a cost-effective way of improving breathing and quality of life," said charity chief Sarah Clay. voh.org.uk/abc



- The Rush salon in the high street is now a charity shop benefiting visually impaired people. The shop at 23 Victoria Road reopened on March 14 as Vision Foundation.

A manager is being recruited (salary £25,000 a year), and volunteers are also being sought.

The charity has nine shops, including one in Thames Street, Kingston, and began life in 1921 as the Greater London Fund for the Blind. It has raised £30m for sight-loss projects.

Kingston's

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● What's to become of the old Fircroft charity shop in St Andrew's Road? Auctioned last year for £725,000, it just sits, unloved. Once a money-raiser for the Surbiton learning disability support group, it was sold, with basement and two-bed flat, by Barnard Marcus.

● You always get a good talk at Surbiton Probud, the lunch club for retired or semi-retired professional and business men and women. The 72 members meet on the third Wednesday of the month at Glenmore House. April's talk is on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, May's is about smugglers and June's is on the history of Kingston. You don't have to live in Surbiton to join. surbitonprobud.org.uk

● RHACC's Hillcroft campus in South Bank, Surbiton, runs Thursday & Friday walk-in sessions to find out more on career development, education and skills learning. There are also open days in June. rhacc.ac.uk/about/open-days

● St Matthew's CofE primary has won a platinum prize for outdoor play and learning (Opal), for improving play while also developing skills of negotiation, compromise, creativity and flexibility. The Langley Road school is "one of the best in the world for quality of play" says Opal founder Michael Follett. Head Pam Dryden, pictured, is proud of the award.



● Activity groups, avid readers, Shine Bright UK and Kingston Voluntary Action met at Tolworth Library in the Broadway for International Women's Day with Tamil dancing, a talk on the menopause, free health checks and refreshments. The theme was women's mental and physical well-being. There were informative display boards and books about influential women.

● Is the council driving shops out of business? That's Surbiton dry-cleaning guru Robert Helliwell's belief after Kingston prioritised repainting the yellow lines outside his Claremont Road premises, rather than creating the customer bay he's craved for decades. "They've singled us out because our little old ladies are easy pickings," he said. "For years I've asked for a 10-minute drop-off facility, but it's obviously more lucrative not to have one! Do any councillors walk from Brighton Road to St Mark's Hill?" he asked. "All you see are closed premises! Do something to help instead of making trading impossible." His fury boiled over after one elderly customer paused for three minutes to drop laundry, only to be ticketed by a zealous warden.



Planned towers rise and fall

Developers have chopped the 21-storey skyscraper proposed on the corner of Tolworth roundabout's Toby Jug site to 15 floors. But the block by Tolworth station soars from 11 storeys to 20.

Signal Park's phase 2 tweaks reflect neighbours' views, with a final plan due to reach Kingston Council in April. A fifth of phase one's 211 flats are now occupied.

A decade ago, 269 homes were planned. That rose to 705, then 950 and has now hit 1,250 flats. Neighbours regularly say they fear the effect 5,000 new residents (if you add in the Tolworth Tower scheme) will have on school and doctor waiting lists as no extra education or medical facilities are proposed.

The Guinness Partnership project, on land once occupied by government buildings and the Toby Jug pub (where David Bowie launched Ziggy Stardust), will be finished by

2032. It wraps round the Hollywood bowling alley, whose Canadian investor owners refuse to sell. When that lease runs out in seven years, those investors may propose tower blocks of their own, coinciding with Signal Park's completion. Guinness's Ben Cook confessed to the odd sleepless night over Hollywood bowling alley's refusal to do a deal which would have created an even bigger site.

"Families can't get kids into the same school as their siblings as it is," one neighbour complained. "Yes, the council will make Guinness pay a contribution, but will the council spend it wisely? I doubt it!"

Ian Pattinson of Guinness confirmed the developer would pay an infrastructure levy... but said it was entirely up to the council to decide how to use it. Car parking is being cut in the new plan, from 388 spaces to 250.

Solar panels, green roofs, cycle routes, a new bus stand, electric car charging and community gardens are all features.

Changes to the planned height of some of the towers reflect fears over blocked daylight. Overall, the scale of the buildings facing the A3 has been lowered, to stop houses on the other side of the By-Pass being left in shadow, while the blocks nearer the railway line have been raised.

Work on the new flats is due to start in January next year. The Guinness artists' creative imaginings can be viewed at signalparkconsultation.co.uk

Tim Harrison

Duo tackle teenage mental health

Two Surbiton women offer classroom help to young people troubled by body image, exam stress, depression, anxiety or relationship quandaries.

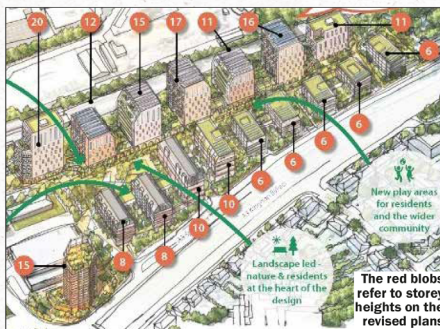
Therapists Sian Morris (left) and Faye Kinirons met while studying, and create topic-based teaching aids to boost mental health. Schools sign up at

thementalhealthproject.co.uk for digital programmes to assist youngsters aged 11 to 16.

Sian lives just off Maple Road, while Faye runs a therapy practice in St James' Road. Between them they've created videos for secondary schools in England and Wales, with five lessons for different year groups.

Faye, who has taught for 15 years, said the duo's mission was to broaden mental health management to those unable to afford individual therapy. "Our mission's simple; to provide resources that take care of the mental health curriculum for teachers," she said.

Sian, who has worked for the charity Mind, added: "Teachers are being asked to respond to growing mental health needs on top of what is often already an overwhelming workload."





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sky SPORTS




It's all Greek

Bestselling novelist Victoria Hislop is the star attraction at the BookBox literary club in the community hall of St Mary's church, Long Ditton, on Wed, May 15. The author of *The Island* will chat about her new book, *The Figurine*, set in Greece, a country for which she has a passion, a second home and even honorary citizenship. She'll shine a light on the questionable



acquisition of cultural treasures. Copies in the Regency Bookshop, Victoria Road. The event is at 8pm. Tickets: [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk) and search for the author's name.

oneACTS festival launches

Drama, comedy and intrigue play out on stage in eight new plays at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road. The oneACTS 2024 festival, a showcase of original playwrighting now in its 15th year, runs Mon, May 20-Sat, May 25, 7.45pm. Four short plays (all 15-30 mins) are performed on each alternate night. Tickets £12 (£10 concs) at ticketsource.co.uk/the-cornerhouseevents



It's been a creative few weeks for Tolworth Girls' pupils with a visit to Sky Up Academy Studios, Osterley, for immersion in the world of Sky TV's media production, using cameras, greenscreens, sound gear and editing software to create a news segment.

Two pupils have progressed to the regional finals of a public speaking competition, Jack Petchey's Speak Out Challenge, while students took part in activities in the lead up to World Book Day, including scavenger and treasure hunts looking for book-related clues, watching Q&A videos with authors and dressing up in the costumes of well-known characters (with the added challenge of having to identify themselves and their literary origins).

"It's a testament to TGS's unwavering commitment to nurturing a love for reading and creativity among its students," said one member of the school staff.

Berrylands Belles won the adult choir contest at Richmond Performing Arts Festival... for the seventh time on the trot! The 50-strong choir performed *Towards Infinity* by Paul Jarman, and *Waltzing Matilda*. Adjudicator Chris Wray commended the Belles for their beautiful sound, excellent phrasing and diction. They were up against choirs which compete internationally. The female, non-audition community choir, directed by Bec Gresson, rehearses Mondays, 8-9pm, Tolworth United Reformed Church. Newcomers welcome.

Joe Biden may be looking over his shoulder as a revival of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* opens. The last time it was performed in Surbiton, President Kennedy was assassinated. Atri Banerjee's version, at Kingston's Rose from April 17-May 4, explores the tangled web of love and loyalty that binds families together and stars Geraldine Somerville (who played Harry Potter's mum, Lily). When the show came to Surbiton's long-gone Romsey Theatre in South Terrace, the production was overshadowed by the shooting of JFK in Dallas. John Foyle of Berrylands Road was in the audience on Nov 22, 1963. "It swept everything off the radio news when I got home from the theatre," he recalled.



Molly McBride, a single mum of four from Kingston, won the Whole Lotta Comedy Surbiton comedian of the year final (£150 cash, plus trophy); one of 20 performing a quickfire, five-minute stand-up at the Waggon & Horses, Surbiton Hill Road. Monthly rounds held through the year. Have a go! Email wholottacomedy@outlook.com

Surbiton Symphony Orchestra and conductor Peter Le Tissier return to St Andrew's church, Maple Road, on Saturday, April 13 for the season finale, culminating in a performance of Strauss's monumental *Alpine Symphony*. In the first half, the orchestra presents the twin fairytale worlds of Wagner's *Lohengrin* prelude, paired with Mendelssohn's music to accompany Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. After the break, tubas, organ, wind, thunder machines and multiple instruments combine for the symphonic poem *Eine Alpensinfonie*, one of the great challenges for any orchestra. 7pm. Tickets from £5 at [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk) (search SSO).



Go on. Add five minutes to your commute. Stop to admire the remarkable mosaics in Surbiton station on the linking bridge over the platforms. Inspired by William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, they were restored by Jo Lewis and Franca Hunt at Hillcroft College, South Bank.

New twist on Priestley

Another Inspector Calls is a new play by Andy Moseley which asks whether anything has really changed since JB Priestley's seminal 1945 modern-morality drama *An Inspector Calls*. Priestley's play, a mid-20th century classic, is a scathing criticism of Victorian and Edwardian hypocrisies and a prescribed Eng Lit text. Another Inspector Calls is set at the Gower family's Highland retreat in 2020. A family do is cut short when Det Insp Anne Gould arrives. She's not there to enforce lockdown rules, she's investigating the death of a woman. But what links that to the family? A rehearsed reading by NoLogoProduction is at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, Fri, April 26, 7.30pm. £12 (£10 concs) from ticketsource.co.uk/the-cornerhouseevents



Mum, Dad... please stop embarrassing us! Parents of kids at Long Ditton Infants and St Mary's got together and formed a lockdown band, Heaven's Lieutenants. They carried on rehearsing and performing after Covid, and now have a new EP out, *Waves*, available on streaming platforms. If you want to find out what all the fuss is about, there's a gig coming up on April 27 at Fusebox in Kingston. Full info at the band's Instagram [@heavenstlieutenants](https://www.instagram.com/heavenstlieutenants)

Young musicians from Kingston Grammar showed off their skills at a coffee concert at St Andrew's, Maple Road. Accompanied by head of music Mark Lafin, they performed everything from Bach to Elgar, ragtime to showtime. High points included Hannah Topen's glorious singing from *Marriage of Figaro*, Kessie Li's harp playing, Milly Hutton's cello and Tom Price's piano version of *Friend Like Me* from *Aladdin*.

The new Thames Concert season has seven evening concerts starting on Oct 5 at 7.30pm. [thamesconcerts.com](https://www.thamesconcerts.com)



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Take a punt!

The varnished boats are works of art, but Dittons Skiff and Punting Club, now 100 years old, is very much an active sporting enterprise. Based by The Albany, Thames Ditton, its purpose-built clubhouse, gym and boathouse is second to none. While recent rain limited boating, it's set fair for taster evenings (any Thurs from May 16 at 6.30pm) to experience the river, with expert guidance, regardless of age, fitness or gender. "It's great for core fitness; we have active members in their 80s," said vice-chair Guy Hanscomb. More at dittons.org.uk or Insta @dittonskiffpunting

Skiffing and punting are excellent ways to enjoy an iconic stretch of the Thames, while the bar, lawn and terrace are good summer vantage points. To mark its 100th anniversary, the club staged a flotilla of 24 skiffs and punts, some a century old. The club has more hand-crafted skiffs and punts than any rival.

DSPC also takes part in regattas, with punting (summer-focused) and skiffing taking place all year round.

It was showtime for cheerleaders and tumblers as 12 teams put on a thrilling display to entertain crowds at Tolworth



Recreation Centre. The Altitude Showcase saw routines from teams aged four to 18, as well as demonstrations on a tumble track. "It was a major success," said head coach Maddie Garry. Find out more at altitudecheerleading.com

Blues tilt at 4 trophies

Chelsea Women are still in the hunt for four trophies as gaffer Emma Hayes ticks off the days until she quits for the USA. With, left, midfielder Erin Cuthbert regularly wearing the captain's armband (even upside-down!), the squad has brushed away injury issues. On March 31, the Blues face Arsenal in the League Cup final at Molineux, having stunned the Gunners with a 3-1 WSL win at Stamford Bridge in front of 33,000. And they're still chasing league, Euro and FA Cup glory, with an FA semi v Man U on Apr 14. Lyon's Sonia Bompastor remains the hot tip to replace Hayes, winning the Champions League twice as a player (in Cuthbert's position), once as manager... not to mention two league titles. She's 43, and speaks French, English and Portuguese.



Surbiton High's Beverley Wong added the Surrey Badminton Championships U12 girls doubles & mixed doubles to her U12 girls singles title. Mum Rebecca spoke of her "determination, resilience and teamwork" as she now targets All-England matches.



Social Bowls has taken off in Tolworth. Just for fun, team-building or simply as a get-together (like this group of old pals, pictured), more people are booking slots at King George Field Indoor Bowls Club, Jubilee Way, with its six rinks and top-notch facilities. Follow suit at kgfindoorbowlclub.co.uk

Emma Kjaer won silver in the U13 Girls 60m dash with a PB of 8.31 seconds at the Surrey & Sussex Athletics meet in Carshalton. The 12-year-old from Effingham Road first



started her sprint training in 2023 with Kingston Athletics Club and Poly-technic Harriers at Kingsmeadow.



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A good sport to tackle

Too much screen time? Opt for green time! The Southborough boys (below) are also Kingston Rugby Club juniors, training on Sunday mornings at the ground behind King Edward's rec near Hook's Ace roundabout. "It's great," said Harry Crow, 11, of Cotterill Road, whose dad, Paul, is one of the five regular trainers of the U12s. With age groups as young as U5s, everyone learns the importance of teamwork.

The current season ends in May, but coaches are now building numbers for September. Full information at kingstonrfc.com

It's social as well as sporting, with parents getting together for events, and outings arranged. "My son came back with tufts of grass from the Stoop, and tried to plant them in our Surbiton garden!" said one touchline mum.

From tackling practice on giant player-size bags (above, right) to rapid passing and running for forwards and backs, coaches organise training using RFU safety protocols.

"The player I like best? Marcus Smith," said Harry, citing the 25-year-old Quins' fly-half and England hero as his favourite.

Kingston Rugby Club has three pitches (one floodlit) and an impressive clubhouse. **Tim Harrison**



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