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

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THAMES DITTON TODAY

Published quarterly since 1970

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Photo credit: Cllr. Tannia Shipley

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 village Christmas trees. The subscription is only £5 per household. If you can contribute more, please do so. Subscriptions can be paid via our website www.residents-association.com; subscriptions (in an envelope please) may be left at Boots Pharmacy, 14 High Street, Thames Ditton or Thorkhill Road Pharmacy, 94 Thorkhill 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 AND WESTON GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting

8.00 pm on 17 March 2020
at Vera Fletcher Hall

Agenda:

1. **Minutes of the 2019 AGM** Meeting and matters arising therefrom
2. **Chairman's Annual Report**; receive, discuss and adopt the Annual Report for 2019-2020
3. **Accounts**: To receive the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019
4. **Appointments**: to receive nominations and appoint officers and an auditor: President, Chairman, Vice Chairmen, Hon Secretary, Hon Treasurer, Auditor
5. **Elections**: to adopt candidates for the Elmbridge Borough Council Election 7 May 2020
6. **Resolutions**: to consider any resolutions submitted in writing to the Secretary by 26 February 2020
7. **Guest Speaker** Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary of the Open Spaces Society

President: Martin Wilberforce

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Deepfield, Giggs Hill Road,
Thames Ditton 020 8398 5005

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Hinchley Wood 020 8398 1565
Nigel Haig-Brown
53 Heathside, Esher 020 8398 4060

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1 Boyle Farm Road, Thames Ditton 020 8786 6882
Flooding Tony Thompson,
Willow End, River Bank, Thames Ditton 07736 677671



THE NEXT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION OPEN MEETINGS ARE

March 17, 8pm AGM - Vera Fletcher Hall, Thames Ditton

May 5, 8pm - Vera Fletcher Hall, Thames Ditton

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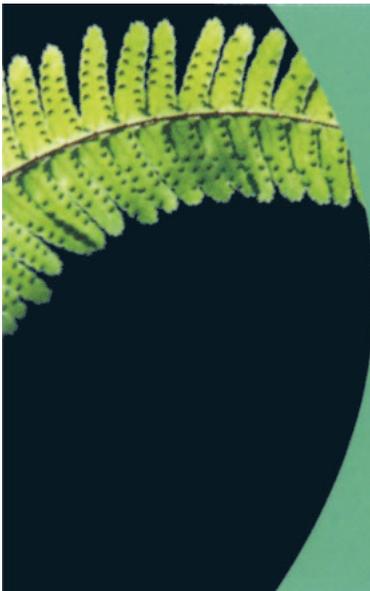
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News from the Residents' Association to end Feb



Alaa from Café Noir and his Local Hero award

Alaa Habooby – Local Hero

A gloomy Saturday in February was brightened up when the Residents' Association presented its second Local Hero award to Alaa Habooby for all his support to Thames Ditton in Bloom. Alaa's smile (and his free coffees) have regularly been warming up the volunteers who plant out Thames Ditton station platform twice a year, as well as cheering up commuters.

The level of train service may be wanting, but we have the best train station coffee shop! Now Alaa is extending his cheery service to Saturdays at the Thames Ditton Lawn Tennis Club café.

AGM Speaker, Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary of the Open Spaces Society

We are delighted that Kate Ashbrook is to be our Guest Speaker at the Residents' Association AGM on **Tuesday 17 March**. Kate is the General Secretary of the Open Spaces Society (Britain's oldest national conservation body, founded in 1865. Its founders went on to create the National Trust in 1895). Kate is also Vice-President and Chair of the Ramblers' Association, a Vice-Chair of the Campaign for National Parks and a member of the Institute of Rights of Way and Access Management.



Kate Ashbrook – come and hear her speak

The Open Spaces Society campaigns to protect common land, village greens, open spaces and public paths and our right to enjoy them. In Elmbridge they succeeded after five years campaigning to make Burhill Road in Hershaw a restricted byway and thus prevented it being opened up for development, and supported the 2012 campaign to protect the celebrated pastoral view from Richmond Hill.

Spring Bulbs and Fountain Flowers

Last Autumn Will Bland and John Lyon planted several hundred more Spring bulbs all over Thames Ditton and Weston Green.

This is the 30th year that the Residents' Association has funded these bulbs and this Spring we can see the results – not only of last Autumn's planting but those that are spreading naturally.

A special thank you to Francine Brooks for planting the winter pansies and the summer geraniums in the fountain at the Boyle Farm roundabout, and to Andrew James for watering the flowers throughout the year.

Planning

The planning application for a large development at Hampton Court Trading Estate (2019/2005) has been refused

RA ward councillors, Karen Randolph and Caroline James put in many hours of planning, reading and site visits and made thought-provoking presentations to the Planning Committee at Elmbridge Borough Council, sparking a lot of debate and leading to the proposal being overwhelmingly refused.

Whilst the need for housing is recognised it must be of good design and not be overbearing. This proposal was seen as out of scale, the design as urban, and it lacked decent outside amenity space for its future residents. Also of concern was the access from Summer Road and the impact on air quality.

Thanks to the Summer Road Action Group for providing information to our councillors.

Land to the east of 74-128 Speer Road (2019/1721) permission has been granted for a two-storey, three-bedroom dwelling within the built form of planning permission 2017/0818 (an office building).

George And Dragon Public House, Thames Ditton (2019/2346). The application to replace the umbrellas at the front of the pub with a permanent pergola was refused.

Currently there is no committee date for the application for the development of the **Jolly Boatman and Hampton Court Station site (2018/3810).**

Milbourne Pond

The incessant rain has benefited Milbourne Pond, which is looking very healthy.



Local Plan Consultation

Elmbridge Borough Council has been consulting on the vision, objectives and the direction for development management policies as part of the preparation of a new Local Plan. The Residents' Association has submitted a response which can be found on our website.

The new Local Plan is likely to be published sometime in the Autumn.

Dates for your diary

Farmers' Market

George and Dragon
car park 9.30am-1:30pm
Saturdays; 28 March,
25 April, 23 May

Easter decoration workshop

Tuesday 7 April, 2pm
Church Hall at All Saints Weston Green

Dittons Fair

Sunday 3 May, 1pm
Giggs Hill Green

Thames Ditton Station planting day

Sunday 3 May 10.00am -12.30pm

Esher May Fair

Saturday 16 May
Esher Green

Bereavement Cafés

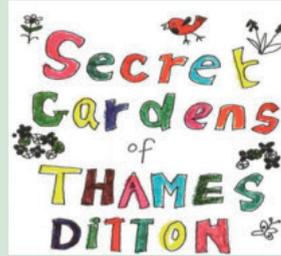
St. Nicholas Church Hall 10:30-12 noon
3rd Wednesday of the month

All Saints, Weston Green 10:30-12 noon
1st Tuesday of the month

St. Mary's, Long Ditton, Community Hall
7:30pm-9pm. 2nd Wednesday of the month

Secret Gardens of Thames Ditton

Sunday June 7, 2pm – 5.30pm
To take part or to help please contact
carolinejames1@gmail.com



Boomerang Bag Club

Thames Ditton Centre
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Weston Green Litter Pickers

Meet at Marneys pub on the first
Saturday in the month at 10.30am

Thames Ditton Litter Pickers

Meet on the third Saturday of the month
at the George & Dragon at 11am

Residents' Association

www.residents-association.com or
follow us on *Twitter @TDresidents*

Easter decorations workshop

This Easter come along to an informal workshop and make a beautiful floral Easter table decoration. All the flowers and greenery you need will be provided along with a glass of prosecco as you work! It really is a wonderful way to spend a couple of hours and emerge with something lovely for your home. Date is Tuesday 7 April at 2pm in the church hall at All Saints Weston Green, Chestnut Avenue KT10 8JL.

Cost pp is £10 and places need to be pre-booked by emailing Louise Lewis on louandrog@hotmail.com

December workshop – book now for Easter



Update from Nick Darby, Surrey County Councillor



It's never easy to decide what to cover. This time I will start with our local highways.

In my first year as your Surrey County Councillor I had £7,000 to allocate to local highway projects in the Dittons. This year it is around £30,000. Even this figure is nowhere near enough to cover the work we need. I have recently driven round the Dittons with a Highways officer and met and discussed Highways concerns with residents. This has resulted in a provisional list of work to be costed and prioritised.

As examples, the footways in and around Thames Ditton High Street, as well as along Station and Watts Road are poor. We could do with finishing off Weston Green Road and Grove Way. Repair is needed to Summer Road from near the Swan as well as Giggs Hill Road between the Cricket Club and Portsmouth Road. I add to this list Hampton Court Way, the section and hump on the southbound side near the crossing by the Embercourt roundabout are due to be repaired. Ember Lane is one of a number of roads with safety improvements being worked on. Surrey have allocated an extra capital sum of £93m in the recent Budget for investment in more major Highways over the next five years. I will be working hard to ensure the Dittons has its fair share.

The Surrey Budget was approved at the beginning of February. It totals £967m, an increase of £40m over the previous year. £28m of this will come from Council Tax increases. As Leader of the Opposition, it was my job to respond to the proposals. I am delighted that plans to close some of what we know as 'the tips' have been reversed,



Surrey County Councillor, (The Dittons) Nick Darby also that the threat to our libraries is over for now and that the country car parking charges have been dropped.

Surrey spend over £1m a day on Adult Social Care, half that sum on Children's Services. Even with these huge sums, there are real concerns that with ever-increasing demand, some of our most vulnerable residents don't receive the care they need and deserve. We receive the lowest amount per head for Public Health of any county in England. Local government funding remains a big issue. Numbers of us continue to strive for changes.

We spend around £40m each year for School Transport. The rules which cover entitlement to free transport are not easy to follow. I strongly recommend parents look at these closely as part of their decision on which schools to choose. I am delighted new parking restrictions on Weston Green Road should result both in minimising the risk of gridlock and saving of the bus service to Three Rivers Academy.

I could go on..... I hope that by the time you read this there will be signs of Spring !

Nick Darby

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Secret Gardens of Thames Ditton



Secret Gardens 7 June 2020, save the date

The hugely popular Secret Gardens of Thames Ditton event returns to our village this year, with an ever-growing list of gardens old and new for you to enjoy.

The date for your diary is Sunday 7 June. Garden gates will swing open at 2pm and close at 5.30pm. The chosen day is a little earlier this year (previously the Secret Gardens have opened on Father's Day) as many of our gardens look their best in early June – as long as it has stopped raining by then!

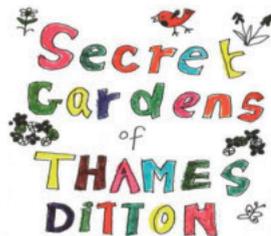
Entry price for all the gardens remains a bargain £5, with all money raised going to help the ongoing costs of the Thames Ditton Christmas Lights, plus a generous donation to the Garden of Remembrance at St Nicholas Church. This much-loved community asset is entirely run by volunteers and is one of the gardens to open this year.

Perennial favourites are returning after a well-earned break, and we are delighted to announce that we have a number of new gardens to delight the eye this year. As ever, tea, coffee and fabulous home-made cakes will be served at Maybury Lodge in the High Street, the Secret Gardens HQ.

At the last SG event in Thames Ditton in June 2018 (last year was the turn of Weston Green) some gardens reported upwards of 400 visitors on the day, and many local pubs, shops and cafes reported a welcome boost to their Sunday takings. A total of £2,600 was raised for the aforementioned good causes – a record!

Tickets for the event will go on sale nearer the date in selected village shops and will be available to buy on the day itself at Maybury Lodge in the High Street. Please put the date in your diary. We look forward to seeing you – and cross your fingers for a sunny day!

**RA Councillor Caroline James
Andy Anderson
Secret Garden Organisers**



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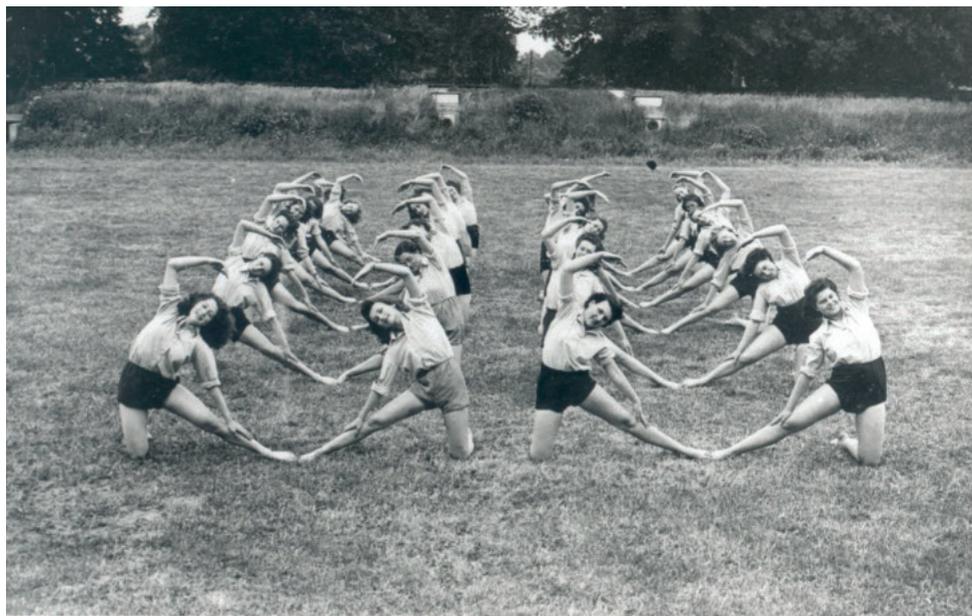


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‘Memories of War.’Elmbridge Museum’s oral histories project



Women’s Junior Air Corps doing drill at Hinchley Wood School

The Second World War brought about the deaths of a staggering 70 million people across the globe. It was the largest total war the world has ever seen, and the deadliest conflict in human history. The figure brings home the overwhelming scale of devastation the conflict caused, but it doesn’t tell a human story. People – each with their own families, friendships, careers, hobbies, likes and dislikes – become completely lost when they are converted into data.

With the 75th anniversary of V.E. Day on 8 May fast approaching, at Elmbridge Museum we are marking this with a new venture: ‘Elmbridge at War.’ We set out to run a series of projects, uncovering the lives and experiences of Elmbridge residents from 1939-45. Through an exhibition,

walking trail, memorial projects, object videos and replicas we managed to gradually piece together Elmbridge’s Second World War landscape. But in spite of all of this, there was still a nagging gap in the research: human experiences. The answer? Oral history.

Oral history is the practice of recording spoken memories and opinions, often for historical use. Oral historians interview willing participants, sometimes for hours on end and more than once, about their lives. Within these life stories, interviewees may recall their experiences, thoughts or feelings about historical events they witnessed or eras they lived through. The beauty of this history lies not in the factual information it sometimes offers, but in the human perspective it always reveals.



No. 53 Greenway, Hinchley Wood damaged by a VI Flying bomb

We've now recorded seven interviews with yet more on the horizon, including a group interview at Thames Ditton Centre for the Community. A huge range of Elmbridge residents, aged from their late 70s to 101 years old, have already been recorded.

Some participants remembered lots, some very little. Some had strong opinions on the war, while others were indifferent. None of this makes any one interview better than another: every memory is a valid one. Recollections have been vivid, emotional, funny, captivating, sobering – but above all, extremely varied. This is no surprise, given the contrasting intensity of bombing during the Blitz across Elmbridge. Areas to the north and east of the borough received the tail-end of London's heavy shelling, while the south and west commonly saw little to nothing at all. Nevertheless, each interview provides a personal insight into what it was

like for some living through the Elmbridge Blitz, and the profound effect that it has had on their lives since.

It's amazing how simply asking the question 'how did this make you feel?' can open a treasure trove of memories. When asked this very question about a bombing raid in her local area, one interviewee spoke candidly of the joy she felt when her school was closed. Contemplating her lack of understanding of death as a child, she reflected that *'it never once occurred to me that it probably killed a lot of people'*. Her mother had gone to copious efforts to protect her from witnessing the devastation by making long walking detours through the local area after a raid – *'no one could've said we weren't active enough!'*. Jokes aside, the shockingly commonplace nature of violence to the children of the war years stands out starkly.



German prisoners of war from Thames Ditton's Topside Camp (Greenwood Road) and land girls harvesting tomatoes at Rivernook Farm, Walton in 1946

For me, one of the most pertinent comments came at the very end of an interview. The stop button on the recorder had been pressed and the headphones were off. The man I had been interviewing sat back in his chair and remarked *'they were the happiest and the saddest years of my life.'* It's one thing that virtually every other interviewee has agreed on.

Amy Swainston

Exhibitions & Interpretation Officer
Elmbridge Museum

The 'Memories of War' oral histories will soon be available to hear on our website elmbridgemuseum.org.uk/online-exhibitions/elmbridge-at-war

The 'Elmbridge at War: The Blitz in Our Borough' exhibition is now on display in the Civic Centre foyer, Esher High Street, until June.

Why not join us for a Curator's Talk on Wednesday 1 April or Thursday 7 May? Details can be found on our website elmbridgemuseum.org.uk/whats-on, or contact us via email ebcmuseum@elmbridge.gov.uk or telephone 01372 474568.

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Church & Charity in a 'Can-do' Partnership



'The round church', Our Lady of Lourdes

Most people who live in Thames Ditton have seen 'the round church', as Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic church has always been known hereabouts. It's a remarkable piece of modernist architecture, with its rather austere silhouette and slender spire. Inside it had a major 'refit' to mark its 50th birthday a few years ago. But the purpose of the investment (including a new glass-fronted welcome area facing Hampton Court Way) was to make the church more outward looking, reaching out to the local community as well as *'looking after its own'*.

Parishioners have always been very generous towards good causes, but last autumn they took a further step, launching an appeal, with 50% of all funds raised going to their chosen charity partners for the year, *ElbridgeCAN*. By Christmas,

the appeal had raised more than £5,500 for the charity through a whole host of events, beginning with a very sunny Caribbean *'Winter Carnival'* on a cold November night! But there are plenty of further events between now and the end of the appeal in July, including an evening when some of the refugees will talk about their experiences and a parish quiz.

ElbridgeCAN supports refugees who arrive in our borough to establish themselves in their new life, their previous homelands and hopes having been torn from them by violence. So far this locally-founded initiative has rehoused seven families in partnership with Elmbridge Borough Council through the government's *Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme*.



Dr Karim (centre) with Elmbridge CAN chair, Steve Wells, and his wife Linda

In total ElmbridgeCAN supports more than 20 families, most of which have made their own way here from a wide range of countries (including Turkey, Albania and Afghanistan), people who cannot return home for fear of persecution (or death).

Dr Karim, a Syrian neurosurgeon, spoke at the launch of the parish appeal about the difference ElmbridgeCAN made to him and his family when they first arrived three years ago. He commented on his visit: *“the welcome was so warm; I was so happy. My soul was quiet when I came into the church. It was so peaceful.”* Steve Wells, Chair of the charity, stressed that their aim is to provide a safe and peaceful environment for our new settlers, to help them forge new relationships and naturally to put down new roots, to replace those destroyed by violence.

A large number of local volunteers help to support the new arrivals both practically and emotionally and some of the parishioners at Our Lady of Lourdes have joined them. Sharon Lyons comments: *“It’s very rewarding work and good to spend time*

with Syrian ladies and connect with them on a practical level.” Parish priest, Fr. Rob Esdaile, adds: *“Apart from the fund-raising aspect, this project is proving to be such a blessing to our community, educating us about real human needs, galvanising people to get involved and creating links with people whose stories we might never have heard otherwise.”*

For more details about ElmbridgeCAN’s work and how you can get involved, see www.elmbridgecan.org.uk. To find out more about future parish appeal events contact charities@olchurch.org.uk

Fr. Rob Esdaile

Join in our fund-raising events

Bread and soup lunches are being held every Wednesday during Lent at 12.30pm. All are welcome.

A quiz night is being held on Friday, April 24 at 8pm. to book a place please email office@olchurch.org.uk

Behind the scenes at The Dittons Fair - come rain or shine



Fair rides ready to go

With thousands of visitors flocking to Giggs Hill Green every May for The Dittons Fair, we take a look behind the scenes at what it takes to pull off such a huge community event.

The Dittons (village) Fair was born more than 60 years ago by The Dittons Scout Group, having begun life as the 'Summer Spree' in 1956.

It's the main fundraiser to enable more than 200 local children to access a rich scouting programme at The Dittons Scout Group. Although the number of children has certainly grown over the years, the value of celebrating and supporting the wider community remains central to the organisation.

The Fair Chair is a crucial role, one played for many years by Aileen Widdowson, who has this year handed the baton to Marianne Pearson. Planning starts early by renewing the headline sponsor, who we are delighted to announce is JD Wood Estate Agents. Local business donations are gathered and arena acts booked, including the famous Imber Court Dog Training team who encourage local dogs to leap over jumps,



Programme for the first Dittons Fair

run through hoops and dress up for the ever-popular Dotty Dog Show.

The information is transformed into the iconic fair programme, designed by local graphic designer, Sophie Fisher.

Beaver (6-8 years) and Cub (8-10 years) Scouts then tread the local streets engaging with local residents to promote the fair. You may well overhear them practicing their sales patter between houses, an important life skill!

During the weekend of the Fair, the Shack (scout HQ) is a hive of activity with books and toys sorted, bottles, tombola and sweetie prizes labelled, popcorn machines fine-tuned and the famous pig racetrack repaired for optimum race conditions. Signage provided by local business Fast Signs is erected and the car parking team is briefed.

At 7am on the day of The Fair it's a quiet scene as David Cooper - long standing Beaver leader and Fair Chair for many years - welcomes the Griffiths family from Undercover Tents, long-time supporters of



Bacon sandwiches help to power the day

the fair. Bacon sandwiches, the reward for the early bird helpers, are consumed against a background of walkie talkie communications between the Shack and Green.

By 1pm Giggs Hill Green is transformed ready for the Hinchley Wood School samba band to open the event. Visitors descend from all directions and the scout group families work non-stop running stalls and activities, until 5pm when we wave the final visitor farewell.

The smell of sizzling burgers and sausages draws in the queues and Christina Trotter swiftly organises her tea tent team who serve homemade cake and beautiful Bachmanns cakes, kindly donated every year by Chris Bachmann. No one goes hungry!

Even the family that runs the Fairground has become a special part of the team with one lady attending for more than 40 years, first learning to spin candy floss as a young girl with her grandparents. You can find their spinning teacups and swings, bouncy castles and bungees and much more.

By 7pm, Giggs Hill Green is restored to tranquillity with meticulous litter picking restoring the venue to its pre event status. It's then off to a local pub for a well-earned drink to celebrate one of the most rewarding and fun events to be involved with.

A huge thank you to so many people who make this such a special event. From the volunteers to the many local businesses who support us in one way or another and of course to all our visitors who help to create such a special community atmosphere.

The Dittons Fair 2020 will be on **Sunday 3 May**. The fun starts at 1pm and we look forward to seeing you all there.

Aileen Widdowson

900th Anniversary of St Nicholas' Church



St Nicholas Church from Church Walk

St. Nicholas' is a beautiful and historic church, dating back to 1120 with some parts of its Norman heritage still visible. The church is located right in the heart of the village, and in 2020 it will have been at the centre of community life for 900 years.

It houses many treasures including one of the finest fountains in Surrey, and was the first to be established in the county in 1120. The church has a rich history of strong connections with local colourful characters including the Vicar who managed to forget two of his own weddings!

To highlight the church of St Nicholas, its heritage and its role in our community, we are aiming to work across the community to offer a series of opportunities during the year to celebrate. Do look out for these or come and visit us in the Garden of Remembrance at the Secret Gardens event or you are welcome to visit us or use our services at any time.

For updates about our plans please visit our website: www.stnicholaschurch.org.uk

National Garden Scheme – Church Walk

Three Church Walk gardens are opening on Sunday 31 May for charity under the National Garden Scheme.

Jill and Charlie at no. 52 garden organically. Exuberant planting includes nearly twenty small maples, and many other small shrubs and perennials.

Lesley and Keith's garden at no. 6 creates an impression of greater size through lines of sight. Their gardening is partly driven by plant lust and foliage is as important as flowers, and there's plenty of wildlife.

The minimal Guide Hut garden is maintained by Lesley, who solves the problem of long



narrow strips of soil either side of a fence.

Put the date in your diary Sunday 31 May 2pm - 6pm. Admission £5 adult, child free, tickets from the Guide Hut where light refreshments will be available.

www.ngs.org.uk/view-garden/37133/



Your Residents' Association

Notification to residents of key planning applications

Web site maintained as resource for all residents

High Street Christmas Fair & continued funding for High Street Christmas Trees & lights

Secret Gardens of Weston Green

Supported residents' objections to inappropriate development

Supported Thames Ditton High Street retailers

Supported parents seeking long-term solution to secondary schools crisis

Continuing pressure for maintenance to prevent flooding at Esher station, and to resolve other long-standing flooding problems

Supported 'Boomerang Bags' to make Thames Ditton a plastic bag free zone

Regular Open Meetings to engage with the community on important topics

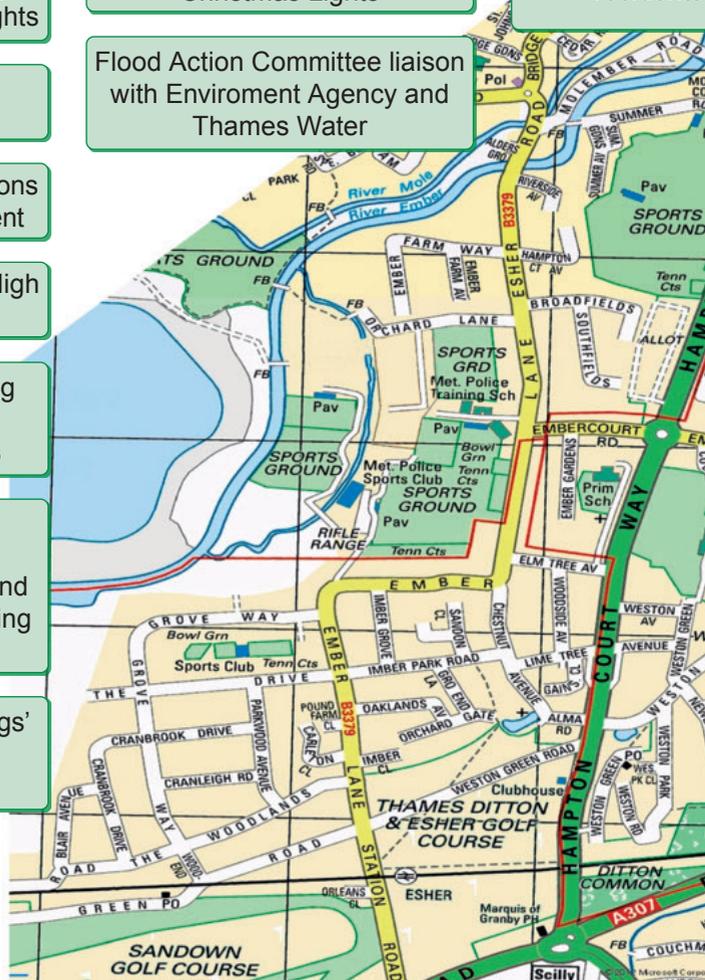
Detailed response to Local Plan

Replaced Lime Tree Christmas Lights

Flood Action Committee liaison with Environment Agency and Thames Water

Constant vigilance
Conservation
Green

Twitter residents



tion in Action 2019-2020



ance to protect
n Areas and
n Belt

to keep
informed

RA Councillors represent
interests of local residents to
GP surgeries and the CCG
on health services

Supported 'Save our River'
to stop EA changes
to the River Ember

Responded to
Heathrow consultations

5000 copies of Thames Ditton
Today distributed quarterly in
Thames Ditton, Weston Green
and Molesey

Pressed for lighting of Lower
Green Road alleyway to
Platform 1 Esher Station

Planted spring bulbs,
maintained flower beds
and Fountain roundabout,
supported Thames Ditton in
Bloom at the railway station
and beyond

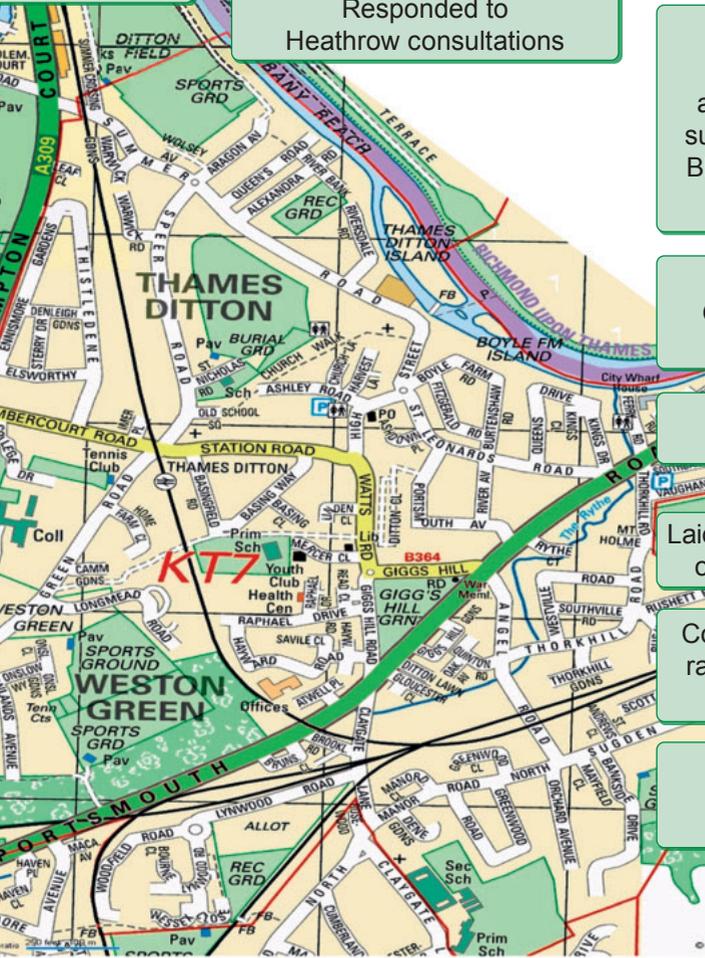
Active Litter Picking
Groups in Weston Green
and Thames Ditton

Supports Monthly
Farmers' Markets

Laid wreaths on War Memorials
on Remembrance Sunday

Continuing support and fund
raising for services for NHS
patients at Emberbrook

Actively pressed South
Western Railway to
improve services



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED - TELEPHONE OPERATORS

We are a local charity. Our operators work from home answering the telephone to the less mobile residents in our community and contacting our volunteer drivers to get lifts for them to medical appointments, hairdressers, Day Centres and so on.

We need more help. Can you spare one morning a month, to be a telephone operator?

If so, please call Frankie Bell on 07790 472993.
She'd be delighted to hear from you



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED - DRIVERS

We are a local charity. Our drivers use their own cars to provide a door-to-door service for less mobile residents in our community enabling them to get to medical appointments, hairdressers, Day Centres and so on.

We need more help. Can you spare a few hours a month at times to suit you, to carry out local drives?

If so, please call Frankie Bell on 07790 472993.
She'd be delighted to hear from you



Celebrating their centenary – the girls at the heart of the village



2nd Thames Ditton Girl Guides at Remembrance Sunday.

On 15 October 2020, 2nd Thames Ditton Guides will reach the grand old age of 100. ‘What’, you might ask, ‘*about 1st Thames Ditton Guides – are they not even older?*’ ‘*And what have the Guides been doing all these years?*’ ‘*Surely they are old and frail and no longer in fashion?*’ ‘*Closed at a very young age, busy having fun and doing good*’ and ‘*not at all*’ are the answers to those three questions.

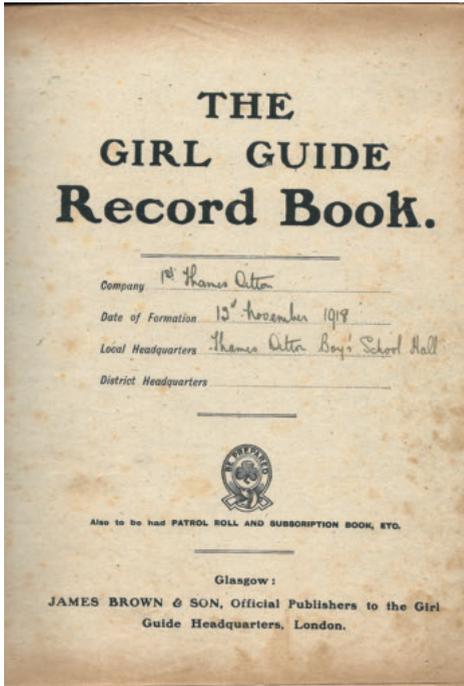
Tucked away in our headquarters in Church Walk each Friday night, or camping somewhere in the summer months, or campaigning to save the planet from plastic poisoning, or visiting Harry Potter World – Guides are still very busy, still doing good and still very much alive.

England in the 1920s was a very different world. The school leaving age was 14 and many local girls left to go into domestic service or the paper mills in Esher. More

fortunate girls attended Tiffin Girls’ School or Surbiton High School. Society was quite divided between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’, and girls especially were generally expected to know their place and stay in it. Well, except if they were Guides, of course.

Having set up the Scouting movement in 1908 for boys, Robert Baden-Powell was rather shocked to have a contingent of girls turn up at a rally for Boy Scouts at London’s Crystal Palace, demanding ‘*something for the girls*’. He promptly delegated that request to his sister, Agnes, who in 1910 set up the Girl Guides.

Not long after, in Thames Ditton, an enterprising woman with some money and time on her hands, a certain Mrs Spencer-Whitehead, decided that what Thames Ditton needed was a Girl Guide unit. 1st Thames Ditton Guides was duly set up in 1918, but demand for places was such that



Original record book from 1918

2nd Thames Ditton Guides followed only two years later. When demand dropped off a few years later it was the younger sister who continued, while the older one faded away.

For many years the unit was run by the Misses Cox, two sisters who lived in Weston Green, who were a formidable pair by all accounts. They ensured that the unit camped every year through the Second World War and met whenever it was safe to do so, including in the air raid shelter that sits in the grounds of Thames Ditton Infant School. The Guides collected newspapers for the war effort in their trek cart (bought in 1920 and still in service today) and knitted socks for, and wrote friendly letters to, servicemen. One of the leaders kept a beautiful diary of their adventures during the war years, including picnics on Cow Common, Molesey, that were interrupted by the arrival of German doodlebugs.

After the war the hunt for a permanent meeting place began in earnest. Having met in various schools and church halls, the Guides were eventually allowed to build their HQ in the grounds of the old church school. Opened in 1955, it cost the huge sum of £1,585.15.4 (old money), partly funded by the same Mrs Spencer-Whitehead, supplemented by Guide fundraising. That same hut was refurbished in 2013, thanks to support from the local community, at a cost of £120,000 and is now used by a variety of local organisations, as well as the Guides, Brownies and Rainbows.

One of the huge blessings of having so few leaders over so many years, and of having our own premises, is that we have the original records dating back to 1918, precious historical documents that track 2nd Thames Ditton Guides across the 20th and into the 21st century. We can see the names of those first girls who joined and the schools they attended, or whether they were in service or working in the paper mills. Today's badges may be all Mixology and Vlogging, rather than Land Worker or Telegraphist, but learning new skills has always been important.



The original trek cart is still in use today.



Lady Baden-Powell (centre) visiting the Guide Hut

The older records have a very military feel: the leaders were Captain and Lieutenant; the planning meetings were ‘courts of honour’; girls had to pass 2nd and 1st class tests to become a true Guide. In these days

of GDPR and child-centred activities, the uniformity and the level of recording have certainly changed, but the desire to do good and serve the community is still there. Our newest venture, with support from Elmbridge Council, will be planting the verge along Church Walk as it approaches Ashley Road, to offer a home to bees and other insects while making the area look very pretty for the neighbours.

This summer we will be opening our hut to support the National Gardens Scheme (31 May) and the Secret Gardens of Thames Ditton (7 June), so please do pop in and see for yourself why we are 100 years young. We would love to hear about your memories of Guides in Thames Ditton and to celebrate our birthday with you.

Bronach Hughes



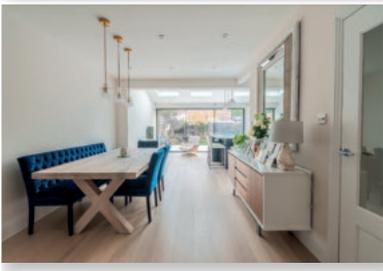
100 years later, camping is still a key part of the guiding experience



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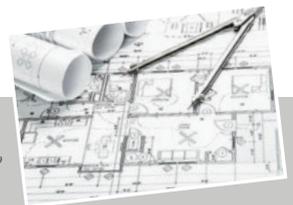
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"Thames Design and Build were great to work with and they were ahead of schedule throughout the project. Their team was sympathetic to the impact of the works whilst we remained living in the house, and we were pleased with the quality of their workmanship. The team is well structured, and communication was good. We were always able to discuss issues either with Fred, the site manager, or Paul Merifield, and agree solutions quickly. The final results are fantastic and have delivered exactly the space that we were looking for." Robin, Kingston

Ditton Garages, Southville Road, Thames Ditton, KT7 0UL

An extinction rebellion which starts at home



Nori Chesney and her grandchildren helping to clear the common at Weston Green

Nori Chesney has first-hand experience of the effects of climate change and how it can impact on your local community and family life. Nori's response has been to make looking after one's environment a fun, family priority. *'I want my kids and my grandkids to understand the importance of participating in life'* she said, *'looking after their environment and maintaining it is part of that, because no-one else is going to do it.'*

Born and raised in California on a large avocado farm near the Mexican border, Nori learned her outdoor skills from her father, working on the farm as a team with her brothers. Her upbringing taught her how to do a good day's hard work and to feel satisfied with accomplishing something valuable. Her eyes were bright as she recounted her father's inventiveness, when

he gave her, at the age of 7, a motorcycle with an irrigation spooling system attached to the back, which would unravel as she revved up the mountainside watering the avocado trees. The only time the family spent indoors was for eating, sleeping or 'time out'. As a consequence Nori loves the trees and the rain and says, *'We always leave a place tidier than when we came'*.

Avocado trees don't like the cold and need lots of rain, so when the droughts came in 1969 and the water bills became excessive, the family farm was repossessed. All the trees were cut down to make room for real estate and to Nori she felt *'it was like watching elephants being shot'*. At the same time lots of family friends were being sent to the Vietnam War - her uncle was killed there. Then her parents divorced under the strain and she felt her life torn apart.



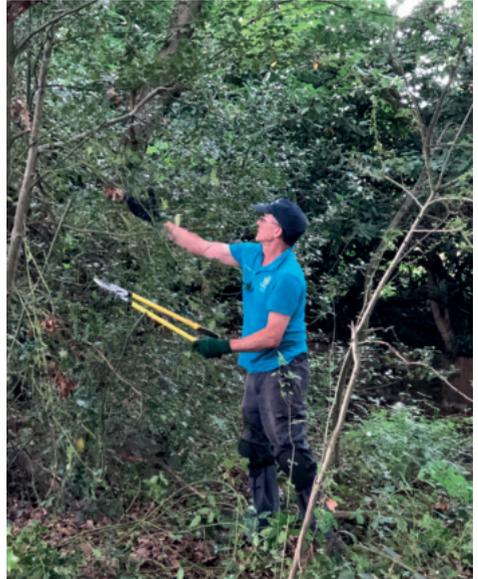
Bear Valley Ranch, California c. 1959

Nori moved to Europe to study, and while there experienced a life-changing encounter with a Holocaust survivor who happened to be the neighbour of a Nazi administrator of armaments. He had recently been released from jail and wouldn't even go out into the garden because of his shame. Nori said, *'After everything that lady had been through during the Holocaust, she felt compelled to go and see her neighbour and tell him that she had forgiven him. That was life changing for someone like me who had only recently become a Christian, and the impact of that experience was a catalyst for my life as a missionary'*.

How does life in Weston Green compare with life out West? Nori's perspective is that when she was young, California was a place where culturally everyone knew everyone, it felt safe and everything was green, and people had a lot in common as a community of farmers. Her experience of life in Weston Green reminds her of what it used to be like, and she feels it is a good place to teach her grandkids to know their neighbours and to learn how to look after their environment. When Nori learned of

the Elmbridge Countryside Volunteers, she signed up the family to join their team in clearing undergrowth on Weston Green Common to allow the mature trees to enjoy more light and to grow. Her grandkids range in age from 6 – 16 years and every one of them looked forward to getting stuck in and were very excited about the idea of wearing gloves and using tools (with adult supervision for safety purposes).

Nori recognises that modern children spend a lot more time indoors, but she firmly believes that if you plan ahead, show enthusiasm in getting involved and get outdoors with them, they will be more than happy to swap time with their electronic devices for the trees, as their own extinction rebellion.



Getting down to business with the loppers

For further information about the Elmbridge Countryside Volunteers, please contact the Countryside Team on 01372 474565 or email Countryside@elmbridge.gov.uk or visit the website at www.elmbridge.gov.uk/countryside.

Julie Royce

The Singing Hairstylist



Zoë Slade at the Thames Ditton High Street Christmas Fair

The Thames Ditton Christmas Fair may herald the start of the festive season for some, an excuse to have a jolly in the street for others, or an opportunity to promote your wares. But for Zoë Slade, previously known as a hairstylist for Hype in Thames Ditton, it will always be the place where she made her debut as a singer.

As a teenager, Zoë lived in Long Ditton with her father, and a kernel of a dream had lain inside her heart from a very young age: she wanted to be a singer. Surrounded by a musical family (her father is a guitarist and her brother a drummer), she was shy and in awe of all her family's musicality, so her talent lay dormant - until now.

After recently making a new acquaintance whose passion for music rekindled her own,

she started to listen again to the music that she had always loved and that inspired her, such as the music of BB King, Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Kate Bush, Abba and Supertramp.

Zoë said, *'One night I thought to myself - I can do this. Why am I not doing this?'* With that as a catalyst, she booked a singing lesson with a trained teacher and good friend of hers, Claire Bender, who had sung at her wedding. Doing voice warm-ups was a new and alien experience for Zoë and she said, *'I felt quite silly and had to face the wall when singing as I was too nervous to face my friend'*. Claire was 'blown away' by Zoë's voice and encouraged her to give her inner self a good talking in order to build her confidence.

Then came her lucky break. Zoë frequents the Nice Buns Cafe quite regularly and Jackie, the owner and part of the Christmas Fair committee, overheard her talking to a customer about persuading a local pub landlord to give her a gig in the New Year. Jackie asked, 'Why don't you sing at the Thames Ditton Village Christmas Fair?' Zoë agreed without hesitation.

Currently inspired by Billie Eilish, Caro Emerald, London Grammar, June Girl, and Melody Gardot, Zoë put together a set that met Jackie's brief to sing 'some classics'. Nervous and excited, Zoë performed eight songs at the fair, including Nina Simone, Peggy Lee, Doris Day, Caro Emerald and Amy Winehouse's 'Valerie', as a duet with Claire Bender (her teacher). The show wowed local audiences, and many people lingered around the lime tree to listen to the classics that emanated from the tent there.

Boosted by this experience, Zoë is talking to four local pubs that are receptive to

giving her a gig. She's investing in her own musical equipment and is looking to do a demo CD to encourage other bookings. *'I'm still hair styling and being a mum to my son and daughter, so it's hard work, but now I have awakened my dreams, I'm doing my best to make them come true. In part, it's to show my kids if I can do it, so can you!'*

On the brink of a potential new career, Zoë reflected on what it takes to get started. *'If your heart is telling you to go for it, get an honest friend to give you feedback, or a lesson from an expert and ask for the truth. Do a few open mike nights and use technology - for example, there is singing software called Sing Star which is available on the Nintendo Wii, and that will give you points for how well you are following the melody!'*

If you heard Zoë sing at the fair and want to follow her activities or find out more about her future gigs visit her Instagram account [@surreysoulsister](#)

Julie Royce



Zoë and Jackie at the Nice Buns Café

Probus club members learn about the 4-second Cobra!



Shelby 427 S-C Cobra 1966

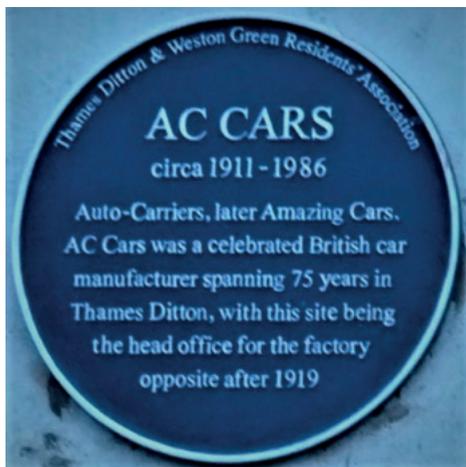
Thames Ditton is famous for a variety of achievements, but the AC Cobra 427 was perhaps one of the most iconic. In 1966 it was one of the fastest accelerating cars in the world, capable of 0-60mph in 4 seconds. In fact, it was tested at over 165mph on the M1 soon after its opening as part of the AC preparations for a Le Mans entry. The 70mph road speed limit was introduced soon after!

Recently, members of the Hinchley Wood and The Dittons Probus Club were joined by AC Owners Club members to hear from John Spencer, the official archivist for the Owner's Club, a history of one of Thames Ditton's longest running businesses.

AC Cars moved to Thames Ditton in 1911 and made a succession of interesting products including cars, invalid carriages, airship engines and railway trains, up until 1986. As early as the 1920s, AC held world speed records including the first light car to cover 100 miles in one hour, recorded at Brooklands. They also entered cars into the Monte Carlo Rally with strong results,

including winning outright in 1926

For 75 years AC provided employment to hundreds of local people and contributed to automotive engineering excellence in Surrey. At the height of car output AC had factories in the Ferry Works, on Thames Ditton High Street and Summer Road, as well as on Taggs Island near Hampton Court.



Blue Plaque commemorating AC Cars

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Undercover
Event Tents



AC Cars on Thames Ditton High Street in 1925 and the car entered for the Monte Carlo rally. The diagonal building still exists behind The Lime Tree. (Courtesy: Mrs Wendy Grimmond)

Probus: Retired Professional and Business people.



The Hinchley Wood and The Dittons Probus Club meets at Imber Court on the third Tuesday of the month at 10.30 for 11am. New members are welcome to join the informal atmosphere and hear interesting talks. More information at: www.hwandtdprobus.wixsite.com/mysite or contact Edmund Woolley (Chairman) on 020 8398 3581.

Simon de Mille

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Solution to the Winter Crossword



1	I	2	N	G	E	3	N	U	4	E	5	H	I	6	R	S	U	7	T	E
	A				I		8	C	U	E								R		
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	I				11	T	H	E	A	T	R	E						M		
12	H	A	13	T	C	H	M		E			14	A	D	15	O	P	16	T	
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	U		I			26	D	E	27	J	A	28	V	U	29	E		N		I
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38	C	L	I	N	T	O	N			39	N	E	M	E	S	I	S			

Congratulations to the senders of the first three correct entries opened in the shuffle. Each wins a £5 voucher to spend in local shops.

Mrs M Neal
Flat 6 Albany Reach,
KT7 0QH

Robert Miller
9 Burtenshaw Road,
KT7 0TP

Priscilla Austen
18 Imber Park Road
KT10 8JB

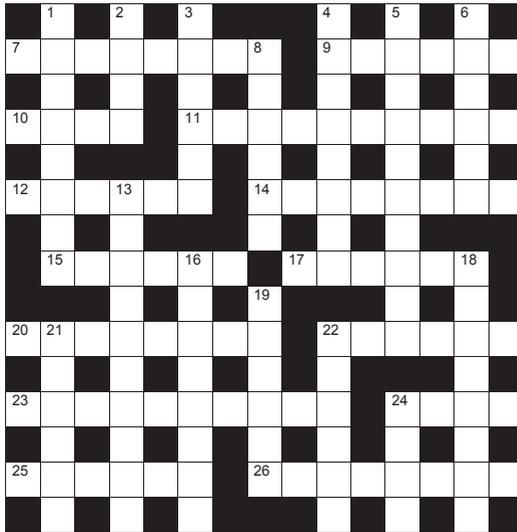
treat
someone
special
to something
special this
mother's day
and easter



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Spring Crossword



by **Howard and Bob Cruthers**

The first three correct entries randomly opened after the closing date of 8 May 2020 will win a £5 voucher to spend in local shops. Please send the completed puzzle (or photocopy) enclosing your name and address, with the envelope clearly marked 'Crossword Competition' to:

Thames Ditton Today
Crossword Competition
24 High Street
Thames Ditton
KT7 0RY

ACROSS CLUES

- 7 Plebian (8)
- 9 Inked skin depiction of military show? (6)
- 10 Obscene particles from steam train? (4)
- 11 Unacceptably defective? (3, 2, 5)
- 12 Secure lead newsman? (6)
- 14 Apples or blended fall down (anag) (8)
- 15 Move around ring? (6)
- 17 Modifying word or phrase, eg gently (6)
- 20 Varied chocolates? (8)
- 22 Swiss watchmaker (6)
- 23 Greek devoted to the pursuit of pleasure? (10)
- 24 US TV award (4)
- 25 Thin layer on top of concrete (6)
- 26 Donkeywork (8)

DOWN

- 1 Memory assist (8)
- 2 Annoying locust? (4)
- 3 Enthusiasm (6)
- 4 Midlands market town, with strong dogs? (8)
- 5 Daydreaming astronomers? (10)
- 6 Sings in a Tyrolean fashion (6)
- 8 Correct textual error (6)
- 13 Singers came together? (10)
- 16 Leeway to circle the earth? (8)
- 18 Mistakes, in knickers? (8)
- 19 Liquid moved in a circle (6)
- 21 Stamp out whisky? (6)
- 22 Language, or muscle used to speak one (6)
- 24 Therefore (4)

SERVICES, CLUBS, SOCIETIES AND GROUPS

SERVICES

Cheer (Concern and Help for East Elmbridge Retired)	Mark Michelmore	01372 879321
Dittons & Weston Green NeighbourCare	Frankie Bell	07790 472993
Elmbridge Borough Council Community Support Services		
Thames Ditton Centre for the community	Mon & Thurs	0208 3985921
Thames Ditton Children's Centre	Tues, Weds, Fri	0208 3983772
Meals on Wheels, Community Transport, Dial-a-Ride, Alarm & Telecare services, Relief Carers	ask for service at central switchboard	01372 474552
Homesupport Elmbridge	Thomasina Breslin	01932 267128
Esher and District Stroke Club	Ann Pollock	0208398 6132
Voluntary Action Elmbridge	Sally Dubery	01372 463587
Surrey Youth and Adult Education Service	Elmbridge Area	020 8979 8334

GROUPS

1st Thames Ditton Brownies	Bronach Hughes	bronachhughes@hotmail.com
3rd Thames Ditton Brownies	Bronach Hughes	bronachhughes@hotmail.com
2nd Thames Ditton Rainbows	Heather Crowe	heathercrowe@hotmail.com
1st Weston Green (All Saints) Scout Group	Carole Needham	lwgbrownies@gmail.com
1st Weston Green Guides	Sumathi Jeevaratnam	sumathi.jeevaratnam@gmail.com
2nd Weston Green Guides	Helen Lawson	helenlawson287@gmail.com
2nd Thames Ditton Guides	Bronach Hughes	bronachhughes@hotmail.com
1st Weston Green Brownies (All Saints)		lwgbrownies@gmail.com
3rd Weston Green Brownies	Gillian Twomey	gtwomey@hotmail.com
1st Weston Green Rainbows	Larisa Strickland	westongreenrainbows@gmail.com
4th Thames Ditton Ajax Sea Scouts	Alison Derrick	020 8398 0041
Dittons Scout Group	Aileen Widdowson	07783 449666
Coffee and chat (United Reformed Church)	Mrs. E. Barker	01372 467491
Emberbrook Trefoil Guild	Mary Bowen	020 8398 6857
Friends of Bushey and Home Parks	Jean Smith	020 8977 9391
Girlguiding in Thames Ditton and Weston Green		dittonsdistrict.ljh@gmail.com
Friends of Walsingham Care	Miss Valerie Chicken	0208 398 2932
Molesey and Dittons Neighbourhood Watch	Chairman: John Haberfield	020 8398 5256
Parents and Toddlers(St Nicholas church)	Information	020 8398 7211
Ripieno Choir	Nick Harris	020 8399 7231
Surrey Bell-ringers	Giles Andre	020 8979 1994

CLUBS

Albany Motor Yacht Club	Secretary	01784466651
All Saints Weston Lunch Club	Val Atkinson	020 8398 1117
Arts and Heritage Club	Carol Butcher	01932 867511
Cercle Francais d'Esher	Brigitte Tiller	01932 860842 brigitte@ptiller.com
Claygate Bridge Club	Hon. Secretary	020 8398 1710
Colets Health & Fitness	Giordano Orsini	020 8398 7108
Ditton Bridge Club	John Dagnall	02083984463

Dittons Skiff and Punting Club	Hon Secretary	07710 139417
Dittons & Hinchley Wood Royal British Legion	Hon Secretary	020 8398 6263
Ember Players (Drama) Ember Sports Club	Elaine Sesemann	07801 943392
Ember Sports Club	Zenda Hedges	07717 304146
Ember Sports Club: Bowls	Sylvia Jones	01932 788701
Ember Sports Club: Croquet	Dr. David Cooke	01932 862841
Ember Sports Club: Tennis	Annabel Duncan	0208 786 6318
Esher Bowling Club	Roger Cooper	01372 468109
Esher Bridge Centre	Paul Whicker	01372 460157
Esher 41 and Ex-Round Tablers' Club	Dr. R. Tudor-Williams	020 8398 0108
Folk Dance Club (St Nicholas)	David Ford	020 8715 2148
Long Ditton Cricket Club	Nigel Hardy	020 8398 8361
Long Ditton Garden Club	Heather Harvey	020 8398 2642
Model Railway Society (Hampton Court)	Secretary	01932 241224
Old Cranleigham Rugby Club	Tony Price	07801 837129
Old Cranleigham Hockey Club	Simon Marshall (Men)	07801 737695
	Helen Hawes (Ladies)	07771 557900
Probus club, Hinchley Wood & the Dittons	Edmund Woolley	020 8398 3581
Probus Club, Sandown	Julian Rye	020 8398 2463
River Club (BMYC)	David Walker	0870 460 3586
Rubber Bridge TD Lawn Tennis Club	Val	020 8399 9972
Surbiton Croquet Club	Alec Thomas	020 8398 2391
Surbiton Golf Club	Secretary	0208 398 3101
Surbiton Hockey Club	Secretary	020 8398 2401
Thames Ditton Lawn Tennis Club	Chris Lewis	07770 562569
Thames Ditton & Esher Golf Club	Mark Rodbard	020 8398 1551
Thames Ditton Squash Club (Colets)	Dave Peck	020 8398 7108
Thames Ditton Cricket Club	Howard Frish (Secretary)	07947 561449

SOCIETIES AND ASSOCIATIONS

Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance	Mrs Brenda Denby	0208 398 6054
Ember Choral	Linda Bridges	020 8399 5402
Esher and Molesey Garden Society	Jean Billett	01372 465961
Esher and District Amnesty International	Cherry Eddy (Campaigns)	0208 398 4377
Hampton Court Way Allotment Association	Lettings: Piotr Hennig	020 8398 5358
Long Ditton Youth Club	Toni Izard	07749 633973
Lynwood Allotment Society	Gill Vickers	020 8398 4870
Molesey and District Antiques Society	Linda Lambert	020 8398 1476
NADFAS (Decorative & Fine Arts) Kingston	Mrs. Valerie Windsor	020 8549 9967
Oxshott & Cobham Music Society	Cherry Eddy (Membership)	0208 398 4377 cherryeddy102@gmail.com
Soroptimist International (Kingston District)	Secretary: Pat Harman	020 8390 3507
Thames Ditton Women's Institute (W.I.)	Secretary	020 8398 8615

OTHER

Cancer Research UK	Mrs. Vivienne Harris	020 8398 6787
University of the Third Age (U3A)	Hon Sec Anne Brown	01932 881633
Vera Fletcher Hall	Lettings: Amelia Crafts	08456 528 529
	Membership: Sue Morris	020 8224 0980

Please contact the Editor to amend these listings

The Spring Season at the Vera Fletcher Hall continues



We hope we can entice you in to see and support some high-end theatre taking place at the Vera Fletcher Hall, your local theatre. Our Spring Season continues with the return of the ever-popular **Giles Shenton** (*Old Herbaceous*, *Three Men In A Boat*) this time inhabiting the role of iconic rogue Falstaff in **Much Ado About Falstaff** on Sunday 1 March. We are promised more Shakespearean insults than ever previously heard on a theatrical stage! We are again offering our **Fish, Chips and A Play Night** with the return of **James Pellow** and his new comedy **The Coronation of Rosie Pink**. Come and have a fish and chip supper and then sit back and enjoy the entertainment on Friday 27 March. In May we welcome back **Cyphers Theatre Company**, who last year brought us Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, this year with **Dickens' Great Expectations** on Saturday 2 May.

Following the enthusiastic reception of Calamity Jane last season's Film Night, we are screening another classic movie musical, **Seven Brides for Seven Brothers** - only £7.00 and you get a complimentary glass of house wine or a tea or coffee. Rounding off the Spring 2020 Season we are delighted to be hosting the launch of local talent **Yasmine and Peter Giles'** new album **Insights** on Saturday 16 May and the finale will be **Charles Court Opera's** production of **Gilbert and Sullivan's The Mikado**.

We are always looking out for new faces to volunteer and make it possible to continue running a full programme of events - from running the bar to supporting publicity to working front of house, if you love theatre and have some spare hours, we would love to hear from you at pr@verafletcherhall.co.uk.



Full details at
www.verafletcherhall.co.uk

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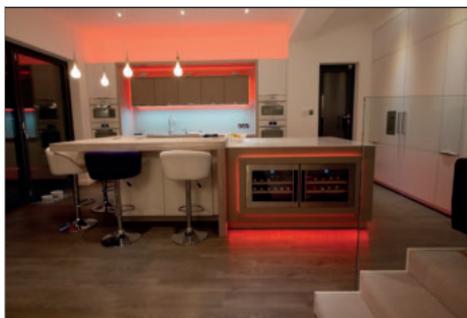
Email: lindanmlambert@aol.com

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OPEN MORNING

Senior School

Saturday 14 March, 9.30am - 12.30pm

Prep School visitor events also available. Please see our website for details.

