

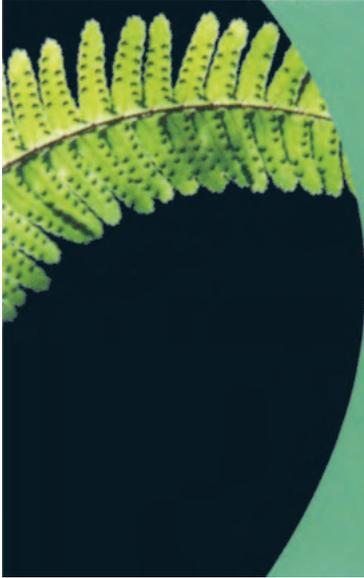
# THAMES DITTON — TODAY —

WINTER 2010



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

THE MAGAZINE OF THE THAMES DITTON AND WESTON GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



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# THAMES DITTON TODAY

The Magazine of the Thames Ditton and Weston Green  
Residents' Association

Winter 2010

Published quarterly since Spring 1970

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You are welcome to submit articles or images. Please contact the Editor well in advance of the next deadline on 1 February.

## Advertisers

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Cover photo: *Keith Evetts. Cyclamen hederifolium blooms from October through the Christmas season. It does very well in the garden around here, so plant out after Christmas rather than throwing them away. A spot shaded in summer, sunny in winter is good.*

[www.residents-association.com](http://www.residents-association.com)

Officers and staff of the Association are volunteers, but we must fund costs of this magazine, administrative and election expenses, and other expenses such as spring bulb-planting and the village Christmas tree. The subscription is only £3 per household. If you can contribute more, please do so. Subscriptions (in an envelope please) may be left at Boots Chemist, 14 High Street, or Thorkill Road Pharmacy, 94 Thorkill Road, Thames Ditton. Or mail to Membership Secretary Peter Haynes at 6 Onslow Gardens, Thames Ditton KT7 0JJ. Thank you.

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# THAMES DITTON & WESTON GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



## About the Association

Founded in 1934 our Association is a strong, locally based non-party-political organisation concerned with protecting the amenities and furthering the interests of the inhabitants of Thames Ditton and Weston Green. We work to preserve and enhance the best in our attractive environment and the quality of life of everyone in our community.

Through regular meetings, social activities, our magazine and website we keep in touch with residents' views and we raise and spend funds for the benefit of the community, from tree and bulb planting to contesting unacceptable development projects.

With five Residents' Councillors we have a strong voice on Elmbridge Council working with other residents' councillors to ensure that decisions are based on the needs of local communities and on good management rather than on party politics.

Our Residents' County Councillor Peter Hickman represents our views at Surrey County Council.

**President:** Maureen Sheldrick,  
34 The Woodlands, Esher

**Surrey County Councillor:**  
Peter Hickman, Little Lodge,  
Watts Road, Thames Ditton 020 8339 0931

## Thames Ditton Councillors

Sandra Dennis,  
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Ruth Lyon,  
11 Riversdale Road, Thames Ditton 020 8398 3396  
Karen Randolph,  
Deepfield, Giggs Hill Road,  
Thames Ditton 020 8398 5005

## Weston Green Councillors

Lorraine Sharp,  
168 Ember Lane, Esher 07970 874 925  
Tannia Shipley, 'Clinton House'  
27 Lower Green Road, Esher 020 8398 2484

## Officers:

Chairman: Libby MacIntyre,  
24, High Street, Thames Ditton 020 8398 5534  
Vice-Chairman: Martin Wilberforce,  
7 River Avenue, Thames Ditton 020 8398 4732  
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5 Station Rd, Thames Ditton 020 8398 3489  
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29 Station Rd., Thames Ditton 020 8339 0485  
Membership Secretary: Peter Haynes  
6 Onslow Gardens, Thames Ditton 02 8398 6019

## Conveners of Sub-Committees:

Health and Community:  
Karen Randolph (see above for details)  
Planning: Graham Cooke  
23 Ashley Road, Thames Ditton 020 8398 8509  
Highways, Drainage:  
Andrew Roberts, 1 Boyle Farm Road,  
Thames Ditton 020 8786 6882

---

**THE NEXT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION OPEN MEETING IS  
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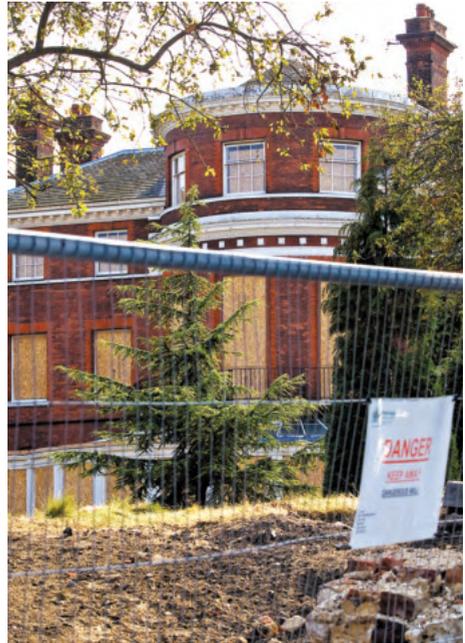


13 September – 18 November

## Home of Compassion

This important listed building has been the target of vandalism and repeated theft of materials during the two years it has remained unoccupied and boarded up, with garden unkempt, and the walling close to the river in a tumbledown state. Unsurprisingly it came to the notice of the serial squatters who last year occupied Ravens Ait and they seized possession of it over the weekend of 16/17 October. They attempted to justify the squat by the need for resident caretaking and by offering use of the premises for community activities, and tried to open negotiation with the owners, Caring Homes, to regularise their position.

The squatters appear to represent a miscellany of small ideologically or spiritually-motivated groups from anarchists to ecologists via various social concerns. Several of them have jobs and skills, and accommodation elsewhere, while others are said to be homeless. Their leaders presented their views with civility and intelligence which made an impression on residents who talked to them. However, there was widespread local condemnation of the unlawful means used to promote their ends, and cynicism when online squatters' manuals were found to advocate just the sort of PR campaigns to allay local suspicions which their leadership, clearly no stranger to media manipulation, was pursuing. Caring



Homes went to court and obtained a possession order, and the squatters were evicted peacefully on 18 November. Meanwhile the credibility of the squatters as self-styled 'caretakers' was put in doubt by parties at the Home that led to complaints about noise and antisocial behaviour from residents living nearby.

Despite the legal position quite a few residents took advantage of the squat's offer to tour the building and reported that its interior was in a poor state. The Home, formerly Boyle Farm, is close to the heart of Thames Ditton in every sense and there

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is a clear and legitimate public interest that these historic listed buildings be properly cared for. The Association's overriding concern is for the buildings' proper preservation both now and in the future, whoever is in ownership or occupation, and we have impressed that upon squatters and owners alike. Our officers and councillors have been in close touch with Elmbridge Borough Council whose officials have again visited the buildings. An excellent and robust letter has been addressed to Caring Homes by EBC's Head of Town Planning, detailing steps that must be taken urgently to inspect the building and remedy defects that currently render it vulnerable and at risk, and citing the local authority's powers to enforce works, which are considerable.

For their part, Caring Homes have reaffirmed in public that it remains their intention to develop the building as a commercial care home when financial circumstances permit. The most recent report and accounts of the parent company, Myriad Healthcare, show the company to be very substantially in debt.

Registered covenants on the property exercised by Boyle Farm Estate Ltd. restrict its use to a private dwelling house or a care home which may be either charitable or commercial. Elmbridge officials emphasise that with an ageing

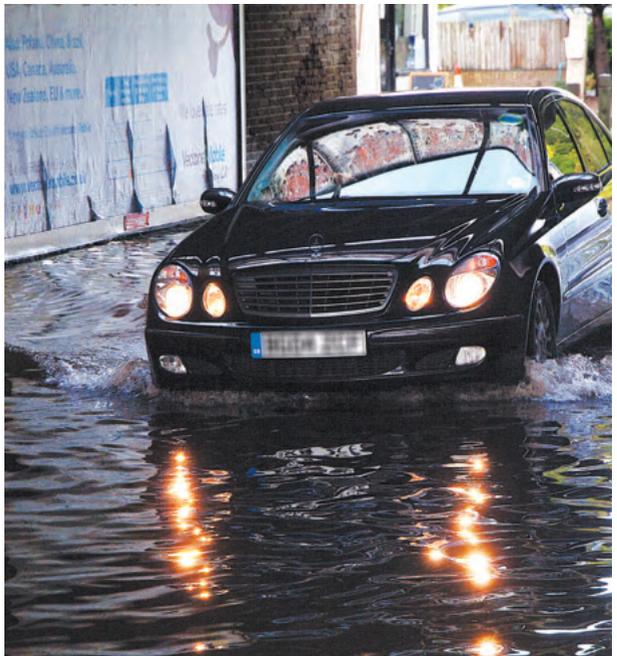
population in Surrey, there remains a priority need for such facilities in this part of Elmbridge.

The Association in liaison with the Council and with Boyle Farm residents will remain very closely engaged with the issue.

## **Floods and Drains**

Continued heavy lifting by the Association's councillors is making meaningful progress to resolve issues concerning Esher station flooding and, with Andrew Roberts our Highways convenor lending pressure on Thames Water and Network Rail, the 'lake' by Thames Ditton Infant School.

Following great pressure from Weston Green councillor Tannia Shipley and our county councillor Peter Hickman in the



*Esher station bridge*

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wake of two floods within five days in early October under Esher station bridge, Surrey Highways finally conceded that their remaining action point on the extensive 2-mile system of drains, ditches and culverts that contribute to the draining around Esher station really had to be done as a matter of urgency. SCC official Carol Walker found some funding, and the substantial culvert under the Long Arch bridge – a large Victorian affair completely blocked for ages – was finally cleared out manually with subsequent jetting of the part under the road. We're not saying that this "will solve the problem," but it is a major step that has taken an enormous amount of effort by Tannia and Peter to get officials to take. SCC have also been clearing the ditches again along Station Road Weston Green – it requires continuing toil to get action on regular maintenance as well as the occasional unblocking 'spectacular.'

As for the 'lake' in Speer Road by the Infants' School: Andrew Roberts' persistent pressure on Network Rail and Thames Water has resulted in both those organisations agreeing to schedule works urgently on the sewer and culvert that form part of the onward drainage system. Thames Water scheduled the clearing of their sewer for Friday 12 November but as yet we have no confirmation the job was done. Network Rail are applying for funding and hope to clear their culvert in January. Peter reports that Carol has again managed to find some funding and raised a works order to clear their part of the existing drainage system when Thames Water have cleared their sewer, and to dig and install a new drain and gully from a point near the end of Church Walk (the

low point where the lake forms) to the central sewer in Speer Road.

Our thanks to Carol for her positive response on these matters and we hope that finally the job will be done very soon.

## **Imber Court**

The non-profit-making Metropolitan Police Sports Club has nurtured and serviced sports facilities at Imber Court for 80 years, ploughing all revenues back into the club and grounds. It is an important and valued sporting facility for the local community and amateur sports clubs in this area as well as the Metropolitan Police. However, its future is uncertain following systematic pressure from the Metropolitan Police Authority to force it to sign a short lease on commercial terms without the right to renew. The Club's legal advisers have advised against so signing away the Club's rights established by charitable custom and practice. The MPA has countered by serving writs for costs on the Club's committee.

Some have inferred that the Metropolitan Police's actions may stem from a wish to clear the way for eventual sale of lands at Imber Court. On three occasions in the past five years the MPA has applied to change the status of these lands from Green Belt to land suitable for housing development. This causes concern both among the many users of the Club's sporting facilities in the local community and among residents who wish to preserve the Green Belt. We have therefore been keeping a very close eye on the position. Councillor Tannia Shipley reports from Elmbridge's Head of Planning that the Council has no plan to

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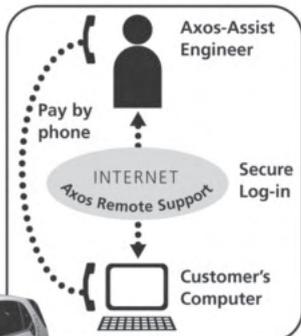
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change Imber Court's status in the draft 'Core Strategy' paper on the Borough's housing needs until 2026. This document is expected to be approved by the Secretary of State in a few months.

The working conclusion is that the future of the Green Belt at Imber Court remains under a potential threat, but that this is some years away from coming to a head.

## **Parking consultation**

Surrey's long-postponed statutory consultation with the public on their parking proposals for Thames Ditton (including areas east of the Portsmouth Road) is now expected to take place towards the end of December. The proposals mainly consist of yellow lines to prevent obstruction at known choke-points; curfew parking along one side of Basingfield Road; a passing-place in the High Street and another along Watts Road at the junction with Linden Close; and eight short-term shopper bays in the High Street with a few more along Summer Road. The only remaining point which seems very controversial is Surrey's proposal to make the shopper bays Pay and Display, with ticket machines. This is unnecessary and counter-productive. The system without machines at Winter's Bridge works very well. It is hoped that in responding to the eventual consultation, residents will resist that aspect of the proposals. Keep an eye on our website and notice-boards for further news.

## **Albany Reach**

Council officials presented the results of their second trial without litter bins at our Open Meeting of 9 November. Their

preference was for the Reach to remain without bins. After a wide discussion with arguments on both sides, those present voted by a clear majority for bins to be reinstated. This had earlier been the unanimous view of the Association's Executive too. The officials conceded that bins would be replaced along the Reach. Their precise type and location would be for further consideration. There would also be consideration of improved signage. There was discussion of overnight camping by anglers. Representatives of the local angling groups made constructive suggestions and the Council officials will look at better enforcement of the existing by-law forbidding the erection of tents. A representative of Surbiton anglers pointed to Broadwater Lake in Godalming as an example of a carp-fishing venue where this had been achieved and shelter limited to umbrellas. Officials will investigate.

The constructive engagement of the Thames Angling Conservancy, representatives of which have also been visiting the reach in the warmer months to remove litter, flotsam and jetsam, was welcomed. It has become clear that much of the litter is left along the Reach by inconsiderate youths and picnickers – who with the bins removed have had nowhere to leave their litter.

## **Planning**

The proposal to build on land at 15 Queens Drive was unanimously rejected by Elmbridge's East Area Planning Committee on 8 November. Among reasons given by the Committee were that the building proposed was too big, out of keeping, and involved "garden grabbing."

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Two residents working with the owners of **29-31 High Street** have outlined proposals for a development of those two buildings to provide up to four retail units and seven studio flats in an attractive mews-style development. They broached these ideas at an Open Meeting and are submitting plans to Elmbridge. An element of their thinking, which has generally been welcomed by residents, is to open up a path from Ashley Road car park to Hawkes Yard. Elmbridge's planning officers will consider the plans against the previous reasons for rejecting earlier, separate plans for the two buildings which were higher in aspect, more developed and with reduced ground-floor retail space.

The developers of the **old Harrow** site have submitted yet another application which shuffles around some proposed features but still does not address the real issues of scale, mass and an overbearing aspect abutting the Green Belt of Weston Green which led to Inspectors upholding Elmbridge's refusal of permission. Residents are therefore maintaining their objections. Government Planning Policy is about to change, which will prevent developers constantly going to appeal to take decision making away from local neighbourhoods. The outcome for this site will set a precedent for future local development nearby and it is important that it meets legitimate planning concerns.

Following Elmbridge's refusal of yet another application to change use of one of our village shops, at **71 High Street**, to residential flats, the landlord is appealing against the decision. The loss of the small shops which keep alive the High Street

and prevent it becoming a soulless mix of dormitory and offices was precipitous, until about 20 years ago a local schoolgirl wrote a seminal piece of research in *Thames Ditton Today*. The Residents' Association and its councillors have since taken a very strong line of resistance to this insidious and irretrievable loss of retail space.

The refurbished flats in the 1970s institutional wing at The Newlands, formerly for the elderly, are now on the market without similar restriction. Cllr. Tannia Shipley, who over the past several months has thoroughly delved into the planning and other history of the buildings at **The Newlands**, reports that the planning permission granted in 1970 for the erection of 2 extensions to the listed building, to provide 38 flatlets for the elderly, was subject to a number of conditions. The second condition was personal to the applicant – Esher Rotary Housing Association – and stated that 'this permission shall endure solely for the benefit of the present applicants'. The matter was not re-examined nor was a new permission issued, personal or otherwise, by the Planning Staff of the day when the Rosemary Simmons Memorial Housing Association Ltd took on the buildings with continuing provision for the elderly some 34 years ago. The original condition, having been technically breached for such a long period, has thus become defunct and Elmbridge Borough Council cannot enforce it.

Plans to overdevelop land behind the off-licence at **96 Thorhill Road** have met with considerable resistance. The

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Association supports the many local residents objecting to proposals judged inappropriate and out of keeping with the situation.

## Christmas Lights

Approved by members at our Open Meeting, the Association will match some funding from Surrey in the shape of Peter Hickman's local SCC allowance for minor works, and make available an interest-free loan, so that power can be supplied to Thames Ditton's Octagon and proper lights installed on the lime tree for the festive season. The all-up cost is likely to be of the order of £4,000. The aim is to brighten the place up and support our small shops who keep the heart of the village beating.

With retailers, the Association is mounting a fundraising campaign to repay the loan. You'll see posters and collecting tins in the shops for your change, and we're planning a series of fun events in the village starting with the Fair and continuing throughout next Spring and Summer. We hope that residents will get involved and be as generous as they can be in donating to the appeal. Let's light up the tree!

The **Christmas Fair** will be at 6 p.m. on Wednesday 8 December.

The Friends of Thames Ditton Hospital are putting on Charles Court Opera's **Christmas Pantomime "Robin Hood"** on Saturday 15 January at the Vera Fletcher Hall in aid of the Thames Ditton



*Alice, Tricia and Heidi Bland rattle tins outside the George to raise money for the lights. Who could resist! (photo by Blands).*

Hospital Appeal. Young professional singers described as a “spunky little troupe” by *Opera Now* return with another smash hit which *Time Out Critics* rated as four star entertainment. Tickets including a 3 course dinner are £32 from Karen Randolph on 020 8398 5005.

And finally: a **Merry Christmas** to all our readers. May the New Year usher in brighter times ahead for the nation, and in particular for this delightful corner of England.

**[www.residents-association.com](http://www.residents-association.com)**

---

# The Big Christmas Shop

– in little Thames Ditton



We've all been there. You're in the car drumming your fingers on the wheel as you sit waiting in the queue that stretches for the whole three miles from Thames Ditton to Kingston. Or you're struggling through central London futilely trying to force your way through the Christmas crowds towards Harrods to buy goodies for your family and friends, only to return on the Tube crushed between other fraying shoppers, giving up the hunt for the perfect gift, defeated without the slightest hint of a warm, festive feeling.



*time to put my feet up... (photo by Claudia)*

What people don't realise is that these winter-time traumas could be avoided simply by doing their shopping locally and that actually, the local high-street is abundant in gift opportunities, as well as proffering a much more pleasant shopping experience overall. Why wait around in traffic jams, only to give up after an hour and return home, when you could do it all locally, so that instead of being stuck in the jams, you can walk past them and laugh?

Believe it or not, this cosy little village and the closely surrounding areas can prove particularly fruitful in the lead up to Christmas. The high-street Christmas hot spots include Stitchery, which sells all manner of trinkets and gifts perfect for

Christmas, including individual gourmet chocolates which you can choose yourself to create a personal box of chocolates for somebody. A gift much more appreciated than just a box of your standard branded chocolates you could pick up in any supermarket.

Bradley and Brown, with a shop in Thames Ditton and another in Bridge Road, Hampton Court, is also a brilliant place for buying imaginative and artistic gifts ideal for Christmas. This is perhaps the most wonderful thing about shopping for presents locally: the individuality of all the shops and the gifts you can find in them, whereas just opting for one of the larger shopping centres and towns does not leave much room for creativity in

---

your gift-giving, and everybody ends up just buying the same generic presents from chain stores. Don't forget too that buying all of your presents from those chains means that your money is only going to the larger companies with their expensive displays and advertising, and not to smaller businesses which keep your local high-street alive.

For presents with character and a story behind them, Ember Antiques boasts some beautiful antiques of all varieties, which would make a change from the usual book or DVD. The jewellers, Assimi, also on Thames Ditton high-street is a rather obvious go-to for Christmas presents if you're buying for a female relative or friend. It has a beautiful array of fine, hand-crafted jewellery from a silversmith who's made things for the Queen. So you don't need to go further than the village to buy top jewellery for

your special someone. Or even... yourself!

The gift shops and the jewellers are the obvious places to buy presents, and rightly so; however don't be tempted to just opt for the obvious, as there are many shops which would not typically be seen as great Christmas shopping opportunities. In fact, you'd be surprised. Take the Thames Ditton Boots pharmacy for example, not an obvious one, but actually it's a great place to buy girly stocking fillers and small gifts like hair and skin-care products and make-up. There are also great deals on items like these, especially around Christmas, so don't be fooled into thinking that your local pharmacy is only good for picking up cold and flu remedies at this time of the year!

Adiva, the Thames Ditton boutique, sells some lovely clothes and accessories that would earn some brownie points from a wife or female family member – and take note of this one, because it's one of the very, very few clothes shops in the area without venturing into Kingston.

Aside from presents for family and friends, the non-human family members must not be forgotten, and Thames Ditton animal lovers can treat their pampered pets to a Christmas gift from Beech House Veterinary Centre in Weston Green.

If we're talking Christmas shopping, this doesn't just cover gifts, but also Christmas provisions: food and drink. After



photo by Claudia



*divine treats from Bachmanns*

all, what would Christmas be without them?

A great place for Christmas essentials is Bachmann's Patisserie in Portsmouth Road. Bachmann's is brilliant all year round, but at Christmas it really is something special. Indulgent chocolate creations and one-of-a-kind seasonal cakes...absolutely essential to Christmas and I doubt anyone would deny it! Not only is this wonderful Christmas food to share with your family on the Big Day, but again, this is a fine place to buy really special chocolates to give as gourmet gifts which will be greatly appreciated by a lucky someone – more so than your average supermarket brand of chocolates too, because average, these desserts are not.

You can get fine cheeses and other treats in the Lime Tree deli, and you

won't be buying green and unripe Christmas fruit and veg from the supermarket, will you?! Just phone the Secret Garden, and they will put up a box of good stuff from the market and deliver it.

If you can't meet your needs in Thames Ditton or Weston Green, then Hampton Court, only a 15 minute walk, can provide shops such as a butchers and more high-class boutiques, while if you want to buy a bicycle for your offspring there is the new cycle shop at the Marina on Portsmouth Road.

And there you have it. You don't need to travel far and wide to get all of your Christmas gifts.

Obviously, there are some things we lack such as shops selling media products and of course toy shops. So sadly, there will still be some fighting your way through Christmas crowds in the city centre or waiting in queues driving to larger towns.

You really can get so much more here than you'd think. If you take the time to look in some of the smaller, more inconspicuous shops around you, and show a little imagination, you will find excellent gift opportunities. Just think how sad the village would be if there were no shops in it! You can fix that. Have more fun, get less fraught - and help to keep local shops alive.

Merry Christmas!

***Claudia Woolley***

*Claudia lives in Thames Ditton and is in her gap year between Esher College and reading English and Philosophy at University.*

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# Sold out, sold on

## – Thames Ditton’s Cottage Hospital



Thames Ditton’s former Cottage Hospital, forlorn and shuttered for the past two years, is up for sale. It was founded and funded by these villages, nationalised as part of the new National Health Service in 1948, and in the heart of many residents it belongs to this community. Its ownership is in the hands of the Kingston Primary Care Trust. There’s little we can do to influence its sale, but the Residents’ Association will press for any authorised development to include at least some provision for local community use.

Victorian times saw great progress in setting up proper local administration, public health services and health care. Here, between 1877 and 1885 villagers collected £500 to rent a small cottage near The Elms on Weston Green Road, which became our cottage hospital. When the lease expired a new hospital was built at its present location on the same road for twice that amount. Hannibal Speer granted the land, local architect Arthur Style designed the building and local builder E J Callingham built it. Officially opened in 1893, new wards and rooms for nurses were added over the next thirty years as adjoining cottages were acquired. All this depended on public-spirited fundraising by residents. They also raised money to pay for the installation of a wireless for patients and, by 1939, X-ray equipment.

Meanwhile Esher and The Dittons Urban District Council was established in

1895. Its first Public Health Officer was Thames Ditton resident Dr. Arthur Senior, who retained the post for forty years. During that period Thames Ditton Cottage Hospital prospered in the service of the local community. Patients came from Esher, Long Ditton and Claygate as well as Thames Ditton and Weston Green. In the war the hospital was very busy – notably when a flying bomb fell on Imber Court during a sports event, killing forty and wounding another hundred. It was well staffed and there were excellent surgeons and physicians available, including a good anaesthetist who lived conveniently nearby – Dr. George Tickler. After the war it was carrying out 300-400 operations a year and was still very much ‘our’ hospital.

When the National Health Service was established in 1948 the cottage hospital was nationalised. Local people remained committed to support their local hospital; but from that time on, then as now, the centralised NHS bureaucracy failed to do likewise. In the early 1950s the old operating theatre needed replacing. The Regional Board wouldn’t fund it, because the hospital was small and close to Kingston Hospital. The redoubtable Matron got the Brownies to start an appeal, and then in 1955 the Friends of Thames Ditton Hospital were established, raised £4000, and with services volunteered by a local architect and surveyor the new operating theatre was up and running three years later.



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The Friends bought an ECG machine and a top heart specialist was available locally.

By 1962 the fight to save our hospital had begun, after it became clear that the NHS had no long term intention to fund it. In 1968 the local community offered £20,000 to pay for an additional 16 beds but the Regional Board rejected the offer. 1974 saw assurances that our cottage hospital would not be closed and denials that there had ever been any official plans to do so. In 1976, the Community Health Council (on which three residents' representatives served) voted that the hospital should continue to practise general surgery. Sandra Lewis, a resident and a qualified nurse, recalls that "the hospital was extremely good and the standard of care was outstanding. The anaesthetist could be called out at two minutes' notice to enable operations. There were several good surgeons and GPs who centred their work on the hospital."

In 1978 the Chairman of the Area Health Authority, Dorothy Barrett, gave a categorical assurance that there was "no intention whatever within the foreseeable future of closing Thames Ditton Hospital." However, as you will have foreseen, a few years later the Authority planned to close it, despite the pleas of GPs who were unanimous that the Cottage Hospital offered very high standards of care, and fulfilled a function that would not be replaced by new arrangements.

The Residents' Association raised £2000 towards a campaign fund. In the ensuing campaign the village team fielded 8 members with a budget of £5000 in voluntary donations, against an organisation with an annual budget of £3m and thousands

of civil servants. In 1985 the battle for the hospital was lost on the casting vote of the Esher Community Health Council Chairman Jennifer Butterworth. A resident who attended wrote in Thames Ditton Today: "It was a disgrace."

The NHS finally closed the hospital in 1986. A year later it opened as the carefully-named Weston Green Resource Centre, for the mentally handicapped in the district with learning or social difficulties. And the rest you know. We managed to get Surrey's health authorities to support a new community hospital on the former Milk Marketing Board site and in 1997 Emberbrook opened, with the George Tickler wing equipped and staffed to provide up to 14 beds for short-term intermediate care to be funded by the NHS. But by 2001 the NHS were funding only 4 of those beds and in the past three years, they have funded none – and this at a time when we are being told that acute hospital beds are being occupied by patients who ought to be in local community hospitals.

We won't get our cottage hospital back, nor will the proceeds of its sale bring direct advantage to the community that paid for it; but we'll certainly see whether planning permission can be contingent on some community use. And we will ensure that local history faithfully records not only the good who gave their time and money to set up and support this fine village institution, but those who sold it short.

***Karen Randolph***

*One of our hard-working councillors, Karen is also Chair of the Hospital Friends, the Association's Convenor on Health and Community, and heads the cross-party group Save Our Surrey Hospitals. Keith Evetts furnished some historical background.*

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# Snow-free Paths



*Watts Road in the snow*

The Metropolitan Paving Act 1817 (repealed in 1891) required householders to clear snow outside their frontage. In several European countries you're required by law to do this, and people do. It was also the custom in the UK, but the British public stopped doing it after the sixties. Many people end up in A&E as a consequence. Perhaps I should not complain as a Doctor of Chiropractic, but

last year I started campaigning to get people to clear snow from their footpaths, with the help of the Residents Association.

One reason people weren't clearing snow was worry that they might be sued in some way if others had accidents. I contacted Surrey County Council, who confirmed there was no legal reason for

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concern. They have now put detailed information on their website about what people can and should do in the event of snow. They note: “It is very unlikely that you would face any legal liability, as long as you are careful, and use common sense to ensure that you do not make the pavement or pathway clearly more dangerous than before. People using areas affected by snow and ice also have responsibility to be careful themselves.”



*if Isabelle can do it so can you  
– photo by Richard*

Earlier this year I suggested setting up self-help groups for clearing pavements. Each would have a coordinating ‘Snowman’ who would hold a proper snow shovel for group use. I’ve established such a group in my road, Lime Tree Avenue, where all residents have committed to keep our footpath clear of snow and ice this winter. The Residents’ Association has contacted residents and shop-owners in the most trodden roads of Thames Ditton & Weston Green to establish Snowman-led groups. The response has been generally positive, and several groups each up to 12 households covering 200 yards of pavement have been set up.

The Association has funded the purchase of a robust snow-shovel for each Snowman to hold. As we extend the scheme to other roads we would need to find funds for more. Contact me or Peter Haynes, the Association’s Membership Secretary, if you’d be prepared to help - see end of this article. When it snows, other parts of these villages will see the

benefits to our community and support this simple neighbourly initiative and, well, it should snowball.

If you’re not in a group, then please clear snow from your frontage anyway. It is not difficult to remove it while it’s fresh: a coarse brush is all you need to clear an inch of snow. I was not in the country when the first snow fell this year and my partner Janette and six year old daughter Isabelle easily cleared the snow and spread rock salt on our path. The key is to get to it before it’s been trodden down. Don’t use hot water! It will turn to ice very quickly. Ideally you would put rock salt on the area you have cleared as it will melt ice and prevent it refreezing for a few days. Table salt will do fine but it’s an expensive way of doing it.

Which leads us to the question of salt-grit. There are just three Council bins in our area, from which residents may take grit to keep the public paths clear:

- 
- ◆ Summer Road east of the level crossing
  - ◆ Weston Green Road outside Esher College
  - ◆ Lynwood Road, near the roundabout at the entrance to the Lynwood estate.

When I contacted Surrey County Council in February, they said they would supply more official salt bins. But lately they have said they will do this only if we pay £2,500 up front per bin, for ten years, one fill a year! They also forbid us to put any bins we might buy anywhere on the public highway. So you can see that despite their public relations statements

about snow-clearing and engaging residents, they're not really going to be much help to us. I was able to purchase a 200 litre grit bin myself for £89 (a bin twice that size costs £124). To fill it once costs around £40. For ten years, the all-up retail cost would be roughly £550 per bin while Surrey want five times as much for their contractors – which won't surprise any of you who follow how Surrey spends our taxes. If you don't want to buy a bin, you can get a 25kg bag of salt-grit locally (for example, from Halls in Hinchley Wood) for about a fiver if you see that heavy snow is forecast. It will do for about 50 yards of a six feet wide path you've cleared.



*fun for some, danger for others*

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If things go well, we'll be looking to tap funds from the "Big Society" initiative, and we'll see whether the government puts its money where its mouth is.

Young children do not understand why adults can't have fun while clearing snow off paths. As one of the Parent Governors at Thames Ditton Infants School, I was delighted when this campaign was adopted for their "Community Cohesion" policy, and I look forward to visiting the school and explaining to the children how they and their parents can keep their foot path clear of snow and ice this winter and help neighbours who may not be able to do it themselves. So to avoid being reproached by your six-year-old, get out there!

***Richard Lanigan***

*Peter adds:*

In addition to the groups, we're enlisting some dedicated 'Flying Snowmen' to deal with the areas of pavement where there are no adjacent houses. The idea is to lend them a manual snowplough (we have one to try out). Volunteers for this duty are welcome.

The emphasis in all this is self-help and neighbourhood pride. The Residents' Association and its volunteers are happy

to act as a framework and assist in getting it off the ground. Ultimately it's up to groups of neighbours to keep their pavements accessible and safe during the winter. It can also be sociable: perhaps some mulled restorative after the job?

Neighbourliness is not only about clearing snow. If snow and ice linger, your elderly, infirm or other vulnerable neighbours may not be able to get to the shops, or pharmacies. Spare a thought for them, check that they're all right, and see if you can help in small but essential ways.

***Peter Haynes***

Contact:

Richard Lanigan 020 8398 0091

Peter Haynes 020 8398 6019 (Residents' Association Membership Secretary)

Facebook group:

Snow Free Footpath For Surrey

Surrey County Council website: [www.surreycc.gov.uk](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk) (search for "Frequently asked questions about pavements")

When there's snow imminent our website carries information on things like salt availability and official driving tips:

**[www.residents-association.com](http://www.residents-association.com)**

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**and finally...**

We would like to wish you all a very **Happy Christmas** and extend our very best wishes for the New Year.



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# Know Your Residents' Councillors

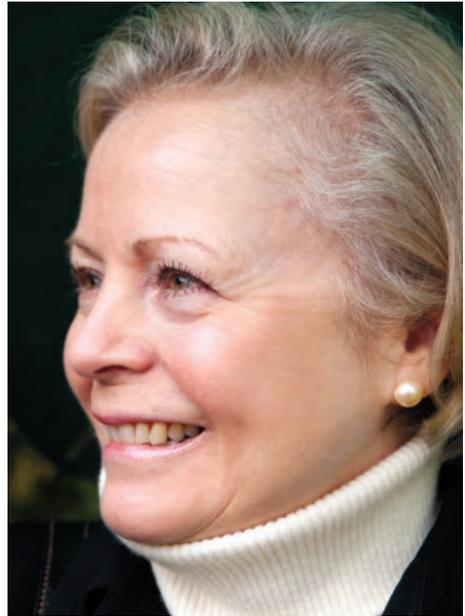
– Tannia Shipley



When Tannia Shipley first stood for election as RA Councillor in 1999 she narrowly won by 60 votes. In 2007, the last time she stood, she swept in with a majority of 339. You can see why: Tannia is a 'doer.' She cuts an elegant figure, but she isn't afraid of rolling up her sleeves and getting her hands dirty, metaphorically speaking, if that's what it takes to get a community job done.

Take the drains for example: we're all aware of the flooding problems which affect Esher Station and elsewhere in the ward. There's a reason why Tannia has been described as the 'drains lady:' she's one of the first to get her Wellington boots on when needed. *"We have to be extremely vigilant about keeping the culverts open – many people don't realise that our forefathers built ditches all over Weston Green, many in back gardens, to keep flooding at bay. The area was known as Ditton Marsh in those days. As the strain on the drains continues, we constantly have to keep an eye on the situation and be ready to act, alerting the appropriate services whenever there's a serious downpour."*

When asked how she sees her role as Councillor, Tannia's answer is uncompromising: "to do my best to represent everyone in the ward. As a Residents' Councillor I'm independent, and not confined by the dogma of national politics – there's no place for that at a



*at Remembrance Sunday 2010, All Saints*

local level – it's all about providing local solutions to local problems." Tannia is a classic 'people person.' She makes herself available to residents, day and night, always on the end of a phone and 'on call' at weekends in times of emergency, and loves talking to them. It's how she keeps tabs on what's really happening in the ward – and not just at election times. One year she and her shipbroker husband Nigel were hosting a New Year's Eve party when she got a call around half past ten about flooding. Without hesitation she made apologies to her guests, pulled her mac over her party frock and disappeared



*you'll often find Tannia working on the commons with other volunteers*

into the night to investigate. The problem was resolved in the New Year after successful meetings with officials and local residents.

Tannia, a former teacher and Head of House at a comprehensive, has lived in Weston Green for 25 years and loves every inch of the place. But it's a constant fight to preserve this beautiful corner of Elmbridge with its commons, woodland and ancient ponds. Planning takes up a lot of her time. She stresses she's not against development *per se*: 'We have to be forward thinking, but development must be appropriate and we have to preserve our special places.'

Conserving the environment is crucial to this. Tannia takes very seriously her role as a custodian of the Commons,

particularly Ditton Common: they need careful managing. She also takes a special interest in Marney's and Milbourne Ponds which need regular TLC. But it's in the care of the vulnerable and elderly that Tannia's real strength lies. *"Because I've been a Councillor for many years I know what doors to knock on, being a conduit, knowing who to call upon to get things done. This is the part of the job that I love, making contact with people. The most important lesson I've learned in my 11 years as Councillor is that it's important to listen to people, to have an open mind."*

Tannia estimates she spends 25-30 hours a week on Council duties which also embrace her role as Chairman of the R.C. Sherriff Trust, being a Trustee of the Elmbridge Trust for Older People which links in to her role on Elmbridge Older People's Advisory Body, plus an active role within CHEER (Concern and Help for East Elmbridge Retired). It all adds up to around 120 meetings a year to add to the many days she spends out there on the ground.

She's well aware that the future is likely to prove even more challenging. *"In these uncertain times my mission is to fight as hard as I can to preserve front line services, especially for the elderly and the vulnerable, and to preserve our special places. But it's a battle I'm geared up for."* Spoken like a sterling Residents' Councillor, and not a politician. From her record and from the light in her eye, you know that Tannia means it.

***Tricia Bland***

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# Thames Ditton Centre

## – how’s it going?



In April, we were all a little anxious about our move, after eighteen years, from the Vera Fletcher Hall to the newly refurbished Thames Ditton Hall. It’s now nearly six months since our launch party and we’re enjoying the new building very much. Our objective is to keep members happy, healthy and involved, for a very low charge. Here are a few thoughts to ponder if you’re retired, or care for an older person.

**Use it or lose it** – whether you’re 95 or 25 if you don’t use your full range of movements, you’ll quickly stiffen up. You won’t notice until you need to reach that vase on a high shelf or have to do up a tricky zip in a new dress. At the centre we’re offering a chair-based exercise class for £1. Nicky Wills, our trainer is specially trained to promote mobility and build strength in the bodies of all levels of fitness. The classes are particularly useful if you’ve recently had surgery or have been ill – you’ll soon feel the benefits. We also run multilevel yoga lessons on Thursday afternoons and Tai Chi on Monday afternoons, for a fiver.

**Laughter** really is the best medicine and whatever the activity, boy we have a lot of fun! Last month Nathan attempted to teach the members how to make



*“Gramps,” model for the Art Class & darlin’ of the ladies.*

balloon models . Marjorie came close to making a very presentable poodle before it was sabotaged, while Rhoda was very disappointed with a swan which looked more like a coat hanger – no one will be giving up their day job, but everyone went away smiling.

**Learn something new** – stimulating the grey cells helps to keep you alert and gives you something to talk about. The Centre offers one – to – one computer lessons on Mondays. The Art and Bridge classes have been expanding lately, and

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we've all learned new skills from speakers at the Centre. Back in September, Premier Wines came in to teach the members the basics of wine appreciation. Their expert brought the subject to life and, after sampling some really excellent New World reds and whites, members went home with that rosy glow which comes from – I must emphasise – the satisfaction of a new skill learnt.

**Stay social** – results of a recent study that followed a group of older people over a thirty year period showed that having no friends was more damaging to your health and longevity than obesity or physical inactivity. Last year, “Pam” came to the centre for the first time with her daughter, who'd come to visit from Australia and was really shocked by how isolated her Mum had become. For the next three weeks the two ladies came to the centre together and quickly realised that two of Pam's cousins were members. Before her daughter left, Pam was going on shopping trips with them and was being welcomed into a whole new circle of friends and family. She hasn't looked back.

**Eat well, drink well** – sometimes the more elderly and the single don't cook proper meals for themselves. We offer a nice (and sociable) three course meal for £3.25 and a packed tea to take away for £2.50. We're also constantly reminding the members to drink plenty. It's very easy for older people to get dehydrated, which can cause temporary memory loss, falls and confusion. Once dehydrated, we are more susceptible to kidney and urinary tract infections which can lead to – guest what – more temporary memory

loss, falls and confusion. We try to drink a glass of water with each meal, and there's free tea or coffee.

So if you or your nearest might think about joining, do drop by the Centre on a Monday or Thursday and see for yourself. Bring this magazine for a free tea or coffee. It's in Thames Ditton Hall just by the Library off Watts Road, and we'd love to see you there.

***Helen Hewitt***

*The Centre is for the over 50's. Membership (if you're an Elmbridge resident) is only £8 per year. If you're not old enough yet, be a volunteer! An active group of volunteers arranges interesting outings. Tel: 0208 398 5921 (Mon & Thurs only). There's also a Children's Centre there on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings.*

**Monday Activities:**

*Gentle Chair Based Yoga 11-11.45pm  
£2 per session.*

*Beginners Computer Club 11-1pm £24*

*Bridge Club 1.45-4pm £1 includes tea and biscuits. Friendly!*

*Tai Chi 2.45-4pm Cost: £5 gentle oriental discipline, core strength and balance.*

*Games 1.30-2.30pm:*

*Bingo (First Monday of each month)*

*Boccia (Second Monday of each month) –  
A cross between Indoor Bowls and Boule –  
game of strategy and skill can be played by  
anyone on a chair.*

*Team Quiz (Third Monday of each month)*

**Thursday Activities:**

*Art Class 10.30am-12pm Cost: £2.50*

*Gentle Yoga 2.45-4pm Cost £5*

*Hand Care 10.30am-2.30pm Cost: £1*

*Thursday Afternoon Entertainment: singers,  
musicians, speakers, outings and activities*

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# Indian Ring-necked Parakeets

– which side of the divide?



*native of Thames Ditton – who’s a pretty boy?*

We all (if we are of a certain age) remember the Monty Python dead parrot joke. Parrots used to be only the subject of jokes or perhaps the bird in a cage at home which repeated to visitors all the things you wished it hadn’t heard. Parakeets, as members of the parrot family, were seen as exotic birds with their homes far away in the East but as long ago as 1857 in Dorking a local stationmaster (yes – they used to have these in those days) saw and shot a ring-necked parakeet.

They are bright, alert and can learn to talk to some extent but even those bred in captivity need “ongoing obedience-training” to remain tame. In Victorian times they were popular cage birds but many escaped or were released into the wild. In recent years they have spread from their native Himalayas to Surrey and further afield. There is a story that our own Surrey parakeets descend from birds who escaped from the film-set of *The African Queen* at Isleworth.

The local papers a few years ago were full of the Esher Rugby Club colony but the thousands of parakeets which nested there soon got tired of watching rugby each week-end and moved off when the poplars were cut back – probably to a garden near you, where there are plenty of seeds, berries, fruits and nuts. They have now reached Wales and the Scottish borders and bird lovers are divided on whether they are a good thing or simply a pest, taking over other birds’ nests. Described by the London Wildlife Trust as “as British as curry,” they are the UK’s only naturalised parrot, large, long-tailed and green with a red beak. Males have a prominent pink and black ring around face and neck, which in females is paler or absent.

In flight they are beautiful birds with their long streaming tails, but their noisy chattering and annoying partiality to horse chestnut and camellia buds has not

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*bright visitors to cheer Church Walk in frosty winter – or pests to be exterminated?*

endeared them to gardeners. Parakeets can live to 15 years, touchingly mate for life and are prolific breeders so we will have to get used to them. They were protected in the wild under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, but from this year they may be shot without a licence if they are a pest. Fruit farmers especially are worried, since the birds love raiding ripening crops and parakeets have few predators – really

only sparrowhawks and goshawks; and their gregarious habit gives them protection through safety in numbers.

Opinions therefore are divided and I wonder what readers of Thames Ditton Today think – are they a welcome exotic addition to our bird population or simply a menace?

***John Lyon***

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### **ROBIN HOOD**

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Saturday 15 January 7.00 for 7.30pm

### **ROBIN HOOD**

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*Charles Court Opera return in style with some of the UK's best young operatic talent.*

*Tickets including 3 course supper in aid of the Thames Ditton Hospital Appeal £32 from Karen Randolph 020 8398 5005.*

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Saturday 19 February 8.00 pm

### **THE LONDON MOZART TRIO**

*Colin Stone (piano), Krzysztof Smetana (violin) and Sagi Hartov (cello).*

*Three outstanding world class musicians play Rachmaninov's Elegiaque Trio No.1, Schubert's Piano Trio No. 1 and Martinu's Piano Trio No. 2*

Tickets £11 (under 16 years free)

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Sunday 13 March 7.30 pm

### **ASTRAEUS SAXOPHONE QUARTET**

*Francesca Reich Yasmin Ogilvie  
Ben Capon Emma Cross*

*Prize winning young musicians play classic and modern works including Jonathan Dove, Nigel Wood and Eugene Bozza  
Tickets £9 (under 16 years free)  
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Friday 18 March 8.00 pm

**Cabaret Now presents Andrew Brewis in  
COCKTAILS AND LAUGHTER**

*Andrew Brewis from the Ritz, the Savoy, the Ivy celebrates with words and music the bitter sweet world of Noel Coward.  
Tickets £10*

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Friday 25th March 8.00 pm

**Chamber Concert  
MARK BEBBINGTON (piano) and  
THE CAVALERI QUARTET  
(formerly the Harpham Quartet)**

*Anna Harpham (violin) Ciaran McCabe (violin)  
Ann Beilby (viola) and Rowena Calvert (cello).  
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The Cavaleri Quartet are formidable talent, with recent performances at the Wigmore Hall and the Rachmaninov Hall, Moscow. Mark Bebbington is "truly a remarkable pianist" – The Times  
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### **YOUNG PEOPLE'S THEATRE**

Saturday 12 February 2.30 pm

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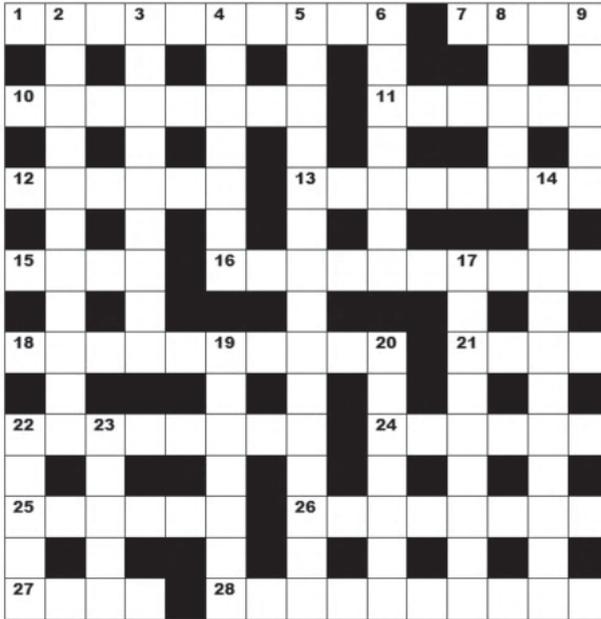
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# Winter Crossword

## By Michael Jackson



A £5 Voucher for spending in any Thames Ditton or Weston Green shop will be awarded to each of the first three correct entries opened after the closing date of 14 February 2011.

The completed puzzle (or photocopy) enclosing your name and address, with the envelope clearly marked 'Crossword Competition,' should be sent to:

Thames Ditton Today  
Crossword Competition  
6 Church Walk  
Thames Ditton

### ACROSS

1. Come to grips, the balancing pole in hand, when on these (10)
7. I broke a rib in Apulia (4)
10. You won't do this if oats very badly cooked by hotel chef (8)
11. Airman wandering in yacht basin (6)
12. To transfer property (6)
13. Am in city for friendship (8)
15. Just a sip and its tower leans (4)
16. Our tax seen as not essential (10)
18. Man let love turn to evil (10)
21. ...making him swear on this (4)
22. No meal is complete without this pudding (8)
24. Walk a plank to get on ship (6)
25. Whale yielding isinglass (6)
26. ...and it won't be found here (2,1,5)
27. ...nor this fish aunt cooked (4)
28. Brain cell in test of minds (10)

### DOWN

2. Teasing vet I seek the facts (11)
3. Art Museum where a man lives alone? (9)
4. A French rite performed by retainers for the V.I.P. (7)
5. To restore parity, those hips need manipulation by me (15)
6. On this island I sat, a rum in hand (7)
8. A car I can find in Chile (5)
9. What a state 7 is in! (5)
14. It's fun to recite about an invitation (11)
17. To control Olympic monies, Coe must avoid extravagance (9)
19. Going into Riga mill I saw them paper modelling (7)
20. "I have had my labour for my..." (Troilus & Cressida) (7)
22. As boot loses circler it becomes a shoe (5)
23. It's in Salami land (5)

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# Solution to the Autumn Crossword

by Maureen Willcox



G	R	E	A	S	E	P	A	S	T	O	R	A	L
R	L	E	H	T	R	O	A						
A	M	E	N	D	M	E	N	T	A	S	S	E	T
T	M	E	L	H	M	T	E						
E	T	E	R	N	A	L	E	X	P	O	R	T	S
F	N	T	F	F	U	T							
U	L	T	R	A	O	P	O	S	S	U	M	S	
L	E	A	S	Y	C	L	U	E	R	I	P	E	N
P	N	E	F	P	L	V							
A	U	S	T	R	I	A	R	E	R	O	U	T	E
S	W	A	T	O	I	N	R						
S	E	E	D	S	H	I	N	D	S	I	G	H	T
E	R	T	E	T	E	E	E						
D	E	S	P	A	I	R	S	A	D	O	R	E	D

Congratulations to the first three contestants whose correct entries were opened after the deadline. Each wins a £5 Voucher for spending in any Thames Ditton or Weston Green shop.

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**Jo Dunstone**  
57 Warwick Gardens  
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**Lesley Haynes**  
6 Onslow Gardens  
Thames Ditton KT7 0JJ

## Modern Folk Tales

*The old fortune-teller said: “There’s no easy way to say this, so I’ll just be blunt: prepare yourself to be a widow. Your husband will die a violent and horrible death this year.”*

*Shaken, the wife stared at the woman’s lined face, then at the flickering candle, then down at her hands. She took a few deep breaths to compose herself. She simply had to know. She met the fortune teller’s gaze, steadied her voice, and asked her question...*

*“Will I be acquitted?”*

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Elmbridge Community Alarm Service		01372 474560
Elmbridge Relief Carers Scheme		01372 474547
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	At other times	01372 474553
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Ember Sports Club: Tennis	Margaret Robinson	01372 842401
Esher Bowling Club	Roger Cooper	01372 468109
Esher Bridge Centre	Paul Whicker	01372 460157
Esher Camera Club	Billy Buchanan	020 8398 3169
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Folk Dance Club	Pam Phillips	01372 373745
Hinchley Wood / Dittons PROBUS Club	Geoff Francis	01932 867771
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Long Ditton Garden Club	Mrs. Ann Allen	020 8398 1718
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Old Cranleigh Hockey Club	Eds Copleston (Men)	07775 940703
	Helen Hawes (Ladies)	07771 557900
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Rotary Club, Esher	Geoff Morris	01932 868454
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	Membership: Sue Morris	020 8224 2536

Please contact the Editor to amend these listings



Following up stories of huge ‘escape’ tunnels for Henry VIII under the river from Hampton Court, I arranged for the Highest Authority on the subject at Historic Royal Palaces to be consulted. The reply was that there are no tunnels known. The authority doubted engineering capability and priorities of that order at the time.

“But,” he added, “we could be wrong...” And in this way even implausible stories are kept alive. Pubs like to add colour, even when they have plenty of authentic history. The former Alma Inn, now Marney’s, claims to have been the site of a hunting lodge for Henry in his deer-chase. That can’t be excluded, but where’s the evidence? The present buildings date from 200 years after Henry’s death. It is likely that when it became a pub in the latter half of the 19thC it was on land connected with the Lamberts, a significant family for three generations in Weston Green. Major-General John Arthur Lambert, buried in 1887 in our churchyard, served in the Grenadier Guards at the Battle of the Alma in 1854. Maureen Sheldrick writes: *“The Alma was a private house and sometime or other the front room was turned into a beer/cider house – and no they did not need planning permission! I believe it did not have a liquor licence until somewhere around 1950/60’s!”*

The Angel is another historic Inn with oodles of authentic history (not to mention scurrilous stories!). Previous landlords coloured in stories of ghosts, linked with speculation that there was a gibbet on the triangle of grass by Portsmouth Road there, for hanging highwaymen. No evidence of the latter has been forthcoming; though former pub

dog Harvey told me his canine sixth sense *had* confirmed the presence of ghosts!

I can be wrong too, as Mrs. E often reminds me. Gerry Mitchell writes to correct errata in the last issue (page 8): *“Although John and I ran the Weston Green Over 60s with the help of many volunteers from 1965 to 1991, we did not start the Club. Mrs Bernice Bennett of Newlands started the Thames Ditton Fellowship and then the Weston Green Over 60’s Club. Much as I would have liked to receive the MBE (as my friend Grace Goy of Summer Road did) my medal was the BEM (British Empire Medal).”* She adds: *“At the Thames Ditton Centre we are all enjoying our new premises. The joy now is that it is all on the ground floor, and has a patio so when it is not raining we can sit outside.”*

The Curse Of The Editor strikes again. No sooner had the article on Hewett Watson appeared than I learned that next year the Botanical Society of the British Isles will change the hallowed name of its journal, ‘Watsonia,’ to ‘New Journal of Botany’ – a characterless title that seems destined to age quickly.

Lastly, sincere thanks to the many who give their time freely to this magazine. Verity Park for her utterly dependable and crucial organisation of the advertising; Guy Holman who raises the standard of the covers; former distribution manager George Cammack and successors David and Dee Youd, whose dining table is burdened with the magazine for a whole weekend before bundles are passed on to all those volunteers who in rain, shine or snow trudge round to deliver it. And to readers, whose praise and interest make it worthwhile. Merry Christmas to you all.

*Editor*



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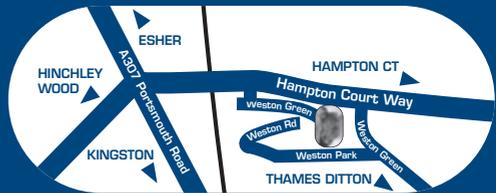
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