

THAMES DITTON TODAY

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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

Editorial Team

Libby MacIntyre & Sandra Dennis
editor@residents-association.com

Magazine Design

Guy Holman
14 Hayward Road, KT7 0BE
020 8398 1770

Distribution

David Youd
6 Riversdale Road
Thames Ditton KT7 0QL
020 8398 3216

Advertisement Manager

Verity Park
20 Portsmouth Avenue
Thames Ditton KT7 0RT
020 8398 5926

Contributors

You are welcome to submit articles or images. Please contact the Editorial Team well in advance of the next deadline February 5.

Advertisers

Thames Ditton Today is delivered to an influential 5000 households throughout Thames Ditton, Weston Green and East Molesey. Contact Verity Park for rates for full page, half and quarter page advertising.

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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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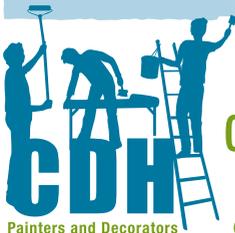
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THAMES DITTON AND WESTON GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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 residents. 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 six Residents' Association Councillors covering the two electoral wards we have a strong voice on Elmbridge Borough Council working with other Residents' Association 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, Nick Darby, represents our views at Surrey County Council.

President: Martin Wilberforce

7 River Avenue,
Thames Ditton 020 8398 4732

Vice President: Ruth Lyon,

11 Riversdale Road,
Thames Ditton 0208 398 3396

Surrey County Councillor: Nick Darby,

12 Basing Close, Thames Ditton 020 8398 2382

Thames Ditton Borough Councillors

Tricia W. Bland,
29 Station Rd, Thames Ditton 020 8339 0485
Caroline James,
Laurel Cottage, 20 High Street,
Thames Ditton 07970 672723
Karen Randolph,
Deepfield, Giggs Hill Road,
Thames Ditton 020 8398 5005

Hinchley Wood & Weston Green Borough Councillors

Tannia Shipley, 'Clinton House'
27 Lower Green Road, Esher 020 8398 2484
Janet Turner, 2 Montgomery Ave,
Hinchley Wood 020 8398 1565
Nigel Haig-Brown
53 Heathside, Esher 020 8398 4060

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33 Portsmouth Avenue, Thames Ditton 020 8224 2880
Membership Secretary: Peter Haynes
6 Onslow Gardens, Thames Ditton 020 8398 6019

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Health and Community: Karen Randolph (see above)
Planning: Rhodri Richards,
Ditton Cottage, Giggs Hill Road,
Thames Ditton 020 8398 4962
Highways, Drainage: Andrew Roberts,
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
February 2, 8pm – Venue / Zoom to be confirmed, see website for details
March 23, 8pm – Venue / Zoom to be confirmed, see website for details
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News from the Residents' Association to end November



We still remember in 2020

Whilst Remembrance Sunday was primarily observed at home this year, wreaths were still laid at the War Memorials in Thames Ditton and Weston Green. We missed the usual stirring turnout from the scouts on Gigs Hill Green but their presence was still very much in evidence with a very moving wreath.



The Scouts' remembrance wreath

Observing social distance, wreaths were also laid by the RA Chairman Graham Cook and by local RA Councillor Caroline James. In Weston Green RA Councillor Tannia Shipley laid a wreath in the Memorial Garden at All Saints Weston.

The day was still as moving as ever as the community remembered the war dead.

Signs of change?

We await more detail, but it seems that the government has listened to our concerns about changes to the planning system. The BBC is reporting that *“The government is set to revise its proposals for controversial planning reforms in England, after new housing targets prompted a backlash amongst some senior Conservative MPs.”*

Thank you to all who told local MP Dominic Raab their views and took the time to respond to the planning consultations. The RA's response to the consultation and correspondence about planning with Robert Jenrick and Dominic Raab can be found on our website www.residents-association.com

Fantastic Foodbank support

The local community continues to provide fantastic support for the East Elmbridge Foodbank and it is so important for this vital service at this troubled time. Did you know that most of the food distributed by foodbanks in the Trussell Trust network is donated by the public?

Visit www.eshercab.org.uk to see which food items are currently needed. There are a number of local drop-off points, including the George and Dragon in Thames Ditton High Street and All Saints' Church, Weston Green. You can also donate money via East Elmbridge Foodbank's **Localgiving** page.

Foodbank Co-ordinator Catherine Heavens said: *“Thanks to the generosity of the local community we are able to provide support to people who find themselves in financial need as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and other difficulties.”*

“We will be providing additional bags of festive fare and other goodies for all our clients and others who may be struggling at this time. We know that numbers will be much higher this year but we have plenty of stock and a great team of volunteers ready to bring some Christmas cheer over the festive season.”

The Foodbank works with local agencies. If you are struggling with your finances and do not have enough money to buy food and other essential items contact Citizens Advice on 01372 464770 or via their website www.eshercab.org.uk ; your child’s school or your local church or other support agency to ask for a referral.

If you have difficulty getting a referral, e-mail info@eastelmbridge.foodbank.org.uk or phone the Foodbank on 07908 777475 to get help.

Financial support in hard times

Surrey County Council has sent out a message to say that if you are struggling or feel that you are unable to make ends meet, it has a dedicated community helpline that residents in need of support can call: **0300 200 1008**. Deaf and hearing-impaired residents can text **0786 0053 465**.

Details of the financial support available can also be found by following the Coronavirus link on its webpage www.surreycc.gov.uk

Think 111 First

Our local health authority is introducing changes to the provision of urgent but not life-threatening health care. Patients are being asked to ‘Think 111 First’. From the beginning of December patients going through the 111 service who do need to attend an A & E Department will be given



Foodbank Supplies

a booked appointment. The aim is to enable patients to be seen more quickly and to have a better patient experience. This approach will reduce delays and help avoid overcrowding in the Emergency Departments, reducing the risk of spreading Covid 19.

The system has been successfully trialled elsewhere. Patient experience and outcomes will be carefully monitored.

Unitary Council, what is happening?

Surrey County Council’s (SCC’s) bid to form a county-wide Unitary Authority has been put on hold after Council Leader Tim Oliver was told, informally, that the Government will not be pushing for local government restructuring in the Devolution White Paper - due to be published in Autumn, but now postponed until the New Year or even later.

This issue has not gone away though and is likely to resurface later. So it is still important for residents to sign the RASSU petition (Residents Against a Single Surrey Unitary) to show the strength of opposition to SCC’s proposed mega-council and the consequent loss of local democracy. A minimum of 10,000 signatures is being aimed for in the petition.



Retail triumph

Thames Ditton has triumphed again in the Elmbridge 2020 Independent Retailer of the Year Awards, with more awards than any other town or village in Elmbridge.

Paull's Fruit & Veg won Best Grocer for the seventh consecutive year. CycleLink won Green Business of the Year for the second year running. Café Noir of Platform One, Thames Ditton Station and Thames Ditton Tennis Club won a 2020 High Street Hero of the year award. We are lucky to have such fantastic independent shops.

Planting at Thames Ditton station

The Autumn/Winter planting morning at Thames Ditton Station took place in October. Covid-19 guidelines were strictly adhered to and the morning went well. The volunteer team planted primroses, pansies, trailing ivy and spring bulbs in the planters and wheelbarrows. Thanks to all involved.

Thanks also to the Men In Sheds team who made new wooden planters over the summer and local artists who painted more bugs and bees for the artwork installation on the wildflower meadow.

River Ember

On November 5 a significant amount of foam, smelling highly of detergent, was sighted at the Mole/Ember weir. Patches of the foam rose over a meter in height with a significant amount breaking off and floating like icebergs towards the Thames. Foam that

has an odour of detergent is acknowledged by the EA as pollution.



Foam on the Ember in November

The foam is far more extensive than has been experienced in previous years. RA Councillors are investigating and the RA is pressing Thames Water and the Environment Agency for an explanation.

Environment Agency Flood Action Campaign

The Environment Agency is running a Flood Action Campaign: "Prepare. Act. Survive."

They are particularly trying to reach people who live in areas at high risk of flooding but who have not yet experienced it, as Covid-19 will exacerbate the challenge of recovering from flooding this winter. Visit our website www.residents-association.com to find out more.

Planning

The application to drastically reduce the retail space at **6 High Street, Thames Ditton (2020/0772)** has been refused and we hope to welcome a new retail outlet to the High Street soon.

The application to replace a bungalow with five two-bedroom flats at **1 Portsmouth Avenue (2020/1420)** has been withdrawn.

As we go to press there is no date for the planning committee meetings for **Merrywood, Weston Green (2020/1795)** or **Bransby Lodge, St Leonards Road (2020/0865)**.

At time of writing the appeal inquiry against the refusal of planning permission for development at Sandown Park Racecourse is under way. Visit our website www.residents-association.com or follow us on *twitter @TDresidents* to keep updated.

Work is still under way on the new Local Plan, although Covid-19 has caused some delays. It is likely to be published early next year.

Hospitality hopes

We have missed each other and our local pubs and restaurant during lockdown. Luckily, many of them have continued to serve the community with takeaway food and drink that has been much enjoyed.

Venues have gone to great lengths to keep their customers safe, e.g. the festive igloos set up at Marneys Village Inn. We are looking forward to them all being able to open their doors again from December 3, and to enjoying their hospitality again.



Marneys' innovative igloo for dining out

High Street Christmas

Sadly, the Thames Ditton High Street Christmas Fair will not take place this year due to Covid-19 restrictions.

However, we are delighted that the **High Street Christmas Lights** are going to be up, spreading some much-needed festive cheer!

And we are hoping that the Christmas Farmers' Market on December 20 will be able to go ahead to bring a festive feel to some last-minute Christmas shopping.

Message from Canada

We were delighted to receive an e-mail from Canada to the Thames Ditton Today inbox from someone who had found us online when researching his family history. It is good to know that the stories we publish get around!

And on a lighter note ...

Many thanks to readers Caroline Denoon Duncan and Sive Oke for drawing our attention to the verse on page 11, as seen in the Slightly Foxed magazine.

Dates for your diary

Christmas Farmers' Market

Mercer Close Car Park (opposite the Library) December 20.

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

A Pageant of English Verse

I won't arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
I'll sanitize the doorknob and make a cup of tea.

I won't go down to the sea again; I won't go out at all,
I'll wander lonely as a cloud from the kitchen to the hall.

There's a green-eyed yellow monster to the north of Kathmandu,
But I shan't be seeing him just yet and nor, I think, will you.

While the dawn comes up like thunder on the road to Mandalay,
I'll make my bit of supper and eat it off a tray.

I shall not speed my bonnie boat across the sea to Skye',
Or take the rolling English road from Birmingham to Rye.

About the woodland, just right now, I am not free to go
To see the Keep Out posters or the cherry hung with snow,

And no, I won't be travelling much, within the realms of gold,
Or get me to Milford Haven. All that's been put on hold.

Give me your hands, I shan't request, albeit we are friends,
Nor come within a mile of you, until this trial ends.

Anon



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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

Update from Nick Darby, Surrey County Councillor



As I write, we are at the end of our first week of the second lockdown. It feels an age already. We can but hope that by sticking to the rules, we will be able to enjoy Christmas with friends and family.

In the meantime, so many continue to give generously to local foodbanks. It is tragic that by August, 4,790 residents in Elmbridge were on Universal Credit, an increase of 257% since February, the highest in Surrey.

One more plea, can those eligible for a free flu jab book in at their GP surgery as soon as they can! This is so important at present.

Recent road work on Hampton Court Way, at the Winters Bridge lights and beyond, and the Summer Road section by the Swan towards Riversdale Road has been well received. I am delighted that, following much persuasion from me, Surrey Highways has confirmed that the second section of Weston Green Road, Giggs Hill Road, the raised table on Watts Road by the Library, Imber Park Road, and Ferry Road, are scheduled for resurfacing before the end of this financial year; Sadly, many roads are still in poor condition. Watch this space!

On Watts Road, I am hoping a small tweak to the parking and double yellow lines will reduce the frequent gridlock and stop the dangerous practice of footway driving. The tweak involves splitting in two the double yellow line section by the entrance to Linden Close, but not reducing the overall available parking. This needs both Elmbridge Committee approval and consultation, hopefully early next year. My thanks to my RA colleague Caroline James for pointing out the disappeared Give Way road markings



Surrey County Councillor, (The Dittons) Nick Darby by the George & Dragon, now repainted following my report to Surrey Highways

Sadly, mental health remains an important, and often ignored, issue. Following a list of 20 recommendations by the Mental Health Task Group I chaired, by the time you read this a Surrey Mental Health Summit will have taken place, bringing together a number of stakeholders. I am determined this will be more than a talking shop. One of the current initiatives is for a Mental Health Practitioner to be attached to each GP Surgery. Initial indications are really positive - as always, early help for mental health sufferers is vital.

And finally, news of County Hall in Kingston. Surrey County Council will have left by the end of December, relocating to offices previously owned by Canon UK on the outskirts of Reigate. For me, it will eventually mean a very different journey than the 10 mins from Thames Ditton. I expect County Hall will eventually be converted largely for residential use. Time will tell!

Wishing all a happy and safe Christmas and 2021.

**Nick Darby – SCC Leader of the
Opposition**

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The Gift of Giving



smiles2smiles volunteers Tracy, Terry, Ananda, Clare B, Clare S and Lesley

The Gift of Giving

Many people are currently facing hardship and this winter, and Christmas in particular, will be especially tough. Some are experiencing difficulties for the first time because of the Covid-19 epidemic. These are people who a year ago would never have expected to find themselves struggling to afford food or Christmas presents for their children. Our community is never short of kindness and generosity So if you would like to offer support to someone local who is in need, here are two organisations providing help where your contribution is welcome.

smiles2smiles

smiles2smiles began in 2012 when Thames Ditton resident Clare Bell was out walking. She came across a lady crying because her husband had been made redundant and they couldn't afford Christmas. Clare went home and with the help of friends and some donated gifts they put together and delivered a Christmas package for this family - everything they needed for Christmas, including a Christmas tree.

This incident inspired Clare to found smiles2smiles. Today she has 11 volunteers working with her - “Clare and Ananda, Leticia, Wendy, Tracy, Sarah, Terry, Felicity, Helen, Lesley and Louise” - and they fundraise, collect donations of gifts, package and distribute them. The donations are put into gift bags or hampers and distributed to those in need who are nominated to smiles2smiles by local doctors' surgeries, churches, Sure Start Centres and four local Women's' Refuges.



Megan, Frankie, Layla and Skye-Blue all helping the cause

Clare said: *“We also provide gifts to anyone on the Elmbridge Meals on Wheels programme who doesn’t have any living relatives and also 15-20 bags go to the Ashford Hospital mental health ward for anyone who is admitted over Christmas. We make sure that every child in the four Refuge Centres gets at least one present for Christmas. We provide gifts for adults as well as children and for all sorts of reasons, including for those who have been recently bereaved or had a bad year.”*

All the gifts are donated, some from “mufti days” at Thames Ditton Infant school, Hinchley Wood primary and secondary, and other schools. Each gift bag contains a card handmade by a child at Thames Ditton Infants school and there is a Gift List on Amazon. *“Usually we distribute 40 hampers and 65 gift bags at Christmas, this year we have to provide 167 to meet our nominations list. It’s a big increase so we would welcome more donations.”*

To find a list of the gifts that are needed and to make a donation please search for smiles2smiles on Facebook or make a donation via their Amazon Gift List, where there are gifts available to donate from £1 to £25 www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/ZWYK85THOW6F

Free My Meal

Free My Meal was set up by Surrey mum Hayley Steere in August in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and aims to connect those needing a meal with those willing to cook one. Hayley says: *“I began thinking about how things may have been different had I still been a single parent family and struggling to survive during the current climate. I wouldn’t have used a foodbank or community fridge.”*



Free My Meal founder, Hayley Steere

Free My Meal is a simple and easy exchange based on trust and goodwill. Using social media, people sign up to a private Free My Meal group as a ‘recipient’ or a ‘cook’. Cooks post available meals on the group and recipients request the meal. Delivery is arranged privately between the parties. Free My Meal does not provide meals itself; it simply forms connections enabling people to find one another. The service is private and suitable for anyone who finds themselves in need of a meal without the means to buy the food to make one. There is no charge for the meals provided. Anyone can join with no fear of judgement or discrimination. Some people have found a meal within an hour of needing one.

Within the first week of set-up 700 people volunteered meals and now there are 60+ groups and 14,000 members operating locally, there is even an Elmbridge group!

If you would like to offer a free meal or to receive one, visit Free My Meal on Facebook or www.freemymeal.co.uk to find your local group.

Sandra Dennis

“Weston Green lured me here”- Introducing Gill Coates



RA Executive member Gill Coates collecting Meals on Wheels

When Gill Coates idly looked around the estate agents’ windows when meeting with friends for lunch back in 2000, she was struck by the width of the gardens enjoyed by the houses of Weston Green. With two young boys in tow, who were forever kicking their football into their neighbours’ gardens in Teddington, she suddenly saw ‘football pitch’ and that was it!

When venturing out for the groceries on their first weekend in their new home, a mother duck and her ducklings came waddling down from Marneys’ Pond, and Gill joyfully felt like she had not only got her bigger garden, but also had moved to the ‘country’.

With a busy career as a director of a PR consultancy combined with bringing up

her family, she had little time to take much notice of local issues until her mother became elderly and moved into Imber Close. This is when Gill started to take a keen interest in the provision of local social care and got some insight into people’s lives outside her own. Then her mother had a fall and moved in with Gill and her family, prompting Gill to give up her career to be her mother’s full-time carer.

‘Local’ started to matter to Gill ‘a lot’ and with her natural curiosity and enthusiasm, she started to get involved. First, friends working at the local Citizens Advice Bureau persuaded her to join them as a Trustee to advise them with their marketing, PR and communications. You can read more about *Citizens Advice* in *pandemic times* on

page 27 in this magazine. Then, since the lockdown earlier this year, Gill volunteered to deliver Meals on Wheels, a service which she is almost evangelical about. Gill said: *“I can’t spend long with each customer but we have a little chat which I can tell brightens their day. It’s so rewarding because in return it brightens mine. We are very lucky to have a Council that still provides this service locally.”*

And now Gill is a new member of the Residents’ Association Executive, looking after Weston Green’s interests.

Her path to this new role was through Citizens Advice, which she represented at an open public meeting with Elmbridge Borough Council in 2019. When the then Leader of Elmbridge Council didn’t quite answer her question, Gill got herself noticed when she had the audacity to publicly tell him so. Go girl! No wonder Tannia Shipley

from the Residents’ Association asked Gill if she would be interested in joining them. As Gill turns her spotlight on local issues that matter to people in Weston Green, residents can be assured that she will leave no stone unturned in her determination to get a fair hearing.

About her various volunteering activities, Gill said: *“I think that whatever you have done in your life you can probably find an organisation out there that needs your skills on a voluntary basis. So, don’t sell yourself short, you don’t have to be outgoing, have a professional background or any particular experience for lots of roles. I don’t really put myself forward for things, but I just can’t hold back from helping people if they need it.”* Sounds as if Gill is that ‘must have’ party person who at 3am will help you sweep up afterwards.

Julie Royce

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Think Christmas, Shop Local



Local presents under the 2020 Christmas Tree?

With the Festive Season upon us, you may still be wondering what to get your loved ones for Christmas. After a very difficult year it is important that we support local businesses - and what better way is there to do this than by sourcing Christmas presents from the shops we are so lucky to have in Thames Ditton and the surrounding areas. Hopefully all our shops will be allowed to reopen in December, luckily many of them are also able to trade online.

Here are some ideas about what our brilliant local businesses have to offer...

For the gin lover out there, what better way to celebrate than with our very own Thames Ditton Gin. There are now three varieties: Original, Pink and the Special Edition Secret 2020 Lockdown Batch. All of these are available on www.thamesdittongin.com, at the Farmers' Market and at the pop-up shop in the High Street. Why not invest in some Thames

Ditton Gin glasses to complete the gift?

Another local gin maker is the mastermind behind familiar favourites Number Ninety Seven located on Maple Road, Surbiton, and the recently opened Hideaway, found at Thames Ditton Marina. The Good Life Gin Trio Box Set features their Original Gin, Barrel Aged Gin and Pink Gin, available at www.thegoodlifemerch.co.uk as well as in both restaurants.

For the bearded, moustachioed and even smooth-faced men of Thames Ditton we have Kingston-based business 'Norse'. Their best-selling beard oil, beard shampoo and aftershave balm are all available at the View Gallery and Gift Shop on the High Street www.view-gifts.com

Local artist Lisa Tolley's fine art prints depict beautiful local areas, with three Thames Ditton prints and more than 15 other local areas to choose from. All are available at www.lisatolley.co.uk. You can also contact Lisa for her bespoke prints - her house portrait commissions have been extremely popular this year.

One Sunday, during September, I went on the Molesey Art Trail, organised by Surrey Artists' Open Studios. It was so delightful to see some of the talented artists we have living in our local area.

I purchased a beautiful leaf-shaped plate from Keya D'Sa, who specialises in ceramics. Her website is www.keyadsa.com Geoff Thiel is another ceramist who focuses mainly on Raku (Japanese style pottery) but he also had some beautiful stoneware and porcelain pieces. Geoff's pottery can be found at www.geoffthielceramics.co.uk

Margie Haslewood paints beautiful landscapes and had a great selection of greetings cards; she can be contacted via her website www.art4myhome.com. Liz Bernard at lizbernard.co.uk uses acrylics to create both representational and abstract contemporary paintings.

For an amazing list of local artists from all over Surrey all art enthusiasts should visit www.Surreyopenstudios.org.uk

Vicky O'Leary, based in Thames Ditton, makes beautiful embroidery and has wonderful things on her website vickyolearytextiles.com Another Thames Ditton-based Vicky has a beautiful online gallery of pieces at www.vickyoldfield.co.uk

Chocoholics are spoiled for choice. You can head to Bachmanns at Winter's Bridge on the Portsmouth Road for award-winning chocolate products, all hand-made on their premises, or pick up luxury Belgium chocolates at View in Thames Ditton High Street.

If you are opting to create a festive hamper there is a range of outlets in the High Street to help, from organic goodies at Organic



Chocoholics are spoiled for choice

Nest (including some wonderful honeys and jams) to speciality cheeses at the Lime Tree and the best of basics (including booze) from Budgens and Thames Food and Wine. Yuletide flowers from the Secret Garden can provide the icing on the cake!

This festive season is the ideal opportunity to celebrate both Christmas and the local businesses Thames Ditton has to offer. Happy shopping!

Emily Batchelor



Festive flowers from the Secret Garden

Elmbridge Museum needs your help to prepare an exhibition on Elmbridge High Streets

It will track the evolution of the High Street from the 50s, 60s and 70s to the present day. It is looking for memories, photos, and any other items – home videos, recordings, artwork, posters, objects – if it is related to the High Street.

Please contact Elmbridge Museum at **01372 474 568** or email ebcmuseum@elmbridge.gov.uk if you would like to take part.

Closing date for submissions: 21 January 2021.

www.elmbridgemuseum.org.uk/whats-on for more details

The life and times of Father Christmas



For about 900 years Christmas has been celebrated in St Nicholas' church in Thames Ditton. St Nicholas himself eventually became known as 'Father Christmas' and stories of his life as a saint are writ large in the stained glass of the church.

When and where was he born?

Nicholas was Greek, born around AD 280, in Patara - a flourishing Christian city on the Mediterranean coast (now part of the Turkish riviera).

What do we know about his family?

He was an only child born to parents who were Christians and wealthy. Their wealth paid for him to have a good education and he could read the scriptures from an early age. Sadly, both his parents died when he was only 16 and he was left in the care of his uncle, who was an Abbot at a monastery.

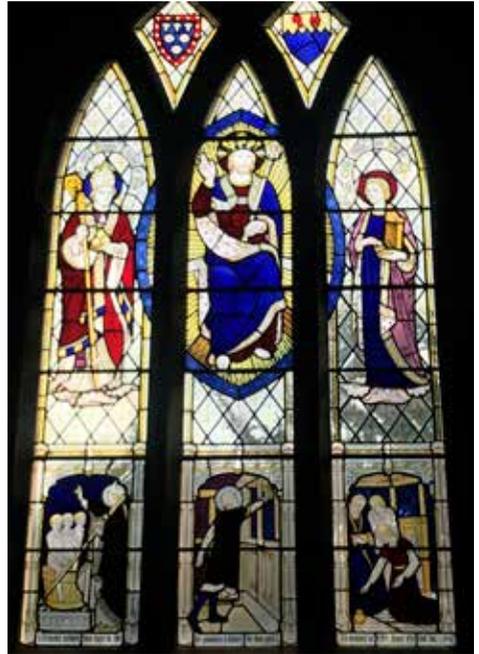
What do we know about his early life?

Heavily influenced by his past as an orphan and his reading of the scriptures, he was determined to use his inherited wealth to help other orphans and all young children, as well as the poor. Very soon he began to give it away, usually in disguise so that he could give alms in secret.

In his late 20's he became Bishop of Myra (a town close to Patara). Life as a bishop was tough during the time as the Roman world was ruled by Emperor Diocletian, who relentlessly persecuted Christians. Nicholas was exiled, imprisoned and tortured and was on the brink of martyrdom. When Diocletian died, Constantine the Great

became Emperor and was more tolerant of Christianity. However, Diocletian's rule left great division in the church and Nicholas took a firm stand to defend church doctrine.

How does the church tell his story?



Stained glass above the altar

One of his most famous acts of charity is depicted in the stained-glass window above the altar. The two lower panels on the right show him providing money for the dowries of the daughters of an upper-class man who had lost all his wealth. Without dowries the girls would not be able to marry and most likely would have been sold into slavery or prostitution. He secretly tossed three bags of gold coins through the window of the girls' house to save them from this plight.



St Nicholas providing the dowry



Receiving the gift



St Nicholas saving the picked children

You will note he is not wearing a red outfit, with white hair and beard, but legend has it that the bags miraculously landed in the shoes (or stockings) of each girl.

The lower far left panel illustrates one of his miracles that was very popular during the Middle Ages. It shows Saint Nicholas with three naked children sitting in a wooden barrel at his feet.

Loosely, the story goes that during a terrible famine a malicious butcher lured three little children into his house, where he killed them. He placed their remains in a barrel to cure, planning to sell them off as ham. Nicholas, visiting the region to care for the hungry, saw through the butcher's lies and resurrected the pickled children by making the Sign of the Cross.

How did he become ‘Father Christmas’?

Following his death on December 6 AD 343 he became known as a patron of children and magical gift bringer, primarily because of those two great stories from his life. He fell out of favour after the Protestant Reformation but he remained an important figure in Holland. Dutch immigrants took him to America in the 1700s where he went through a number of transformations to become the plump, jolly Santa riding a reindeer-driven sleigh that we know today.

St Nicholas now

He continues to be revered around the world independent of his Christmas connection, and he is the protector of a diverse bunch of people. For example, the medieval image of St Nicholas shown with the barrel led some to conclude that he was the patron saint of brewers!

He is also the patron saint of pawnbrokers who use the symbol of three golden balls to signify their business, and if you look at the tall stained glass panel on the left above the altar, or the second stained glass panel on the left as you enter the church, you’ll see St Nicholas with three golden balls balancing on top of his bible – a symbol of his help to



St Nicholas, a patron saint for many the poor and in particular the three young sisters’ dowries.

Sailors, merchants, archers, repentant thieves and prostitutes are all part of his patronage.

So on Christmas Eve, as we search the skies for that sleigh “*with a little old driver so lively and quick*”, we can reflect on the real life story of ‘*St Nick*’.

Julie Royce



A wintry St Nicholas

Memories of Winters past



Winter 2020 is shaping up to be very different. Here are some reminders of winters past. If you are a recent arrival, you have not seen the local area look like this!



Thames Ditton High Street 2010



A snow lady taking shape



The post getting through



A wintry Weston Green February 2009



Giggs Hill Green February 2009



We are missing the Thames Ditton High Street Christmas Fair in 2020



A winter view of All Saint's Weston Green



Snowball with a chance in hell?

Many thanks to everyone who sent pictures. If you have pictures of winters past you would like to share please send them to editor@residents-association.com



A Christmas Window.



Canine capers in the snow

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Citizens Advice in pandemic times



The pandemic that has swept the nation this year has forced many organisations to do things differently. This has certainly been the case for Citizens Advice Esher & District, which, until the lockdown, had always operated a drop-in service for clients at their office in Harry Fletcher House behind Esher High Street.

Elaine Bissell, who took over as CEO of Citizens Advice Esher & District in January, says: *“The lockdown presented real problems for us. We knew that local people would be needing our help more than ever, but face-to-face interviews were impossible, so we had to move everything to remote working. That was no easy task for us. Many people do not realise that we are a charity and most of our advisers are volunteers. Fortunately, our team is highly skilled and dedicated so we were able to set up a small group to work from home when the lockdown started.*



Valerie Thompson, volunteer advisor and fundraiser, lockdown-working from home

“We were also fortunate to receive financial grants from the CAF Coronavirus Emergency Fund, National Lottery After the Lockdown and Surrey Community Foundation Coronavirus Fund, which meant we could buy the equipment necessary for advisers to work remotely and provide additional training on the government’s new measures to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic. Nearly all our volunteers were able to continue to support us in some way, whether advising from home, delivering foodbank parcels, helping us to raise funds and communicating our changed working practices, so we lost very few people and have been able to continue to offer the same opening hours, albeit a far more limited service, by telephone and online.”

It is not the same however, and the team were anxious to get back to face-to-face interviews as soon as possible. *“Citizens Advice is here for everyone and it is important to remember that some of the most vulnerable people in our society simply cannot use telephone and online services. They may be homeless, unable to afford a computer, unable to read, or English may not be their first language. And often we simply have to meet people because of the kind of service they require. A telephone and online service is not enough, so we are grateful to the Bridgepoint COVID Fund who kindly gave us a grant to make our office Covid 19-secure. We opened for our first appointments in early October and have been able to help clients resolve issues they have been grappling*

with throughout the pandemic” says Elaine. “Our next project is to look at offering video appointments to allow us to increase the number of clients we can see safely.”

In leafy Elmbridge it is sometimes hard to imagine that there is much of a call for free advisory services, but Elaine is quick to point out that the crisis is affecting everyone. “Sadly, we have seen more people coming to us for advice on employment issues and redundancy and we have dealt with a number of consumer issues including refunds for cancelled holidays. We have also had more requests for help with Universal Credit and debt advice. There is help available out there and our advisers are highly skilled in helping people get the support they are entitled to.”

So skilled, in fact, that in the last accounting year the public value of Citizens Advice Esher & District was calculated to be over

£5,000,000. “It is an astonishing figure for a small independent charity,” says Elaine. “It includes £1,500,000 directly into clients pockets from debts written off or additional income, over £100,000 savings to Elmbridge Council from preventing 72 evictions and, of course, the notional value of over 17,000 hours of volunteer time from our fabulous team.”

Citizens Advice was set up as a national network 70 years ago to offer free, impartial advice to anyone who needs it. The pandemic may have changed the delivery in Elmbridge, but Citizens Advice Esher & District’s mission is unaltered. If you need our advice, just call on **01372 464770** or complete the online form on the Contact Us page of the website, www.eshercab.org.uk.



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Surprise Sparrowhawk visit



Look who dropped in for dinner ...

When you live next to a river you get used to the visits of a wide variety of birds, animals and fish but, every now and again, you get taken by surprise - and that's exactly what happened recently to Nell and Tony Nockles who live next to the River Ember in East Molesey.

The couple regularly sit at their breakfast table looking out on to their garden where they have a special metal frame with a fat ball suspended inside as food that only allows smaller birds, like sparrows, blue tits and robins, to help themselves to the nourishing nibble. Larger creatures, such as parakeets, squirrels, magpies, blackbirds and others who regularly visit their garden cannot get through the small gaps that

allow entry for smaller birds. Having the opportunity to watch the antics of the small birds and the sometimes-desperate attempts of the larger birds and animals to get at the fat ball is one of life's pleasures.

In early October the couple, who have lived in Molesey for over 50 years, saw something that took them both by surprise. They noticed that for some reason there were no small sparrows at all squabbling over the feast left out for them. It suddenly became clear why they were absent because there, perched on top of the feeding-ball frame, was a magnificent sparrowhawk, which looked straight at the two humans as if to say "*Who scared my breakfast away?*" On a normal autumn day there would have

been between 10 and 15 small birds in and around the metal frame competing with each other to get a tasty morsel. Clearly they saw the hawk and disappeared into the surrounding bushes.

The visiting bird of prey stayed around just long enough to check that there were no further easy meals around and this gave Tony the opportunity to snap a few photos before the hawk flew off to find more food for its family. Following the hawk's visit Nell and Tony hoped that the hawk hadn't frightened the entire small bird population. Thankfully, very soon afterwards the squabbling continued, but looking back it was noticeable that there were far fewer birds hovering around the fat ball than there were before. Upon reflection, it seems that Nell and Tony have been feeding not only their small bird population, but also the hawk!



Tony Nockles has now retired as the RA Executive representative for the East Molesey part of Thames Ditton ward.

If this role would appeal to you please contact chairman@residents-association.com



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Meet your distributors – Sarah Harmer



Sarah Harmer exploring Tanners Hatch in the Surrey Hills

Your copy of Thames Ditton Today was put through your letterbox by one of our team of loyal volunteer distributors. Who are they and what are they up to when they are not pounding the streets of Thames Ditton and Weston Green delivering magazines?

Sarah Harmer delivers to Sterry Drive and Elsworthy

When and why did you move to Thames Ditton?

We moved here in 1996 because Charles and I were getting married. I was living with

friends in Hersham and Charles was *living* on a canal boat and there wasn't room for me! Initially we lived in Queens Road. By 2006 we had three children, so we moved to the Davies Estate.

How did you become a distributor?

I took over from someone in Queens Road and when we moved there was a gap to fill for Sterry Drive and Elsworthy. I support the aims of the Residents' Association. It's good there is a locally based group interested in our area.

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Can you give us a ‘potted biography’?

I was born in Nottingham but we travelled around a lot because Dad was a doctor. We even lived in Barbados for four years. I moved to London as a student. I studied Biology at Imperial College followed by a post graduate course at the City University to become a Speech and Language Therapist. I mainly worked for the NHS but six years ago I started working independently. I see young people, aged between two and 19, who have speech, language and communication needs. When I was 27 I did a four-month overland trip from London to Kathmandu and it was then that I first met my husband. I went on to work in Australia and Barbados before I came back and got married. I have three daughters. They are all at university now.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I attend Pilates classes run by Lisa McAuliffe at the Vera Fletcher Hall. I swim regularly at the Hurst pool. I enjoy walking and at the moment we are working our way through a book of Surrey walks. We own several canoes which we use on the Thames and over the years I have done lots

of camping.

I help with the children’s theatre performances at the Vera Fletcher Hall. It’s a family affair as Charles and all my girls have helped serving drinks and snacks and with the clearing and cleaning of the hall as well. The productions are fantastic and of such a high professional standard. I am really looking forward to them being able to start again

I am a Unit Helper with 2nd Thames Ditton Guides. Guiding offers the girls so many experiences, choices and opportunities. There are special events such as the Big Gig pop concert at Wembley Arena and Scoutabout, where Guides and Scouts camp and participate in a multitude of exciting craft and outdoor activities. They also contribute to the local community such as the Remembrance Sunday service at the Giggs Hill Green Memorial and running a stall at the Dittons Fair.

Are there any Christmas traditions you enjoy locally?

We always take the Guides skating at Hampton Court – and I skate too! It always feels that Christmas is really here when we go.

Distributor Sarah Harmer was in conversation with Pat Cooke

Quick Fire Questions

Beer or Wine?

Wine! I don’t like beer – even when my husband makes it!

Eat out or eat in?

Eat out. I love all the local restaurants especially Maisie and Ditto. We are spoilt for choice.

Vacation or staycation

I love to go to different countries. We have family in Australia, Spain and the USA. Our favourite family holiday is skiing.

Cinema or Theatre

I love the theatre and we go to a musical every year.

What would you miss if you had to move away from Thames Ditton?

My friends and the community spirit here. It’s the perfect location for London, the parks, the countryside and the river.



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A busy year for Ajax Sea Scouts - despite Covid



The Sea Scouts new wheelchair-accessible boat

It has been another busy year for Ajax Sea Scouts. Covid-19 reduced our programme for Scouts but also gave us some breathing space to complete a number of key building projects.

In September 2019 we were awarded £26,000 from Elmbridge Council via the local Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) towards three key projects: disabled toilets; unisex toilets and a new perimeter fence. With matched funding from Ajax these projects have now been completed. CIL funding was key to delivering these projects, particularly given that all fundraising ceased in 2020.

Working with Warspite Sea Scouts (Stoneleigh, Surrey) we also commissioned a wheelchair accessible boat to provide access for all.

Within the constraints of government and Scout Association guidelines we did manage to get our Scouts on the water; and noted how popular the river was driven by a combination of warm summer and

significant increases in the number of people working from home.

It's hard to give a firm number but we are estimating that in 2020 something like 400 plus local residents bought either a Stand-Up Paddle Board or inflatable kayak, often both.

We expect this trend to continue which will place increased pressure on green spaces and parking next to the Thames. One of our aims for the next 18 months is to work with local residents and Elmbridge Council to increase the productivity of the Ditton Reach car park which for the past forty years has been used to dump old boats and trailers. Given the pressure on Albany Reach it makes sense to explore and encourage the use of alternative launch sites.

One event very close to our hearts is Remembrance Sunday which is cherished by all local Scout groups. All of our Scouts go to great efforts to look smart and join our community for this important ceremony, which sadly wasn't possible this year.

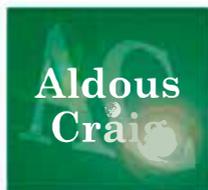
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Ajax Sea Scouts at 2019 Remembrance Sunday

Here's hoping things get back to normal and we will see you on the water before long.

For further information, please see www.ajax.org.uk

Andrew Roberts



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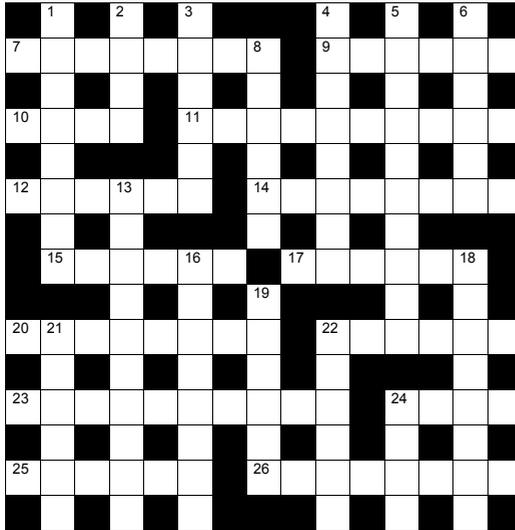
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Winter Crossword



by Howard and Bob Cruthers

The first three correct entries randomly opened after the closing date of February 5 2021 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 Many riot mix up becomes threatening (anag) (8)
- 9 Goddess of the dawn (6)
- 10 Lupine gobbling of food? (4)
- 11. Related to energy, resulting from charged particles (10)
- 12 Unnerve baby's toy? (6)
- 14 Shed staff (8)
- 15 Unmistakably (6)
- 17 Bill Gates, or Jeff Bezos, for example (6)
- 20 Mangled triangle is essential (anag) (8)
- 22 Respectful imitation (6)
- 23 Crawlers (10)
- 24 Snug teapot cover? (4)
- 25 Forthrightness (6)
- 26 Deer (8)

DOWN CLUES

- 1 Outdated creature? (8)
- 2 Vulgar or unfashionable (4)
- 3 Elzie Crisler Segar's 1920s cartoon character (6)
- 4 Tom Hanks' 2000 survival film (8)
- 5 Come up with new ideas, during bad weather? (10)
- 6 Counterfeit (6)
- 8 Output, or gives (6)
- 13 Wrist bones, or parallel-sided shapes (10)
- 16 Hunting dogs (8)
- 18 Atomic bomb target (8)
- 19 Not so pretty tool for smoothing wood? (6)
- 21 Oppose (6)
- 22 Reaction(s) to pantomime villain, perhaps (6)
- 24 Strike, with a Wood? (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 Cranleigh Rugby Club	Tony Price	07801 837129
Old Cranleigh 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
Probus Club of Molesey	Roger Marlow	0208 398 5460
River Club (BMYC)	David Walker	0870 460 3586
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
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

A warm festive cocktail



The masterminds behind No 97 have created this festive cocktail that you can recreate at home, and perhaps drink around a firepit!

Sloe It Down

Ingredients:

50ml Sloe Gin	Orange Zest
100ml Apple Juice	Lemon Zest
5ml Honey	2x Cloves
1 x Cinnamon Stick	1x Star of Anise

Method:

Heat the Apple Juice, Honey, Cinnamon, Orange Zest, Lemon Zest, Cloves and Star Anise. Bring up to a simmer (do not boil) Pour into a teacup or vessel of your choice. Add your 50ml of Sloe Gin.

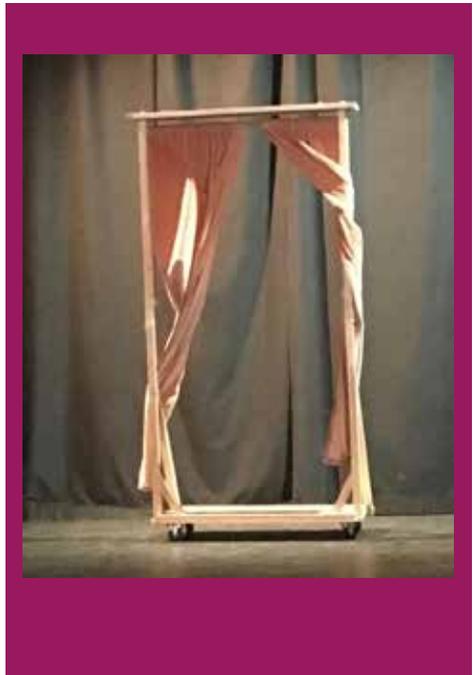
Voila!



We remain paused for our theatre activities and, although many of our classes had tentatively restarted, we are back to being completely closed for the moment.

We have, though, been continuing work on our new website, which you should be seeing in the next few weeks. We are always happy to hear from our hall users and audiences and so if you have comments to make on the new site or a request for when we are able to re-open the theatre, please do contact us at pr@verafletcherhall.co.uk.

In the meantime, let's hope that we can emerge in December from this forced hibernation and enjoy some kind of Christmas.



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