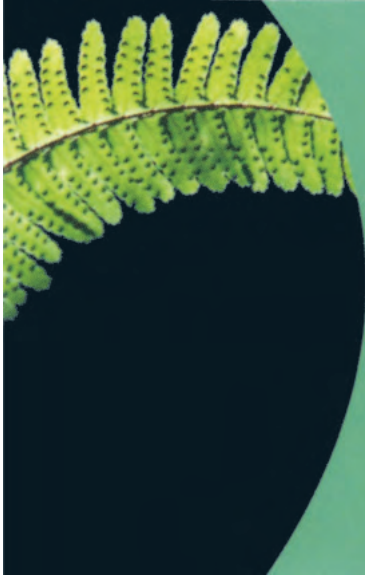


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THAMES DITTON TODAY

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

Published quarterly since Spring 1970

Autumn 2010

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Cover photo: *We remember the fallen. Rev. Martin Hussey officiates at the ceremony on Giggs Hill Green. This year's remembrance will be on Sunday 14 November – Keith Evetts*

www.residents-association.com

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

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THAMES DITTON & WESTON GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



About the Association

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

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

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

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

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Planning: Graham Cooke
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THE NEXT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION OPEN MEETING IS

TUESDAY 9 NOVEMBER AT 8.00PM

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News From the Residents' Association



21 May – 12 September

Mostly a quiet summer, with a reduction in some areas of crime and less antisocial behaviour in Thames Ditton and Weston Green (but some in nearby Molesey and Hinchley Wood affecting the area statistics). There have been continuing cold-calling and other scams in the area, on the doorstep and by telephone and mail, aimed at gullible residents – particularly the elderly. We say farewell to PC – now Sergeant – Andy Grapsas, Neighbourhood Specialist Officer for the Dittons and Hinchley Wood, who with the right mix of patience, persistence, tact and firmness has done a very good job of establishing the Neighbourhood Team, responding to residents' concerns and countering crime and antisocial behaviour with several notable results. Andy moves on promotion to lead the Neighbourhood Team at Woking, and is being replaced by PC Katie Kennedy.

Subject to the results of a consultation exercise, East Molesey Police station, visited by just one member of the public each hour it is open, will be sold and by the end of this year our Neighbourhood Team will likely be based in Esher at the Civic Centre where they will have office space, a reception desk, be accessible for more hours in a more frequently-visited location, and have their Council Community Safety partners close at hand. The police are still considering forward bases elsewhere among the community.

Other forces round the country are facing drastic cuts reported in the national press but years of financial stringency for Surrey Police have given them resilience. While there may be some cuts in Surrey's back-office staff, cuts in the number of officers and PCSOs and especially in the neighbourhood policing units, which are notably effective, are not thought likely. Issue of hand-held devices and rationalisation of procedure should mean that officers spend more time in the community, and less time doing paperwork in the office.

We've learned meanwhile that during the summer one of our PCSOs, on his own initiative, lined up free golf instruction for certain local youths in the hope of engaging them in constructive activities. Alas, despite professions of interest not one took up this admirable invitation.

Thames Ditton Centre for the Community

The former Ember Centre took up its new home and title at Thames Ditton Hall in early June. There is provision also for youngsters at the Hall. Facilities are good. This is a satisfactory outcome for the centre, the community and the Hall in which everyone can take pleasure. Nonagenarian June Spencer OBE, the oldest surviving member (Peggy Archer) of the original cast of 'The Archers,' did the honours. It was good to see the



June Spencer OBE – Peggy Woolley née Archer in 'The Archers' opened the Centre

Elmbridge leadership acknowledging the contributions of several key figures to the development of the Centre, not least our Cllr. Ruth Lyon; while resident Gerry Mitchell MBE (who with her late husband began the Weston Green Over-60s Club a very long time ago) also paid tribute to the role of the Residents' Association over the years in protecting the interests of the elderly and in securing the future of the Hall.

NHS and General Practices

Residents will be concerned that despite the current government's commitment to preserve front-line services in the NHS and to ring-fence, even increase, spending, the Primary Care Trust in Surrey is to slash the budget by

£100 million and funding for many practices in East Elmbridge will be severely affected. The excellent and effective practice at Giggs Hill Surgery, which the regional NHS has encouraged to invest in expanded facilities over the past few years and which caters for around 7,500 patients, will now receive funds for just 5,700 patients. Predictably, services will suffer, and the practice warns that there is even a possibility it may be rendered inviable.

County: Parking, drains, cycle path

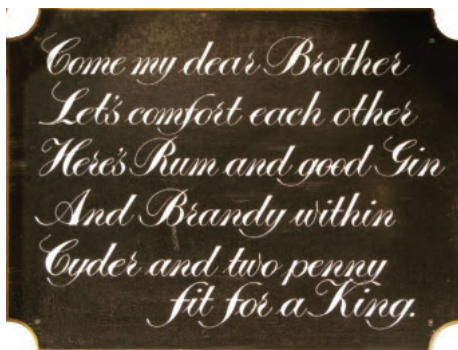
Surrey postponed the final phase of statutory consultation on the **proposed parking scheme for Thames Ditton**. Funds have now been found for it to go ahead. This is foreseen for November-December. News that the council has raised charges for on-street parking in Walton by 35% to £5 for 4 hours in order to 'drive shoppers back into the car parks' further illustrates the intention of both council leaderships to raise revenue from parking fees despite the pleas of Communities Minister Eric Pickles for councils not to regard motorists as 'cash cows.' Surrey's proposed imposition of pay and display for the shopper bays envisaged in our High Street is unnecessary and likely to inhibit casual shoppers even if the initial charge is free. The free shopper bay at Winter's Bridge works very well without machines and is the model to follow.

The **blocked drain outside Thames Ditton Infants' School** has not been forgotten during a generally dry summer: our county Cllr. Peter Hickman has kept pressure on Surrey Highways to inspect

and resolve the problem. It seems that major work may be required both to unblock the existing drain (which some doubt is actually connected to anything!) and probably to make a new gully at the Church Walk end of the puddle to connect with the main drain in the centre of the road “when funds permit.”

The controversial cycle path along Hampton Court Way will be modified and re-routed where it crosses immediately in front of house driveways, following representations by residents to the Local Area Committee and support from Peter Hickman and Weston Green councillors Tannia Shipley and Lorraine Sharp who produced facts to support residents objecting to the path’s unacceptable features. Peter Hickman arranged a site visit with Margaret Hicks – chairman of SCC’s Elmbridge Area local committee, which met again on 21 June. Nick Handel, representing residents who were objecting to the route, spoke well to the Committee. After a brief debate a senior Highways official conceded that that particular stretch of the cycle route would be removed.

Meanwhile, villagers targeted by **draconian council parking enforcement officers** last Spring can take heart from Speer Road resident **David Matten**. He successfully challenged a ticket for parking for five minutes at the unmarked octagon in Thames Ditton while he bought flowers for Valentine’s Day. ‘Done’ under an obscure “Code 26” (parking more than 50 cm from part of the kerb, a measure intended to counter double-parking), he elected to mount his own case in a telephone tribunal against the council under the arbitration of an



the famed board outside The Harrow

independent lawyer. He argued that there were no signs, no lines, his car was off the main highway and not blocking any traffic; there was nothing in the Highway Code on this ‘offence,’ and residents had been parking there for over thirty years without penalty. David showed that the council had ignored official guidance. If there is a problem with parking in such places, they are required first to publicise the matter e.g. by means of leaflets to all households in the area; and their “powers should be exercised responsibly and with circumspection, and only if the vehicle is likely to cause a hazard.” The enforcement officer was ignorant of this guidance. If you would like to know more of the detail to support your own case, David would be happy to share it with you – call 8398 2025.

Planning

The Harrow: while the result of the developers’ appeal against rejection of the last proposals was still awaited, a new application (ref: 2010/1690) was lodged for 2 detached and 4 semi-detached houses on three floors. The houses planned are bigger. The 2 storey houses at the rear have a larger ground floor

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December 7th **Christmas Social and Members' presentation.** Our annual celebration and party! – mulled wine, raffle, refreshments and an opportunity to hear about precious, unusual or interesting pieces brought by members.

Later speakers in the programme include Eric Knowles from the Antiques Roadshow and subjects include embroidery, Renaissance art, model trains, Chinese wall hanging – something for everyone!

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footprint. The 3 storey houses along the Road are taller than neighbouring properties (which the ‘artist’s impression’ does not somehow convey), and densely packed. The design has evolved positively and looks less like a barracks than the first application – another example where the Association’s persistence in pressing for the proper application of planning guidelines has brought about a noticeable improvement in what should eventually result. But we are not there yet – the new proposals still do not solve the problem of scale and mass which led to residents, and Elmbridge, rejecting the earlier applications.

Another case is **The Newlands**, where earlier unsatisfactory plans were opposed. The present owners have now refurbished the former 1970s institutional wing, which looks much better cared for; they have taken steps to keep the old Grade II Listed house from further deterioration and the new planning application looks positive in many respects as it seeks to change the present offices into three flats and a substantial house, restoring to heritage standards the features contributing to the building’s listed status.

Again, the four new houses nearing completion in **Ashley Road** are looking good. In keeping with their surroundings in the conservation area, they represent the constructive fruit of earlier objections to less satisfactory proposals. It takes a great deal of time, effort and patience on the part of our planning convenor, Graham Cooke, our Residents’ councillors and residents closely engaged with these planning applications, to get these results from developers whose primary motive is profit. Even where the final schemes approved do not fully meet ideals, they are much better

than what could have been railroaded through without constructive objection. We all benefit from these efforts and are grateful to those involved.

Another satisfactory result from a long campaign by residents and our Weston Green councillors, particularly Lorraine Sharp, is that **Vodafone** have reportedly changed their plan to erect a phone mast in an unpopular position near Lower Green Road and opted for the more sensible location on the roof of Sandown Park, where there is already a phone mast of another provider.

Railways

There is also good news to report from Thames Ditton Station, where we campaigned against further cuts in manned hours, especially on Saturdays, engaging the support of our MP. Network Rail have agreed to maintain present hours. A coffee bar has also opened on the up platform.

Churchyard renovation

With permission from both Elmbridge and the Church authorities, St. Nicholas will remove a number of the yew trees that now overcrowd the churchyard. Significant trees including the large cedars will remain – also the remarkable and cherished ‘blasted yew’ near the church door. Many of the yews to be culled have a controversial past. They were planted about 140 years ago on the initiative of Thomas Earl, a corn and coal merchant with premises behind 25 High St. who was Churchwarden from 1865-72. He met the cost of prettying up the churchyard from his own purse, but on retiring billed the vestry for £144 including interest! In those days the sum would have covered the salary of the

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parish clerk, or the school teacher, for two years. The Surrey Comet of 27 April 1872 records that this surprise “*engendered a bellicose and antagonistic spirit in the vestry, and a noisy altercation occurred, during which strong and uncomplimentary epithets were freely exchanged.*”



Milbourne pond at risk

Milbourn pond

The pond has again dried up this summer. However, many ponds in the Borough were emptied by the dry spell, and Marneys pond was also short of water. Our Weston Green councillors have continued to press for reappraisal and action to preserve the pond. They report that the Countryside committee’s local experts agree that the pond is too small, too shallow and the wrong contour to retain a worthwhile amount of water that would prevent complete drying in spells of dry weather. Late last year the clay lining of the pond was tamped down, and in early 2010 culverts and drains were cleared and cut to maximise use of runoff from the pond’s immediate surroundings. In September there will be removal of some of the adjacent shrubs (which should reduce transpiration losses a little) and the

bullrushes – a mistaken introduction to the pond which are now choking the life and water out of it – should be killed. A proper solution will almost certainly require re-contouring to a deep dish shape, and a liner, but for the moment there is no money available to cover this.

During the dry season, tenacious Cllr. Tannia Shipley has continued to pursue the issue of flooding near Esher station – a problem with official records nearly a century old – and with the aid of longstanding resident Mary Robinson’s local knowledge an old drain has been identified in the system near the Arch bridge over Hampton Court Way, the existence of which had remained unknown to current Council engineers. We wouldn’t want to raise any false hopes, however – Tannia emphasises that the whole system of around two miles of drains and culverts over flat terrain requires continual clearing and maintenance by landowners, councils and Network Rail rather than the approach, seemingly customary, of waiting until the problem is too severe to ignore.

Albany Reach

Elmbridge Council again removed bins in August, in the hope that litterbugs will take their litter home. Residents have pointed to increased litter, and the problems of ordure including human excrement from seasonal anglers bivouacking there overnight at weekends have continued. While most users are responsible, the few uncouth anglers and groups of youths who leave drink cans and crisp packets seem unlikely to take their litter to their next venue – and now they have nowhere to leave it. Elmbridge’s Environmental officer Jenny James, who

introduced the trial scheme last year, will report on it as the first agenda item at our Open Meeting of 9 November. All who care for the Reach are urged to attend. You may wish to read the thread on Albany Reach in our website forum, which contains a summary of measures tried.

Doings and dates

Queens Road resident **Pam Bannister** again organised a hanging basket and window box competition for the road's inhabitants, to coincide with Hampton Court Flower Show. The occasion is great fun for all and brightens the road, along with dark hints of dastardly ruses to win this extremely competitive event for the classy prizes offered by sponsors The Albany and Class Comedy!

Colets squash club won the men's England club championship for the fourth year running, beating Pontefract 5-0, the 11th time overall since they first won it in 1994.

Thames Ditton Junior School retained the winning trophy for the District Sports field event for the 7th year running.

Jayne Thomas of Speer Road won silver medal for her Midsummer Night's Dream garden at the RHS Flower Show at Hampton Court.

Tom Beaumont (Thames Ditton Juniors and Kingston Grammar School) and school friends Tudor Morris and Robbie Montgomery cycled from John O'Groats to Land's End to raise money for Momentum, a charity based at Kingston Hospital which helps children with cancer. They have nearly reached their £10,000 target. Further donations welcome at: www.justgiving.com/le2jog-momentum.



last year's Christmas Fair

This year's **Residents' Association Christmas Party** is on Saturday 11th December at the Vera Fletcher Hall: three course dinner, friends and your favourite music. £30 a ticket for a wonderful community occasion – phone Fiona Elliott on 020 8398 1788.

The seventh village **Christmas Fair** will be held from 6 pm on Wednesday 9 December with all the trappings. As usual, the High Street will be temporarily closed to traffic.

Subscription reminder

If you have forgotten to send in **this year's subscription** to support the independent representation of these villages, this community magazine and items like the Christmas tree and flowers around and about, please visit page 3 (or print off a form from our website) and feel good as you do the necessary! Thank you.

And **thanks also to our loyal advertisers** in Thames Ditton Today, who tell us that the magazine produces good quality business. We are fortunate in that there is still a waiting list, and trust that readers will support our local businesses who do so much for the community.

www.residents-association.com

Weston Manor Farm Remembered



Weston Manor Farm was my childhood playground. When I first discovered its charms, it was a working farm used by local artists and for photo shoots. The last tenants left in 1956 and it gradually fell into disrepair. Local children vandalised it, despite the efforts of police to keep them out. I loved its mystery and my favourite spot was sitting in an upstairs window with my legs dangling out. To get up there I had to climb the inside of the large fireplace, as the stairs had been destroyed, then cross the floor joists to reach the window. From there I could look out across the walled garden with its fig and walnut trees, and imagine it was

my very own secret garden Weston Manor Farm (sometimes called just Manor Farm) was on land which is now occupied by Esher College. The farmhouse or manor house was built around the 15th century and was originally part of Henry VIII's estate. It had wood pegged beams and wattle and daub walls. It also had one mullioned window left and various fireplaces and chimney stacks. It was while climbing up the fireplace one day that I noticed a loose brick. After prising the brick out, I discovered an old shoe and after removing several other bricks I found more shoes. I was probably lucky that the fireplace didn't collapse on me!

I took the shoes home and hid them, as my parents had banned me from playing at the farm. My find consisted of 5 complete leather shoes and 8 parts of shoes.

Shoes and other items were often hidden behind a fireplace as a primitive form of protection against evil spirits. Shoes were not cheap, and for the family living at the farm then, they would have been one of their most expensive purchases. The shoes I found are all singles and well worn. They are a mixture of child, youth/maid and adult and one has two large cuts on the upper, which suggests that the wearer may have had a bunion. 26% of shoes hidden in buildings are found in chimneys, sometimes in large groups (as mine were) and sometimes with other artefacts. Some are in pairs but most are odd. The buckles and other fastenings were likely to have been removed to use on other shoes.

In 1998 the shoes were sent to the Northampton Shoe Museum and Brian Hensman sent me an extremely detailed report of each shoe and dated them at around 1670 – 1700. The quality of workmanship is very average and the shoes would have been made for moderately prosperous working class people such as a farmer or tradesman. They almost certainly had several owners, each passing through the original owners family, then down to his workers or given to the very poor. Nothing was wasted in those days. I have tried to match up the shoes with the occupants of the farmhouse but records only go back as far as the 18th century.

The shoes were exhibited some years ago at Elmbridge Museum.

The farm also had several outbuildings, one of which was a magnificent seven-year harvest barn so called because it could accommodate seven years of harvest. It was 85 feet long and 22 feet wide and was probably built around the 16th or 17th century. I remember hiding in the hay loft and watching all the comings and goings of farm life. We were discovered one day when my friend fell down the loft ladder and hurt her ankle. We got into trouble with the farmer and then with our parents but it didn't stop me going there. I found the key to this barn prior to demolition.

In 1960 an article appeared in the Esher News and Advertiser highlighting a combination of the weather, shameful neglect and destructive activities of local children for the state of the farm. The article went on to say that the ancient manor house had withstood the ravages of 400 years but was now being destroyed. In 1961 a Mr Carver wrote to the Historic Buildings Council for England regarding restoration of the barn. There was also a scheme to turn the barn into a cultural centre. Nothing happened. Sadly, the farm and barns were demolished in 1961. The owner Captain J S S Litchfield had finally won planning permission for an educational establishment, which resulted in the loss of some of the oldest buildings in Thames Ditton.

Veronica Whittall

Weston Manor Farm, Thames Ditton.
K.W.E. Gravett & T.S. Mercer.
Surrey Archaeol. Collect., 59,
1962, 27-34. ISSN 0309-7803

A Shirker's Tale

– the Nokia Swim



Anyone who dropped into the Skiffers for a quiet skiff or punt on the morning of the Nokia Thames Swim would have had quite a shock. 120 race officials and scores of 'volunteers' were milling about to support, protect and judge the 1200 plus charity swimmers planning to race from just below Hampton Court Bridge to below Ravens Ait.

The idea of the event was so crazy that even stalwart shirkers, such as I, had been persuaded to rise at an unearthly hour to be at the club at dawn to lay courses, receive safety briefings, position safety skiffs, staff the kitchen, etc. It was great fun!

I had hurt my back lifting a skiff onto the racks the week before. Regrettably, I had to accept that when the time came to hurl soggy ropes and anchor weights from the start warning board dinghy into the muddy Thames, all I could do was sit in the towing boat *Elexis* and give helpful advice.

The first thing I noticed was that the rope which was meant to smoothly play out from the boat was badly knotted. Pointing this out to one's colleagues – who were now fairly soggy themselves – in a tactful way at 6.30 am is rather tricky. I was invited to 'get unknotted' myself – at least I think that is what they said. Anyway I jumped to the rescue and sorted out the rope before starting a philosophical discussion about whether the arrow on the **Regatta Slow Down**

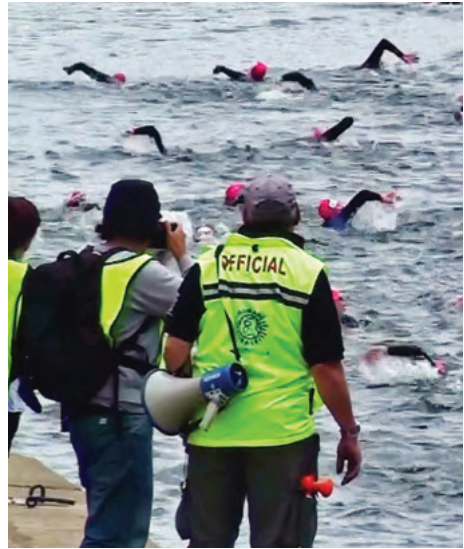


photo by Bob Saxton

sign should point to the racing channel itself or to the channel which boats should use to avoid the race. The debate was never satisfactorily resolved as an exasperated crew member pointed out that any approaching boats could probably not see the arrows anyway! Next, we had to rush to the finish and anchor the other warning dinghy, which interestingly had the arrows on the sign pointing the other way. As we were to pass the club *en route*, I suggested a comfort break. Then a master stroke; I spotted Jan and her team cooking up bacon butties and promptly gave her the first of hundreds of orders taken that day. Fighting my way through the safety boats which were crashing their

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way, somewhat unsafely, into the water over the hard, I delivered the sustenance to the crew of *Elexis*.

Morale was lifted immediately. Skipper Bob Saxton commended me for ‘doing something useful at last’ whilst Ross Donnellan, Jerry Stockbridge (a friend who had been pressganged into the crew to compensate for the state of my back) and I relaxed as we sped past our 30 plus skiffers and 40 plus kayakers in bright orange t-shirts and caps taking up their positions on the course. After further antics at the finish we returned to provide a marshalling service at the start of the race. We bravely positioned *Elexis* up stream of the swimmers who slid into the water from Cigarette Island and had to swim across the Thames to the start at Hampton Court.

What a spectacle! The swimmers were started in waves of 100 every ten minutes and we were in a perfect position to observe them. Each wave of rubber suited swimmers had different coloured bathing hats and was urged on by the race starter to psych them up before the race. ‘5 minutes to go’ would incite an *Oggy Oggy Oggy* from the athletes, ‘3 minutes’ got them all clapping and shouting things like ‘hello Mum’, but ‘1 minute’ brought on an eerie silence before the deafening sound of 200 arms thrashing their way through water.

After several waves of swimmers and one or two stand offs with pleasure steamers, Jerry got bored. He asked to be let ashore so he could find out how it all worked and take some photos. As you know, the water is very shallow at present and we had one of those difficult boating

moments when Bob rammed *Elexis* at the bank, running aground at precisely the moment Jerry hurled himself forward. Anyway he got ashore somehow. What did Jerry discover? First, that all contestants were tagged so the organisers knew where they were and if they had lost anyone. (I asked if they had depth gauges on them too.) Second, changing tents and transportation were all laid on at the start – there were lines of swimmers desperate to use the portable loos there before donning their rubber wear!. Third, the Ambulances kept their engines running (think about that).

Take my advice and volunteer next year to help out in the clubhouse or on the water. But take care in the preceding weeks not to hurt your back!

Peter Wallum

*Dittons Skiff & Punting Club,
Albany Reach*



well-insulated: photo by Bob Saxton



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The Fight for Hampton Court



The Palace's setting remains remarkably pastoral – photo by Lesley

Tricia Bland interviews conservation architect **Keith Garner** on why his battle to save the Palace's setting is so important:

Describe in a nutshell developer Gladedale's plan for the Jolly Boatman site opposite Hampton Court Palace.

Gladedale want to build a four-floor hotel facing the Palace, plus flats and a 65 room residential home on the station car park with an underground car park beneath. Plus an office building on the part of the station site adjacent to Hampton Court Way currently occupied by a used car dealership.

Why do you feel that these plans are inappropriate i.e. 'out of scale' and 'unsympathetic' to the area, and against the national interest?

The scheme will cause irretrievable harm to the setting of the glorious historic Palace buildings; the most important group of Tudor buildings in England, an important work by Wren, and the most significant Baroque landscape in the British Isles. The site by the river is part of the parkland setting of Hampton Court Palace. Currently, you see the Palace through the trees across Ditton Field as

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the train approaches the station then, as the train slows and stops, you see it in all its glory across the river. The Palace's pastoral setting dates from the C16th when it was built by Wolsey. If this scheme goes ahead suburbanisation will encroach on the Palace, so something now historic, unique and special will become humdrum.

Why do you feel that the plans ignore Government guidelines?

This principally concerns flood protection, which I know is of great importance to local residents. Government guidance requires that new development is steered away from flood plains unless there are crucial, overriding reasons. A test called the "sequential test" requires developers to show they have tried to find other sites less prone to flooding and have not been able to do so. Here, the sequential test has not been carried out and, therefore, the planning application is unlawful. This is part of the reason I have initiated the legal challenge.

Do you agree with historian David Starkey who has reportedly called the plans not only 'a national scandal but an international scandal?'

Yes. I couldn't see this kind of thing being allowed at Versailles! David Starkey is certainly opposed to the proposed development. He supports the legal challenge and signed the petition I put on the Downing Street web site, calling on the Government to intervene, along with 1475 other signatories. The legal challenge is also supported by Historic Royal Palaces.

As a conservation architect, what would you recommend for the derelict Jolly Boatman site?

The site should be acquired via the Heritage Lottery Fund and public subscription, and landscaped. Gladedale would have to be given a fair commercial price for it. Network Rail, on the other hand, is dependent on billions of pounds of public subsidy and should not be pursuing a project that is contrary to the national and local interest. If returned to parkland there would be a spectacular view of Hampton Court Palace from the station platforms across the river as visitors and residents arrive. There could still be a car park on the Hampton Court Way side of the tracks, where the car dealership is currently, which would be available for blue badge holders catching the train and as a short stay car park serving the town centre of East Molesey. There needs to be improved cycle parking facilities at the station to encourage more people to cycle and I would also support the construction of a footbridge across the mouth of the Ember, to make it easier for people in the Dittons to walk to Hampton Court.

How can local people help support the campaign?

The full hearing is likely in October. There is a fund to pay the legal team and we would be very grateful if you could send donations to the Hampton Court Rescue Campaign Community Account, HSBC Bank, 34 High Street, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 1DD (Sort code: 40-45-22 Account: 31507893).

Keith Garner

– interviewed by Tricia Bland,
RA HonSec.

Curtain Up!

– at the Vera Fletcher Hall



Now in its 19th year our Autumn programme promises to refresh the parts that other venues cannot reach – high quality entertainment, drama and music on your doorstep and at affordable prices. The Hall has invested in a new upgraded piano which will make its debut this season.

Our **music programme** brings old faces and new sounds. A highlight of the season is the return of international opera star **Donald Maxwell** and Tiramisu Opera in a Gala Concert, kindly sponsored by Octagon, on Friday 8 October in aid of the Mayor of Elmbridge's charity Parkinson's UK. Donald starred in *La Fille du Regiment* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in June and appears at the Chatelet Opera House in Paris in November so it is a real coup to get him to our own pocket opera house in Thames Ditton. He and Tiramisu Opera will entertain with songs and arias from Mozart, Puccini, Gounod and Borodin to Cole Porter and *Flanders & Swann*. Donald compères spiced with anecdotes from opera houses around the world. The £17 ticket price includes canapes and the audience will be seated cabaret style around tables.

To celebrate England and the English, actor, pianist and singer **Michael Lunts** presents **By George!** on Thursday 21 October, with words and music from Noel Coward, John Betjeman, Gilbert & Sullivan, *Flanders & Swann*... plus nautical shanties to celebrate Trafalgar



Katalin Csillagh

Day. Anyone who remembers Michael's depiction of Chopin in "Winter in Majorca" or "The Last Ballade" will know what a treat is in store from this multi-talented artist.

The Hall has a reputation for high quality chamber music and on 26 November the celebrated cellist **Sagi Hartov**, who came with the London Mozart Trio in June, returns with **Katalin Csillagh** (piano) from Hungary and **Nicola Smedley** (flute) to play trios and solos by Haydn, Weber, Chopin, Liszt and Poulenc. To get a flavour of what we can expect go to www.katalincsillagh.com.

Music lovers have a treat on Friday November 12 when **Charles Court Opera** presents **HMS Pinafore** – Gilbert and Sullivan’s ever popular and hilarious satire on class and naval incompetence. Toe-tapping sailors dance and sing across all ranks with “Dear Little Buttercup”, “The Ruler of the Queen’s Navee” and “He is an Englishman”. On Friday 19 November we welcome back **Commedia Productions** with **Verdi’s La “Traviata”**. Sung in English, this is an exciting new full-scale production of one of opera’s greatest love stories –the courtesan Violetta and her lover Alfredo, with the famous drinking song *Libiamo ne’lieti calici* and with singers from major opera companies and accompanied by Commedia’s pioneering “virtual orchestra”. Anyone who came to their “Magic Flute” last year will want to come to this.

Our theatre productions have a growing following and Love & Madness Productions, who gave us their memorable “Playboy of the Western World”, and “La Ronde”, return on October 1 with Dario Fo’s “Accidental Death of a Salesman”, a sharp and hilarious satire on corruption. Fo, an Italian playwright, screen writer and politician, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1997. This story of a railway worker who “fell” to his death from police headquarters is his best known work, with a long run in the West End, on Channel 4 television and nominated for the Laurence Olivier Award.

We have all enjoyed Michael Friend Productions’ performances. He returns on 29 October with something different – the classic 1938 mystery thriller “**Gaslight**” by Patrick

Hamilton, which was a massive hit on the London stage at the Apollo Theatre and

the Old Vic and was adapted for the cinema starring Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer. Arch villain Mr. Manningham is obsessed with finding the rubies belonging to an old woman he once murdered. The gaslights rise and fall, mysterious footsteps are heard in the attic, his wife is driven to the edge of insanity and the sense of malignancy grows until salvation arrives in the form of retired detective Rough. Many of you will remember Michael Friend’s previous productions such as Shaw’s “Mrs. Warren’s Profession” and Ayckbourn’s “Damsels in Distress”, so we know we have a treat in store.

As always our **children’s programme** sells out early so if you have children or grandchildren don’t delay booking! On Saturday 16 October Cornelius & Jones return with **Pinocchio**, the classic story of the puppet who wants to be a real boy but who cannot stay out of trouble. Stunning puppets, original music and songs. On 27 November Image Musical Theatre presents **Tom’s Midnight Garden** – a family participation musical of the modern classic story of a 1950s boy’s encounter with the past in 1895.

Finally, Christmas is celebrated with Charles Court Opera’s inimitable pantomime for all the family – **Robin Hood** – on Friday January 14, a thigh-slappingly sensational and terrifically funny production, toe-tapping routines and musical treats from pop to opera. Definitely not to be missed !

See page 39 for times and tickets for these shows. You can keep in touch with events at the Vera Fletcher Hall on the website:

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Hewett Cottrell Watson

– homo dittoniensis



One fine August day in 1855 Charles Darwin left his house in Kent for Thames Ditton. He came to talk to a shy but cantankerous botanist, the leading British expert on plant geography. Hewett Watson was a founder of what is now the Botanical Society of the British Isles whose journal, in his honour, is entitled ‘Watsonia.’ His portrait hangs in the Herbarium at Kew.

“*What makes Watson a renegade?*” Darwin had asked his friend Joseph Hooker, a great botanist and son of Watson’s patron William Hooker, Director at Kew, who wrote back: “*His belief in transmutation.*” To which Darwin replied, “*You will be ten times hereafter more horrified at me, than at H. Watson.*”

For Darwin the day passed “*very prosperously.*” He thought Watson a very clever man but rather too sarcastic. There ensued a lively academic correspondence between the two. When Darwin published *On The Origin of Species* four years later, Watson’s contribution was acknowledged in eight different places including the first page.

Watson argued that the rigid classification of plant species was often arbitrary and unsound. One of the first to carry out original research to demonstrate that evolution occurred, he concluded that no eternally permanent species exist. These ideas were radical at the time, and Watson was a radical man.



Hewett Watson in 1839

The seedling years

Born on 9 May 1804 in Yorkshire, Watson did not get on with his right-wing father, of whom he wrote: “*A Tory magistrate, full of the prejudices of his party; most violent temper; opposed to all philanthropic measures; and almost dead to individual benevolence.*” When he was 15 his mother died, and his knee was smashed by a cricket bat during a school game. A sensitive lad, he was happy with the family gardener and found patrons in a school headmaster and the Vicar, who lent him science books. He liked botany and also became interested in phrenology – the belief that a person’s intellectual and

emotional makeup is reflected in the shape of their head. In 1828, he went to study medicine at Edinburgh. Doctors were expected to know about herbal remedies, and botany formed part of their university studies. Watson was a good student but, like Darwin shortly before him, he left Edinburgh without a degree.

Transplanted to Thames Ditton

After he came into enough to live on, Watson tried the country life with his sister in Barnstaple but found it boring. *“You may imagine a society made up of retired officers, and families of moderate independencies, who hold trade in contempt, yet envy its wealth; who have no occupation save hunting, shooting, fishing, card-playing, quadrilling, walking & backbiting each other.”* At 29, he bought a cottage in Thames Ditton – a hothouse of intellect and taste, as we know – where he stayed for the rest of his life. The cottage was in Ditton Marsh, roughly where Claygate Lane intersects with Manor Road North these days, but along with the farmland has now been superseded by the suburban housing of Hinchley Wood. He did it up, cultivated the garden, and installed a housekeeper. He also bought a couple of small cottages in Claygate Lane to let for income.

Watson focused his research on British plants, save for a two-year visit to the Azores as naturalist with HMS *Styx*. He found life on a Navy ship at sea uncomfortable, and it was the last time he travelled. It was his work on the Azores, however, which first attracted Darwin’s attention. Watson’s definitive work on plant species and geography founded a science, and confounded the critics of

evolution. But he didn’t have the inspiration to work out how evolution occurred. When Darwin articulated the principle of natural selection, however, Watson immediately recognised this marvellous unifying theory of the life sciences. He wrote handsomely to Darwin: *“It has the characteristics of all great natural truths, clarifying what was obscure, simplifying what was intricate, adding greatly to previous knowledge. You are the greatest Revolutionist in natural history of this century, if not of all centuries.”*

Later Watson, ever picky, questioned small details of Darwin’s work. The relationship became bumpier. Darwin’s acknowledgments to Watson began to fade as he revised the *Origin*. In correspondence and scientific journalism Watson was uncompromising. He had many spats with other scientists. His biographer Egerton observes: *“He had a genius for finding real scientific problems which had inadvertently arisen, and then imputing unworthy motives to whomever got caught up in the dilemma.”*

Private life, pollination, politics and parish

Yet in his personal life, Watson was diffident and shy. He shunned society, but he was not a recluse. He had friends, was generous with his money, and reckoned he spent up to a fifth of his income helping others. He never married, although he felt his oats as any man. In Thames Ditton his housekeeper, Grace Eastmond, remained with him for the rest of his life and shared the domestic side of it, if not – perhaps – his bed. She may

have borne him a daughter. The evidence is inconclusive.

Watson was of liberal convictions, underpinned with firmness. He described himself as a renegade from Toryism, was keen on political consultation especially with the middle classes, and in May 1848 wrote a pamphlet entitled ‘Public Opinion, or Safe Revolution Through Self-Representation.’ A year later – in words that would please many a resident today – he wrote to his friend George Combe: “*Local legislation for local objects appears a desideratum to a great extent now.*”

A dissenter who wrote that deism was a hindrance to progress, Watson nonetheless joined the congregation at St. Nicholas and played his part in parish life. An article in the Surrey Comet of 5 May 1866 records that Watson organised a collection for John Walker, the Vestry Clerk, as a token of the esteem in which he was held in the parish. The article cites Watson who admiringly noted that “*Mr Walker had lived a lifetime in the parish without making a single enemy.*” There is a redeeming irony in this generous action from a man who had made numerous enemies of his own!

Age and extinction

In 1873 an ageing Watson wrote that he no longer felt able to spend a night away from home. His joints were increasingly stiff and painful, and in December 1880 he fell, damaging his left foot. This ended his botanising. In the months that remained to him, he took opiates for his pain. Grace, his ‘valued housekeeper,’ answered Hooker’s last letter to him on 14 July 1881: “*Mr.*

Watson is too seriously ill to receive visitors. He now keeps his bed, refuses food, & seems utterly unconscious of all around him.” She was with Watson when he died a fortnight later on 27 July. He left her some money and all the house contents.

His protégé John Baker, a botanist who ran Kew’s Herbarium, was Watson’s executor. A domestic fire in 1864 had destroyed Baker’s own botanical library and plant collection. Watson had organised and generously contributed to a rescue fund collected for Baker after this catastrophe.

Hewett Cottrell Watson lies buried in our churchyard, where in Spring his gravestone is surrounded by snowdrops. Baker and at least nine other botanists of national repute attended the funeral, including Sir Joseph Hooker, the Director of Kew Gardens after his father and by then a past President of the Royal Society. Charles Darwin, whose own health had declined and who was to die nine months later, was not there.

Keith Evetts

Sources:

- *Hewett Cottrell Watson, Victorian plant ecologist and evolutionist: Frank N Egerton 2003 ISBN 0 7546 0862 X (I have asked Dittons Library to acquire it)*
- *Darwin Correspondence Project: www.darwinproject.ac.uk*
- *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
- *Botanical Society of the British Isles News #47 Dec. 1987 and #49 Sep. 1988:*
- *Mercer collection, & sundry internet sources*

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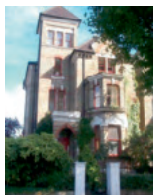
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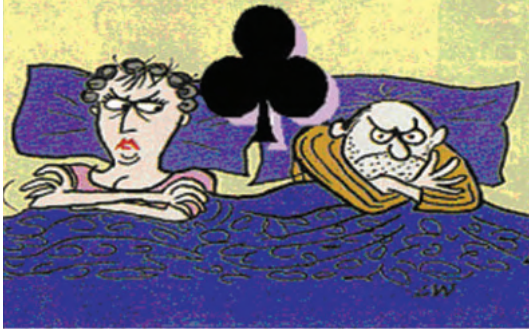
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"The difference between genius and stupidity at the bridge table is that genius has its limits."

If your idea of a bridge class is of formal lessons, homework or strict

etiquette then the bridge classes at the Centre could not be further from this. They are for those wanting to improve their bridge rather than for starters and they proceed at a gentle pace with plenty of opportunities to put up your hand and say "Help – what do I bid on this hand?"

You may sometimes feel like the bridge player who joked "The brain is a wonderful organ. It starts working the moment you get up and does not stop until you sit at the bridge table" but the classes at the Centre are the very best way you could possibly have to remedy this. You may not bid and make a grand slam every time you play but the pleasure of making the contract you actually did bid or of seeing your opponents go down is one of life's minor joys.



"We had a partnership misunderstanding.

I assumed my partner knew what he was doing."

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those of us who want to improve our bridge but do not necessarily want to play in the more formal atmosphere of a bridge club. In other words it is for those who want to improve their social bridge, and all this for £1 a week to cover tea and biscuits!



*“If I did everything right,
I wouldn’t be
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*“Where is the hand
you held during the bidding?”*

*“I’m sorry, but I can’t think
and play bridge
at the same time.”*

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John Lyon



A century of fun

Bill Doe celebrated his 100th birthday at Thames Ditton Centre on 16 September (his birthday proper is 19 September). Born in Ealing, Bill lived for 24 years in Thames Ditton and is now based at Grace Lodge, Hinchley Wood. A food chemist by profession, for J. Lyons in London, Bill – whose real name, Cedric, he prefers not to use (his wife, now deceased, refused to marry him if he was called Cedric) – attributes his century to good eating, moderate drinking, some exercise and – lots of fun!

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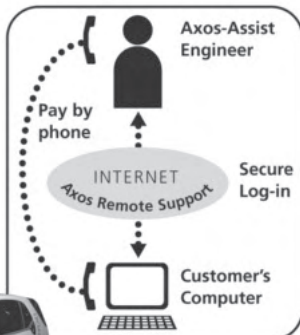
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The Harry Hawkes 8



The Cricket Club hosted Surrey's favourite run on Sunday 12 September. The race was instituted to honour the passing in 1984 of former TDCC President Harry Hawkes, who was a club stalwart from the 1920s. A captain of the Second XI and described as 'a more than useful bowler,' Harry set great store by training and encouraging youngsters. Funds raised by the race go to training young cricketers and to other youth organisations and charities.

The Hawkes family lived in Thames Ditton for several generations, from William Hawkes, a labourer in the early 1800s, through Thomas Hawkes who opened a soft drinks manufacturers in the High Street in premises owned by William Speer. Lemonade and ginger beer were becoming fashionable in the late 1800s. The bottling business was eventually sold in the 1960s. Its site is now named Hawkes Yard – behind the new development at 29-31 High Street. Harry spent his final years at Garden Cottage, behind the Old Manor House on Station Road. If anybody has a photograph of him please let the Editor know.

Sponsored by Nuffield Health, Lanson Running and Vitamin Water, the eight-mile race – an unusual distance suited to the endearingly quirky traditions of this village – is properly timed over a measured course to Kingston, across the



they're off! – cue the Chariots of Fire theme river, and back along the towpath. It has an excellent reputation among runners for all aspects, and the cheerful volunteers who run it and supply the barbecue can be proud. First man home of over 300 runners was James Trapmore in 43 min 26 sec, and the winning woman was Marie Synnott-Wells in 52 min 16 sec. The youngsters' race twice around Giggs Hill Green, a little over a mile, was won by the very capable young runner Michael Stone in 5 min 51 sec just eight seconds ahead of Laura Cook. Both look to be HH8 athletes of the future.

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TICKETS £17 including canapés in aid of the Mayor of Elmbridge's charity "Parkinson's UK" from Lisa Scroby 01372 474383

Thursday 21 October 8.00pm

Michael Lunts in BY GEORGE!

Actor, singer and pianist Michael Lunts celebrates England and the English with words and music from Noel Coward, John Betjeman, Gilbert & Sullivan, Flanders and Swann... plus nautical shanties to celebrate Trafalgar Day.

TICKETS £10

Friday 29 October 8.00pm

Michael Friend Productions present

GASLIGHT by Patrick Hamilton

1880. London in the fog. Gaslights mysteriously flicker in the home of the newly married Manningshams. Who prowls the attics at night? Is Mrs. Manningham losing her sanity or is her life in deadly danger? Find out in one of theatre's greatest thrillers.

TICKETS £12.50

Friday 12 November 8.00 pm

Charles Court Opera presents

H.M.S PINAFORE

Gilbert & Sullivan's hilarious satire on class and naval incompetence. Toe-tapping sailors dance and sing across all ranks with "Dear Little Buttercup", "The Ruler of the Queen's Naveel!" and "He is an Englishman".

TICKETS £15

Tickets for all shows from Joan Leifer

**Tel: 0844 884 8832, and The Pro Shop,
52 High Street, Thames Ditton.**

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Friday 19 November 8.00 pm

Commedia Productions present

LA TRAVIATA

Verdi's tender and moving tragedy of courtesan Violetta and her lover Alfredo. Sung in English. An exciting new full-scale production with singers from major opera companies and accompanied by Commedia's pioneering "virtual orchestra".

TICKETS £15

Friday 26 November 8.00pm

CONCERT

Katalin Csillagh (piano) from Hungary joins Sagi Hartov (cello) and Nicola Smedley (flute) to play trios and solos by Haydn, Weber, Liszt, Chopin, Poulenc...

TICKETS £11 (under 16 years free)

Friday 14 January 2011 7.30pm

Charles Court Opera presents

ROBIN HOOD

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TICKETS £12.50

YOUNG PEOPLE'S THEATRE

Saturday 16 October 2.30 pm

Cornelius & Jones present PINOCCHIO

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TICKETS £6

Saturday 27 November 2.30 pm

Image Theatre Company present

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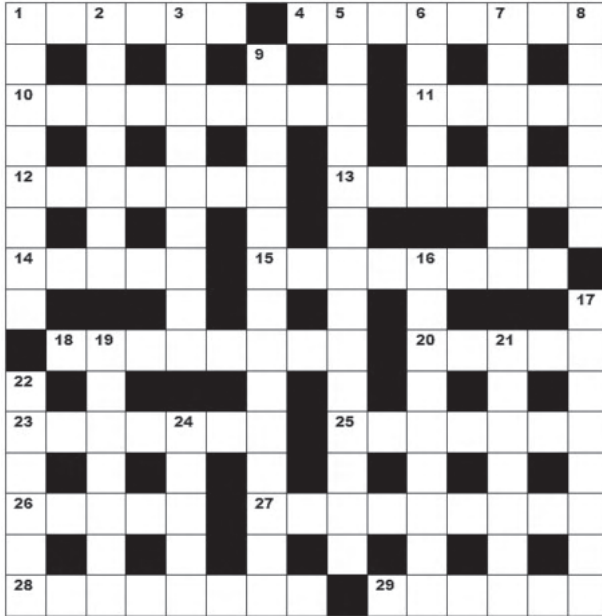
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Autumn Crossword

By Maureen Willcox



Applause for Maureen as our new alternate crossword compiler.

A £5 Voucher for spending in any Thames Ditton or Weston Green shop will be awarded to each of the first three correct entries opened after the closing date of 7 November 2010.

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

Thames Ditton Today
Crossword Competition
6 Church Walk
Thames Ditton
KT7 0NW

ACROSS

1. A film Travolta agrees is a classic (6)
4. Old times speak of the shepherd's life (8)
10. Ten madmen warrant correction (9)
11. Play cassettes to find something of value (5)
12. Endless problems caused by geometric figure (7)
13. Destined for foreign parts (5)
14. Extremely blue without the sailor (5)
15. American marsupials (8)
18. Can stupid Lucy see a correct answer in this? (4,4)
20. Reach maturity (5)
23. In landlocked country, gold with stripe (7)
25. Try another way (7)
26. Biblical progeny (5)
27. Wisdom to look forward to? (9)
28. Abandons hope as chaos is spread (8)
29. Though poor Dad has a hard heart he's well loved (6)

DOWN

1. "One single — thought raised to Heaven is the most perfect prayer" (Lessing) (8)
2. These days found in Polly's kettle (7)
3. Not energetic, yet Des ran haphazardly ... (9)
5. ...as the otter ran off ahead (2,3,9)
6. A homeless vessel (5)
7. Latin beak preferred for pulpit (7)
8. News hot from the press (6)
9. Infernally cracking pace (4,3,9)
16. Caught unawares, is spurred to action (9)
17. Thus commas turn to quotes (8)
19. These could be worth a fiver! (7)
21. Reckless gambler can unblock drains (7)
22. Chose not to solve this clue (6)
24. Toke a joint, woolly hat, Ethiopia's where it's at for this popular sect (5)

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Solution to the Summer Crossword

by Michael Jackson



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

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

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Thames Ditton KT7 0PJ

Mr. Tom Eddy
46 Grove Way
Weston Green KT10 8HL

Mr. K. Yale
3 Elsworthy
Thames Ditton KT7 0YP

Snippets

At last Weston Greenies have somewhere to meet for a chat. Resident Jane Holt (one of our wonderful magazine distributors) has recently opened a teashop opposite Esher Station – The Chocolate Teapot. Imagine the surprise all round when a London firm visiting to quote for a canopy found that it was their own firm which had originally installed one over the shop in... 1937!

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SERVICES, CLUBS, SOCIETIES AND GROUPS

Services

Cheer (Concern and Help for East Elmbridge Retired)	Trudy O Keefe	01372 474555
Dittons and Weston Green Neighbourcare	Sue Mayes	020 8398 6714

Elmbridge Borough Council Community Support Services

Information, Meals Services, Community Transport, Bus Permits		01372 474552/4
Elmbridge Community Alarm Service		01372 474560
Elmbridge Relief Carers Scheme		01372 474547
Ember Centre for the Retired	Mon & Thurs	020 8398 9870
	At other times	01372 474553
Esher and District Stroke Club	Ann Pollock	0208398 6132
Voluntary Action Elmbridge	Mrs Carole Roycroft	01372 463587
M.D.H.S. Household Services (& garden tidying)	Carolyn Smart (Manager)	01932 248533
Surrey Mobile Library Service		01483 517402
Surrey Youth and Adult Education Service	Elmbridge Area	020 8979 8334

Groups

Girl Guiding in TD & WG	Mrs K Williams	020 8398 1300
1st Thames Ditton Brownies	Mrs. Bronach Hughes	020 8398 1628
3rd Thames Ditton Brownies	Mrs Heather Horler	020 8398 0364
2nd Thames Ditton Rainbows	Nicki Sutherland	020 8398 4202
1st Weston Green (All Saints) Scout Group	Alan Nolan-Davies	0844 414 2826
1st Weston Green Guides (All Saints)	Mrs. Louise Lewis	020 8398 4843
2nd Thames Ditton Guides	Mrs. Bronach Hughes	020 8398 1628
1st Weston Green Brownies (All Saints)	Mrs K Williams	020 8398 1300
2nd Weston Green Brownies	Mrs J Epps	020 8395 0595
1st Weston Green Rainbows	Mrs Helen Hill	020 8398 3135
4th Thames Ditton Ajax Sea Scouts	Alison Derrick	020 8398 0041
Dittons Scout Group	Laura Clarke	0208 398 3447
Coffee and chat (United Reformed Church)	Mrs. E. Barker	01372 467491
Emberbrook Trefoil Guild	Mrs. Adrienne Nealing	020 8398 5582
Friends of Bushey and Home Parks	Mrs. Julie Cohen	020 8943 2017
Friends of Walsingham Care	Miss Valerie Chicken	0208 398 2932
Molesey and Dittons Neighbourhood Watch	Chairman: Pat Farmiloe	020 8398 2787
Parents and Toddlers(St Nicholas church)	Information	020 8398 7211
Ripieno Choir	Nick Harris	020 8399 7231
Surrey Bell-ringers	Nick Pattenden	Nick@FSLimited.com

Clubs

Albany Motor Yacht Club	Secretary	01784466651
Arts and Heritage Club	Carol Butcher	01932 867511
Claremont PROBUS Club	Mr. P. Collins	020 8398 3125
Claygate Bridge Club	Hon. Secretary	020 8398 1710
Colets Health & Fitness	Giordano Orsini	020 8398 7108
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	Anne Segall	020 8941 4528
Ember Sports Club	Mrs. Pauline Wareham	020 8979 8977

Ember Sports Club: Bowls	Sylvia Jones	01932 788701
Ember Sports Club: Croquet	Dr. David Cooke	01932 862841
Ember Sports Club: Tennis	Margaret Robinson	01372 842401
Esher Bowling Club	Roger Cooper	01372 468109
Esher Bridge Centre	Paul Whicker	01372 460157
Esher Camera Club	Billy Buchanan	020 8398 3169
Esher 41 and Ex-Round Tablers' Club	Dr. R. Tudor-Williams	020 8398 0108
Folk Dance Club	Pam Phillips	01372 373745
Hinchley Wood / Dittons PROBUS Club	Geoff Francis	01932 867771
Long Ditton Cricket Club	Nigel Hardy	020 8398 8361
Long Ditton Garden Club	Mrs. Ann Allen	020 8398 1718
Model Railway Society (Hampton Court)	Secretary	01932 241224
Mothers Union (All Saints)	Val Lomax	01932 860344
Old Cranleigh Rugby Club	Tony Price	07801 837129
Old Cranleigh Hockey Club	Eds Copleston (Men)	07775 940703
	Helen Hawes (Ladies)	07771 557900
River Club (BMYC)	David Walker	0870 460 3586
Rotary Club, Esher	Geoff Morris	01932 868454
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
Thames Ditton Marquetry Group	Jasmine Berry	020 8398 4358
Yoga for Health Club	Mrs. Celia Rowe	020 8398 2700

SOCIETIES AND ASSOCIATIONS

Ember Choral Society	Linda Bridges	020 8399 5402
Esher Recorded Music Society	Miss S. M. Garrat	020 8398 8541
Esher and Molesey Garden Society	Chris Walker (Sec)	020 8398 6651
Hampton Court Way Allotment Association	Lettings: John Morgan	020 8398 3049
Lynwood Allotment Society	Louise Flaig	020 8398 7704
Molesey and District Antiques Society	Linda Lambert	020 8398 1476
NADFAS (Decorative & Fine Arts) Kingston	Mrs. Valerie Windsor	020 8549 9967
National Trust: Richmond Association	Membership Secretary	020 8894 2972
Soroptimist International (Kingston District)	Secretary: Pat Harman	020 8390 3507
Thames Ditton Women's Institute (W.I.)	Secretary	020 8398 8615
Thames Valley Amateur Radio Transmitters Society	Chairman	0148328 4279

OTHER

Cancer Research UK	Mrs. Vivienne Harris	020 8398 6787
University of the Third Age (U3A)	HonSec Anne Brown	01932 881 633
Vera Fletcher Hall	Lettings: Helen Mason	
Membership: Sue Morris	08456 528 529	
020 8224 2536		

Please contact the Editor to amend these listings



Rachel Agourakis writes:

"I read with interest the articles 'Are You Married or...' and 'The Tower at Boyle Farm' having lived in and around Thames Ditton much of my life, in fact living on Thames Ditton Island from the age of 11 to 16 years old from 1973! One of our neighbours was Jack Barton, who produced "Crossroads" from 1974 to 1985, and the house we rented was originally built for William Hartnell, the first Doctor from "Doctor Who"!"

It seems the island was favoured by artistic types; my stepfather was a musician and played for the likes of Des O'Connor and Jack Jones.

When we lived on The Island we were told that there was a tunnel from the tower on the grounds of The Home of Compassion that extended under the Thames to Hampton Court Place and which was used as an escape route, I don't know if this is true but I understand that there is a similar tunnel that extends from Hampton Court to Waynfleet Tower in Esher that is large enough to allow a horse and rider to travel through! I wonder if any records exist that may shed some light on this?"

There have indeed been persistent rumours of 'escape tunnels' under the Thames but frankly, one rather doubts the story as it stands. Perhaps there were conduits of some sort – though rather fanciful to imagine subterranean supplies of cakes from Henry VIII's confectioner, who lived where Boyle Farm now is; or even ale from the Swan which claims (with no clear substantiation) a history dating back to before Henry. If anyone has primary evidence to support the existence of ancient tunnels under the

river for any purpose, (or the Swan dating back to 13C) please write in!

Veronica Whittall, who writes about Weston Manor Farm in this issue, adds another recollection:

"Another property long forgotten and demolished in 1954, was Hedger's Cottage, which stood in the car park of Thames Ditton Tennis Club. It was built around 1687 and was formerly known as Manor Cottage. In later days cottages were more likely to be called after the people living in them, so it became Hedger's Cottage after an occupant called Job Hedger. At one time it was the only dwelling on the left of the road from Weston Green to Thames Ditton. I remember this old cottage and after it was demolished I picked up an old bead and a bent nail from the site, which I still have."

In Spring 2008 Thames Ditton Today carried an article on the growing numbers and depredations of the urban fox, with which this area is infested – as their foulings testify. That prompted some lively defence of foxes. But since then we've had the nationally reported attack on baby girls by a fox entering a house in North London; this summer a teenage girl camping overnight in the garden of her home in Long Ditton was bitten when a fox ripped into her tent and attacked her; and now we read reports of a fox entering an open window in Fulham and biting through the ear of a lady lawyer as she slept. The Council won't control foxes. Please don't encourage them to be bold by feeding them.



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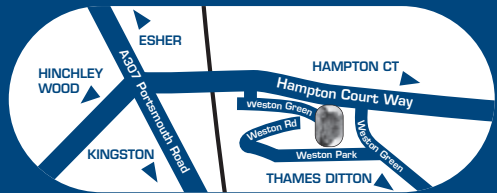
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