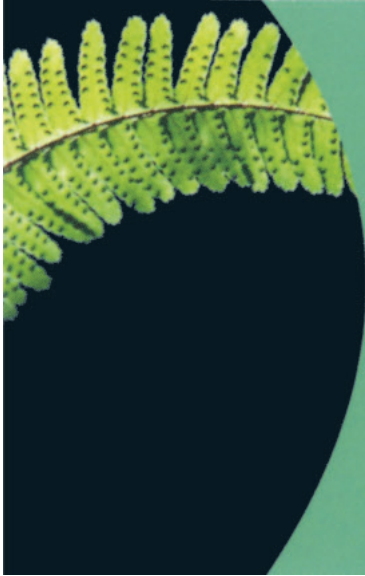


WINTER 2012

THAMES DITTON — TODAY —



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



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THAMES DITTON TODAY

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

Published quarterly since Spring 1970

Winter 2012

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You are welcome to submit articles
or images. Please contact the
Editor **well in advance** of the next
deadline on 8 February

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Cover photo: *High Street in the snows two years ago.*
Photo by 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 Thorkill Road Pharmacy, 94 Thorkill Road, Thames Ditton. Or mail to Membership Secretary Peter Haynes at 6 Onslow Gardens, Thames Ditton KT7 0JJ. Thank you.

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THAMES DITTON & WESTON GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



About the Association

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

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

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

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

President: Maureen Sheldrick,
34 The Woodlands, Esher

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

Thames Ditton Councillors

Sandra Dennis,
Little Bradley, Thames Ditton 020 8873 2936
Ruth Lyon,
11 Riversdale Road, Thames Ditton 020 8398 3396
Karen Randolph,
Deepfield, Giggs Hill Road,
Thames Ditton 020 8398 5005

Weston Green Councillors

Ruth Bruce,
15 Imber Grove, Esher 020 8398 8324
Tannia Shipley, Clinton House
27 Lower Green Road, Esher 020 8398 2484

Officers:

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Vice-Chairman: Martin Wilberforce,
7 River Avenue, Thames Ditton 020 8398 4732
Hon. Treasurer: Bob Huxster,
5 Station Rd, Thames Ditton 020 8398 3489
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29 Station Rd., Thames Ditton 020 8339 0485
Membership Secretary: Peter Haynes
6 Onslow Gardens, Thames Ditton 020 8398 6019

Conveners of Sub-Committees:

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

**THE NEXT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION OPEN MEETINGS ARE
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News from the Residents' Association



to 24 November

Planning

The government is bent on further favouring its property development lobby by abolishing the need for planning permission for extensions twice the size of those currently allowed, and by offering developers a let-out from the requirement to include affordable housing in any larger scheme (or pay the equivalent). Our councillors together with likeminded colleagues are trying to prompt the Elmbridge Administration to respond with robust and well-based criticism of these ill thought-out intentions, as some Conservative councils elsewhere have done. Our Planning convenor, Graham Cooke, is writing to the government consultation on behalf of the Association and individuals are encouraged to add their own responses. Please see the Association's website.

In lieu of community-driven neighbourhood plans envisaged in the Localism Act, Elmbridge council planning staff are elaborating plans intended to have the support of the local communities in the borough, divided into eight areas. Thames Ditton and Weston Green are lumped with Long Ditton and Hinchley Wood as one area. These plans have been given the title of Settlement Investment and Development Plans, SIDs for short. Each SID will take account of another document called the Strategic

Housing and Land Availability Assessment – SHLAA – which outlines land that “could” be developed, and which is prepared by the Elmbridge planning staff without consultation with the community. One proposal in the SHLAA envisages 24 terraced houses to be built on Colets playing fields with access from Speer Road. Aside from being on the flood plain, on playing fields, and on an area of land designated as of high amenity value in the Supplementary Planning Document elaborated as recently as the turn of the year, the land includes protected trees and a probable population of bats. At a workshop run by planners with the participation of some community representatives by invitation only, our councillors resisted, unanimously, the endorsement of this unacceptable SHLAA proposal in the SID document. Dialectic with the planning staff is continuing as this is written.

The final draft of the SID for our area will be put to public consultation in March 2013. It carries the risk that under the new planning regime, statements in the SID that survive the eventual public consultation will be held to “have the support of the community.” It would be that much harder to resist eventual planning applications based on them. We will alert residents to the final draft of the SID when it is published by Elmbridge, soliciting your responses at the right time

to carry weight in next year's consultation, and ask you to monitor our website.

Other planning news

Brabant House has been given a reprieve following the Elmbridge Planning staff's refusal of the application to demolish the building and replace it with 8 flats, on the grounds that the forward projection of the proposed building would be "overbearing and visually prominent and thereby detrimentally dominating this part of Portsmouth Road." A heritage argument for keeping the existing building was rejected by the planning officer, as it is neither listed nor in a conservation area. Meanwhile, occupants including the Brabant House Clinic of Natural Medicine and the Charity Street Child Africa are concerned to emphasise that business continues – and is expected to continue – as usual.

A third application for **31 Embercourt Road** envisages four detached houses in place of the present large house. Two earlier applications, each for six houses, were rejected.

The Elmbridge North Area Planning Committee, dominated by Conservative councillors, has approved compliance with condition after condition in favour of Gladedale, the developers of the controversial **Jolly Boatman site**. The Hampton Court Rescue Campaign has described this as "*a repeated, predictable and demoralising pattern... reasoned argument is ignored and the final vote – tribal... Cllr. O'Reilly, Leader of the Council, lectured the Committee that the*

Conditions were 'merely a bureaucratic exercise'."

Policing

The elections for Police and Crime Commissioners were the latest government policy fiasco in a growing list (to add to the long list of fiascos down to the last government). Increased powers, including the power to hire and fire the Chief Constable, will now be concentrated in the hands of a single person. In Surrey, turnout was close to the national average of 15 percent, easily an historic low, with many spoiled ballots, reflecting a mixture of apathy and electoral hostility towards a new and largely unwanted system that risks politicising rather than democratising control over the police.

Former Detective Chief Superintendent with the Metropolitan Police, **Kevin Hurley**, standing on a platform of 'zero tolerance,' was elected on the second preference vote. Mr Hurley promised that he would put the public's view to the Chief Constable and "*make sure she delivers on it.*" How he proposes to consult the public to put fairly their view in addition to his own, is not yet clear. Meanwhile, the defeated Conservative candidate Mrs. Julie Iles described zero tolerance as "unachievable" and commented, not entirely magnanimously, that Mr. Hurley had failed to get the Conservative nomination for which he had applied, then benefited from standing as an independent: "*It shows that those people who thought they were voting for an independent weren't,*" she said, adding that "*the very last thing we want is the police policing the police.*"

Library car park signs

The very large signs lately erected by council officials at the entrance to this car park – without prior consultation with ward councillors – are expected to be replaced with less obtrusive signs bearing less draconian wording: the car park is used by groups in addition to the TD Centre and the Library.

Flood insurance

With a stand-off between insurance companies and the government over the way in which flood risk should be reflected in premiums, it has become increasingly difficult for many homeowners on the flood plain to get reasonable – or sometimes, any – insurance cover. The Association is adding to pressure on government to fulfil earlier promises concerning flood prevention schemes. We are also quietly exploring, via a Walton-based specialist in broker research, the possibilities for collective bargaining with insurance companies.

Commons cleanup

Organised by resident **Lewis McGuinness**, about sixteen residents met outside the Chocolate Tea Pot on 19 October to clean up the Commons (not that Augean stable on the riverbank at Westminster). Participant Tannia Shipley writes: “We collected several sacks of rubbish – it was an extremely successful event and we had lots of fun! It was interesting to see some beautiful cyclamen on the common, and some amazing fungi. We finished back at the Chocolate Teapot for goodies and a gossip before we all left for home.”



Peter Dodge and helper Isla – photo Tannia Shipley

Milbourne Pond

A group of residents tackled some of the overgrown margins of the pond in late October. Again, Residents’ councillor Tannia Shipley writes: “A wonderful morning: we started at 10am and finished by 11.30 so much was the enthusiasm. Local resident **Peter Dodge** organises this event regularly and we had advice and guidance from one of EBC’s Countryside Team. We had a few youngsters helping us. They might have had tiny hands and little legs but they were back and forth to the ever increasing mountain of cleared vegetation. They learnt about community spirit and we were all very pleased with our morning’s work.”

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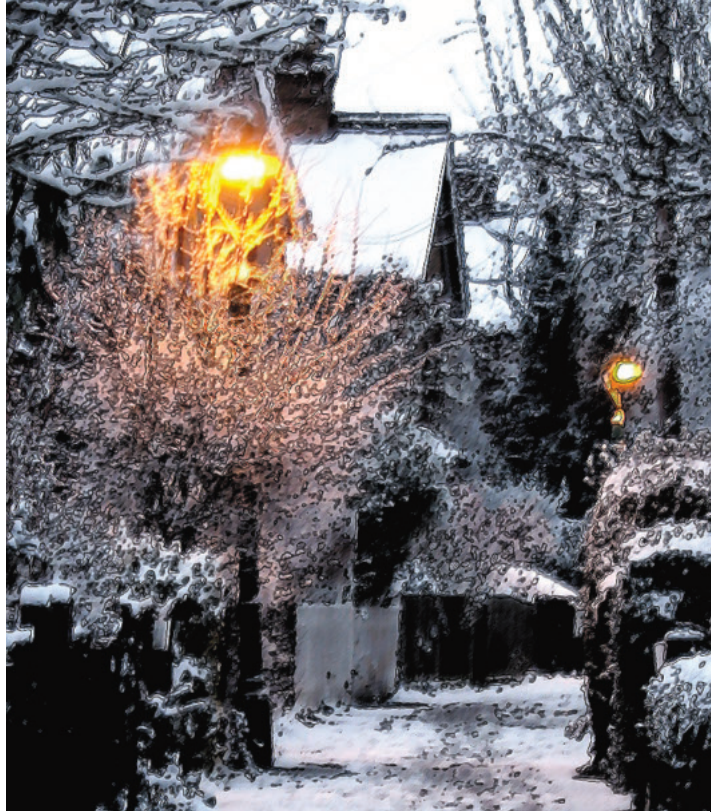
INCORPORATING CHOSES (GURET)

Sewage glitch

Despite a ban on heavy lorries from ten till six overnight, the result of long and hard battles by residents in years past, residents of The Woodlands and Douglas Road were kept awake all night in late October by a convoy of tankers conducting shuttle runs up and down their streets. Our councillors Ruth Bruce and Tannia Shipley – and retired Councillor Maureen Sheldrick – were quickly on to it: to learn that there was an emergency at the treatment plant at Farm Road, Esher. There was no option in the circumstances but to engage tankers round the clock to cart the sewage away. Thames Water stated that this “operational incident” was confined to the treatment plant and did not, as earlier reports suggested, involve a leak into the Mole.

Snowmen

Membership Secretary **Peter Haynes** reminds us that it might well snow again this winter. He writes: “Perhaps readers would consider setting up a group in your own road. We have 26 Snowman groups



Church Walk – before Snowmen get going already and they’ve undoubtedly prevented some falls and injuries. But we still have a lot of roads where pavement clearance is needed after snow. It doesn’t involve a lot of work to form a group. The Residents’ Association will provide you with a heavy-duty snow shovel, and also leaflets to tell your neighbours about the scheme. Then, after snowfall, it’s just a matter of clearing your own stretch of pavement and leaving the shovel out for your neighbours to do likewise. It can make a real difference.” Contact Peter Haynes (see page 5 for details).

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Doings

On 25 October 2012 a plaque, tree and bench provided by the family of the late David Lowe, a past Residents' councillor and stalwart of the Association (TDT Spring 2012 issue), were ceremonially inaugurated at Thames Ditton Infants School where he had chaired the Governing body. To honour David's memory, the school will make a half-termly award to a pupil for excellence in ICT.

Ernst Bachmann, who founded Bachmanns Patisserie in 1989, was presented with a lifetime achievement award at the Baking Industry Awards. This fabulous patisserie and chocolaterie has won no less than 17 national awards.

For over 35 years **Pat Farmiloe** has been behind the terrific Good As New Sales which, cumulatively, have raised over £101,000 for Cancer Research UK. The sale in October raised almost £5000 clear. Many congratulations to Pat and her team, and if you would like to join them please call her on 0208 398 2787.

Remembrance wreaths were laid at Giggs Hill Green Memorial by our councillors **Peter Hickman** for Surrey, **Sandra Dennis** for Elmbridge and Chairman **Libby MacIntyre** for the Association. At the Weston Green act of remembrance, wreaths were laid by Cllr. **Tannia Shipley** for Elmbridge and **Maureen Sheldrick**, President of the Association. **Pam Tiller**, who looks after the archives of All Saints Weston, researched the names that appear on the War Memorial there and has produced an excellent pamphlet on who they were and the circumstances of their deaths.



Pam Tiller – monumental research



D'Artagnan and panto friends

The **Friends of Thames Ditton Hospital** are hosting Charles Court Opera's Christmas pantomime "**The Three Musketeers**" on Friday and Saturday 11 and 12 January. The company's pantos are rated 4 stars by Time Out. The admirably supportive **Dairy Crest** are again most generously sponsoring the production. Tickets are £12.50 on the Friday and £35 including a 3 course dinner on the Saturday. Funds raised will go towards the purchase of 24-hour ECG monitor packs so that NHS patients can get a complete service from cardiology consultants at Thames Ditton without waiting to go to Kingston or Tooting for this equipment.

When a family member is diagnosed with a life-threatening illness the volunteer service of the **Brigitte Trust** can make a real difference. Supported by

Surrey as a supplier of Palliative Care Services by Macmillan Cancer Support, the Trust can offer respite for a carer, and emotional support, transport, and errands, and their services are free – volunteers receive travel expenses from the charity. They operate throughout Elmbridge and are **recruiting volunteers** for training courses in Guildford and Crawley in the New Year. If you would like to join them please call Vanessa Smith on 01306 880862.

Once a month from October to June **Le Cercle Français D'Esher** meets at West End, Esher to hear a talk in French, enjoy coffee and biscuits or browse the free lending library of French books. The Cercle, which was founded in 1973, has around 100 members whose ability in the French language varies from "Did A Level some years ago but am rather rusty"

to completely fluent. One of the committee members is a long-standing Thames Ditton resident. If you're interested call Brigitte Tiller on 01932 860842. *Pourquoi pas?*

Our thanks to resident **Francine Brooks** who has planted the Fountain flower beds with glorious winter pansies after the red, white and blue Jubilee summer planting. This Autumn the Residents Association again funded the planting by **John Lyon** of hundreds more spring bulbs on the commons and grass verges of Thames Ditton and Weston Green.

Andrew Roberts is putting up the Residents Christmas Tree on the roundabout at the entrance to the High Street. By the time this magazine is published, we will have enjoyed another High Street Christmas Fair and the Residents' Christmas Party.

We welcome the new management who have tastefully redecorated and reopened the Red Lion, one of our cherished old pubs, and hope they will do well.



who could resist popping into the Red Lion?

New Editor needed, writes Editor:

“By next summer I will have completed seven years and 28 issues of Thames Ditton Today and it’s time to find a fresh Editor. The Summer 2013 issue will be my last. A successor should be in sympathy with the aims of the Association; have an enquiring mind (there’s always plenty to enquire about); with basic competence in everyday handling of office software; and a well-seasoned sense of humour. The Editor is responsible for the magazine overall and in particular for the content. Advertising, distribution and graphic design are handled by other members of the team. If you are interested, please get in touch while opportunity remains to understudy for a couple of issues before you take over. It’s an excellent way of contributing as a volunteer to community activities – and it can be a lot of fun too. Call 0208 398 7320 to discuss.”

And Season’s greetings

Heartfelt thanks to all those who support this magazine and those who put something back into this community by participating in the many fine clubs and worthy activities around and about. Don’t forget: you can buy quite a few imaginative Christmas presents in the village, not to mention fine cakes and good veg, so please do your best to **shop local!**

A Merry Christmas One and All.

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They describe themselves as “middlemen” but as part of a Lloyds of London network, they exercise a skill that is second to none. On average they handle up to 140 emergency enquiries per year. The Marint team of eight are led by the company founder, a Master Mariner, so it really is “all hands on deck”. Indeed, one of the team members who was at his desk at the start of the business day when I paid them a visit, had been up until 4am that morning doing what Marint clearly do so well – and just off the Caribbean coast; now there’s a coincidence!

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Journeyman Pictures

One of the most significant and compelling changes over the past 50 years or so has been the instantaneous communicating of news and pictures from far-flung places and centres of conflict. It is there, in front of you...often as it is occurring, whether it be sporting or political turmoil or celebrations of world-shattering achievements.

The founder of Journeyman Pictures in the High Street is Mark Stucke who was for many years a correspondent for Channel 4 news and freelance war journalist. He now heads up a company that distributes factual programming worldwide for broadcast, theatrical and educational use. The company has a catalogued archive of over 5,000 films, covering a myriad of subjects and styles. Another skill is rendering foreign news reports into English and recording the translated narration in-house.

Journeyman has three departments: one dealing with news; a second with documentaries, for global distribution and a third, footage which news and feature programmes can call on and use to illustrate major programmes. Walking into the company's offices is like entering a library with shelf after shelf of news coverage that keeps us all in touch with the reality and effect of world events.

Harris Corporation

The Ferry works on Summer Road have been expanding (and along with other offices, helping to sustain the growing number of village snack and refreshment places). One of the oldest

operations – dating back to 1980 when the then chief executive of a small electronics company lived in Speer Road – is in the offices of Harris Electronics which is an integral part of the world-renowned Harris Corporation with head offices in Florida.

Harris provides advanced technology, from national intelligence through transportation, energy and healthcare. Defence is a key part of the business and the company is the number one supplier of tactical radios to NATO and the US Department of Defense.

Its expertise extends to broadcast and media, its technology beaming content to billions of people in 100 countries on six continents every day, in which Ferry Works with its server banks plays a key part. These village offices contribute to an estimated 6 billion dollars of annual revenue globally and the local team is among 17,000 employees in 52 countries round the world.

Show us your niche

My excursion was just a taste of the many top quality business connections across the globe which belie the image of a sleepy village. It is equally tempting to take a look at the many other, often surprising, niches of commercial activity that go on here. For starters, someone connected with this very magazine works from home for a company that provides worldwide long-range weather forecasts to international market traders.

I gather that we will have at least one sunny day in 2013.

Malcolm McIntyre

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Children's Park for the Future in Summer Road



What have Hinchley Wood, Oxshott, Walton, Cobham, Molesey, to name but a few, got that we haven't? Well the answer is a fantastic park with a zip-wire, a large climbing frame and a team swing. I should know, because I have visited them all, mainly with my two very energetic 7 and 4 year old boys, and while researching this project.

I began to feel that we were missing out on having such exciting structures on our doorstep. Why should we have to drive to other areas to enjoy what we should have in our large under-used Summer Road Park? With another 4 form entry into Thames Ditton Infants School this year, the demographics of the village show that this is a definite need for the area.

What's On – Spring 2013

Your local Holiday Inn has lots going-on over the next few months and we very much look forward to welcoming you to great food, great fun and great memories!



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The play area that we already have is fine for the under 5s, but after that the children have no real interest in going there. After speaking to various mothers who all felt the same way, we decided to approach Peter Hickman, our local Surrey County Councillor, to see if he could help. We called a public meeting in July so that everyone could air their views on what their children would like in the way of equipment in the park. Here are some of the suggestions; a zip-wire, a jungle climbing frame, monkey bars, a team swing, outdoor table tennis tables and two goal posts. The table tennis tables could attract coaching clubs in the summer holidays and we could even have football clubs at the weekend with the new posts. How about some more benches, maybe commemoratively commissioned benches by residents, and perhaps a small orchard?

Following two meetings with Playdale (a playground equipment company) they produced a wonderful image of what the park could look like with all our requests, placed on soft matting surface which allows the grass to grow through.

The ergonomic structures allowing ‘free play’ are different from the hard playground for under 5s and are made from natural timber with a 20 year life guarantee. The whole area takes up 28 metres squared leaving lots of clear space and is intended to be positioned along the back row of trees away from any adjacent houses in Alexandra Road backing onto it.

We have held 3 public meetings and leafleted the affected houses. We are not

asking for a mobile phone mast to be sited, but only a children’s playground! The latest meeting we held with Ruth Lyon, our local Elmbridge councillor, was very positive and in October we took our proposal to Elmbridge Council to see if we can get the funding.

Council officers may oppose wooden structures, citing vandalism and durability as their main concerns. We do not accept this: and an alternative steel climbing frame would bring us back to what we already have and would not be as aesthetically pleasing. The football posts, solid outdoor table tennis tables and zip-wire are maybe all we can get at present, but it is at least a step in the right direction. No final decision has been made and you will get your chance to have your say as to your preferences.

In today’s society of “screen baby-sitting” and obesity, let’s get our children playing outside. Don’t they deserve it? When the park has been completed it will add value to the area and everyone, especially the children, will be excited by what we have achieved.

If any readers of Thames Ditton Today want to contribute ideas please contact me.

Liza Dale

lizadale@btinternet.com

Tel: 8398 7759

Heartening to see more residents getting together to take a stake in their surroundings and make things better - is this the birth of the Friends of Summer Road Park?! – Ed

Report From County Hall

from your Residents' Councillor



Although it meets in Kingston, the County Council can seem miles away from the real concerns of residents here. Over the past few years it's been through much upheaval with three leadership changes and three Chief Executives. Out of 80 councillors there are just ten representing Residents and Independents: it takes a lot of work for the voice of reason and common sense to be heard – but heard, it is!

The budget cuts already begun will get worse, stretched further by increasing demand for schools and a growing number of vulnerable older people. Although they complained about it in opposition, there is no sign that this government will redress a situation where we in Surrey raise high local taxes for central government but receive comparatively little back for our own needs. There have been some savings through partnerships and slightly better efficiency, but there is a long way to go! To give you the flavour: a new salt bin in Long Ditton was agreed in April. The money was provided by local shopkeepers. After eight months of pushing for progress I learned that a chain of no less than ten officials were dealing with this simple request. Astounding!

School Places

In this part of Elmbridge there is great pressure on school places and there have been two public consultations, one at



Cllr. Peter holds court in a local hostelry

Cranmere concerning primary schools and one at Esher High concerning secondary school places. Secondary places are more worrying as in the short term some of our children will be pointed outside the Dittons towards Rydens. In the longer term there is inadequate provision for known pupil bulges moving upwards. You would think that with census information, birthrates, and data from nursery and infant reception classes, the county should be able to plan far enough ahead to meet future schooling needs. But it's clear that they haven't managed to do this well. Part of the problem is: where do the extra places go?

Roads

The appointment of new contractors somewhat improved this lamentable area.

This Summer the Olympic Cycle Routes received attention, so some routine work was delayed. Locally, we will receive just £60,000 from this year's straitened highway budget to spend in the Dittons. I await the figures for next year. Your councillors have pounded the streets identifying small works that should be put in hand. There's also "central" money for major projects, but there's a very long list of roads in Surrey that need improvements. I have batted for Thames Ditton High Street as one road desperate for improvement, but this made item no. 100 on the county list and this year items only up to no. 63 are being done. However we managed to bring forward Newlands Avenue from no. 405 to this year: Highways agreed it was in a truly dreadful state! Please do report any faults/requests via the SCC website and let me know when progress is slow or lacking so I can chase progress.

Parking

Amid general uproar last year the idea of Pay and Display was abandoned. Following my question at full Council we were the first area to throw out the proposals for the High Street. It was not a paying proposition nor good for the viability of our shops.

Some minimal restrictions were introduced at local choke-points, but even these caused controversy. Engineers continue to look at several parts of the Dittons, and a few small scale controls will be implemented next year. Residents are always free to apply to Surrey for further controls and any request will be looked at. Consultation is necessary, and progress is slow.

Community funds

I try to spread my small local allowance for minor projects around all parts of the division I represent. I've been able to allot some funds for Thames Ditton Summer Fair road closure, Ditton Library atrium blinds, street lighting improvements in Thorhill road, refurbishment of a meeting room at All Saints Weston, new posts and railings in Station Road Thames Ditton, monitoring equipment for TD Infant School's Eco project, the purchase of visual aids for St Paul's School, the refurbishment of the library at Cranmere School, Christmas Lights in Thames Ditton High Street and several donations to 'Love of Learning' projects at all of our Schools. The most recent small donation was a contribution towards an electric bike for Nigel Oates, one of our local PCSOs, following the relocation of his office from Molesey to Esher.

This year the new leader of the county council introduced a Community Improvement Fund of over £700,000. Excellent bids from across Surrey totalled nearly £5m for some 200 projects! I am on a panel that reviews all of these bids, a fascinating but difficult task as comparatively few applicants can be successful. It brought home to me the number of voluntary groups there are in Surrey, and I have formally requested that funds are allocated again next year for this very worthwhile initiative.

Despite the constant battle with bureaucracy it's a good feeling when I can get something done for these villages!

Peter Hickman

*Surrey County Councillor for the
Dittons & Weston Green*

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Top Tips for Tenants

- * Be very careful who you share the property with, particularly if you are all signing the same tenancy agreement - by doing this you are making yourself liable for their share of the rent as well as your own, and also for the cost of any damage which they may do to the property. You should only sign a tenancy agreement with people you can trust.
- * Don't sign the tenancy agreement unless you are absolutely certain you want to rent the property. Don't allow yourself to be hustled into signing against your better judgement, and before you have fully thought it through.

And finally.....

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Stormclouds Over Local Schools



Local parents know that there aren't enough permanent primary and secondary school places in our area. How has this arisen?

In early 2009 Surrey County Council (SCC) directed the Governing Body of Thames Ditton Infants School to take an additional and temporary 'bulge' class of children into the reception year, making a year group of 120 or four forms of entry. A Portakabin was provided in the school playground for the two extra classes, reducing available play space. SCC was also developing plans that might have included Thames Ditton Infants School, and presumably Thames Ditton Junior School, permanently becoming 4 forms of entry. The council intended to build permanent classrooms along the rear wall of the playground of the Infants and to replace the grass field with an all-weather artificial surface. The Governing Body of



'temporary' Portakabin craned into the Infants School may become permanent

the school were not in favour. An over-large density of children on a small site would not provide the best start for their school careers. But mindful of the

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increased need for school places in the area, and wanting as many children as possible to access an excellent education without compromising standards at the school, the governors questioned SCC about increased provision on other more suitable sites. Meanwhile TDIS was directed to take a second bulge year in September 2010, filling the second room in the Portakabin. Analysis of postcodes revealed that significant proportions of these children were coming from some distance, including from outside Surrey.

The September 2011 reception entry reverted to three forms, but not for long. Thames Ditton Infants School was again directed by SCC to take an additional bulge class in September 2012. From analysis of application data it did seem that the children in this cohort were from the immediate community although Thames Ditton Infants is not the nearest school for quite a number of them. The children are accommodated in the classroom vacated by the first bulge class who have now moved up to the Junior School. One implication of this third bulge class in four years is that Thames Ditton Junior School will have all three bulge classes simultaneously in September 2015.

The approach of the Governing Body of Thames Ditton Infants School has always been that as many children as possible should be able to access the excellent education provided by our school. However we also recognise that there is a point at which that excellence would be compromised by trying to cram ever larger numbers of children on to a relatively small site.

In light of significant changes on the Governing Body and the continual directions from SCC to take additional classes amounting to permanent 4 form entry, the issue was revisited this Summer. Further research included feedback from staff and parents on their experiences of the bulge year groups; seeking research on the effects of school size on achievement – of which there is actually very little; and analysing school census data. After drafting a ‘pros and cons’ list for becoming permanently 4 form entry, once again the Governing Body voted overwhelmingly against permanent expansion, although we can be directed otherwise by SCC at any time.

Since September 2012 the lack of primary and secondary school places in the area and the seeming absence of a longer-term strategy from SCC for dealing with predicted rises in the school-age population has been made clear to Dominic Raab MP at a local open meeting and by letter from Thames Ditton Junior School Head Teacher, Nick Fry. A recent presentation from SCC officers to Elmbridge Borough Councillors identifies some of the current strategies for providing permanent primary school extra places. In our area this includes the rebuilding and permanent expansion from 1 to 3 form entry of Cranmere School. Other places may be provided in a new building in Molesey on the former John Nightingale Special School site, and the sale of some existing land for housing at Hurst Park School may pay for this.

Secondary school expansion is even more problematic as SCC only maintains Esher High School, the other three

secondary schools in Elmbridge being academies and therefore independent: academies, unlike maintained schools, cannot be forced to take additional students. Esher High expanded by one form of entry a few years ago and Surrey intends that to add another. Rydens Enterprise School in Walton has just announced plans to rebuild and increase its intake by three forms of entry, but not until 2016, and Heathside intends to add one form by the same date.

To provide some comparative data that encapsulates the situation: in 1979 Hinchley Wood Secondary School took 180 pupils each year. It now takes 210 pupils, an increase of 17%. Over the same period the Thames Ditton Infant and Junior Schools have increased in size permanently by 50% and in the 'bulge years' by 100%. It's quite clear that over the coming years there won't be enough places available unless more schools and proper extensions are built. Quarts into pint pots don't go, and education has to be paid for. If we want better state school provision then residents must be realistic, understand what government education policy shibboleths and 'no increase' County Council tax precepts actually mean for our children, lobby those who have the power, and use their votes.



what will the future hold?

The Governors and Staff of Thames Ditton Infants School would welcome any feedback you may have on the issues raised in this article, which can be sent to the school on info@thames-ditton-infant.surrey.sch.uk.

Nicola Chetwynd-Stapylton

*Community Governor,
Thames Ditton Infants School
Former pupil of TD Infants and Junior
Schools, Hinchey Wood School
and Esher College*

Farewell to Ye Olde Harrow



the former Olde Harrow, altered since Georgian times, before demolition in 1905 and replacement by the present doomed building

On appeal by the developers, planning Inspector Paul Dobsen, based in Bristol, has approved proposals to demolish the Harrow on Weston Green Road and build some large houses there. The present pub, not listed and now dilapidated, replaced the earlier Georgian Harrow in about 1905. While there is nothing now worth conserving of the present building, I hope that the eventual owners of the new houses may preserve the name, at least.

For the Harrow dates back to at least 1771, probably the mid-1700s. Within

the parish of Thames Ditton, small clusters of houses had earlier grown up around the church and the wharf, around Ember Court, and around the original Weston Green – that is, the green by which the Harrow is sited. The remainder was farms, orchards, woods, and commons or ‘wastes.’ Hearth Tax returns in 1664 show that there were more houses of substance in that part of the parish comprised by Weston and Ember, than there were in Thames Ditton village and Ditton Marsh.



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A commuter's rural idyll

Stagecoach services from London to Portsmouth were timetabled from at least 1681, with Kingston already a major coaching centre. Improved roads under the Turnpike Trusts during succeeding decades made Thames Ditton and Weston Green more accessible to and from London, with a journey time under three hours. So increasingly, houses were built for gentlefolk and rich merchants, with their own carriages and horses, most of whom retained houses or businesses in London while acquiring country establishments within reach of Town. Around Weston Green, these included the Newlands in the late 1600s, and a little later, the Elms and the Mansion House, which subsequently was rebuilt as Weston House. The small Green, with its area of common, its pond and the village's stray animal pound, and the annual village Fair in June, became a pivotal place in the life of the parish of Thames Ditton. By the second half of the 1700s Weston Green had grown considerably. The building of an inn there, and naming it the Harrow, adjacent as it was to farms, was a natural development. Several other inns of the parish appear to date from the same period; while a couple of others such as the Angel (mid-1500s), and probably the Swan alehouse, are thought to be considerably older.

A richly-flavoured history

The Harrow is well woven into local history. The Vestry held meetings and dinners in local pubs by rotation, including the Harrow. In 1784 its publican Peter Pratt was a churchwarden

at St. Nicholas. He was tried for body snatching jointly with William Scott, yeoman, of Thames Ditton and Thomas Greatise or Greatrix, millwright, of Kingston upon Thames, at the Quarter Sessions. Pratt and Scott were found guilty. On 16 November 1784 they had dug up George Papps, who had lately been interred in the churchyard, to sell his body for dissection. Fined 6s 8d, the best part of a week's pay for a labourer, it made no apparent difference to Pratt's standing in the community. He remained a churchwarden, continued to serve pints at the Harrow and went on to become a leading Congregationalist in Kingston.¹

In 1792 the Harrow was the venue for a society of local worthies concerned with crime. This story has been popularly propagated as the establishment of a local vigilante force to deal with highwaymen. But that is something of a distortion. It is based on a fragmentary document found when an old house nearby was demolished. For a while framed and hung in the Harrow, the document has since disappeared but, happily, methodical Mercer transcribed it.² It outlines "*a Committee of Nine Persons to be appointed Yearly...for the purpose of managing and carrying on the ...Society*" and establishes that a meeting shall be held on "*every last Thursday in May.*" The participants came not just from Thames Ditton but some from Molesey East and West, Esher, Petersham, and Chessington. From the text fragments it is clear that the Society would provide money for rewards and for defraying reasonable prosecution expenses in connection with a range of crimes including not only

burglary and highway robbery, but breaking hedges, stealing livestock and fruit, and receiving stolen goods. If any Subscriber is robbed or injured (injury here will have included injury to their property and goods) *“he or she shall immediately give Information thereof to one or more of the Committee, and such Subscriber, with the consent of 3 or more of the Committee, shall take all proper Methods to apprehend and prosecute the Conviction [of] the Offender or Offenders.”* The committee’s approval is required before reimbursement to any of the members who make a claim.

Nowhere is any force or band of vigilantes mentioned. It is clear that this was one of the thousands of Societies For Protection Against Felons that were being set up around the nation from the late 1700s. The texts of their formative documents are widely available, and very similar in all essentials to that of the documentary fragment above.

This was in the days before local police forces. Since Saxon times, the onus for securing the arrest and prosecution of a villain lay to a large extent with the victim. Citizens had a right of arrest, but by the 18th century arrest or service of a warrant would normally be carried out by a parish constable on the instruction of a Justice of the Peace, to whom a victim would apply (and who would require a fee). The suspect might often have to be detained locally for a while by a constable, before being brought before the JP for judgment, if a misdemeanour; or, if a felony or larceny, then committal to trial before a court, and to detention in a

county gaol meanwhile. A Society for Protection against Felons such as the one based at the Harrow would not have powers of arrest that went beyond a citizen’s arrest, nor powers to condemn a man; still less would a suspect felon in Surrey be committed by the group to Newgate for hanging (as one local author romanticised). From Thames Ditton, a JP would have committed a suspect to detention and trial at the county’s next Quarter Sessions.

The expenses of arrest, temporary detention, delivery to court or prison, and of witnesses in court, would in many cases have to be borne by the victim of the crime. And so, these Societies were basically for mutual insurance among subscribing property-owners and merchants.³ They spread the cost of effecting arrest and preliminary detention, funded reward notices and rewards for witnesses to come forward, and demonstrated local commitment. But the beguiling image of Treasury tax clerk and local landowner William Speer the elder and colleagues in a force of vigilante villagers surging out from the Harrow to pursue highwaymen down moonlit lanes is, I think, somewhat fanciful!

Rat Pie and Twopenny

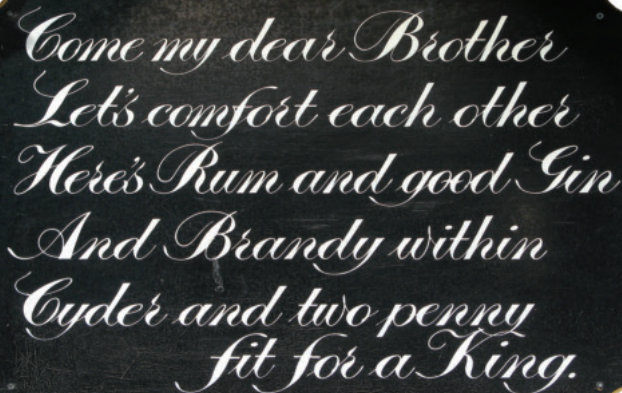
For some bizarre English reason, however, highwaymen like pirates catch the popular imagination – as does rat pie, served at a party at the Harrow in 1890 after Thomas Elliott, the village rat-catcher who lived on Weston Green Road, caught two sackfuls of the rodents at nearby Pound Farm. These days, Gourmet Rat Pie would be extolled as a

Special Offer on a board outside the establishment. The Harrow's famous sign was of a rather higher order.

The poet Eric Wilson Barker (1905 – 1973), who was born in Church Walk and spent his childhood in Thames Ditton, revisited his birthplace in 1959 and wrote: *"I visited an ancient pub, The Old Harrow near Weston Green. I always remember the lines on the signboard of that inn when I was a kid... There it was too and the old weatherworn sign with the letters a bit dim but still legible!"*⁴ The sign, lately transposed to a fresh board with the spelling corrected, was still outside the Harrow a few years ago.

Bowls & buyouts

In 1927 the Harrow's landlord William Crosby offered a small meadow adjacent to the inn at a annual rent of £6 to ten local gentlemen – founders of the Dittons Bowling Club.⁵ The bowling green, one of the oldest in Surrey, was laid with fine Cumberland turf. In 1941 the inn was taken over by Ernie and Dorrie Cartwright (earlier of The Swan in Thames Ditton), who became stalwart members. An incendiary bomb hit the clubhouse during the war. Dr. Collier took over the Harrow in 1950, supporting the Club and making the



*Come my dear Brother
Let's comfort each other
Here's Rum and good Gin
And Brandy within
Cyder and two penny
fit for a King.*

Twopenny was the second runoff from a malting – a bitter or mild “small beer” rather than the more alcoholic strong ale from a first fermentation

billiard room available for meetings. Ladies were allowed to play from 1953 and from 1985 were accepted as full members. The club thrived and was a delightful spot of recreational pleasure within the community.

Towards the end of the millennium the Harrow was acquired by an investment company now known as the Wellington Pub Company, which owns a vast number of pubs that might offer development opportunities. It also owns the Red Lion and the George. The company allowed the Harrow to get run down. In August 2004 the brothers Reuben, billionaire property developers (and serial donors to the Conservative Party⁶), bought the company.

The bowling green was an obvious attraction for property speculators. Around the end of 2005 the company refused to renew the lease on the green. The Dittons Bowling Club was made an



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offer they could not well decline, and sold out for a small payoff. With the community recreation argument thus removed from potential objections, the owners submitted a planning application to demolish the Harrow and build a massive block of 14 flats. This was rejected, since when the site has passed through the hands of several developers, and their proposals through several wearisome iterations, until the present plans for four substantial houses, which are considerably better, were passed on appeal.

So the seasons roll by, the bowling green is lost, the Harrow will be ploughed under, and different profits will be reaped. Fortunately, dear Brother and Sister, we still have some old pubs in which to comfort each other. While we may, let's drink a pint of twopenny to Ye Olde Harrow and honour its place in village history.

Keith Evetts

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Charles Court Opera presents
THE THREE MUSKETEERS
Sponsored by Dairy Crest

A swash-buckling side-splitting pantomime. Join Athos, Aramis, Porthos and D'Artagnan in an evening of toe-tapping routines and musical treats from pop to opera. All for one and one for all!

TICKETS £12.50 (Friday)

TICKETS £35 (Saturday) including 3 course dinner
in aid of Thames Ditton Hospital Appeal
from Karen Randolph 020 8398 5005.

Friday 8th February 8.00 pm

CONCERT

Lukasz Filipczak (piano) Henry Tong (violin)
Sagi Hartov (cello)

Rising stars in the music world play trios and solos by Mendelssohn, Rachmaninov, hostakovich, Granados.

TICKETS £11 (under 16 years free)

Friday 1st March 8.00 pm

THE LONDON MOZART TRIO

Colin Stone (piano) Krzysztof Smetana (violin)
Sagi Hartov (cello)

Three outstanding world class musicians play piano trios by Dvorak, Martinu and Rachmaninov

TICKETS £12.50 (under 16 years free)

Friday 22nd March 8.00 pm

Michael Lunts in

SCHUBERT THE WANDERER

Michael Lunts, pianist, actor and writer presents his fascinating and original one-man show exploring the last days of Schubert's life, interweaving the sublime music that he wrote at the time into the dramatic action. It is a chance to both see and hear Schubert, man and musician, live on stage.

– TICKETS £11

Tickets for all shows from Joan Leifer
Tel: 0844 884 8832 and Bradley + Brown,
50 High Street, Thames Ditton

www.verafletcherhall.co.uk

YOUNG PEOPLE'S THEATRE

Tuesday 15th January 1.30 pm

Wednesday 16th January 10.00 am & 1.30 pm

Proteus Theatre presents
THE SECRET GARDEN

The children's classic of Mary Lennox sent from her home in India to the wilds of Yorkshire is brought to life in a magical production fusing circus, puppetry, film and music

TICKETS £6

Saturday 9th February 11.30 am and 2.30 pm

Little Angel Theatre presents
DOGS DON'T DO BALLET

The much loved book of Biff – who doesn't do dog stuff like peeing on lampposts, he likes moonlight and music. Biff doesn't think he's a dog, Biff thinks he's a ballerina. But dogs don't do ballet – do they?

With puppetry, dance and songs.

For 3–6 years.

TICKETS £6

Saturday 16th March 11.00 am

English Touring Opera presents
LAIKA THE SPACEDOG

A new opera by Russell Hepplewhite. Four singers, four players and a puppeteer tell the true story of Laika, the first dog in space, through song, puppetry and animation. There are cross-curricular links with science, planets, rockets. Laika, the Russian mongrel discovered in Gorky Park in Moscow in 1957, was destined to become the first animal in orbit. The opera opens with a week of performances at the Science Museum in London.

For 7-11 years

TICKETS £6

Saturday 23rd March 2.30 pm

Image Musical Theatre presents
THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

A family participation musical based on Kenneth Graham's classic of Mole, Ratty, Badger and Toad.

For 5-11 years.

TICKETS £6

To hire the Vera Fletcher Hall contact
Manager Helen Mason Tel: 08456 528 829



Claremont Fan Court School

An independent co-educational school for pupils aged 2½ to 18 years

School visits

Prospective families are welcome to visit the School.

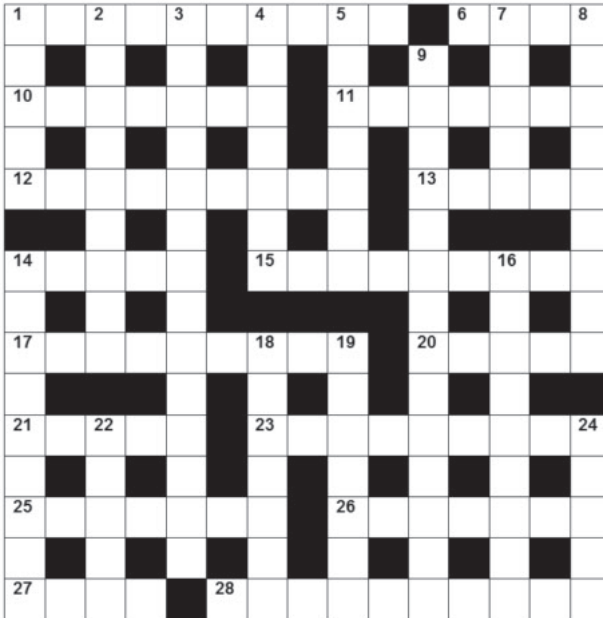
Pre-Prep and Nursery	2½ - 7 year olds
Prep	7 - 11 year olds
Senior	11 - 18 year olds

For further information about Open Mornings or to arrange an appointment please tel: **01372 473624** or email: **jtilson@claremont.surrey.sch.uk**



Winter Crossword

By Michael Jackson



The first three correct entries randomly opened after the closing date of 7 February 2013 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
6 Church Walk
Thames Ditton
KT7 0NW

ACROSS

1. Cure? Repeat mixture to recover (10)
6. Scheme (4)
10. Star of Auriga (7)
11. It uses a fulcrum (7)
12. Electronic device to take snap of 'inside' room (9)
13. South American fruit used to make jelly and jam (5)
14. Strife is curtailed to find position (5)
15. Italian conductor opens with Puccini opera (9)
17. Covered by non-conducting material (9)
20. Unite to loosen? (5)
21. A small spray (5)
23. Plane's hard landing – passengers tossed about? (9)
25. Lays open to attack or bad weather (7)
26. Town 10m to the South East (7)
27. River to annoy one I hear (4)
28. Your task is in Loch Ness, taming the monster (10)

DOWN

1. Short review (5)
2. Furniture used for storage (9)
3. A pilot lost? Gone fossil hunting (14)
4. Substance used in chemical analysis causing reactions (7)
5. Touches to cause laughter (7)
7. The Pound in the Balance? (5)
8. Account of events (9)
9. Felicitation (14)
14. Thinnest excuse for miss, I felt terrible (9)
16. Complex but I trace tin element (9)
18. Key workers in the office (7)
19. Old Roman coins scattered about India (7)
22. A coin of India (5)
24. To give a welcome to your guests (5)

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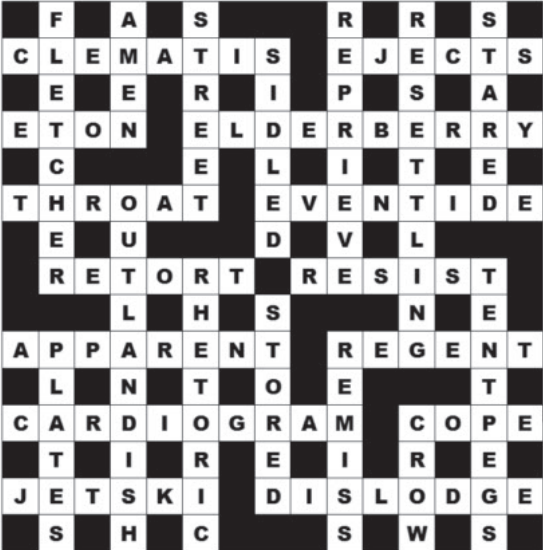
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Solution to the Autumn Crossword

by Maureen Willcox



Congratulations to the following winners who each receive a £5 voucher:

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SERVICES, CLUBS, SOCIETIES AND GROUPS

SERVICES

Cheer (Concern and Help for East Elmbridge Retired)	Harry Livesey	01372 474555
Dittons and Weston Green Neighbourcare	Avril Ashworth	020 8398 7521
Elmbridge Borough Council Community Support Services		
Thames Ditton Centre for Retired People	Mon & Thurs	020 83985921
Thames Ditton Children's Centre	Tues, Weds, Fri	020 83983772
Meals on Wheels, Community Transport, Dial-a-Ride,	ask for service at	
Alarm & Telecare services, Relief Carers Scheme	central switchboard	01372 474474
Esher and District Stroke Club	Ann Pollock	020 8398 6132
Voluntary Action Elmbridge	Sally Dubery	01372 463587
Surrey Youth and Adult Education Service	Elmbridge Area	020 8979 8334
M.D.H.S. Household Services (& garden tidying)	Pam Howard (Manager)	01932 248533

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	020 8398 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	Jean Smith	020 8977 9391
Friends of Walsingham Care	Miss Valerie Chicken	020 8398 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	Annabel Duncan	020 8786 6318
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)	Jill Cotter	020 8398 4598
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	020 8398 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

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
Esher and District Amnesty International	Secretary	gettle51@msn.com
Hampton Court Way Allotment Association	Lettings: Piotr Hennig	020 8398 5358
Long Ditton Youth Club	Toni Izard	07749 633973
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
Soroptimist International (Kingston District)	Secretary: Pat Harman	020 8390 3507
Thames Ditton Women's Institute (W.I.)	Secretary	020 8398 8615

OTHER

Cancer Research UK	Mrs. Vivienne Harris	020 8398 6787
Elmbridge Fairtrade Network	Judy Porter	020 8398 6401
University of the Third Age (U3A)	Hon Sec Anne Brown	01932 881633
Vera Fletcher Hall	Lettings: Helen Mason	08456 528 529
	Membership: Sue Morris	020 8224 0980

Please contact the Editor to amend these listings



Thames Ditton resident Gaynor Owen trained for 18 months, come shine or more usually rain, to run the New York Marathon for charity. Then came 'Frankenstorm' Sandy. Despite the devastation, the Mayor of New York still encouraged runners from around the world to come for the Marathon... Gaynor writes:

"Many felt uneasy about this and would have preferred the Marathon to have been cancelled or postponed as residents in areas we were due to run through had been left homeless, without power or water and in some cases, dead. However, the message was clear – "the show must go on" and the Marathon was to be used as a symbol of unity and strength to help get New York back on its feet.

Then with 36 hours to go and after all international runners had arrived in New York, the Marathon was cancelled – an impossible and inappropriate event. Many runners were in complete agreement with the cancellation (including me), but upset by such a late decision when it was clear that it should have been cancelled as soon as the hurricane hit.

So tens of thousands of international runners staged the first Unofficial New York City Marathon in Central Park, tagged "Run Anyway," on Sunday 4th November instead. Many had raised huge amounts of money for charity and we didn't want to return home without completing what we set out to do. We were

offered no official help, were not allowed to wear our racing numbers and were forbidden to cross the official finish line which had been given a police guard for the day! After being poorly treated by the New York media, we decided not to take "NO" for an answer and ran laps of the hilly park until our tracking devices hit 26.2 miles. None of this was really reported by the press!

We had no idea what response we would get but thousands of New Yorkers came out into the park to cheer us on, offering water, food and apologies for the unfair treatment. The atmosphere was amazing! People from all different countries were shouting out my name on the front of my Cancer Research UK vest and I carried a Union Jack for the final lap to more cheers from the crowd. I am delighted to report that I finished the Marathon distance (unofficially, of course) in 4 hours 6 minutes... if I never see another hill, it will be too soon!

I ran the Marathon in memory of my 'Uncle' Alan and to raise money for Cancer Research UK – over £3,600 raised so far and the money is still coming in. This was not the Marathon that I had in mind, but a marathon none the less and I did it! No one will ever be able to take that away from me... and I do have the medal to prove it but shhhh, the Marathon never happened so officially I wasn't allowed to wear it in America! I did, however, wear it with pride when I collected my girls from school after arriving back here."



Two ways to treat your Pet

To keep them healthy, pets should be seen at least once every 12-months by a vet. So why not bring them along to Beech House, Thames Ditton for their regular health checks. This way, we can detect potential illnesses early and nip them in the bud.

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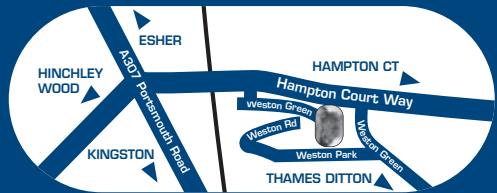
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