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**Surbiton
Farmers Market**

Issue 80

The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3

May 2025

● Meet the Surbiton artist whose work you'll recognise, but whose face you won't. Yet Ken McDonough's pictures helped sell 500 million Airfix kits. **p4**



● Don't tell me you've been throwing away your avocado stones! An enterprising Surbiton cafe shreds the orbicular seeds to create cups of wellbeing tea! Story on **p2**



● What is it about a simple instruction on a river path that some middle-aged male cyclists find so hard to grasp? **p5**



● When not swotting for GCSEs, this schoolgirl is schussing for Team GB. **p16**



● Illustrator and Surbiton Hill Methodist stalwart Fred Bestall worked in the study of his Cranes Park home to create the image we know of Rupert Bear, the character beloved by millions. Now Rupert is catching a train at the station. All will be revealed in the next Good Life!



Another supermarket?



They plan to raze a Tolworth garden centre and replace it with another... **OR** build a discount food supermarket.

Two options are listed for Court Farm in Old Kingston Road, which has traded since 1967, but there are fears about car congestion and loss of Metropolitan Open Land.

Documents lodged with Kingston Council by Court Farm's agents cite comparative traffic levels at nearby Aldi stores, including 300+ cars an hour at weekends. The site itself is opposite Lidl's UK HQ.

If approved, work could start in May 2026, with the higgledy buildings and leaky greenhouses swept away for a store 23ft high. Size-wise it would equal 10 tennis courts, with staffing – now 32 – rising to 40.

Court Farm director Sean Hegazy, 57, reassured The Good Life that his main option was like-for-like replacement. "It's definitely not a Lidl; it'll be a garden centre," he said. "More contained; more like a shopping mall, modernised, a better entrance; state-of-the-art."

However, documents state: **Option 1**, discount food store; **Option 2**, replacement garden centre. Its junction with Kingston Road would be upgraded to cope.

The site is also home to a tree surgeon and Pooch Planet dog grooming ('dogs welcome, people tolerated').

Mr Hegazy, who took over Court Farm in 2020, said other firms could still share the space. He said the plan was to demolish and rebuild in stages, yet the watchdog Kingston Society frets about the 'extent and size' of building on Metropolitan Open Land. **Tim Harrison**

Going Dutch: a new pub empire



A Dutchman went into a bar... It's not a joke! Hidde Hartog has relaunched The Elm Tree in the high street; the flagship of a new pub empire, Surbiton Pubs Ltd. "Ultimately I'd love to have five," said the 40-year-old 'intreprenuer' from Amsterdam, who has run independent pubs in London for a decade and is now tied to Greene King for five years. Thursday night music jams are back, plus sports screens (you couldn't move for Arsenal v Real), while food includes a full English for a fiver.

Continued on **p2**

Bog off! Loo row halts payback

Offenders can no longer do community service in Surbiton, in case they need a wee!

Probation officers have halted a payback scheme. Last autumn criminals did 200 hours of unpaid work including renovating Queen's Prom benches and clearing a Fishponds stream. Now new rules state offenders must have private loos.

Surbiton Cllr Ian Manders said: "It was going well, then it ended in January as participants must have toilets on site. Some areas have public toilets, but apparently that's not acceptable!"

The council is urging a rethink. "It's a strange demand by probation," said Cllr Manders, observing that some UK prisoners still have to slop out cells.

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the good life

Stone me! It's avocado tea



Melinda Repas outside Avocadium and (top, right) the famous tea

Waste not, want not. When Melinda Repas has scooped the flesh from an avocado – and she gets through 100 a week – she peels and dries the stone, shreds it and creates a wellbeing tea.

“Of an avocado’s antioxidants, 70% are in the seed,” said Melinda, 34, who set up the Avocadium cafe with hubby Istvan Homoga, 42, in what was Ralph’s at the corner of Surbiton and Southsea roads.

Some say avocados can fight hypertension or osteoarthritis. Melinda’s claims are more modest. “Calmness, relaxation and peace to your daily routine,” she said.

The couple are Hungarian. Melinda’s surname translates as ‘carrot’. “And my brother has red hair,” she laughed.

But what does the tea taste like? Even for an ageing wordsmith, it’s hard to define. Sappy? Perhaps a hint of asparagus? After steeping for five minutes there are only



marginal hints of flavour, and a slightly green tinge. “Not flavour, just benefits,” insisted Melinda. It’s £3.75 a cup.

Avocadium, which recently organised a customer-and-dog walk along the riverside in aid of canine rescue, does well from Kingston Uni students, but the big rush is 4pm when nearby Surbiton High disgorges.

Melinda came up with the cafe’s quirky name. She used to live in a shared house where she devised an avocado & lemon cake recipe which she dubbed avocadium.

Tim Harrison



Koyal's Rosettes

Chef Nand Kishor and the kitchen team

Five months after opening, Koyal has gained a coveted award. The Indian restaurant on the corner of Brighton and Balacava roads has been awarded two AA Rosettes – a sought-after accolade in the restaurant industry.

To earn it, the chef must show technical skill, consistency and judgement in combining and balancing ingredients, and have a clear ambition to achieve high standards. “We’re thrilled,” said manager Omit Pareek. “We’re incredibly proud, and want to thank everyone who has made it possible; our talented chefs and dedicated front-of-house team.” Koyal is the only Indian restaurant in the borough to hold the award. Surbiton boasts another double AA Rosette winner – The French Table, down the street in Maple Road. Aren’t we the lucky ones!

Jane Grove

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In the mix

The former Refilllogic zero waste shop at 140 Ewell Road has become a Thermomix studio, demonstrating an all-singing, all-dancing kitchen blender which can also heat things up, weigh, cook, steam, juice, stir, grind, knead etc. It’s not cheap. The new model, just in from Germany, is £1,349. It’s pre-loaded with thousands of recipes on a screen. Back in the day, it was Tupperware parties. Now Thermomix is the thing, with demonstrators showing off the gadget. Aga Zieba, above, was explaining all when The Good Life called by, with daughter Karolina assisting. Reviewers say it works well for soups, curries and sauces, but that for the same money you could buy a food processor, blender and slow cooker, and still have change. Thermomix argues that it’s compact and combines several device functions, saving worktop space.

Pizza is fired

Masaniello, above, the Italian pizzeria/cafe at 115 Ewell Road, by the Prince of Wales pub, has new owners. “After seven beautiful years we’ve made other plans,” chef Livio Te announced. “Masaniello Surbiton will open under new management. Please support the new owners... or head to Masaniello Twickenham if you really miss us!”

He and restaurateur Maria D’Errico thanked everyone for their support. Masaniello offered Neapolitan cuisine with wood-fired pizzas and freshly made calamari fritti.

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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 12,500 homes. Back issues are 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, join 9,800 locals who follow us on Instagram (just scan the QR code) and Facebook [@thegoodlifesurbiton](https://www.facebook.com/thegoodlifesurbiton) or visit our website 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).

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FEATURED IN:

Continued from p1

Manager Harry Cookson, 26, has helped re-energise the pub. One novelty; the Guinness is poured from original taps imported from Dublin, so takes an extra 30 seconds to properly settle in the glass!

Hide, who cycles in from his New Malden home, has reverted to The Elm Tree name from The Duke. 64 Victoria Road has been everything: a branch of electrical retailer Currys in the 1990s, a children’s clothing store... and then Whitbread opened The Hogshead in 1997. In 2005 it became The Elm Tree, in 2010 the Duke of York. That truncated to The Duke before the latest switch.

Below: a rival to Wetherspoons? **£5: 9am-noon daily.**

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Prep achievement

Year 6 pupils at Surbiton High boys' prep get a pat on the back; 37 of them have gained 121 senior school place offers, 31 of them scholarships.

Mayoral transfer

After four successive Surbiton mayors, the chain of office heads back to Kingston, with Cllr Noel Hadjimichael tipped as first citizen.

Theft-free shops

The parade in Fleece Road, Long Ditton, and the shops in Thames Ditton village, reported no shoplifting whatsoever throughout 2024.

So, how you bin?

Surbiton residents who use wheelie bins to reserve parking spaces outside their homes are being fined by council enforcement officers.

Now pay thy debt

You can now make donations by credit and debit card again at Tolworth's Our Lady Immaculate. A new card reader has been purchased to replace the old one, which gave up the ghost.

Trump's tea tariff

When Surbiton WI members were told of a new 50p charge for tea and biscuits, one wag at the back shouted: "Does that include Trump's tariff?"

No college buyers

Despite being on the market for four months there have been no nibbles for Hillcroft College, South Bank, Surbiton, with its £7m price tag.

Bay to disappear

A disabled parking bay outside 79 Knollmead is to be removed.

Demolition is OK

Permission was granted to pull down the house and garage at 59 St Mary's Road, Long Ditton, and replace it with a two-storey home.

The hole truth

To get its share of a £500million government pothole repair fund, the council must now publish details of how many cracks and crevices in Surbiton its workmen fill.

Not averse to it

Make youngsters poets. Rhymetime at Surbiton Library, Ewell Road, is for the under 5s. Tuesday, 10-10.30am. Book by calling 020 8547 5006.

Watch is taken

A Dunhill watch, bracelet and set of Second World War medals were stolen from a house in Chalcott Gardens, near St Mary's church in Long Ditton, when four men wearing hoodies forced open the front door.

Pavement clutter

Working with the local disability network, the council has issued 65 enforcement notices in a drive to reduce the number of free-standing signs blocking pavements in Surbiton and Kingston. The Kingston Disability Network unites the voices of 25 borough groups which raise awareness of disability issues.

SURBITON LIFE

by David Cox



"There's a nice view, just to the left of our old boards - or as we prefer to say: our Enduring Marketing Zone"

Comedy pub is up for sale

The Berrylands pub where sharp-witted Lee Mack, left, took his first faltering steps as a young stand-up comic is for sale.

Brave New World - pictured below, and still

better known to long-term locals as 'The Bun Shop' - is on the

market at £1.5million, although it continues to trade in the meantime. Licensed in 1890, the Berrylands Road pub doubled as a bakery and confectioners until the 1960s, hence Bun Shop. By the 1970s it was one of two free houses (the other being The Park Tavern by Richmond Park's Kingston gate) owned by Alex Bennett, a Brit living in Portugal.

In the 1980s Ian and Elaine Mole took it over, and launched open mic comedy evenings in the room at the rear - on a mini-stage graced in the 1950s by George Melly and in the 70s by John Otway. It was here, in 1994, that hesitant unknown chancer Lee Mack first tried out a stand-up routine at an open-mic evening, known as The Gong Show. He was in good company; Tim Vine and Jo Brand also gave early performances in that back room.

Mack, who grew up in a flat above a pub, now lives in East Molesey with his wife and three children, and is regularly voted one of the funniest comics in the country.

In 1996 the Moles were bankrupt and the pub shut, only to reopen three years later as Brave New World.

As well as the 7,500sq ft pub (with all fixtures and fittings), agents Savills are selling its 11 bedrooms and a two-bed flat, all currently let and bringing in nearly £100,000 a year in rent.

Tim Harrison

Ed can't resist another stunt!

Tolworth's indoor bowlers raised more than £4,000 to help fight motor neurone disease via a 24-hour bowlathon, cake sale and tombola at King George Field indoor bowls club at Jubilee Way.

Surbiton MP Ed Davey, famed for his action-man pre-election stunts, couldn't resist having a go. "It was a great success," said ladies captain Vicki Harris. "Everyone enjoyed it, and guests from other clubs supported us."

Formed in 1971, the club near Lidl's Tolworth HQ is the borough's only indoor bowls club. Have a try any Tuesday (6-7pm) or Sunday (10am-noon). Wear flat-soled shoes.



Gum 'em back!

The sign at Maple Dental Practice was looking toothless last month, and in dire need of implants to fill gaps in the lettering.

The 'dental fixitive' had clearly failed, creating a new name: Maple Dutil Practice. We've struggled to find a definition of 'dutil', although Good Life cryptic crossword buffs will have already spotted that it's a useful anagram of 'adult'.

The surgery in Maple Road told The Good Life that the letters of the practice name were being redone anyway during a two-week reception and frontage refurb as part of an effort to make the building more secure. The surgery shut for all but emergencies from April 16-28. "It will include replacing the window shopfront due to the fact we have been broken into multiple times over the last couple of years," said surgery business development director Farisa Siddique.



Val's still dancing

If you want a long life, keep dancing. Surbiton resident Val Swinnard made a career of it, and she's turned 100. Val, who is in the Surbitonian Gardens care home at the corner of Browns Road and Warwick Grove, was born on March 23 1925 in Canterbury, and took to the stage at the age of eight.

A talented dancer, she performed through the 1930s, 40s and 50s. In 1946 she danced with Ballet Rambert, in 1951 performed on the BBC television show Music for You,

and in 1955 played Miss Mason in a musical comedy, Twenty Minutes South, at London's St Martin's Theatre, directed by Carry On legend Hattie Jacques.

Val taught dance at the Andrew Hardie studio in South Ken, where pupils recall her being "very popular with the students". Now living with dementia, and with no known living family, Val celebrated her birthday wearing a sash and tiara. She shared a cake and cuppa with care home staff and other residents.

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Matthew James



Ken was a model citizen

Generations of boys became enthusiastic Airfix kit modellers thanks to the artistic skills of Surbiton illustrator Ken McDonough. As they sat at kitchen tables, patiently glueing their model Spitfires and adding RAF roundels, they were inspired by Ken's paintings on the box of warplanes diving through clouds and tally-ho pilots pursuing enemy fighters in daring dogfights.

As a teenager, Ken grew up with his mother in Victoria Road (in a house on the site of the Mail Boxes Etc shop) before moving, after her death, to the top-floor flat at 3 St Andrew's Square. He was 18 at the outbreak of the Second World War, but despite his fascination for flying, he became an 8th Army Desert Rat, serving under 'Monty' Montgomery in North Africa and Italy.

After the war he studied commercial art, travelling from Surbiton station to Regent Street Polytechnic, now part of Westminster uni. His work was spotted by the Rev Marcus Morris who, in 1949, was setting up Eagle, an educational weekly comic for boys featuring the adventures of Dan Dare of the Interplanet Space Fleet, and his battles with the Mekon, a swollen-headed villain from Venus who floated about on a kind of levitating papal chair.

Morris hired Ken to draw pictures for the dummy issue, then paid him 12 guineas a week (£400 in today's money) to write and illustrate a half-page comic strip called Heroes of the Clouds, in which a fictional dad-and-son pilot team told real-life aviation tales from the two world wars.

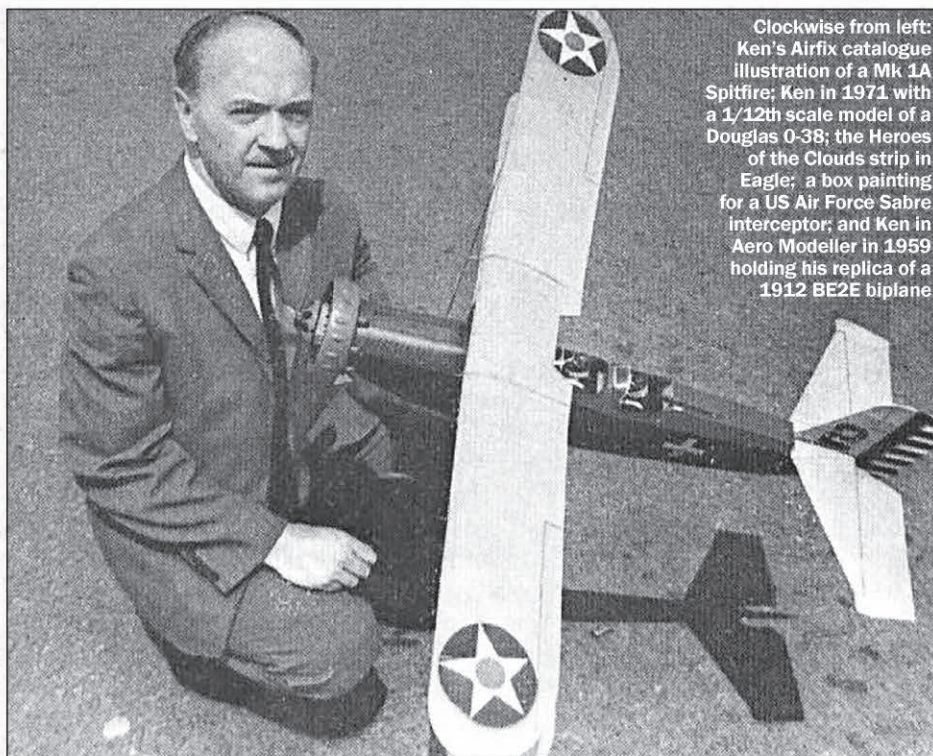
That paved the way for more magazine commissions, notably for Aero Modeller, with which he had a long relationship. Working with



Special thanks to The Historic Croydon Airport Trust, Eagle Society, Bob Corn, Alasdair Imrie, Keith McMahon and Jeremy Briggs for assistance with research

water-based acrylic paints he created technically accurate scenes involving warplanes, signing pictures Kenneth McDonough.

It helped that he was an enthusiastic modeller himself, making replica planes powered by tightly wound rubber bands and testing their airworthiness in St Andrew's Square before heading off to the Old Warden aerodrome in Bedfordshire to join fellow



Clockwise from left: Ken's Airfix catalogue illustration of a Mk 1A Spitfire; Ken in 1971 with a 1/12th scale model of a Douglas O-38; the Heroes of the Clouds strip in Eagle; a box painting for a US Air Force Sabre interceptor; and Ken in Aero Modeller in 1959 holding his replica of a 1912 BE2E biplane

enthusiasts at model flying meetings. In 1966 he wrote and illustrated Atlantic Wings, a 132-page reference book detailing early attempts to cross the North Atlantic by plane and airship.

In 1975, aged 54, he became the chief 'cover artist' at Airfix, creating images of daredevil pilots on boxes and blister packs to persuade youngsters to part with their pocket money. Helicopters, military trucks, fighter jets, buses, fire engines, tanks, commercial jets and even the NASA Space Shuttle – all had the McDonough treatment, though he had a lifelong aversion to bombers, and refused to paint them. Airfix is reckoned to have sold 500 million kits!

His work included construction plans and flying instructions, many marked out on kitchen-drawer lining paper in blue biro, and he created greeting cards with images of aircraft which could be cut out and assembled. He stayed with Airfix until the firm went bust in 1981, but continued painting and illustrating books, helping found the Guild of Aviation Artists.

His personal passion was for early French aircraft, and his work features in aviation museum collections around the world, including the RAF Museum, where it's still sold in art print form.

In 1995 he suffered a stroke, and moved to the Royal Star & Garter Home on Richmond Hill. He rallied, but died there on January 16 2002, aged 81, with sister Barbara and brother Ray at his bedside. He left a large collection of his vintage scale models, including three Breguets, four Farmans and five Latécoères, to his longtime pal David Deadman.

At a memorial service, Aero Modeller editor Ron Moulton called Ken 'one of a kind', adding: "He was the most modest, self-disciplined and independent individual, generous to a fault, meticulous in all that he did and belonging to a fast-disappearing age of creative hand skills."

Modern model aircraft enthusiast Alasdair Imrie confirmed to The Good Life: "As well as being a fantastic illustrator, Ken was a very accomplished and keen aeromodeller. He was a friend of my late father, Alex Imrie, and would visit our home."



Ken's illustrative work is still celebrated by the Eagle Society – the boys' magazine's fan club. Jeremy Briggs, in Eagle Times, summed him up as "a lifelong aviation buff".

Tim Harrison

● **Kenneth Alexander McDonough,**
b Wandsworth, Feb 28 1921,
d Richmond, Jan 16 2002

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A stamp of approval

The era when dozens of little local societies met monthly at Surbiton Library's annexe ended abruptly in the Covid summer of 2020, when Kingston Council contractor Engie wrote to the myriad building users to say their hire arrangements had been ended with immediate effect.

Protests followed, and there was some shamefaced backtracking as the local authority grasped the effect it would have on so many valued community groups... but the Kingston Philatelic Society – 97 years of age – was still a casualty.

Now the Bookham Stamp Club, formed in 1993 and the first such club in the UK to meet by day rather than in the evening, is welcoming homeless Surbiton stamp collectors.

It has 80 members, and gathers on the fourth Tuesday of each month at The Old Barn Hall, Church Road, Great Bookham. Doors open 1.30pm, with meetings starting at 2.15pm.

The programme includes talks and displays, with time set aside to view trading tables where members can buy stamps, postcards etc.

"We're always happy to welcome new members to this friendly, growing club," said Chris Lucas.

The meeting on May 27 includes a stamp auction. If you have an unwanted collection to sell or donate, email Barry Feltham at secretary@bookhamstampclub.com or visit its website, bookhamstampclub.com



● No casinos will be allowed to open in Surbiton because of the risk to mental health from gambling addiction, and to protect vulnerable adults and children, following a council decision.

The local authority also now requires betting shop, pub and club staff to train in suicide awareness in a strategy developed with the Samaritans, mental health trust, youth service and Kingston Hospital.

There are 10 suicides a year in Kingston borough; higher than the London average, though lower than in England overall.



● As Good Life readers will surely agree, you see all sorts of things in Surbiton. But the start of a Viking invasion? Julian Meers was casually strolling up the high street when he glanced across at Cannings to see what could only be the advance party – armed to the teeth – making his way towards the station, doubtless intent on capturing strategic infrastructure ahead of the main occupying force. To be fair, the head of the pillager's axe was safely wrapped in a plastic bin liner...

Bike riding rises on Prom

Police are being urged to step up no-cycling enforcement on Queen's Prom after several near misses involving reckless riders on the riverside walk.

As summer approaches there are fears the problem will worsen, despite wide dedicated cycle lanes existing in Portsmouth Road. The council says robustly enforcing byelaws is difficult. Cyclist numbers fell in 2023 after tarmac signs (right) were repainted... but last year there was a rise in reported incidents.

"It is mostly young to middle-aged men – seldom women – who ignore the messages," lamented Stefan Gross, who chairs the Prom Friends. He frets about the safety of the volunteer gardeners who transform and improve the landscaping. "There's no enforcement; no consequences... so it continues."

Confusingly, Kingston's Canbury Gardens has experimented with a merged foot and cycle path, which may have emboldened cyclists to disregard the rules when they reach Surbiton. Councillors and volunteers are now monitoring Queen's Prom activity to gather evidence.

A Kingston Council spokesman said it did everything to encourage cyclists to use the Portsmouth Road cycle lanes. "While there are byelaws prohibiting cycling on Queen's Promenade, and there is clear signage, the practicality of robustly enforcing them at all times is limited. In light of concerns we'll raise it with the neighbourhood policing team. We are committed to ensuring the safety of all our public spaces and will continue to work with our partners." **Tim Harrison**



Blokes required

Walk and chat while on a free stroll from Surbiton station's Glenbuck Road entrance every Tuesday at 6.30pm as the Proper Blokes' Club works to improve mental wellbeing.

Expect hold-ups

Brace for delays between Surbiton and Kingston on the night of Tue, May 6. From 8pm to 5am, Surbiton Road shuts for resurfacing.

Improve your area

Live in Long Ditton? Want to improve it? Long Ditton Residents' Association committee awaits your input. Email vice-chair Mark Herbert at mark.herbert@longditton.org

Whip crack away

2,200 whips will take root in Stokes Field nature reserve, Long Ditton; 40% oak, 40% silver birch, 20% broadleaf. Elmbridge Council's countryside team will plant under Forestry Commission direction.

Next door to Alice

Victoria Road's Princess Alice Hospice charity shop reopened after a two-week closure for a refurb. Volunteer help always needed.

Planting

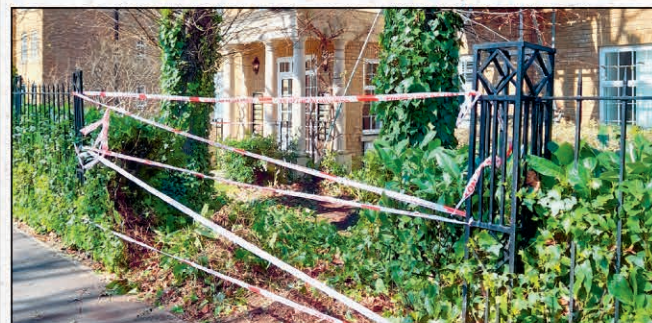
Residents at the Surbiton YMCA in Victoria Road need spare plants to add to their cute little garden.



How it will look in 2027 and, inset, MP and mayor get digging

Surbiton MP Ed Davey put on a hard hat, picked up a shovel and joined the mayor, Cllr Liz Green, at a ceremony to start the £110m Tolworth Hospital rebuild. Now all it needs is a name.

Suggestions are invited from Surbiton residents (tinyurl.com/5n8r6z8z). Tired old buildings will be replaced with new structures housing seven wards for elderly and mental health patients in a two-and-a-half-year project. Ava Mintz, from the health trust patients' body, celebrated that "input from patients and carers" was factored in. Plans include a cafe and plaza 'to break mental health stigma and integrate into the community'. The Red Lion Road site began as a Victorian infectious diseases hospital.



An out-of-control BMW ploughed through the railings of a block of flats in Balaclava Road, demolishing the hedge, rocketing between two trees and taking a large bite out of a supporting pillar in the porch.

Luckily no one was emerging from No 49 at the time. The air bags were not deployed, one resident reported, adding: "We think the whole porch will need to be replaced."

It is believed that the car may have clipped a kerb before mounting the pavement and ending up in the front garden early on April 2.

Police taped off the area, and are now investigating the incident.

New tower mooted

Developers want to site a 16-storey block next to the bowling alley at Tolworth roundabout as part of a scheme to create 1,000 homes, in addition to existing blocks.

The diamond-shaped tower, part of Signal Park, would be so tall at sunrise, its shadow would stretch a fifth of a mile, affecting houses as far away as Cranbourne Avenue.

A third of the flats in the tower, on the site of the old Toby Jug pub – pulled down 23 years ago, would be classed as 'affordable'. Significantly less car parking would be created than in previous proposals.

The Kingston Society, the local planning watchdog, is bothered about the bulk and height of all the mooted new blocks across the site, and fears there will be inadequate health and nursery provision for the new residents.

It is also exercised about the limited parking proposed in the plans, and the likely overspill that would result in already congested streets.

A bewildering 270 detailed documents make up application **24/02849/OUT**. If you've hours to spare, and want to add your two penn'orth, visit Kingston Council's planning portal.



Doesn't he brush up well? David Jacobson, Surbiton Farmers' Market panjandrum, is off to Buckingham Palace this month to take tea with King Charles after being awarded a British Empire Medal

Clandon Wood

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• The prize for the most outstanding nature writing published last year has been whittled down to: **The Lost Paths** by Jack Cornish (Penguin); **Lost Wonders** by Tom Lathan (Picador); **The Accidental Garden** by Richard Mabey (Profile); and **Nature's Ghosts** by Sophie Yeo (Harper North). The

Richard Jefferies Society's judges meet in the summer to announce the winner of the £1,000 award, reflecting the heritage and spirit of the books of Surbiton naturalist Richard Jefferies. He lived in Ewell Road in the 1870s and the bird sanctuary behind Surbiton station bears his name.

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• Surbiton's brief, but oh-so-rewarding magnolia season reached its peak on around March 23, with the stunning pink and white flowers blooming in gardens across the town. The top picture is at the Surbiton end of Effingham Road. The one below is in The Crescent, near Glenmore House.



Tufty warning

A squirrel was humanely destroyed after becoming snared in a bird feeder in a Berrylands back garden.

"Once their head and shoulders are inside, they can't reverse out," said Anita Schaper after taking the trapped rodent to a Surbiton vet to see if he could free it. "It was stuck in the steelwork, and had to be euthanised due to internal injuries."

She's added her voice to an RSPCA campaign raising awareness of risks some feeders can pose. "Being inquisitive, squirrels stick their heads in to get to the bird seed in the central cylinder, yet manufacturers sell feeders as squirrel-proof by design," said the Berrylands councillor.

She has found squirrels caught in feeders three times in as many months. "By luck and ingenuity I managed to free them without harm," she said, adding that the animal which was put down must have struggled for a long time. "It was sad to see it suffering in that way," she said. "Let's face it, like the weather, we love to have a good moan about squirrels. We eyeball them from our kitchens and living room windows and, with some level of begrudging admiration, tolerate them as the equally wonderful and annoying garden visitors they have become."

She is urging manufacturers to redesign seed dispensers to reduce the risk to non-target species. Meanwhile, the RSPCA advises anyone going on holiday to take down 'squirrel-proof' feeders while they're away.

If vets do free trapped squirrels, the law forbids them from releasing furry patients back to the wild as they're officially 'vermin'. **Tim Harrison**



Squirrel-proof? Rodents can get caught in feeders Pic: RSPCA

• If the St Andrew's Square benches look smarter than usual, thank the Friends. Volunteers have been restoring them, removing invasive plants, clearing brambles and enlarging the woodlouse bug hotel. Woodchip paths have been improved, and donated plants put in the ground. Keen to help? Email st.andrews.sq.surbiton@gmail.com for info on the Friends of St Andrew's Square, or visit the stall at Surbiton village fete in the square, Sat Jun 28.



• A grant of £1.74m will pay for a dozen zero-emission buses in the Good Life area. The money has been given to Surrey County Council, and the buses will be operating by spring 2027.

Make home greener

For a third year, the borough's Efficient Homes Show is being staged in Surbiton, with a host of energy-saving tips and positive, practical environmental ideas.

It's at Hollyfield school, Surbiton Hill Road, on Sat, May 10, 10am-3pm, it's free to attend, and visitors have the chance to quiz experts on solar panels, home batteries, insulation and heat pumps.

There's also a chance to meet Surbiton residents who have successfully adopted new technologies to cut bills, learn if you qualify for grants or funding, clue up about electric vehicles and explore green-sector jobs and courses. "Over a third of climate-

harming emissions in this borough come from heating and powering homes," said Cllr Ian Manders, climate action portfolio holder. "High fossil fuel costs represent residents' money leaving the area. I'd rather keep the money in people's pockets."

Parts of the show focus on cycling, gardening and children's activities, and there's a drop-off point for unwanted devices such as phones that can be recycled or given new homes. There are short talks and discussions, and refreshments are available.

There is some parking, but visitors are urged to use sustainable transport. The show is run by a partnership of council, Kingston Green Business Community and Kingston Chamber of Commerce. Just bowl up, or get free tickets via [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk) (search Kingston's Efficient Homes Show).



Ending illegal wildlife trade

The £15billion illegal trade in wildlife will be in the spotlight when Dr Richard Milburn talks on the topic at the next BookBox event at St Mary's community hall, by the Long Ditton church.

Richard, 34, of Church Meadow, is a 'consapreneur', confronting the patchy effect of traditional conservation. His book **Killing The Trade** (Agenda, £24.99, available from the Regency Bookshop) explores what drives it, based on a decade of work which includes protecting gorillas in the Congo and elephants in Zambia.

Richard, who teaches environmental security at King's, London, builds his theories around 'if it pays, it stays'; the fact that poaching will always exist while it's profitable. By forming commercial buffer zones, argues Richard, you create jobs, deter poaching and force organised criminal gangs to switch away from illegal trading in wildlife to legitimate crop-growing.

A 'venitarian' (he eats ethically culled game), he said he'd read a lot of about the threat to wildlife, but little about solutions... so has filled the gap. The restless creative who has already made a conservation board game, Richard's next project is extraordinary; writing a musical about the ivory trade. "I'll write the lyrics, and get AI to write the music," he said. "But if anyone in Surbiton knows how to stage a musical, I'd love to hear from them!" The talk is on Wed, May 21, 8pm. £10. stmaryslongditton.org.uk/events



Walk the stork
Forty people joined Citizen Zoo's Elliot Newton and Digby Wheeler on a Stork Walk for World Rewilding Day at Tolworth Court Farm Fields.

They learned about Wild Tolworth, the rewilding project on the 42 hectare site bounded by Kingston Road, Jubilee Way and the Hogsmill river, and heard about the conservation group's plans to create the environment in which this magnificent bird can flourish.

"We hope one day these incredible birds will thrive alongside us, becoming a symbol of ecological recovery and hope, helping inspire people to appreciate the wildlife on our doorstep," said Elliot, director of rewilding.



Elliot Newton, director of rewilding at Citizen Zoo, gets in a flap

The eye-catching stork-on-a-stick, used as a prop to lead the walk, was made by Surbiton wildlife film maker Tom Hooker.

Jane Grove



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The 'school street' will run from Langley Road's junction with Oak Hill Crescent to the Brighton Road roundabout (right)

Schoolkids shielded from rat-run cars

Parents and staff at St Matthew's primary are celebrating a council decision to create a 'school street' to protect children, morning and afternoon, from drivers using Langley Road to cut through from Brighton Road to Ewell Road.

When autumn terms starts on September 1, motorists who chance their arm from 8.15-9.15am and 2.30-3.30pm will be hit with fines of £130.

Speaking up for the measure, both personally and on behalf of the school, parent Henry Volans of Hailsham Close told members of Surbiton's neighbourhood committee: "Langley Road represents a danger to our children during morning drop-off times. It's used as a rat run, and it's not uncommon for cars to mount the pavement outside our school

entrance while our children are using it.

"My son walks to school, and every morning we see illegally parked cars blocking corners and making it difficult and dangerous to cross the road. It also discourages cycling."

Agreed unanimously (Cllr Jackie Davies called it "a no-brainer"), the 'experiment' constitutes the 11th school street in Kingston borough. The committee will review in September 2026 to decide if it should be made permanent.

Exceptions will apply to residents of Penners Gardens, Oakenshaw Close and Langley Road... if their number plates are registered. Also exempt are registered carers needing access, and expectant mums on a hospital dash.

Tim Harrison

● Perhaps it was once attached to something more substantial, but this curious little sign was spotted on the pavement in St Andrew's Road, seemingly urging Surbitonians to help themselves to scattered leaves.



● Fishponds is trying to regain its former Green Flag status, with judges due to assess it on May 14. They will need to be persuaded of the Surbiton park's biodiversity, community status, access, maintenance and cleanliness.

Ahead of the inspection the Friends' group has declared an action day from 10am-1pm on Sat, May 10, to renovate the pollinator bed near the Mayberry Place gate, and remove blanket weed from the middle pond.

Despite early April's dry spell, water continues to flow well around the pond system.

New school head 'optimistic' about AI

Byron King, right, who has been announced as the new head of Surbiton High boys' preparatory school, is a positive advocate of the increased use of artificial intelligence in education.

He takes on his role in September, succeeding Tracey Chong.

It marks a rapid return to the school in Avenue Elmers for the South African after a

year away from Surbiton in which he worked for StudyHall, an education AI tech firm.

Having previously spent two years as a Year 5 form teacher at the girls' prep, he was made deputy head of the boys' prep school, where he helped pupils navigate through Covid, before leaving last year to take up a new role in sales and marketing. "We're thrilled to welcome him back," said the school.

Byron grew up in Johannesburg before moving to the UK in 2017. "I'm optimistic that positive changes will happen as a result of AI technology," he told a recent Surbiton High podcast, hinting that use of virtual reality headsets could be round the corner.

"We are going to see technology having more of an impact in our day-to-day offering here, but in the context of strong foundations in literacy and numeracy."

The school's view is that while personalised AI 'study buddies' for students may eventually become part of life, nothing will ever replace human teachers, or the fun that comes from learning as part of a group of schoolmates.

Byron lists "respect, resilience, and lifelong learning" as the values he holds most dear.



● The family-run deli/cafe Orindi's, which has dispensed cuppas and meals in Surbiton Road for 35 years, has closed.



● Strictly's Erin Boag holds a Spring Soirée, and you're invited. The Surbiton ballroom and Latin star hosts an evening of dance demonstrations by Caleb Arslan and Kristyna Fatulaj. Bring dancing shoes. Music by ballroom DJ Mr Wonderful. 7.30pm, Sat, May 31, Kingston Workmen's Club, Old London Road. "All are welcome, from budding beginners to seasoned pros," said Erin. erinboag.com/events

Platforms burst into colour

All the hard work of the volunteers of the Friends of Surbiton Station is paying off, with bursts of colour brightening up the platform flowerbeds.

It's good timing. South Western Railway is about to start judging its new Celebration Stations category in this year's South East in Bloom, the annual regional gardening competition.

Station gardens are, says the train company, an important part of its push to improve biodiversity. Paula Aldridge, community rail manager, said: "It's an opportunity to celebrate those who make a positive difference to their communities. We have hundreds of volunteers and station adopters who take care of the green spaces at our stations. It's wonderful to have a category for stations, as we mark the 200th anniversary of the modern railway."



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A chance to quiz your local area councillors

The latest threat to Long Ditton's Green Belt land, Hinchley Wood school's catchment area debacle, Surrey County Council's Unitary Authority changes, street maintenance, parking, a 20mph zone around schools, and Stokes Field tree cutting are among the subjects up for discussion at the Long Ditton Residents' Association annual meeting on Wednesday, May 14 at 8.15pm.

"All our councillors will be present," said the association's vice chair Mark Herbert. "It's your chance to ask them questions!"

Venue: Long Ditton Village Hall in Ewell Road (below), opposite Long Ditton rec. All welcome.



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Cycle, Accessories, Repairs: the wording revealed when Premier Cars left 135 Ewell Road

Ghost signs recall a mooving history

We love 'ghost signs' at The Good Life; faded, hand-painted adverts of yesteryear, revealed when shops change hands or renovate. So thanks to Amanda Peck who snapped these at the former Premier Cars minicab office in Ewell Road, alongside Sainsbury's Local. "I was intrigued, and thought you might be interested," she said.

Good Life detectives have been on the case. That line of shops, which have seen better days, were cottages for dairymen employed in the cobbled yard of Berrylands Dairy, across Ewell Road, whose existence is celebrated on the stone arch dated 1840. It was run by Thelby & Sons, who milked the cows, then wheeled churns round the streets, measuring liquid into customers' containers.

In 2001, Surbiton Historical Society member Greta Fisk recalled, as a child in the 1920s, watching cows being herded through Surbiton from cattle markets in Kingston.

"Cows often ambled along Ewell Road, and I was

terrified," she said in her talk. "They were so large and lumbering, and they stared at me."

"I didn't know then that cows are inquisitive creatures, and like to investigate anything which is strange to them, especially if it moves. To me they were menacing, with revolting strings of a jelly substance hanging from their mouths. It gave me the creeps!"

When Premier Cars moved out of No 135, to more modern offices in Coombe Lane, New Malden, the old frontage was removed, and the ghost sign revealed. It reads: Cycle, Accessories, Repair. But no

trace of a cycle shop can be found in the records. In the 1950s the cottage housed a Robin and Margaret Norman.

Tim Harrison

● Enjoy history? Join the club! £20 a year for a programme of monthly talks at the cornerHOUSE, plus free access to a vast research library. surbitonhistoricalsociety.org



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The blue frontage of the former funeral parlour

It's a grave matter

A former undertakers' office in Long Ditton could be turned into a house under plans submitted to the council.

Alan Greenwood Funerals has applied for a change of use from commercial to residential for 57 Fleece Road. It's attracting serious scrutiny from Elmbridge Council, the planning authority, as the premises are in the middle of the Long Ditton parade, and would set a precedent which could affect the other shops.

A partial precedent was set in Covid times when the Best One convenience store at the corner of Fleece Road and Ditton Hill Road was turned into flats.

● Garage break-ins are on the up in the Claremont Gardens/Adelaide Road area. "Please be vigilant, and if you see anything suspicious, report it!" urged St Mark's and Seething Wells neighbourhood police team PCSO Emma Young.

She advises the public to dial 101. The call is then assessed by an operator and police are either dispatched or it's followed up later.

"This also ensures it's logged correctly, and you get a crime reference to refer to," she added.

We'd rather stick to our system, thanks

Should Surbiton mimic other borough areas and split its annual grant pot into lots of little sums, allocated by individual councillors?

Not on your nelly! The neighbourhood committee has voted unanimously to continue in its own sweet way, pooling all of the available lolly which is set aside each year for Surbiton, to maximise its collective impact.

Residents are always welcome to attend meetings of Surbiton Neighbourhood Committee, which are usually held at Glenmore House, The Crescent. The next is on **Tuesday, June 10, 7.30pm.**

The first half hour is devoted to questions from the public. If advance notice of the question is given (email democratic services officer Herman Kwan on **herman.kwan@kingston.gov.uk**) a council response can often be supplied on the night.



● Surbiton Farmers' Market volunteer Gene is moving out of the area, so has had to give up helping at the monthly Maple Road event.

Market maestro David Jacobson presented her with flowers to thank her for her years of service. She's been allowed to keep her hi-vis jacket (for jogging) and has pledged to come back when she can, as a shopper.

It means fresh volunteers are needed. Any help will be welcomed; you don't have to do the full four hours.

The next dates are May 17 & Jun 21. Contact David via the website, surbitonfarmersmarket.co.uk



Building crate towers at scout camp

Building your own wet-weather fun

They had crate fun at winter camp, making towers and swinging around like pint-sized Tarzans. Members of 1st Surbiton (Sealion) sea scouts joined 500 adventure seekers at Bentley Copse activity centre, in woods near Guildford, for Frost Camp, a jamboree of outdoor pursuits at a base owned by Surrey scouts.

They camped out for a weekend, with the rain turning the site into a mini

Glastonbury. But getting mucky was half the fun. Activities included tree climbing, Segway riding, crossbows, air pistol and rifle, archery, radio-controlled Land Rovers, laser clay pigeon, zipline, cave maze, circus skills and tomahawk throwing.

"That's what I like best," said 14-year-old Noah, a Surbiton explorer scout. "I like tomahawk throwing because you are not able to do it in many places." For instance, Surbiton.

On Friday evening, as rain fell, there was a film, while on the

Saturday, in better weather, there was a campfire and silent disco. "It was a great success, thanks to the dedicated volunteers," said centre manager Nick Cann.

Intriguing thought: you're 15% less likely to suffer mood swings and anxiety if you've been a scout or guide, says an Edinburgh University study.

If you're young and fancy adventure, 1st Surbiton (Sealion) sea scouts meet in Electric Parade. There are beavers (6-8 years), cubs (8-10), scouts (10-14) and explorers (up to 18).

sealionscouts.org.uk

Pet stress answer is mobile vet clinic

Anyone who's tried to put Tiddles in a wicker basket will warm to Adam Bradley's start-up, the Paws & Go mobile veterinary clinic.

Adam, 37, of Pine Gardens, Berrylands, knew his career destination after hearing a vet's talk at primary school. Following Southborough, then Esher College, he graduated in veterinary science in 2010, working at a vet's in Twickenham before deciding to go solo. "Stress is kept to a minimum for pets as they're in their own environment, and feel comfortable in their surroundings," he said, explaining the theory. "And I'm talking about stress for animals and their owners!"

Adam, who also does work for an animal rescue charity, has a cat called Minion, and it was taking

Minion for dental work that clinched his decision. Just putting him in the carrier was stressful, with peeing, pooing and vomiting on the way. And it was much the same for the cat...

"Animals pick up on things. If they've had a bad experience they'll be more pent-up. Dogs, particularly, can be very sensitive to human mood changes."

The other plus is that owners can work from home until the vet's arrival, rather than transporting Fido then sitting in a busy waiting room. "In a vet's surgery there'll be an operations list, but I have a list of one!"

The van retrofit is costing a princely £120,000, but he'll be able to do small operations in it.

"It's still cheaper than a bricks-and-mortar business," he said, adding that for safety the van uses

an oxygen generator rather than cylinders. Until it's ready he uses his car; doing vaccinations, health checks and, sadly, euthanasia. "That's one thing that's a lot better at home," he said.

A receptionist handles phones and emails, and assists with blood tests, with Paws & Go coping with "all small furries", including cats, dogs and rabbits. Consultations, including call-out charge, are £110, with rechecks £85. Pet insurance can cover fees.

pawsandgo.vet

Tim Harrison



Adam at home with his own cat, Minion

Join Snowdon challenge

Fifty supporters of a Surbiton charity have a choice of cycling, walking and climbing to the 1,085m peak of Snowdon on a fundraiser. The expedition on Sept 6 is being co-ordinated by the Brighton Road-based African Vision Malawi which, for 20 years, has worked to improve food security, trained local people in farming and other trades, tackled preventable diseases and supported students. Upcoming projects include special needs and safe motherhood units. Interested? Visit africanvision.org.uk/events

● Join the queue for Long Ditton infant & nursery school, Ditton Hill Road. Ofsted's Feb visit graded **behaviour, personal development & early-years provision** outstanding. Said one parent: "Pupils are valued and supported, and learn the values of respect, compassion and tolerance."



Picture: Roald van Buuren

● An airbag saved the driver from injury when a Peugeot was involved in an accident at the Maple Road/Brighton Road junction in April. The traffic lights were knocked out, with one set being demolished altogether. For hours, drivers just courteously gave way to each other, with shorter queues as a consequence.

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● People who stop at Hook roundabout to pick up prescriptions at Ace Pharmacy have been issued with penalty tickets, despite all but two of the parking bays being blocked by roadworks.

Transport for London's installation of electric vehicle charging points at the Ace of Spades has been dubbed a fiasco by customers of the chemist, who say there is nowhere to park.

TfL is replacing three regular bays with spaces (pictured above) for "the growing number of electric vehicles", but the disruption has led to a shoal of parking fines being dished out while work progresses.

"This adds salt to the wound; the project has been a fiasco from the get-go," said Rob Robb, who says TfL "will go to any length to make money" from users of the two remaining bays.

Objectors say the signage is confusing and that there has been zero communication from TfL.

Customer Chris Sheehan, who was given a penalty ticket, said: "I parked in a clear space away from the roadworks. There were no signs saying parking was suspended."

He says that TfL is causing "high anxiety" to the most vulnerable. TfL has been urged to rescind fines issued since slip road excavations began in February.



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Why not join 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 two bars, a café, four full-size snooker tables and a function suite available for hire. There are bingo sessions, race nights, ballroom dancing and yoga classes, pub quizzes, Weight-Watchers workshops, meat and money raffles and more.

Live sport is shown on a big screen and we hold regular events during the year. **Why not join?** There's lots going on!

Give bowls a go

Our friendly bowls club is looking for new players – both novices and experienced.

You can just play for fun or take part in competitive league matches as soon as you feel ready.

We can help with coaching and equipment, too.

The Surbiton RBL Lawn Bowling Club plays in nearby Alexandra Recreation Ground off Alexandra Drive.

We have friendly club evenings on Fridays from 5.30pm.



WHAT'S ON

MAY ▼

8th May
VE Day 80th Anniversary
SRBL Youth
Marching Band
Doors open 6.30pm

10th May
Open Day Celebration
12-5pm
The Polka Dots
Doors open 7pm

11th May
Lavender Club
dance group
Doors open 2pm

16th May
Freedom Pulse
(Ukrainian band)
Doors open 7.30pm

17th May
Mini Day (a Community
Brain/Charles Ivey
Specialist Cars event)
Cliff Richard Tribute
Doors open 7.30pm

31st May
Allsounds Reggae
Doors open 7.30pm

JUNE ▼

7th June
Epsom Races
Derby Day
Doors open 11.30am

14th June
Huggy Flares
(60s soul/70s funk)
Doors open 7.30pm

JULY ▼

11th-13th July
SRBL Youth Marching
Band 60th Anniversary

12th July
Open air concert & fun day
Times TBC

PLEASE NOTE: If you'd like to join us for any of these events, please follow the instructions on our membership flyer (below).

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Mayor bestows community gongs

Community champions honoured by the mayor, Cllr Liz Green, at a Kingston Guildhall ceremony included **Nicky Newberry** (second right and inset), a mainstay of the cornerHOUSE arts centre, Douglas Road, co-ordinating exhibitions, organising poetry nights (the next: Fri Jun 20, 7pm) and producing the annual panto. The Tolworth Park Road resident's "dedication to enhancing the arts makes her exceptional", said the mayor (pictured in tricorne hat). "I was absolutely delighted, and feel honoured," said Nicky. **Colleen Moore** (centre, in pink) is a key part of Berrylands' Vine Close community, caring for vulnerable neighbours and organising events. "She's a trusted friend and confidante to many, especially those with mobility issues," said Cllr Green. **Ann Hutchinson** (far right) of Tolworth's Community Brain, helps run events including Ski Sunday. Ann, of Ellerton Road, co-founded the Fuse International festival (this year, Jun 28-Jul 6) and chairs Corinthian-Casuals women. "Her dedication has transformed lives," said the mayor. Other awards: Home-Start volunteer **Nicola Spratt**; **John Routledge** of Momentum; **Liz Meerabeau** of Healthwatch Kingston; **David Fox**, Richmond Park football club for girls; and **Shradha Ballal**, Namaste Kingston, who also works with the Save the World Club; **Emily Alder** of GoodGym Kingston; foster carers **Daniel & Ruth Sinclair**; **Francis & Dianne Brannan** of Chessington residents' assn; and **Hazel Shirley**, St John Ambulance. Young awards: brownie leader **Ema Puodziukaityte** and RBKares 12-year-old volunteer **Georgia Devane**.

HMOs are linked to crime

Is there a link between the proliferation of flat conversion in Surbiton – HMOs, or Houses in Multiple Occupation – and reports of antisocial behaviour, including fly-tipping? Tolworth councillor Andrew Wooldridge is sure there is. At Surbiton's neighbourhood committee he asked: "What steps can we take to address it?"

Council officer Steph Royston-Mitchell answered: "Some areas have high concentrations [of HMOs], perhaps because there are larger properties. We engage with the police and landlords, establishing if they have a licence to operate. Landlords may not have been as aware of the issue as they should have been."

She said the council couldn't influence who lived in HMOs, "but when we become aware, there's legislation we can use against individuals who cause antisocial behaviour".

Cllr Wooldridge said issues around HMOs were, sadly, increasing. "The police are having huge problems."

His colleague, Cllr Thay Thayalan, said HMOs were a big problem, citing a case in Gladstone Road, Hook. "There are five or six rooms with people from all walks of life. There have been fights at night; the whole street has complained," he said. "The council doesn't have a say in the type of tenants put there, and sometimes doesn't know the identity of the landlord or the landlord's agent."

"Neighbours often don't know it's going to become an HMO because you don't need planning permission."

Other recent HMO issues have arisen in Tolworth Road, Cotterill Road and Adelaide Road, where a 32-bed 'hostel' HMO is proposed. "The council needs to look at it," said Cllr Thayalan. "There are more HMOs coming up."

In answer to questions on fly-tipping, council officer David Kingstone said the council worked with landowners to make sites less attractive to fly-tippers, making it harder for vehicles to gain access. "It tends to be more cost-effective than cameras," he said.

Committee chair Tom Reeve spoke of a persistent rubbish issue on the Alpha Road estate. "Officers took action, and got the site cleaned up," he said, adding that it had proved a rather drawn-out process. ● More on **p12**



Lynda's a real trooper

She's influenced generations of Surbitonians. Now Lynda Bennett, 1st Surbiton Dolphin cubs' akela, has been honoured for 60 years' service. "It's actually 61 years, eight months and counting," said district president Bob Bushell, presenting her with a framed award. "More than of those 50 years have involved running 1st Surbiton cubs."

Many Good Life readers will recall adjusting their woggles before heading off to join Lynda at a pack meeting, or will have had children or grandchildren in Surbiton beavers, cubs or scouts.

1st Surbiton meets in Electric Parade and, being sea scouts, on Ravens Ait.

When Lynda moved to Surbiton in 1974 the local pack had few members and was in danger of closing. But by the late 70s, numbers had risen so much that a second pack was added.

Lynda has been a district cub scout leader, has organised the swimming team for the county gala (winning several times), runs hall bookings and collects the subs that cover the running costs.

Ian Appleford, 1st Surbiton's assistant leader, praised all the "highly dedicated volunteers" who devote time to making the unit such a success.



Cllrs Jez Langham, Neil Houston & Liz Laino backed the campaign

School fight victory

Parents of Long Ditton Junior School are celebrating after governors of Hinchley Wood School did a U-turn on proposals to change the 11-18 mixed academy's admissions policy.

It followed community opposition to proposals which would have meant pupils at

Hinchley Wood Primary and Thames Ditton Junior being given priority over those at Long Ditton Junior School in Sugden Road. A plan to extend the catchment area to include potential pupils from Surbiton's river roads, two miles away, was also shelved.

"We're absolutely elated with the consultation outcome," said campaigner Annette Whymark. "There were 2,000 responses, the vast majority disagreeing with the proposed changes. We're pleased Hinchley Wood Learning Partnership listened to the strength of feeling. The admissions criteria for feeder schools is unchanged, and children at Claygate primary, Hinchley Wood primary, Thames Ditton jnrs and Long Ditton St Mary's jnrs will continue to have equal access to Hinchley Wood Secondary."

"In Long Ditton we are delighted that our children will retain fair access to our local outstanding secondary school."

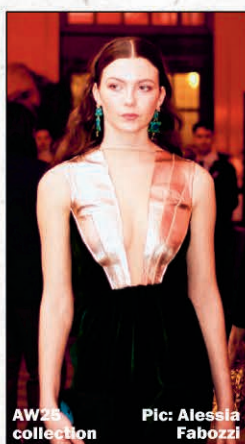
Long Ditton Cllr Jez Langham, who backed the campaign with colleagues Neil Houston and Liz Laino, said: "This is fantastic news! The potential impact on our community has

● **Eighty intrepid souls joined Elmbridge mayor, Long Ditton councillor Neil Houston, and his wife mayoress Veronica English in a firewalk at Painshill Park, Cobham, raising £29,000 for charity.**

Each walked 20ft across burning embers which reached 800 degrees Fahrenheit in aid of Home-Start Elmbridge, which helps families, and The Mayor of Elmbridge Trust Fund, which supports anyone who lives in the borough and is in need.

been recognised. Local children and families can continue to benefit from four excellent primary schools feeding into an equally excellent secondary school."

He called it "a victory for everyone in Long Ditton".



AW20 collection Pic: Alessia Fabozzi

At the races

Teresa Scognamiglio of Surbiton's haute couture house Teresa Si, has unveiled a capsule collection for Royal Ascot in June.

Her mid-length dresses and a jumpsuit were showcased at the Rose Theatre with accompanying pieces by Kingston milliner and accessory designer Bee Smith.

Each garment is made of delicate beaded fabrics in a palette of powder blue, sage green, navy, pink, and mocha brown, finished with vintage buttons and lace trims; a balance between classic elegance and fresh modernity. Silhouettes feature squared necklines, soft flowing skirts, and three-quarter sleeves, tailored for race-day glamour.

"Clients often tell me they want something timeless, with a twist, something that speaks quietly, but beautifully," Teresa said. "This

collaboration with Bee reflects that vision, each look styled with complementary hats and accessories designed to make a lasting impression."

Teresa has 15 years' experience in couture, working for and collaborating with Vivienne Westwood, Ralph & Russo, Elie Saab and Catherine Walker in Italy, Australia and London.

She has created garments



Teresa Scognamiglio with her autumn/winter collection

for red-carpet events including the Oscars and BAFTAs, and has even made a coat for Kate Middleton.

Teresa, from Salerno in Italy, has already wowed crowds with her autumn/winter collection at a Made in Italy event during London Fashion Week.

For more on her capsule collection and bespoke designs visit **teresasi.com** or call 07379 287769 to arrange an appointment to visit her atelier in The Sanctuary off Oak Hill Grove.

Jane Grove

Town group proposed for Surbiton

With funding from a levy on property developers, a new umbrella group is being set up to promote Surbiton town centre. The hope is to replicate the success of a similar body in New Malden, helping – says council officer Amanda McLoughlin, co-ordinating the inception – to maximise the town's potential.

It would connect existing groups and businesses, generate funds, attract visitors, initiate events, commission art and market the area.

The outcome of a bid for 'NCIL', or neighbourhood community infrastructure levy, will be known in June. Surbiton's 'pot' of NCIL cash stands at £200,000. The new body would focus on the area of Victoria, Brighton and Maple roads.

Will there be interest? "Build it and they will come," said backer Forbes Low of Kingston Chamber of Commerce. "It takes time, but people will buy into it. But it must be independent, not run by the council."

Enthusied? Email: **amanda.mcloughlin@kingston.gov.uk**

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It's official: we're still a safe town

Although more than a fifth of antisocial behaviour in the borough happens in Surbiton (the 21% figure covers reports logged by Kingston Council in the year and a half to January 2025), the 'Wild West' is Kingston town, from where 62% of noise nuisance, drug dealing, fly-tipping, neighbour rows, vandalism and graffiti emanated. Overall, we're still one of the safest London suburbs. Over 18 months, just 284 issues were raised in the entirety of Kingston borough, with its population of 170,000. "Numbers are low," safety officer Stephanie Royston-Mitchell reassured councillors, adding that the trend was downward. "For Surbiton, the majority of reports were in the town centre, which is normal as there are a lot of people and a lot of public spaces for potential misuse."

The stats cover incidents reported to the council, not police, although the local authority works closely with the Met. The safest parts of Surbiton are Berrylands and Tolworth's Sunray estate.

Most antisocial activity in Surbiton involves drugs (mainly cannabis) or disputes between neighbours. On average, one report of illegal drug activity in Surbiton is made each month – suggesting the area is still some way off becoming a giant opium den.

Cllr Jackie Davies of Berrylands highlighted furniture dumping. "In lockdown people got used to leaving things outside their houses, and they got taken away," she said. "But last week The Good Life commented on a chair left in Lovelace Gardens. I noticed similar in my road and put something on my street WhatsApp, saying it could lead to fines. It disappeared! People think they're being helpful, but one person's box of books is another person's fly-tip."

● Check noticeboards dotted around Surbiton for ways to report antisocial acts to relevant authorities. **Tim Harrison**



The borough's main fly-tip hotspot is the Swallow Park area

Wise men say...

One of the worst areas for fly-tipping in the borough is near Swallow Park traveller site, Tolworth, by the A3. "It's mostly lorryloads of builders' rubbish," said Cllr Thay Thayalan. When low-emission-zone cameras were installed, fly-tipping briefly stopped, as dumpers thought they were being watched! They soon sussed otherwise, and a banner denouncing fly-tipping was itself engulfed by rubbish bags. Compliance officer David Kingstone told Surbiton councillors that fly-tipping was probed by 'Wise men'. "It stands for waste investigation support enforcement," he said. "Their skill is going through bags to identify sources. Cameras are expensive, and are only useful if they capture vehicle registration numbers."



Queen's Promenade volunteers hard at work on the new Athelstan Garden



An old 406 in Ewell Road in last year's vintage bus day

● It's vintage bus day in Ewell Road on Sun, Jun 8, 10am-5pm. Hail and ride a bus from the 1950s-70s on route 418 between Epsom and Kingston, and get an old-style ticket from a real conductor (ask your parents). It's free. The London Bus Museum at Brooklands empties, with all the old ladies getting an airing – single-decker & double-decker. But as they're old, they can't take wheelchairs or buggies. They couldn't back in the day. Stick your hand out to stop an old 418.

Queen's Prom salutes King

Queen's Promenade in Surbiton is doing its bit for Kingston 2025, the boroughwide celebration of the 1,100th anniversary of the coronation of King Athelstan, the first king of a united England and the first to wear a crown at the ceremony.

For a year, volunteers from Queen's Promenade Friends have cleared rubble and bindweed to create the Athelstan Garden, with hundreds of perennials and spring bulbs, including pollinator-friendly Anglo-Saxon plants and drought-tolerant varieties using a colour palette based on Athelstan's coat of arms.

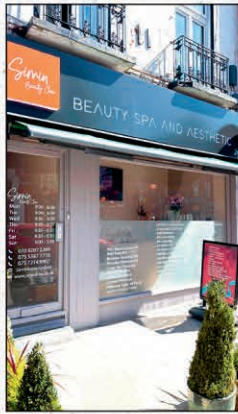
Queen's Prom volunteers have visited All Saints to admire the tapestries which have been worked on for eight years. Eventually all seven Saxon kings reputedly crowned in Kingston will feature.

For more on life in Athelstan's time, there's a talk at the Guildhall on Mon, May 19, 6-7pm. £10. There are also town-centre walks with Blue Badge guides on Mon, May 26 & Sat, Jul 26, 11am-1pm. £20 per person. To learn about local history, and navigate the archives, try a workshop on Sat, May 10, 10am-noon. There are also tips on researching your family tree or your home's past. Call 020 8547 6700, or visit bit.ly/KAE-Workshops

Music, mahjong, marbles

It's all happening at the Save The World Club's upcycling and reuse HQ at 18 Southsea Road, now celebrating its 40th anniversary, where Surbiton green campaigner Des Kay and his team will officially open a new music studio on Sat, May 31, from 2-6pm.

Then on Jun 14 (2-5pm) there's a co-operative cultural games day when you can learn mahjong, carrom, table tennis, marble checkerboard, aeroplane chess, Chinese calligraphy writing etc. savetheworldclub.org/events



● Now open in the centre of Surbiton, the Simin Beauty Clinic, next door to Sage's healthstore in Brighton Road. It has had major investment pumped in to create a spa and treatment rooms. Simin Soleimani previous practised in shared space in St James' Road, but now has a standalone shop. Full report in the next Good Life. siminbeauty.uk

Piano keys to cut keys

The former piano shop, then grocer, at 111 Ewell Road has regenerated. For 25 years it was Piano Warehouse, with clients ranging from Peter Crouch to Emma Thompson, Tom Robinson to Gianfranco Zola, Rory Bremner to Sophie Ellis-Bextor, Oasis to Coldplay. Then, in spring 2022, it became Kingston Green, selling fruit, veg and less-well-known groceries. Now it's reopened as Home & Hardware, a paint and DIY store, which also offers key-cutting.



Pic: Tony Dale



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On yer bike: Recycles returns

With a whiff of 3-in-one oil, saddle polish and French chalk, Recycles has reopened, with two new likely lads at the helm.

Bike buddies Isaac Phillips, 25 this month, and Oli Taylor, 19, pedal to the Brighton Road bike shop from their homes in Chessington and Thames Ditton, having revived a business which had been mothballed for four years.

For Isaac – a sleep-deprived new dad – it's a homecoming. As a young teen, his first job was repair work at Recycles, before stints at Neil's Wheels, Halfords and Evans, and working for folding bike firm Brompton.

As he was cycling through Thailand he heard that the old shop was up for sale, and came back to sign the paperwork. "We offer all the things Recycles did, but hopefully with a bit more spark," said Isaac with a grin. "I loved working here, so when I got the call in Bangkok, this was my dream! It's home!"

Key is the location, by the Portsmouth Road lights and the cycle lanes to Kingston.

The Edwardian-style fascia has gone in favour of an angular new look, and the phone number has changed to 020 3196 4158.

But inside it's still workshop out back, and bikes for sale at the front, and on the pavement. The USP remaining selling affordable bikes to locals "who want to get around without spending thousands". It's at 151 Brighton Road, 9am-6pm Tue-Sat.



Isaac, left, and Oli in Recycles

Historic home on the market

One of the most intriguing Edwardian homes in Surbiton – a six-bedroom mansion with a long family history – is on the market for only the third time in a century.

The house in Avenue Elmers has many original features, preserved for 110 years, including a cute Juliette balcony which juts out over the hall. The asking price is £2.5million.

Kingston councillor, justice of the peace and carpenter Frank Hawkey completed construction of the house just as the guns began firing at the start of The Great War in 1914.

Frank was 55. He had moved from his native Cornwall in his mid-20s to study and set up his own construction company in Surbiton. He, his wife Ellen, and two children, a boy and a girl, lived at 23 St Leonard's Road, near the river.

When the 3,600sq ft house in Avenue Elmers was finished, he named it Trevego after his Cornish roots, and the family moved in. It boasted an orchard, apple chamber, greenhouses, vegetable garden, tennis court and gardener's cottage.

Their son, Reginald, was a civil engineer who worked on the Mulberry floating harbours for the D-Day landings, Hong Kong's airport and the M6 motorway. Reginald lived on in the house after his parents' death (their tombstone is in the St Mary's, Long Ditton, graveyard), but sold it in 1953 after deciding it was too big for him. Other homes were built on what had been the orchard and tennis court.

It's been modernised with a garage, discreet solar panels and electric car charging. There's off-street parking for half a dozen cars. The current owners have lived there since 1983.

Avenue Elmers, with its oddly back-to-front name (Amazon often transposes it to read Elmers Avenue), was



The original panelling survives in the dining room

developed in 1872. It took its name from a building described at the time as "a fine old Gothic house" called The Elmers, built in 1777 for local maltster George Wadbrook. That sprawling pile was originally called Surbiton House, but was renamed in 1823.

Avenue Elmers, Claremont Gardens and Surbiton Assembly Rooms then appeared, with the Assembly Rooms opening in May 1889. Part of the land on which it was built had been used until then as Surbiton's stray dog pound!

Claremont Road estate agents Humphrey & Brand are handling the sale. Partner Laura Humphrey said: "It's very unusual for this house to come on to the market," adding that it has been more than 40 years since it was last sold.

"The panelled dining room is original, and even has a built-in bar. It's one of the best-presented houses in Surbiton, and it's on at a fair price for its size and location." **Tim Harrison**

Business is cleaned out

Economic reality has forced a cheery Tolworth shopkeeper to close the dry cleaner's he ran for 10 years.

Salim Mistry took over Brodies, which already existed at 249 Ewell Road, in 2015; striking out on his own having worked for 16 years in a shop in Cookham, Berkshire.

Salim, who grew up in India, also did shoe repairs and clothing alterations in the 500sq ft premises.

The 56-year-old considered changing the shop name, but stuck with the original moniker. In the past year he has found the going tough, and has finally decided to close the business and give up the lease. A requirement of his tenancy was to remove all the old dry-cleaning equipment; an unexpected and costly end to the Hounslow resident's decade in Surbiton.

Salim has now retrained as a driver on the 281 bus route, with the Tolworth leg of the journey taking him back and forwards – with wistful glances – past the business he once ran. The shop is now on the market at £14,000 rent per year.



● Fed up trying to find somewhere to park? Buy your own car park! The diamond-shaped lot behind B&M Bargains, Ewell Road, is on the market for £430,000 with Wallakers. You get 30 marked-off spaces and six garages. The entrance is from Lenelby Road.



● Why, asks Good Life reader Edith Allen, do many Surbiton pavements have the kind of waterlogged central gully that you might expect to see in a medieval street scene? The answer, apparently, is because some kerbs are higher than the shop doors, so if the pavements were level, shops could flood. So, Edith, for now, carry on sloshing.



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Charity number 1167428

Yellow line penalties rise

Park illegally on yellow lines in Surbiton and you'll now face a fine of £140 – a rise of £30. The charge increased on April 7. As ever, if you pay the penalty ticket slapped on your windscreen within a fortnight you reduce it by half, but that's still £70.

Lesser parking offences – such as overstaying a few minutes in a pay-and-display bay – also rise by £30, to £90 (or £45 for prompt payers).

But if you're caught contravening the bus lane rules, such as in Ewell Road near the junction with Red Lion Road, you'll be hit with a £160 fine.

If your car is clamped, the release fee is £100 on top of the fine, and if you suffer the indignity of being towed to the pound, you'll have to pay £280 before your vehicle is released, not to mention £55 per day for the honour of storing your motor there.

If you opt to abandon your old jalopy, a further £100 'disposal fee' is added to the total bill.

The rises follow a decision by the London Councils' transport committee, which acts for all 32 boroughs. It advertised the increases in February, but says it received no opposition to the changes.



Make a racket for our Edna

Congrats to Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club stalwart Edna Naylor, who is 100. Club director Roy Staniland and staff marked her birthday at the Berrylands club where Edna, a member for 50 years, helped run squash and tennis matches, and organised junior tournament catering. She was management committee secretary for two decades.

"Celebrating Edna's 100th was an absolute honour!" said Roy. "She's been a beloved member for an incredible 50 years, devoting a huge amount of time to the club."

● Educators and employers signed a charter to improve Surbiton students' routes into jobs by matching skills training with industry needs. Kingston Council chief exec Sarah Ireland put pen to paper with Kingston College principal Peter Mayhew-Smith on giving businesses a voice in shaping the future workforce. "We need to understand employers' and organisations' skills needs," said the council chief.



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Children welcome, but must be accompanied by an adult



As long as I gaze on
Surbiton sunset
I am in paradise.

With apologies to the Kinks' Ray Davies

No end in sight to through traffic turning off the A3

Is too much through traffic turning left off the A3 at Tolworth Recreation Centre compromising safety in the network of narrow residential streets beyond? Campaigner Liz Mitchell said Kingston Council was being selective with data it gives to Transport for London.

At a neighbourhood meeting she challenged council highways officers' statistics, saying previous years' figures were not like for like, excluded key information and were therefore unreliable.

The data is used in talks between the council and TfL about potential restrictions, including the possibility of sealing off the turn into Fullers Way North (pictured) to spare those in Thornhill Road and other narrow streets from rat-running motorists.

Ms Mitchell said that the 2024 figures given to TfL by the council showed an apparent 60% decrease on 2023's statistics in traffic turning left off the By-Pass, then exiting into Ewell Road at the other end. "I can't see how these figures can be correct," she said. Cllr Tom Reeve, who chairs the committee, responded: "I have no reason to doubt the reliability of the data."

TfL has resisted discussing road closures until the impact of recent changes to Tolworth roundabout have been assessed. Cllr Reeve said

TfL feared blocking the turn off the A3 would lead to peak-time traffic backing up on the By-Pass itself from the roundabout slip road.

Fellow campaigner Simon Laycock thanked Cllr Thay Thayalan for trying to stop HGVs using the area's residential streets.

Cllr Thayalan confirmed he regularly rang haulage firms to say large trucks taking advantage of cut-throughs posed a safety risk to schoolchildren. "Most firms respond positively, instructing drivers to avoid these roads," he said, pledging to continue his personal crusade.

Mr Laycock questioned whether individual councillors telephoning haulage companies to reason with them was really a long-term solution to the problem.

Tim Harrison



● Contractors earned extra brownie points by ensuring the roadworks which blocked Victoria Road finished six days early. The street was shut off by the YMCA at the Brighton Road junction on Mar 17 while drains, collapsed under the weight of 71 buses, were replaced and a raised ramp constructed. Buses served temporary stops in Maple Road,

and everyone had a glimpse of what a part-pedestrianised high street might look like in the distant future.



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● Scoops for our major pro theatres as Kingston's Rose hosts Michael Sheen, while Richmond bags Jodie Comer. The Rose's month-long run of **Our Town**, with Sheen in a Welsh National Theatre co-production, is from Feb 26-Mar 28 next year. Artistic director Christopher Haydon says it's "about the importance of community". rosetheatre.org

Richmond has the first dates on Comer's revival tour of **Prima Facie**, Jan 23-24 next year. Tickets are already scarce for the show, written by Suzie Miller and starring the Killing Eve actor as a barrister confronting assault law.



Jodie Comer

atgtickets.com

Jane Austen's **Emma**, reimaged for modern times, comes to the Rose from Sep 17-Oct 11, directed by Haydon. Written by Ava Pickett, it swaps drawing-room duets for dancefloor moves for the 250th anniversary of Austen's birth.

Film fest

The fourth **Kingston International Film Festival**, Jun 6-8, gives independent filmmakers big-screen exposure.

Though open to world talent, there's a local category for films made by KT postcode residents. Modesty almost prevents The Good Life mentioning that editor Tim Harrison's first cinematic effort, a 10-minute thriller called **Watch Me**, shot on an iPhone in Surbiton, has made the cut. It, plus five shorts, are screened at the Rose Theatre, Sat, Jun 7, 10.15am.

It stars West End actor and former Surbitonian Jessica Hern, and a children's playground toy car, borrowed after an appeal to Good Life readers to scour their sheds.

An awards jury has selected 73 films for KIFF, a mix of drama, romance, horror, thriller and musicals, to be shown at the Odeon, Rose and Town House. There are also talks, including how to make budget films. At 2pm on Sat, Jun 7, Adrian Wootton presents *The Who* on screen, marking the 50th anniversary of the film adaptation of the rock opera *Tommy*.

One of last year's successes was **Midpoint**, a 16-minute drama shot by Flynn Matthews, 25. Following his KIFF exposure he's now awaiting a BBC decision on developing a TV series. "It was filmed on an affordable camera," said the Kingston-born filmmaker. "I edited it on Final Cut Pro, which some people turn their noses up at!" You can watch *Midpoint* at flynnmatthews.uk

● Full KIFF 2025 programme, and tickets for single screenings or entire days, via kiffest.uk

● Valerie Nunn, right, reads at the cornerHOUSE's popular poetry night in Douglas Road. The next is Fri, Jun 20, bar open from 7pm. A cheese supper is in with the £6 ticket price. You are welcome to write and recite poetry (themes: Paint, Armour and United) or just pop along to listen. thecornerhouse.org



Guitars lead off new concert series

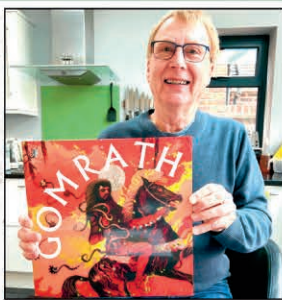
The new **Thames Concerts** series at St Andrew's, Maple Road, starts at 7.30pm on Sat, Sep 13, with the Mela Guitar Quartet.

Future dates: Oct 18, Joseph & Daniel Tong (piano duet); Nov 15, The Eddie Harvey Centenary Concert; Dec 6, Joanne Lunn (soprano); Jan 17, an organ recital; Jan 31 Sabine Sergejeva (violin) & Craig White (piano); Feb 14, Trio Arisonto (horn, violin, piano).

There are free farmers' market coffee concerts performed by local music students at 10.30am on Oct 18, Nov 15, Dec 20 and Jan 17.

The concerts were founded in the 1960s by local conductor Louis Halsey; initially at Kingston parish church, but from 2012 – when Ben Costello became artistic director – in the acoustically superior St Andrew's. He introduced market morning concerts in 2015 to encourage up-and-coming young talent.

Thames Concerts has no government funding, and relies on ticket sales, sponsors and patrons. thamesconcerts.com



Adrian's long, long player

Fifty years after a teenager went into a Kingston music studio to record with his mates, he can put an LP on a turntable and listen to the music!

Adrian Long, of Derby Road, was – with baby bro Martin – part of a prog rock group called **Gomrath**, made up of schoolmates from King's, Wimbledon.

In June 1971 they recorded some tracks at the Eden studio in Eden Street. The band broke up, the tapes were forgotten, and that was that. But there has been a surge of interest in music made in the

late 60s and early 70s, a time of transition from rock 'n' roll to progressive and psychedelic. Record label Bright Carvings (brightcarvings.com) got wind of the lost tracks and pressed a limited-edition LP, which was snapped up by aficionados.

Adrian's dad was also his school music teacher, staging a concert to encourage embryonic schoolboy bands to perform live. "My parents were liberal-minded and let groups play in our house without screaming to turn it down," said Adrian.

Gomrath closed that 1970s show with a cover of Spooky Tooth's *Better By You, Better Than Me*, which features on the new LP. "I kept the master tapes in the loft, and transferred them to digital for my three children... but they showed no interest at all," laughed Adrian, now 72. But the record label proved much more enthusiastic.

Gomrath briefly reformed and have since played on stage in the back room of Berrylands' Brave New World pub, cheered on by Adrian's grandchildren. **Tim Harrison**

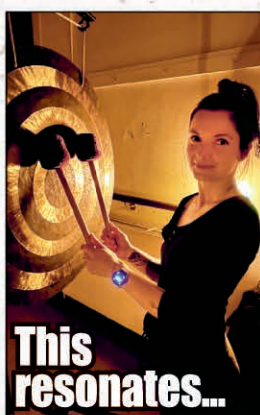


● Surbiton's **Coda** showcases its music students' talent at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, on Sun, May 11, profits funding music lessons for those who can't afford them. "There will also be performances from tutors," said founder Jacob Palmer of Upper Brighton Road, pictured. Doors 6.30pm. £10. Tickets: www.trycoda.com or from thecornerhouse.org

● Pop, disco and indie cover band **Run For Cover**, formed of Kingston Uni alumni, play 'tunes fit for a king' on Sat, May 10, at All Saints, Kingston, marking 1,100 years since Athelstan's crowning and benefiting church upkeep. "It's a bit daunting, but we can't wait to hear how music from the likes of Oasis and Blur sound in the nave," said the band's Paul Thomas, a former Lovelace Road resident, of the 700-seat venue. £15. runforcoverlive.com

One of the more extraordinary experiences to be had locally is a sound bath. If you've never had the chance, book a space on one of the 20 mats in Long Ditton village hall, close to the Long Ditton rec, where Alex Veek, right, a graduate from the British Academy of Sound Therapy, creates a remarkable sonic atmosphere, playing a series of gongs and metal bowls for an hour, to induce deep rest.

"I weave tones and textures that resonate beyond hearing; it's felt in your bones, heart and mind," she said. Sessions cost from £10. There is an amplifier, to fill the upper hall of the complex with the rich sound, but the entire performance is live; nothing is pre-recorded, and all you hear is generated there and then by Alex. Book at cyround.co.uk



This resonates...

● Kylie Minogue's songlist features in a tribute night at Surbiton's Bosco Lounge, St Mark's Hill, on May 22, with artiste Jade Chamberlain, right, producing the close-your-eyes-and-you'll-think-it's-her-pop-princess performance. £10, unless you dine too, in which



case it's free. Book tables. Cocktail deals. All Kylie's greatest hits feature, with authentic costumes and dancers. hotelbosco.co.uk

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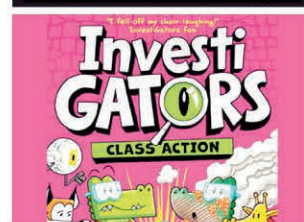
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It's all downhill for our Freya

Surbiton High's Freya Tresidder took a break from Year 10 exams to help Team GB win alpine race silver in Italy. "We finished second overall; amazing for a country with almost no snow!" said Freya, who achieved a podium spot in giant slalom. "Something has kept me putting my skis on, day after day, as the training itself is often wet, cold and frustrating. It's certainly not fun all the time. I had to decide between hockey and netball, or winters in the Alps with long periods away from family, friends and school."

She spends up to 30 weeks a year skiing with Team Evolution, while Surbiton High's Taryn Archbold co-ordinates schoolwork.

Next year is GCSEs, but Freya is also aiming for the Youth Olympics and World Youth Championships.

Wembley thrill for Aggie

As Chelsea Women build up to their FA Cup final clash with Manchester United at Wembley, striker Aggie Beever-Jones tells The Good Life she's never even walked on to the turf of the national stadium before.

"To get to the FA Cup final's a dream," said the 21-year-old lifelong Blues fan. "I've never set foot on the Wembley pitch! It's such an incredible stadium. I've been on the bench, but to win the FA Cup there would be huge."

However, manager Sonia Bompastor **has** played at Wembley! Back in 2012. After the

2-1 semi-final victory against Liverpool at Kingsmeadow, the gaffer said: "I had the opportunity to play in the semi-final and the third/fourth place play-off there in the Olympics, but now it's a chance for the whole club to be in a big final; something that perhaps only happens once in a lifetime."

● The match is at 1.30pm on Sun, May 18. It's being shown live on BBC One.

Aggie chats after scoring the winner against Liverpool



● Dittons Skiff and Punting Club runs free taster sessions for adults every Wed, May 21-Jun 25 at 6.30pm... a great way to get on the river at Thames Ditton. There are also short courses with more concentrated coaching - Learn to Punt on Jun 21, and Learn to Row on Jun 27 & 28 - as well as a lapsed rowers' refresher on Jul 6. Book, and learn more, at dittons.org.uk



● The sun's out, and what could be finer than lawn bowls? Surbiton Bowling Club, 104 years old, has a taster day: Sat, May 17, noon-4pm, and all you need is flat-soled shoes. With 40 members and three club sessions a week, plus mixed league play, men and women are welcome. Club captain Dave White, in blue below, is optimistic for the season ahead after "a flourish of wins last year". surbitonbowlingclub.uk



● A Surbiton racing driver has hopes of glory in a new UK championship, the GT Cup. Peter Erceg, of St Matthew's Avenue, is powering his flame-coloured Audi R8 through 22 races. Having bagged the 2024 British Endurance title, Peter and his team, PB Racing, led the timing board at the official test day at Donington Park, and hope for a podium finish at Brands Hatch on May 17 & 18. pbracing.uk



● Want to learn cheerleading and tumbling? Altitude Cheer's trials are at Tolworth Recreation Centre, Fullers Way North, on Sun, Jul 6. The group offers classes for four to 18-year-olds, and for all abilities.

"Whether you're a beginner or an experienced athlete, there's a class for you," said coach Maddie Garry. "Cheerleading is a great team sport and we pride ourselves on being a friendly, inclusive club."

Email altitudecheerleading@gmail.com

● The new croquet season is under way, with the seven lawns in Alexandra Drive making Surbiton Croquet Club the largest in London. A members' club, run by volunteers with professional grounds support, it has 150 players, from beginners to international stars. There's also an active social programme based around the pavilion's bar and kitchen. Have a free go on the bank holiday open day, Mon May 26, 10am-4pm. All equipment provided. No heels! surbitoncroquet.org.uk



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