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Surbiton
Farmers' Market

Issue 81

The best thing to come out of Surbiton since the A3

July 2025



● A mini nature reserve in Berrylands will become the first of its kind in London to offer a sensory rewilding experience to vulnerable people. Hats off to Surbiton's Citizen Zoo and the merry band of volunteers for their hard work. Story on **p6**

● Feeling a little hoarse? You could join Dobbin and pals for a jar at the Black Lion where the cycle stand makes a fine hitching post.



ENGLISH HERITAGE
C.H. MIDDLETON
'Mr Middleton'
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Broadcaster
lived here
1928 - 1945
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● An English Heritage blue plaque adorns 17 Princes Avenue, Tolworth, to celebrate Britain's first celebrity gardener. Cecil Middleton made his radio debut in 1931, urging the nation to 'dig for victory' in the Second World War; his homespun advice delivered in a reflective tone. Mr Middleton (as he was known) and wife Rosa were the first occupants of a semi built in 1927, where he actually preferred growing flowers to spuds. His funeral was held in 1945 at St Matthew's.



Poundland stores are spared

Both Surbiton's and Tolworth's Poundland stores have been spared in a nationwide cull of branches. Nearly 70 Poundlands will close following the sale of the chain to US investors, but The Good Life can reveal that Victoria Road and Tolworth Broadway's shops aren't on the list.

The chain's acquisition (aptly for £1) follows four tough trading years. Poundland moved into Tolworth's Blockbuster video store in 2013, while Victoria Road (still fondly remembered by locals as Woolworths until 2009) changed first to 99p Stores, then became Poundland in 2016.

Poundland, under its new owners, eventually aims to reduce store numbers from 800 to 650.

It is ditching frozen food in favour of its £3 market-leading meal deals, and focusing on essentials such as milk. More seasonal merchandise will be sold, while customer feedback means many abandoned product lines will be restored.

Barry Williams, Poundland managing director, said: "It's no secret that we have much work to do." **Tim Harrison**



● The ivy-clad former public loo in the corner of Victoria rec – the one that looks like the wicked witch's cottage – could be brought back to life. Kyle Hyams, owner of Coffee on the Corner in Beaconsfield Road, plans to create a tiny coffee bar, 7am-6pm, incorporating an accessible toilet by the St Mary's Road gate, within the 10 sqm building. He has also applied to remodel the pavilion cafe, until last year a French Tarte offshoot, as a cafe and gelateria with bifold doors opening on to an improved outdoor seating area extending to the end of the ramp.



Anger grows over hike in parking charges

Expect fireworks over car parking charges at a council meeting in Kingston Guildhall on July 8 as a backlash grows over the fairness of rises of up to 460% to balance the municipal books.

"We want to pay our way, but we don't want to feel like mugs," said Surbitonian Caroline Cookson, summing up the mood of many. "I only need 10 minutes to collect the kids, but now I'm paying £3.20! It penalises people who can't walk or bus – often working parents, carers or disabled drivers, and it hurts local businesses which rely on quick stops and spontaneous spend."

More than 1,200 signed a petition condemning the scale of the rises. Surbiton Prep parent Nick Hart called it 'drastic'. "Only weeks ago I was charged 65p for a 30-minute slot. Now it's £3.65; a huge burden on school pick-ups." Maple Dental Practice says a parking rise from £1.10 to £3.30 "negatively affects the community".

Last autumn, Kingston appointed Apcoa to handle its parking. Shops in Surbiton say the change has been fraught with issues.

Rail switch is mooted

Could Surbiton station be transferred from Network Rail to Transport for London, tying it in more closely to the rest of the capital's network?

As Surbiton is within the Oyster zone, many feel that there's a logic to TfL running it, suggested a member of the station's staff.

Speculation has grown following the recent nationalisation of South Western Railway – the first rail operator to change under new government legislation.

Unifying track and train was heralded as a step towards a 'more joined-up, reliable service', so there was much merriment (including ridicule from Ian Hislop on Have I Got News For You) as the inaugural Woking-Waterloo train terminated at Surbiton and offloaded all the passengers on to a replacement bus.

Reforms under the change to Great British Railways include a best fare guarantee so travellers pay the lowest price for journeys, and instant compensation for delays, something Surbiton Labour chair Kezia Coleman calls "a long-overdue shift from a broken system to one designed round people who use it every day".

● More local rail news on **p5**

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Gail's set to open

The Lloyds bank building, empty since March, is poised to become Gail's – part of the craft baker chain acclaimed for pricey but compulsive croissants and pastries.

Station roundabout footfall is high, but the chain (owned by a US equity firm) is hesitating over where to site outside tables as it's on a pavement bottleneck constrained by a hefty barrier.

MP Ed Davey is a fan. At last year's general election, Lib Dems targeted seats based on whether or not the area boasted a Gail's! Matthew James has already let the five refurbished flats above.



● Coffee shop RR Tasty, on Surbiton station forecourt, has closed after a year. Network Rail repossessed it, changing the locks.

Lessee Erdinc Yilmaz can only peer in frustratedly at cabinets still full of his cans and bottles. Better news at Top Cod, Ewell Road. Shut since Christmas for a refurb, the chippy run by Iranian Moji Gina, 47, is finally to reopen. Moji also runs the nearby Go Sip cafe.



● A monthly carers' cafe has opened at Surbitonian Gardens with free refreshments and advice. Open 10.30am to 12.30pm on the second Thursday of each month at the Browns Road care home, it offers 'respite, connection and appreciation for the work carers do'.



Yo's gran's recipe makes final

Surbiton NHS worker Yohannah Caussaryam's chilli bites – spicy vegetarian balls made with dried peas, chillies, onion, coriander and cumin, quick-fried so they're crunchy on the outside, soft within – made the final of a nationwide Big Lunch recipe contest run by the Eden Project to encourage home-cooking. The 30-year-old based her dish on her Mauritian gran's favourite recipe. "It reminded me of family gatherings," said

Yohannah, left. "It's food that sparks conversation."

Cocktail wars

The Bosco Lounge at the foot of St Mark's Hill has sparked a price war on cocktails, with Surbiton's tipplers the beneficiaries.

Wed to Sat, from 5-9pm, all cocktails are £7, with bottled and draught beer a fiver and prosecco at £20 a bottle.

But it's the £7 cocktail price that's really eye-catching. Even the nearby Coronation Hall

Wetherspoons charges £9.45 a time. Down the road at the Victoria pub, the cheapest cocktail is £9.50. Cheers.



● Harvest time's upon us, and the Abundance project is ready to help pick excess fruit to save local organic produce from going to waste. If you know of a glut of fruit, volunteers will pick, harvest and distribute to food banks and other places where it's wanted. Leftover fruit is turned into fresh juice at farmers' markets and community events. Relay info on fruit trees or join volunteers for a social hour or two, picking in the fresh air. Equipment and training provided. Call Toni, 07749 633 973 or email abundance@ttkingston.org Abundance is one of several projects set up by Transition Town Kingston to promote sustainability.

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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 10,900 locals

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or visit our website

thegoodlifesurbiton.co.uk

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Athel's Town Saxon Weekend
26-27 July Canbury Gardens

Kingston River Cultures Festival
6 September, Waterfront

Kingston Carnival
7 September, Town Centre

Longer bus waits

First Bus London, which in Feb took over RATP (which ran most Surbiton red bus routes for TfL), plans to cut the K2's weekday frequency from 10 mins to every 12, to the consternation of Surbiton's councillors. See story, **p5**

Topping occasion

Meet your neighbours in St George's church garden, Tolworth, on Sept 13, noon-4pm, at the annual community day in Hamilton Ave. Free pizzas!

An unusual award

For 'unusual and inspiring' teaching of art and music to senior students, Surbiton High has won an award from an education magazine.

A sign of the times

Reassuring deliniation spotted on a letterbox in Ellerton Road. * NOTE: The Good Life is **NOT** junk mail!

No Junk mail
No Cold Callers
Thank you!
* NOTE: The Good Life is not junk mail!

Park dealers jailed

Ahmed Dadey (41) and Matthew Styles (40) were each jailed for three years after pleading guilty at Kingston Crown Court to Class A drug-dealing in Fishponds park. A tip-off led to a surveillance operation and the men's arrests at an address in Wembley.

Support in scrum

Harlequins rugby club is helping Surbiton children aged 5 to 11 boost their mental resilience via six-week workshops on managing emotions.

Peter's gong

Show a bit of respect to Peter Mayhew-Smith, Kingston College group principal, whose CBE caps a 30-year career in further education. "I'm deeply honoured," he said.



Odd-jobbers plea

Volunteer DIY enthusiasts are being recruited by Our Lady Immaculate church to do odd jobs around the Tolworth parish. olionline.co.uk

Old dears' day out

The old ladies of the Weybridge bus museum had a day out in Surbiton on June 8, as heritage buses gave free rides on the 418 route between Kingston and Epsom. In the past, recalls bus driver Graham Burnell, the 418 once went round Berrylands.

Hard lines to come

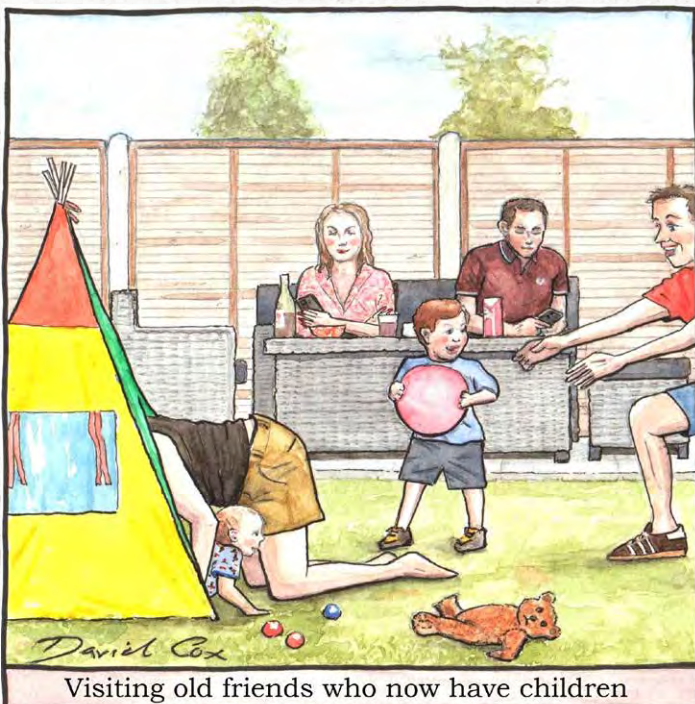
Double yellow lines are to be painted outside numbers 47 to 51 Berrylands Road; a traffic pinch point close to the junction with Park Road.

Alarm is triggered

Firefighters put out a blaze on the top storey of Sainsbury's car park, Victoria Road. The supermarket was evacuated after the fire alarm was triggered at 3.30pm on May 20. It was, said London Fire Brigade, "a small rubbish fire".

SURBITON LIFE

by David Cox



Visiting old friends who now have children

Shaping a school vision

If your child currently enjoys the freedom and creativity of a forest primary school, with emphasis on the great outdoors, you'll hit a brick wall when it's time to move to big school. So Surbiton education visionary Kimberley Cooper, 44, has assembled a team of 'thinkers, dreamers and doers' to create a new secondary, the Beacon School, embracing planetary stewardship and wellbeing on top of regular subjects. It's at the fundraising stage, enjoys strong parent support and is set to open in Sept 2026, for pupils regardless of background.

"The idea is to update education to equip young learners with the skillset to confront 21st century challenges," said Kimberley, right, of Cranes Park Avenue, who has 20 years' teaching experience.

Frustrated that most secondaries are "rigged to performative aspects" and obsessed with league tables, she's been working for a decade on a blueprint for a new model for ages 11-16.

The mother of three, born and raised in Lovelace Road, isn't revealing the location, but it's likely to be an expansion of an existing primary. Her eldest, Florence, is 10... so there is a tight deadline.

"My role is to empower others, be a good human and bring the community back together," she said. "If any community can do this, Surbiton can. There's nothing we can't achieve if we do it together."

The school will be operated by ThriveNow, partnered with Kingston's Forest Schooling UK.

thrive-now-org.webflow.io
Tim Harrison



● Still no arrests over a stabbing at 10pm on May 14 which saw Victoria Road near McDonald's cordoned off. A 30-year-old man who was hurt has now been discharged from hospital. Police have appealed for information. Call 101 (quote ref 8615/14may25) or ring Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.



● Having failed to attract a buyer at £560,000, the old NatWest building in the high street – empty since Feb 2024 – has sold at auction for £900,000! Even property auctioneers Acuitus were surprised. They'd put a £600,000 guide price on the listed property. The mystery buyer has six private parking spaces at the back.

Town partners

A partnership to promote and improve the heart of Surbiton has been unanimously granted £40,000 by local councillors.

It will champion the town and work to improve its vitality via public art and events, to counter a decline experienced by so many high streets.

It links Surbiton Rotary, Surbiton Business Community, Community Brain, Kingston Chamber of Commerce, the Art Trail, Hillcroft College, local businesses and The Good Life.

Cllr Liz Green, whose ward covers the high street, said she'd supported such an idea "for many, many, moons".

Council shake-up: share your opinions

A dozen borough councils, including Elmbridge, would vanish under plans to shake up local government. Overarching Surrey county council would split, leaving Long Ditton administered by a new East Surrey unitary body, sweeping away town-hall jobs.

Today, Elmbridge manages 140,000 people. The new consolidated area would control 550,000. It means stony-broke council Woking could have its £2.1billion property gambling debt written off, so it could start afresh. Share your views, by Aug 5, at surreycc.gov.uk

A free online session explaining the nuts and bolts is on Monday, July 7, at 7pm. Register at tinyurl.com/h833pcdw

● Long Ditton rec was cleared of dog walkers as police blew up a World War 2 bomb unearthed in a back garden. A huge bang was heard on Apr 28, as smoke rose.



● Central Surbiton was cordoned off for four hours at 8.05am on Thu, June 19, after an accident involving a car and a toddler near the YMCA. A two-year-old boy was taken to hospital. His condition was not life-threatening. Witnesses can call 101 (ref 1631/19June25).



Pic: Kathee La Hood

● Forty years ago, Cliff Port was on his knees putting the final touches to the vast drapes that framed the Wembley stadium stage for Live Aid, the concert to benefit the Ethiopian famine. He'd spread the canvases on the floor of the Co-op hall in Tolworth Broadway (above today's Iceland). Cliff (email cliff@ipsoartes.com) is holding an exhibition of his art at the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, in Sept and asks anyone



Pic: Graham Osborne



with photos of his old music artwork in the 80s and 90s to get in touch.

● A man in his twenties died on the tracks at Surbiton station at 10.30pm on Tues, June 10. All trains were suspended for the night, with a Hampton Court train held at the station as a stretcher was taken up the station steps by ambulance crew. Three fire engines, three police cars, two ambulances, three first response teams, a rail incident officer and a dog section unit attended. "It's not being treated as suspicious and a file will be prepared for the coroner," said a police spokesman.

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Matthew James

Check Instagram for the latest news @thegoodlifesurbiton

Bob Noble, the man who devised The Good Life's masthead, came up with the paper's distinctive shape and helped launch it in 2012, has died suddenly at the age of 66. He lived for 29 years at 13 Ravenscar Road with wife Rosie, raising their five children in the family home, a creative hub and party venue featuring garden performances by the Noble family's ukulele ensemble.

An Essex boy, Bob excelled at art and studied graphic design in Bournemouth where he linked up with trainee nurse Rosie Haddrell. They got engaged on Rosie's 21st birthday, and were rarely out of each other's company for the next 47 years.

Married in 1980, the couple soon moved to Tolworth, where children Amy, Harry, Jess, Martha and Freddie grew up with the man Amy described as "a gold-standard dad".

Though he designed for various companies (including the Surrey Comet), he was happiest being his own boss. He set up the firms No Bull and Rich Mind Publishing, taking on design contracts and dabbling in magazine production, including Moor, a well-received (though short-lived) glossy mag about life on the Thames, reflecting his love of boats and boating.

However, The Good Life, which he designed in 2012 in partnership with today's team, has stood the test of time. The earliest issues of the paper were hand-folded in Bob's home, to save money! His gift

was for intuitive design. He created top-notch layouts (the front page on the left from 2012 is one of his), and always insisted on using QuarkXPress software.

No business meeting should last more than an hour, he decreed, enforcing the rule by rising to his feet when the big hand reached 12 and walking out of the room, calling the bluff of anyone defiantly waffling on, convinced that he hadn't meant it!

At a celebration-of-life ceremony at Pembroke Lodge, Richmond Park, daughter Jess said her dad had "joined almost every organisation, committee and team that crossed his path". It was true. He sat on the British Youth Council, was an active Rotarian, and chaired the 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 Surbiton Festivals, rebranding it as 'the Surbo' to breathe fresh life into a calendar fixture. He even moved part of the festival to the river with an illuminated sail past.

An am-dram enthusiast, he performed with NEMCOM and Hinchley Manor Operatic Society,

Grand designs

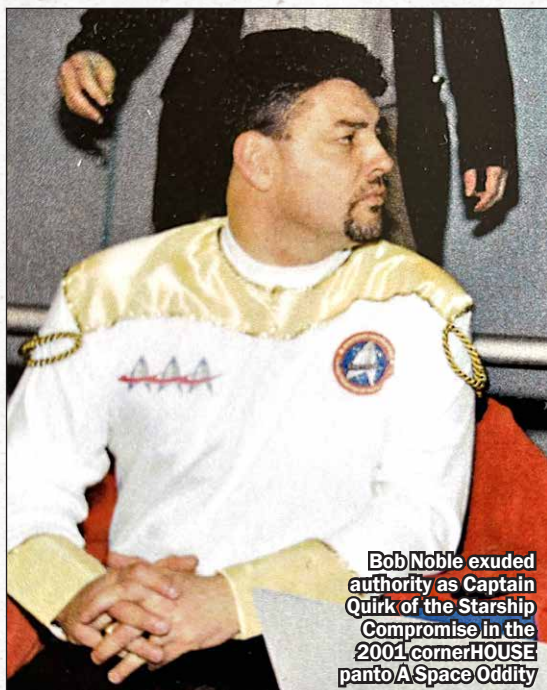
led Kingston Youth Theatre and directed and appeared in shows at the cornerHOUSE arts centre in Douglas Road, often alongside his children.

He used his energy to innovate, inspire and push others beyond their own perceived boundaries, always bubbling with creative ideas. Highlights included the coming-of-age drama Decky Does a Bronco, in which fearless son Freddie did giddy loops on a swing, with the floor of the arts centre turfed with real grass. Another play, The Fire Raisers, a dark drama about arsonists, aimed to benefit a firefighters' charity but, as can happen with projects of vaulting ambition, benevolent intentions were eclipsed by spiralling production costs.

He enjoyed an instant bond with all children, but particularly his own five and his growing tribe of grandchildren, now numbering 11. "Watching him with children, especially from 0 to 3, was magical," said daughter Martha. "He was a baby whisperer, but he always had time to listen." Several of his grandchildren took part in the celebration-of-life service.

Speaking on behalf of Harry, who has autism, Rosie called Bob "a tower of strength", unwavering in campaigning for their son's best interests.

He co-founded Swaps, the South-West London Autistic Parents' Society. He was special needs governor



Bob Noble exuded authority as Captain Quirk of the Starship Compromise in the 2004 cornerHOUSE panto A Space Oddity



at Tolworth juniors and chaired the National Autistic Society, running the London Marathon to boost its funds. He backed the charities EnhanceAble and Yorda Adventures, supporting children with significant learning disabilities, and he and Rosie sang in the Vocality choir at St Andrew's church, Maple Road.

You'd never catch Bob on a bus. Wedded to cars since his teenage years, he had a fondness for Morris Minors. He taught his children to drive in them, with two Moggies regularly berthed on the Ravenscar Road hard standing. Ever the joiner, he ran the London branch of the Morris Minor Owners Club.

When the birds flew the nest, Bob and Rosie moved to Shepperton, camping out in summer months in wooden cabins and a caravan on a waterside site where they dreamed of building a house. But despite leading the residents' association and – as a Conservative councillor – chairing Spelthorne's climate change working group and development sub-committee, his own planning bid was refused in 2021 on the grounds of loss of Green Belt and heightened flood risk.

In a career change, Bob became a funeral celebrant, putting, in Freddie's words, "a huge amount of love, care and attention" into eulogies delivered at more than 300 services.

He'd made his own wishes for an upbeat celebration clear. "Ever the showman, he left us all wanting more," said Freddie, before Joe Brown's I'll See You In My Dreams – Bob's choice – concluded the Richmond Park service.

Tim Harrison

● Bob Noble b Sep 21 1958, d Apr 5 2025

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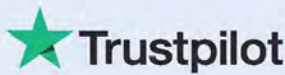
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Farewell to our paper boy

One of the Good Life's sterling deliverers – and one of the most recognisable characters around Surbiton town centre – has died at the age of 89.

Peter Grove of Lovelace Gardens was often seen pushing a trolley full of the area's favourite newspaper around the streets.

He died three weeks after his wife, Yvonne, 88, with their coffins side by side in St Andrew's church, Maple Road, at a double funeral in May, conducted by St Andrew's & St Mark's vicar the Rev Robert Stanier.

After doing his national service in Egypt in the build-up to the Suez Crisis, Peter worked as a cartographer for the Directorate of Overseas Surveys in Tolworth.

It was there he met map librarian Yvonne Dell. They married, moved to Chessington, and produced a daughter, Jane, assistant editor of The Good Life, and son Steven.

They doted on their granddaughter, Ellen, and great grandson Reuben.



Paul Lagan with former Chelsea captain John Terry

Paul: a true Blue

He helped put women's football on the map at a time when the sport was amateur, crowds numbered dozens and mainstream news outlets barely acknowledged that girls played the game.

Paul Lagan, who has died at 66, was well-known to Chelsea Women supporters in Surbiton and Kingston, seldom missing a match at Kingsmeadow.

He worked for three decades as a writer and sub-editor on London local papers, and set up the Capital Football website, putting women's

football on the same level as men's, from top-flight to grassroots. For 35 years he reported on most Chelsea men's and women's matches, home and away, travelling by car, ankle-deep in chocolate wrappers, biscuit packets and empty soft drink cans.

A teetotaler and pescatarian, he campaigned for plant-based alternatives to meat pies and sausage rolls at football grounds, and built strong ties with fans and supporters' groups in the Surbiton/Kingston area.

His Chelsea affiliation came from being taken to games by his Irish mother, a passionate Chelsea fan who'd stand on the terraces bellowing helpful advice to Ron Harris, Johnny Hollins and Peter Bonetti. He leaves his partner Vicky and their sons Danny – a Kingsmeadow 'ultra' – and Jake.

Station to shut in May

No trains will stop at Berrylands from May 9 to Aug 18 next year so the rickety 525ft wooden platforms, relics from 1933, can be replaced with concrete.

Councillors are meeting Network Rail to minimise disruption, but work will involve some nighttime closures of the main line. To the concern of Cllr Anita Schaper, there is no disabled or buggy access; something she's challenging. A space will be left for a lift at some nebulous future date, a possible breach of legal obligations.

There are worries that closure, combined with the K2 bus service reduction, will add pressure to rush-hour links. "It's likely to be a challenging few months," admitted Cllr Schaper.

Plans to replace the old undulating platforms were accelerated after a rail bigwig got off a train at Berrylands and

was horrified by the state of the surfaces. No serious work has been done to the platforms since the reign of George V.

'Comprehensive community engagement' is promised by Network Rail, which starts 'enabling' work this Nov, with drop-in info sessions planned.

Most heavy construction equipment will come in via Lower Marsh Lane, to ease the strain on Chiltern Drive, although parking may be suspended on one side, affecting shops and businesses.

The ticket office, a prefab built in 1969, will be refurbished.

The station, opened Oct 16 1933, was first going to be called **Marsh Lane**, after a nearby signal box. But Wimpey, which largely built the between-the-wars housing, had naming dibs, and opted for **Berrylands for Surbiton Hill** before swiftly dropping the Surbiton Hill bit.

Tim Harrison



● Surbiton Racket & Fitness head squash coach Michael Hennings, who has died of cancer at 47, inspired adults and juniors alike, said club director Roy Staniland.

The Berrylands resident, who played tennis at the club as a boy, guided juniors to national success and coached Surrey's county boys' teams. "The impact he had on our club will endure," said Roy.

● Ed Davey signed copies of his book, *Why I Care, And Why It Matters*, at the Regency Bookshop before hotfooting it to the Hay litfest to be interviewed by political journalist Nicola Cutcher. "It's about how being a carer has shaped my life," said the Surbiton MP who, as a teenager, cared for his mum and gran, and today looks after his disabled son John, with wife Emily.

Call Regency Bookshop on **020 8399 2188** to order.



● The annual free village-style Berrylands Festival is on Sun, July 6, noon-4pm, at Berrylands Park (the former lagoon site off Raeburn Avenue). Attractions include bouncy castles, coconut shy, crockery smashing, tug of war and pig racing. There's live music, food, a barbecue and bar. Berrylands Scout Group had a £1,218 grant from Surbiton neighbourhood committee for light-weight folding tables and benches which will be reused after the event at the hut in Stirling Walk.



● An impressive £72,666 was raised for good causes in Long Ditton Cllr Neil Houston's mayoral year; £30,000 from a sponsored firewalk. Neil, an Elmbridge councillor since 2015 and a Kingston one before that, said it took some persuading to take the hot coals challenge. "We're grateful for the help we had from so many people over the year," said Neil, who racked up 210 engagements.

Where to make tracks

A new, affordable recording studio has opened on the edge of Surbiton to mark the 40th anniversary of sustainability hub Save the World Club.

After the mayor, livewire Aussie émigré Noel Hadjimichael, was told by club supremo Des Kay that it now needed to be used, Kingston's first citizen pledged to find 10 young musicians via a mayoral 'talent quest'!

Built within the Southsea Road hub, the rehearsal and recording space has been soundproofed with pyramid foam panels scrounged from an exhibition.

The mayor saluted the work of Save the World, hailing its importance to the community. Set up in 1985 by serial recycler and green campaigner Des, the centre near Surbiton High School is an interlocking complex of mini Aladdin's caves, each devoted to an upcycling field.

savetheworldclub.org



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Green belt or grey belt? You decide

The function room at Surbiton Hockey Club was buzzing as locals scrutinised plans for 150 homes on Long Ditton Green Belt, including flats, terraces, semis and detached five-bed houses. Developer Taylor Wimpey set out ideas for the 27-acre site

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near Squire's garden centre at a pre-application consultation.

The land, which the company calls Grey Belt, not Green, is owned by the home construction firm which proposes to make half the properties 'affordable', with a mix of private, rented and shared ownership.

The area covers Hill Park Roses nursery to the top of One Tree Hill, retaining the village green which, says Taylor Wimpey, will be 'improved'. Top concerns: the single access road, pressure on schools and doctors' surgeries, and impact on wildlife and biodiversity.

Resident Pauline Keane said: "Apart from the lack of facilities to support the development, I'm surprised access to the estate will be via the very narrow, winding Woodstock Lane North. I can see the road becoming even more dangerous. When walking to Squire's along the country path via Love Lane, we take our lives in



our hands trying to cross that road already."

Long Ditton Residents' Association's Mark Herbert said the group would continue to oppose any Green Belt building. "Our Green Belt provides a critical buffer between London and the home counties. It does its job, preventing unchecked urban sprawl. We must protect and preserve it. Once gone, it's gone forever." View the proposals at woodstocklanenorth.co.uk **Jane Grove**



● Don't spoil our lawn! That's St Andrew's Square's message, three months ahead of the Surbiton Festival, part-staged in the garden the friends' group has worked to restore. The 'mud pit' of tyre tracks last September means the friends want assurances ahead of this year's event. "The grass has not recovered," friends' chair Michelle Gardner told organisers. "We'd like to work with you to ensure no repeat." She wants to know why the festival can't emulate Community Brain, which also holds events there, but carries equipment in and out by hand, respects the grass and cleans up litter. One possible option is the use of grass-protecting mats.

Sensory reserve is a London first

Edith Gardens nature reserve in Berrylands is to become a pioneering, rewilding sensory garden – the first in London. The council-owned acre site off Raeburn Avenue, managed by Citizen Zoo, is a site of importance for nature conservation, with access currently limited to groups which work with vulnerable people.

With £30,360 of funding from Surbiton neighbourhood committee, the aim is to blend wildlife restoration and community engagement in a way never done before.

Citizen Zoo's Digby Wheeler said: "The vision is to create a space where nature and people thrive together, with immersive, sensory experiences targeted to groups who may face barriers accessing other green spaces.

"It's more than conservation; it's a commitment to nature, wellbeing and innovation."

With wheelchair access, areas will focus on sound, sight, touch, scent and taste.



● As well as helping revive Surbiton's river walk, green-fingered Queen's Prom Friends' chair Stefan Gross has been growing four types of rhubarb on his allotment to turn into jam, crumbles and ice cream at his Catherine Road home.



Vandals target bench

A memorial bench to Mike Tattersall, the driving force behind the Alexandra Millennium Green, has had to be moved from its location because of vandalism.

"Vandals have tried uprooting the bench numerous times, causing great distress to the Tattersall family, who have now removed it to preserve Mike's memory," said friend Dawn Lloyd.

After Mike's death in 2022 the bench was placed with a view of the green that he and his chums created at Alexandra rec.

It was blessed by vicar the Rev Stan Brown at a gathering to remember the 'jolly green giant' on what would have been his 73rd birthday. His ashes were scattered around the bench and green.

After the bench, which wife Liz could see from her home, was found flung into undergrowth, the family moved it to the safety of her garden while they figure out a better way to secure it to the ground.

**Mike Tattersall,
'father' of the
Millennium Green**



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Two times for Tom

Cllr Tom Reeve of Surbiton Hill ward is Surbiton's neighbourhood committee chair for a second year on the trot. Anita Schaper is vice chair.

Green research

Surbiton councillors have pledged £27,561 to fund a masterplan for Alexandra Millennium Green, with drainage, footpaths, accessibility and wildlife to be researched with community engagement.

It's your funeral

A bid to turn the back of a former funeral parlour in a shopping parade in Fleece Road, Long Ditton, into a self-contained studio flat has been rejected by Elmbridge planners.

Playing, naturally

A natural play trail for under 8s will be created at the Ewell Road end of Fishponds Park with £55,000 funding from councillors to help children climb, jump and learn to balance.

Flower power bus

You can bus it to Wisley Gardens again after Falcon Buses revived the 714. It's hourly, Mon-Sat, via Portsmouth Road. Add the 715, and it's half-hourly to Esher too.

Going in circles

The perimeter path will be extended to complete a circuit round Victoria rec off Balaclava Road. Made of self-compacting gravel, it will cost £24,000 and take three weeks to do.

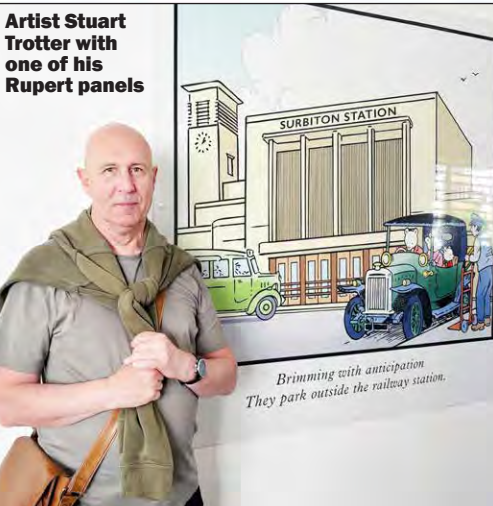
Relevant learning

Want to learn a language or polish your skills? The council is consulting on adult education in Surbiton to make courses from childcare to computing, scriptwriting to arts & crafts more relevant. **kingstonlets talk.co.uk** Type in 'adult education'.

Half century tally

Berrylands defibrillator charity Ralphh has installed its 50th wall unit in six years, many in sporting settings, earning praise from MP Ed Davey.

Artist Stuart Trotter with one of his Rupert panels



Rupert comes home

Rupert Bear is back home, thanks to the artistic skills of Stuart Trotter – illustrator of the loveable character for 17 years.

A new Rupert adventure illuminates Surbiton station's public footbridge, half a mile from where Fred Bestall, the artist who created the classic bear 'look', lived for 30 years.

Ten beautiful panels now liven up the otherwise blank walkway; a project conceived by arty ideas guy and adopted Surbitonian Stephen Young and funded by Kingston Council as part of its Kingston 2025 events, with help from Network Rail, Friends of Surbiton Station and South Western Railway.

It tells the tale of Rupert and family buying tickets at Surbiton for a holiday at the seaside, with porters (ask your parents, kids) helping with their luggage. It's the kind of innocent, evocative yarn familiar to lovers of the Rupert annual, which Stuart still illustrates.

The Durham-based artist began work on the project three years ago, creating images which chime perfectly with the station's art deco design. Bestall himself features in some of Stuart's panels... one with a 1959 Rupert annual under his arm. A team of professional art installers drove overnight from Darlington to fit them. "I wrote the story of Rupert going on holiday," said Stuart, who included three girl guides from Surbiton Hill Methodist church (which Bestall attended)... some of our Fred's original comic strip characters from the late 1940s. **Tim Harrison**



● A faulty lithium-ion battery in a power tool is believed to have caused a fire which damaged 10 garages in Adelaide Road. A fire brigade spokesperson said: "Lithium batteries store a significant amount of energy in a very small space. If released in an uncontrolled way, a fire or explosion can result."

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● Two pedestrians in their 70s and a 35-year-old male driver were taken to hospital after a collision near the Elm Tree pub in Victoria Road on June 12. The junction with Crummock Chase, into Sainsbury's car park, was cordoned off. "No injuries are believed to be life-threatening or life-changing," said Met Police. "No arrests have been made at this stage and inquiries continue."

Are we happy or boring..?

Or can we be both? A welter of recent newspaper articles paint Surbiton in a mixed light. The Telegraph declared Surbiton 'a town we collectively consider boring' (er, no we don't), mocking the fact that its name 'looks a bit like suburb' and that the tube doesn't come this far. But it did say Good Lifers Tom & Barbara were 'forward thinking'. The Guardian listed 'Surbiton North' – a hitherto unknown district – as one of the UK's most desirable places to live, praising its tree-lined streets, abundance of birdsong and riverside walk.

Time Out added its two penn'orth, citing the art deco station as a top attraction, complimenting the 'lovely garden park in the centre', lauding the farmers' market and summing it all up, intriguingly, as 'aggressively suburban'.

Tim Harrison

● A sturdy new fence encircles the playground at St Mary's community hall, Long Ditton. "It had become so dilapidated it was no longer viable for the volunteers to mend," said hall committee chair Ann Leeson. The National Lottery chipped in £5,100, with £2,600 from Your Fund Surrey. Other work has included a full refurb of the hall and installation of a storage shed for the Babes 'n' Tots group's toys. Call the hall manager Mandy Ali on **020 8339 0008** to inquire about hiring the venue.



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Simin Soleimani with an admirer's bouquet at the opening of her new beauty clinic

● Simin Beauty Clinic marked its official opening on June 19, and the Brighton Road salon was heaving with visitors keen to see the treatment rooms, massage therapy area and spa.

The clinic, next to Sage's health store, offers 95 types of beauty, skin and spa treatments for men and women. "And free consultations, and body scrub with organic salt and spa shower after – the only beauty clinic to offer this in the borough," said owner Simin Soleimani, who has 12 years' experience in the industry, including in Harrods and Selfridges.

Simin was previously at Therapy Spaces in St James' Road.

The salon is open every day: Mon to Sat 9.30am to 6.30pm and Sun 11am to 5pm. Visit siminbeauty.uk or email info@siminbeauty.uk



● Fitness frames, suspension trainers, sit-up benches and kettle bells are among calisthenics equipment in the refurbished outdoor gym at Long Ditton rec. "We've equipment for all fitness levels," said an Elmbridge Council spokesman. Picture boards describe how to use equipment safely, with QR codes also accessing instructions. Loop seating is provided for warming down, storing bags and socialising.

The previous gym in Windmill Lane, deemed 'outdated' by the council, was installed with London 2012 funding.

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● No, she's not handcuffing award-winning ex-Radio Four newsreader Simon Vance! PCSO Emma Young was telling the Surbiton farmers' market visitor about a free email alert service. Emma, based at Surbiton YMCA, is trialling 'Met Engage' ahead of a Londonwide roll-out. Subscribers receive incident updates, news about live operations, scam warnings and safety tips, and can give the police feedback. "Our neighbourhood teams' email lists are being replaced, so to continue receiving local information from police, please sign up," said Emma. Visit metengage.co.uk or email Emma at stmarks@met.police.uk



High-speed fibre to improve internet

Parts of Surbiton are being knitted together with upgraded high-speed fibre optic cables to improve internet access. A 10km network is being dug in Surbiton and Kingston – some by Virgin, some by Boldyn – in partnership with Kingston Council, and funded by the Greater London Authority. "Surbiton is an important growth hub for business and leisure," said London Deputy Mayor Howard Dawber. Work should be finished by February 2026. **Tim Harrison**



Sarah Onions stocked up with plants

● The Ajax sea scouts' annual plant fair proved a horticultural hit at its activity centre in Ditton Reach, marking the 80th anniversary of VE Day. From 1951-57, the group's HQ was aboard the locally moored motor torpedo boat 747, which saw service during the Second World War. The ship's wheel (pictured below) is on display on the wall of the current HQ, having been presented in 2008 by Doug Fenner, former senior scout section leader, on the group's 60th birthday.



● As a child she taught her teddies, lined up in front of a chalk blackboard. Now Paula McIntyre, above, is head of Surbiton High girls' prep school, starting in September. A past head of English at St George's, Weybridge, she took a break from the classroom as ops manager for a recruitment firm, then spent five years at accountancy giant PwC. "But I knew that wasn't what I wanted to do."



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Youth Marching Band celebrates 60th anniversary

THE Surbiton Royal British Legion Youth Marching Band, a non-profit making organisation, was set up in 1965 for young people aged 8 to 21.

All tuition, instruments and uniforms are provided by the band which runs along the same lines as HM Forces.

Celebrating 60 years this year, it promotes musical knowledge, self-discipline and self-confidence, and in the past has had many members making their careers within HM Forces, as well as becoming professional musicians in other bands and orchestras.

Here's what a few current members of the band say:

● **Staff/SGT Tom Corbett, age 26**

I set up the Surbiton RBL Academy Band in September 2024 with the aim of giving young people aged 7 to 21 the chance to read, write and play music.

Often our members have never picked up an instrument before, so this is a great opportunity to learn the basics.

We use Grades 1 and 2 of the ABRSM syllabus to teach music theory, Tune A Day books to teach instrument playing, and our tutors' own knowledge to teach drill/marching.

We have had a lot of interest since the Academy Band started last September and hope to continue to take on 2-3 intakes every year, giving young people in the local community new opportunities and skills.

If you or someone you know might be interested in our Academy Band you can contact me on surbitonrblacademy@gmail.com for more details.

● **Lt Ivan Gideon, age 60**

I joined the 'Royal British Legion boys' band', at the age of 11 on the 11th October 1976 at Tolworth Junior School where we practised on a Monday evening.

I joined with two other friends,



Dave Taylor and Andy Kane, and we were recruited by another classmate Alan Brett.

I learned to play the E-flat cavalry trumpet which is what the band played at that time.

We used to wear our No.2 uniform to all band practices which was the old khaki serge battledress with a beret.

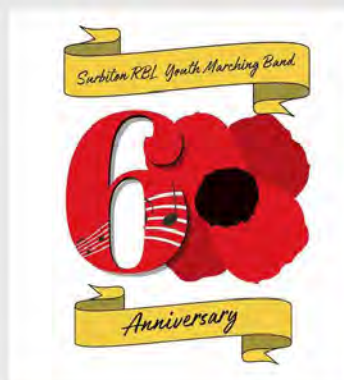
Before we got our blue No.1 uniform, we had to pass a strict drill test.

I would like to thank the club for their unwavering support over the last 60 years - without that, the band would not be where it is today.

● **Dylan, age 8**

I joined the Academy Band in September 2024 because I wanted to learn the drums and meet new friends. In the Academy Band I learnt to read music, march and play the drums.

In April 2025, I moved up to the main band where we practise every Thursday and Sunday.



I love the band because I like performing and learning music.

● **Preston, age 8**

I have been in the band for around 18 months. I am a percussionist.

I like the band because there are lots of different instruments.

I enjoy marching and playing in big concerts.

My favourite event that I've performed with the band is the Lord Mayor's Show.

WHAT'S ON GUIDE

JULY ▼

Saturday 12th

The Surbiton Royal British Legion Youth Marching Band's 60th Anniversary Concert is at the Surbiton RBL Club in Hollyfield Road.

A day full of fun, stalls, a bar, a BBQ and music, followed by a party and disco for all.

The event starts at 2pm.

AUGUST ▼

Saturday 16th

VJ Open Day Celebration, Lest We Forget. The event runs from 12pm-5pm

Stalls, BBQ & more. All welcome!

OCTOBER ▼

Saturday 11th

The Surbiton Royal British Legion Youth Marching Band's 60th Anniversary Tattoo at Tolworth Recreation Centre, Fullers Way North, Tolworth.

An evening of marching band displays by six bands from all over the country.

Tickets will be available soon.

Visit www.surbitonrblband.com/60th-tattoo

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● The Brontës may not have visited Surbiton, but river road writer Sharon Wright (and co-author Ann Dinsdale of the Brontë Parsonage) knows where they did go. **Let Me In: The Brontës in Bricks and Mortar** (£25, Gt Northern Books) tours 40 places which shaped Charlotte, Emily and Anne's writing. The title echoes words from Cathy's ghost in Wuthering Heights.



Sharon Wright

This is simply a Brill picture

Surbiton station's shops have been immortalised in oil pastel, charcoal and marker pens by artist Fan Jiang, 21, joining Kingston Museum's Brill collection, a legacy project launched in 1955 to record everyday street scenes. The Kingston School of Art student told *The Good Life*: "The first place I came to when I arrived from China was Surbiton. I sat outside Caffè Nero, had a coffee and began sketching and doing initial doodles." Although her real passion is animation, creating the Surbiton picture has shifted her outlook. "This was more relaxing than staring at a screen," she said. "It's like meditation."

Unveiling three additions to the Brill collection, mayor Cllr Noel Hadjimichael said they "capture the beauty and artistry of the borough".

Commissioned by the Friends of Kingston Museum, the other new artworks celebrate the Hurricane factory in Canbury Park Road, Kingston, and Malden Manor's distinctive gasometers.



Fan Jiang

It's a tribute to the foresight of Reginald Brill, then head of Kingston School of Art, who had the idea for a painting archive. It now contains 120 works.

Tim Harrison

● After 12 years, Surbiton's Encore Choir says farewell to founding MD Charles MacDougall and welcomes Eleanor Rastall... a deputy for years. "Such a fun, friendly, colourful bunch!" she says, adding that she believes non-auditioned community choirs can be safe places to explore your voice and gently move out of your comfort zone to be part of something bigger. The choir rehearses in St Matthew's church, Mondays, 10am-noon, with accompanist Benedict Lewis-Smith. Pop in, email Liz at gillyvor@hotmail.com or follow Instagram @encoresurbiton



● Another successful Kingston International Film Festival included many slots for local filmmakers. First World War drama *The Fallow Few* (dir: JR Rappaport), and *Reawakening* by Virginia Gilbert were the pick of this year's 75 movies. KIFF 2026 runs June 4-7. You can even film on a mobile. Submit by mid-Jan. kiffest.uk



JR Rappaport, left, with KIFF founder David Cunningham

● Strictly legend Erin Boag starts six-week dance courses in Sept at Hollyfield school, Surbiton, and in Kingston. "There's a class for every level," says the ballroom star, who adds she can even teach those with two left feet. erinboag.com/classes

● Budding and established playwrights: the cornerHOUSE, Douglas Road, wants short plays (15 to 30 mins) for a week-long oneACTS festival in May next year. Deadline: Fri, Oct 31. thecornerhouse.org

● Surbiton artist Georgina Allen, below, showed a new selection of her landscapes, to critical acclaim, at London's Abbot and Holder gallery. @georginarallen



● A vintage Thames skiff, built in 1905 by Harts boatyard, Surbiton, was brought from Holland to the cornerHOUSE by Marcel Linssen, 59, below, for his talk on Harts to Surbiton Historical Soc.



● Thriller writer Nikki Smith is the BookBox speaker on Wed, July 16, at 8pm in the hall alongside St Mary's, Long Ditton. She'll chat about her new book, *They Had It Coming*. stmaryslongditton.org.uk

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ENCORE COMMUNITY CHOIR, SURBITON

We are a very friendly community choir meeting at 10am to noon on Mondays during term time at the lovely St. Matthew's Church, KT6 6JQ - with great acoustics!

No auditions. Pop in for a free taster or email Liz at gillyvor@hotmail.com

Free parking & 281, 406, 418 buses drop you at Fishponds. All welcome. It's a great way to start the week!

The Death of a Diva

A Mirthful Murder Mystery

8th July 8pm Folk Music night with the ROSIE HOOD BAND

Drama production by Kingston Adult Education 2nd & 9th July 2pm

the cornerHOUSE Community Arts Centre KT6 7SB

SEE WHAT'S ON scan the QR code!

12-13th July 2.30pm & 7pm

Southside Theatre Academy youth summer show

Disney Pixar FINDING NEMO

SLIM

Whole Lotta Comedy Support *Paul Kerenza *Mark Williams *Elaine Blackmore 26th July 8pm

● It's a good time to take to the water. Kingston Rowing Club runs junior rowing courses for 13-18s. No experience needed. Five-day sessions run weekly from July 21 at £300. Email kingstonlr@gmail.com. Also young adults and beginners.



● Looking for some fun with colleagues or mates? For a tenner apiece, up to eight can enjoy a two-hour bowls experience session on a Friday or Saturday night, with a free introduction to the game, at Tolworth's King George Field Indoor Bowls Club. Email kgfbc1971@outlook.com

Doubles, anyone?

Meet Luke and Cameron Gomes, 17-year-old twins and rising stars who competed in the first R3 Bullpadel Cup held at Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club. Losing the Surbiton Trophy tennis last year felt like a blow, but may prove a blessing in disguise as the world's fastest growing sport has adopted the venue. "It's addictive," said Luke, left, impressed by the club's five padel courts; three of them new.



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Why not try something different during the holidays?



Every Wednesday between noon and 4pm from 16 July to the end of August, families can try out bowls. Bring the children along and give it a go! There will be plenty of people to show you the ropes, too. All you need is smooth-soled shoes. We'll provide the bowls. £4 per person for 2 hours.

King George Field Indoor Bowls Club, Jubilee Way, Chessington KT9 1TR
020 8397 7025 www.kgfindoorbowlsclub.co.uk kgfbc1971@outlook.com

the past year to committing to the challenge of the marathon, his dedication, resilience, and determination have been nothing short of remarkable."



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