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SPRING 2010



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THAMES DITTON TODAY

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

Published quarterly since Spring 1970

SPRING 2010

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You are welcome to submit
articles or images. Please contact
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Next deadline 7 May.

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Cover photo: *Spring bursts out in a local garden – Editor*

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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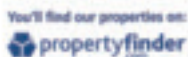
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THAMES DITTON & WESTON GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



Annual General Meeting

8.00 pm on 16 March 2010,
at Vera Fletcher Hall

Agenda:

1. **MINUTES** of the 2009 Annual General Meeting and matters arising therefrom.
2. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT:** to receive, discuss and adopt the Annual Report for 2009-2010.
3. **ACCOUNTS:** to receive the Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2009.
4. **APPOINTMENTS:** to receive nominations and appoint officers and an Auditor:

President	Vice President	
Chairman	Vice Chairmen	
Hon Secretary	Hon Treasurer	Auditor

5. **ELECTIONS:** to adopt a candidate to stand at the Elmbridge Borough Council Elections on 6 May 2010
6. **RESOLUTIONS:** to consider any resolutions submitted in writing to the Secretary by 2 March 2010.
7. **GUEST SPEAKERS:** Illustrated talk by Guest Speakers Joan Harlow and Paul Langton of Esher Local History Society: "The Fascinating History of Thames Ditton"

President: Ann Levick

Vice-President: Edward Rowe,

Vice-President: Maureen Sheldrick

Thames Ditton Councillors

David Lowe,
8 Embercourt Road, Thames Ditton 020 8398 4957

Ruth Lyon,
11 Riversdale Road, Thames Ditton 020 8398 3396

Karen Randolph, Deepfield, Giggs Hill Road,
Thames Ditton 020 8398 5005

Weston Green Councillors

Lorraine Sharp,
168 Ember Lane, Esher 07970 874 925

Tannia Shipley, 'Clinton House'
27 Lower Green Road, Esher 020 8398 2484

Surrey County Councillor:

Peter Hickman, Little Lodge,
Watts Road, Thames Ditton 020 8339 0931

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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

TUESDAY 16 MARCH (AGM) AND TUESDAY 27 APRIL, AT 8.00PM

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News From the Residents' Association



18 November to 17 February

After another successful Christmas Fair the holiday period was quiet. Shop closures continue with Lottie and Thomas departing the High Street for the Web. Criminal activity seems to have picked up in February with some episodes of burglary and anti-social behaviour and a lamentable smash-and-grab raid on Assimi: the shop was closed at the time and fortunately owner Bernard Leon, a craftsman of the highest quality, was not hurt in the raid. His shop was soon back up and running.

Parking

Surrey Highways officers have drawn up the **proposed parking scheme for Thames Ditton**. Detailed plans are on our website. The scheme has taken into account previous consultations: in view of intractably conflicting opinions a much reduced scheme is proposed, limited to the area of the High Street and close to the Station. It will free critical road junctions from obstruction, provide curfew parking in Basingfield Road, and limited short term parking for shoppers in the High Street and Summer Road.

The scheme will be presented to the Local Area Committee for approval prior to the official consultation period of 28 days to begin in April. Surrey will notify residents by an advertisement in the local press and by the posting of notices on lamp posts. The scheme will be on the SCC website in due course. As news is received, we will keep residents informed



smash and grab raid at Assimi 5 February
via our website and the RA notice board. The results of the consultation will be collated and the authority for any changes is to be delegated to the Head of Parking Services, the Chairman of the Area Local Committee and the local County Councillor (Peter Hickman). The final scheme for implementation will take into account the results of this consultation. If diverse opinions are expressed then a consensus view will be taken.

Meanwhile we continue to press for a constructive approach to charging in **Ashley Road car park**. Usage dropped following the imposition of punitive charges for half a

day and longer, and the council's revenue from the car park is significantly down. This makes no sense. On 12 February all the traders and businesses wrote to Elmbridge Council to reject a proposal for a separate annual season ticket for businesses and to ask the Council to reconsider. The current £4 per day charge for all users is killing the High Street, increasing congestion and traders' staff, some of whom are part time, cannot afford the increase. The ruling faction's policy is clearly that if borough car parks do not make a profit they should be sold off. Residents' policy is that the car parks are community assets with a purpose: we want them to be well used and to unclog neighbouring streets. Only when they are nearly full should charges be raised.

Surrey has acquired new powers under the Traffic Management Act to act on **double parking and obstructive parking**. The task is being devolved to borough councils, and Elmbridge subcontract enforcement to NSL (formerly NCP) whose ten to a dozen Civil Enforcement Officers are for the most part concerned only with Elmbridge's car parks. There are sparse but regular street patrols in the Borough and the officers can issue a Penalty Charge Notice to any vehicle that they believe is parked in contravention of the parking regulations. There is no extra budget for the extension of activity. Elmbridge's position, fairly enough, is that if an enforcement officer happens to be nearby when a call about bad parking is received, they may be able to take action. However, in recent days there have been 'raids' to ticket cars double-parked in the High Street or obstructively parked near junctions. If the council took a more sensible view of parking in the car park, this should not be necessary.



pothole nightmare continues

Highways

Winter ice made the **pothole nightmare** even worse. Insurance claims across Surrey rose to around 40 per day. Our Highways Convenor Andrew Roberts again compiled a list of “qualifying potholes” in Thames Ditton and Weston Green to help press Surrey Highways to address them. As of mid February they are fixing an average of 25 a day, starting with priority roads, and are spending about £120,000 a week on them. The quality of repair has been questioned.

On the morning of 10 February outraged residents reported **Surrey Highways contractors cutting down 17 of the flowering cherry trees that line Hampton Court Way**. It transpired that this was part of a project to widen the path for a cycle route at the behest of the County Cycling officer and the East Area Cycle forum. Residents had not been consulted. The proposal was put through December's Area Local Committee but

officials had not mentioned loss of the trees as part of the project, which is costing £70,000, nor, it turned out, had they made provision to replace them. Our Councillor Peter Hickman has made very strong representations to have the trees replaced when the work is done.

The vandalised lamp on the old **Fountain** in Thames Ditton's Conservation Area – gift of Hannibal Speer in 1879 – was finally replaced by Surrey after eight months of shilly-shallying. To get the job done, we had to chivvy SCC in the media, and Peter Hickman met the cost of £400 from his local member's allowance as neither Surrey nor Elmbridge would pay from their budgets.

After a year of patient lobbying Andrew Roberts succeeded in getting Network Rail to remove the large, unsightly signs on the **railway bridge** by Thames Ditton station that perennially attracted graffitists. To celebrate that and the new Fountain lamp, Andrew provided and planted spring flowers at the Fountain and round the octagon in the High Street. While Elmbridge plant and water baskets and troughs from public funds elsewhere in the borough, notably in Cobham, not one is provided for Thames Ditton or Weston Green: we are working on that.

Other items

Following public consultation Elmbridge are pursuing a diluted version of **Dog Control Orders** which will make it illegal to walk more than four dogs simultaneously, or to allow dogs to foul enclosed sports and children's play areas and public cemeteries. The council has abandoned ideas requiring dogs to be kept out of water and kept on leads in areas of the commons. Overall, respondents to the consultation were

substantially against Dog Control Orders at all, but there was support for some individual measures and the diluted form should have majority acceptance.

After a presentation by council officers at our Open Meeting in February, Elmbridge will mount **an experiment in litter control without bins along Albany Reach** during the summer months when usage is high. There will be provision to remove any litter that does accumulate. They (and we) will monitor the results and if the situation deteriorates, the bins will be reinstated.

The Ember Centre should move to Thames Ditton Hall in April following a grant from central government to develop an 'Intergenerational Centre' for children and retired people. Facilities should be upgraded to a level commensurate with that of the present Ember Centre venue, the Vera Fletcher Hall. It follows a year in which the council's rulers first tried to close the Ember Centre, then came up with a succession of lame alternatives that would have seriously degraded this valuable service to the more elderly. Thames Ditton Hall, formerly the Youth Centre, was the object of a protracted and successful campaign by Residents to preserve the premises for community use, when Surrey County Council wanted to sell it off for development that would have seen a reduction also in car-parking space used by library visitors and parents of Junior School children. Thames Ditton Hall's situation should be improved and consolidated by the investment, at a time when the Elmbridge Cabinet has made clear its intention to dispose of some other Elmbridge community halls one way or another.



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There has been much opposition across the county to **Surrey's intention drastically to cut back bus services**, and to axe school services. We suspect that the county's ruling executive will decide to go ahead anyway, although Residents' councillor Peter Hickman reports that cuts in school services may be deferred for a year after Head Teachers lodged strong objections.

Council Tax will go up by nearly two percent overall this year under the Conservative administrations of the councils, several of whose members are both borough and county councillors. Avoiding broader public debate on the medium term consequences, the ruling faction in Elmbridge is cutting staff by around 10%. Services will be affected. They also want to reduce by two-thirds the council's Overview and Scrutiny bodies where their decisions are monitored and criticised.

Surrey County Council has signed a contract to **replace orange street lights with bright white lights** of greater efficiency. This will take five years county-wide, and is funded by government. Lamps will be controlled remotely and monitored for defects in real time. Their timing will be better adjusted for the ambient lighting cycle. Lights will be directed downwards to limit light-pollution.

Planning

The latest planning application for **the Olde Harrow** site was rejected by the Area Planning Committee in Elmbridge. Slightly less barracks-like in appearance, with an improved roof-line, the design's scale and mass was little different from the last one which the Planning Inspector threw out on Appeal. Cynicism was aroused when the architects' plans of the frontage were so

shrouded with imaginary trees that you couldn't make out the building frontage! They were asked to resubmit a version that placed less demand on the imagination. Meanwhile, residents in the vicinity secured a planning expert and our Association commissioned a technical appraisal from an independent architect. Their evidence buttressed our Planning Convenor Graham Cooke's arguments, representative of the public objections, to the Committee meeting, which carried the day unanimously among councillors on the Committee. Graham comments: "We all hope that whatever plans are now put forward recognise the sensitive nature of this site. It is regrettable that we will all have to put up with a boarded up building for even longer but that has to be a price worth paying to get a better long term result."

The new owners of **The Newlands** (Grade II Listed) have received planning permission for new windows and doors to the grim 1970s' institutional building adjoining the house. The owners have agreed that the listed part should be heated and well looked after pending further applications for development, in order to protect the special features, and Elmbridge's Conservation officer is visiting periodically to check the whole of the listed part. The original house was granted permission in 1948 for use as a children's home. In 1970 the council granted permission for 38 flatlets in the new building to be used for community housing for the elderly. The application for new windows was accompanied by a statement declaring the intention to develop "38 studio flats" in the 70's addition. Whether a change of use is intended is unclear. A separate application is to be made for 6 flats in the listed part.

The struggle to preserve the setting of **Hampton Court Palace** continues with an online petition to the Prime Minister to take the wasteland river frontage of the former Jolly Boatman into public ownership. This could offer the prospect of an attractive green riverside route to Hampton Court via Albany Reach. You may sign the petition at <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/hampton-court> or follow the link from our website.

Doings and dates

Sadly, past Chairman Geoffrey Hutton A.R.I.B.A. died in January. Under his leadership in 1969/70 the Association joined the Civic Trust and other like-minded organisations. Geoffrey played an active role in the campaign to prevent the village from being used as a through route and 'rat-run' especially by heavy lorries. He fought for better standards in planning, was one of the first members of the Thames Ditton Conservation Area Advisory Committee, and working with Octagon and architect Katarina Halasz he brought about the award-winning restoration of the Ferry Works site. He was one of the first benefactors to the Appeal to restore the Vera Fletcher Hall. Geoffrey's later initiatives resulted in Elmbridge leasing land at a peppercorn rent to Ajax Sea Scouts where developers constructed the Scouts' new HQ in return for the surrender of their existing lease some years before it was due.

Alas other deaths during the winter included former TDT Editor Margaret Briggs (p.33), and Kay Tadd, who was Head of the Infants' School from the mid 1980's until the late 90's and formed the 'Friends' of the school. She will be fondly remembered by all for her patience and good humour, for the interest she took in

the children and for developing the school to a high level. Death also claimed Grace Goy, who with her husband Neville was a mainstay of Cubs, Scouts and Rangers in Thames Ditton and Weston Green, and was made MBE for youth work in Lambeth.

The new charity **Walsingham Care** (see last issue) welcomes enquiries about support for the elderly who need care or assistance. The telephone line has been faulty but it is now working properly: Contact 020 8398 6774

The next events for the **St Nicholas Appeal** are an Open day at the church on Saturday 13 March from 10.00 to 16.00, and a fashion show on 17 April. Funds raised now amount to over £70,000 and there is some way to go.

Subscriptions

Please make use of the separate form thoughtfully supplied with this issue to send in your 2010 subscription to the Association. Subscription is a small way you can help the Association's volunteers, all unpaid, to meet the expenses of running the Association, working away at issues of planning and local administration, keeping you informed through this magazine and our website, taking initiatives to improve these villages, and maintaining a strong and independent local voice in the councils.

Elections

In this May's Borough Council elections we hope you will turn out to support your Residents' Association – residents like yourselves, accountable only to you. Please don't stay away from the polls and leave the field to the politicians.

Thank you.

www.residents-association.com

Policing the Neighbourhood



Greg Turner is a family man, and he enjoys his work. Promoted police sergeant after a spell as the beat officer for Thames Ditton, for the past few years he's headed the Neighbourhood Team for East Elmbridge – an area stretching from Oxshott to Molesey. It numbers 16 officers divided into five areas, for each of which there is a constable and usually two Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

They spend at least 80% of their time on neighbourhood policing, the rest on other policing tasks from time to time imposed. Higher management has to be – and is – firm about refusing tasks that would nibble away at their primary role: to be known to the community and contactable; to deal with problems that the community flags up as important; and to nip issues in the bud before they escalate.

There aren't enough bodies to provide 24/7 neighbourhood coverage throughout, and it's not necessary: response teams based at Esher cover the borough round the clock. Discrepant central government funding means that in our area around £80 per citizen is spent for a year's policing, while across the metropolitan border in residential Kingston, the figure is around £170 – which pays there for a sergeant, and at least one constable and two PCSOs in every ward. Our team has to prioritise in order to be around at likely peak times for lawlessness, and also to avoid being so predictable that criminals can plan for 'off-peak' activities.



Sgt. Greg Turner of the Neighbourhood team

Greg keeps 14 of the sixteen in his patch on operational duties and maximises the time they spend 'out there.' Much of a constable's time has to be spent on paperwork to meet the cumulative burden of government regulation. If a citizen is stopped and questioned, information and reasons have to be recorded. Preparing files for court takes a deal of time, and to make a case for surveillance or discreet CCTV coverage under the Regulation of

Investigatory Powers Act can take a whole day. PCSOs however have more limited powers and consequently much less paperwork, and so they are able to spend nearly all their time on the beat.

We may get nostalgic for the genial village do-it-all bobby, thumbing his chinstrap under a blue lamp of an evening, but with fast modern communications there are better ways to police a wide variety of crime, some of it very nasty. In 1933 PC Sidney Pattenden was shot three times by thieves he and a colleague tried to arrest in 'a Thames Ditton tennis pavilion'. These days, the strategy is for the police on the beat to summon a rapid response once trouble is detected that cannot easily be resolved. Resources can be summoned from Esher Targeted Response Team, or the Neighbourhood Tactical team (a Sergeant and 5 Constables) who work from Walton. Occasionally the police helicopter may be involved. This may at times seem to the citizen to be disproportionately heavy, but if the helicopter is nearby and uncommitted when a call is received, it can be very quick and effective.

The strategy relies on PCSOs and police knowing the area and covering it, and on residents providing pertinent and timely information. Many of us are reluctant to call 999, but we should do so not just when someone's in danger, but when the police have a chance to prevent an imminent crime or catch the perpetrators in action, even if the crime is not a serious one. While our neighbourhood officers are accessible and can be telephoned, if they are already attending a problem then to call them can add delay in circumstances where there is

some urgency. With a call to 999 the right police response will be deployed immediately from somewhere even if our own are out. When there's no urgency, use 0845 125 2222.

Around one-fifth of the Neighbourhood Team's time is spent on official engagement with the community, which includes police panels, work with schools, 'meet the beat' and other sessions to meet the public on and off the street, hear concerns, set local priorities and work on crime prevention. The team finds it encouraging that residents' priorities tend to be traffic offences and anti-social behaviour, reflecting a low level of more serious crime in the neighbourhood. The more serious crime – indeed about half the crime in Surrey – is mostly attributed to criminals from outside Surrey's borders. Exchange of intelligence with neighbouring forces is a Surrey priority.

Another management priority is to encourage officers to use their discretion to resolve low-level incidents without the panoply of formal action. In Greg's view, this is welcome. Endorsement from the Chief Constable gives officers the support they need to do this rather than be driven solely by box-ticking 'targets.' Perpetrators can be admonished and basic information recorded without needing a visit to the station, fingerprinting, and the full paperwork that comes with a formal caution. Immediate action can be more effective than the marginal prospect of court some time hence; and in recent years the Crown Prosecution Service, short of funds, has proved reluctant to prosecute unless there is a very high probability of conviction. This can be demoralising to law enforcers.

The local police stations themselves are set to become things of the past. This has been triggered by budget shortfalls, but in truth many of these buildings, especially the older ones, have become a maintenance burden that can't be justified. The station in Esher will likely be sold. The one in Molesey will probably follow suit: staffed by volunteers and open 12 hours a week, it is visited on average by just ten members of the public during those hours. The savings will fund about 200 new police officers, full police constables, to go on the beat. So how will the team cope for office space, how will they keep a base within the community? Some of the force may be based in the Civic Centre in Esher, where there is a deal of under-used space; and there are imaginative ideas like basing neighbourhood officers in other public buildings – libraries or public halls, for part of their time.

In Thames Ditton and Weston Green there's no doubt that neighbourhood policing has been a success. We see more of our police on the beat; they try to be responsive to our concerns, they have been notably effective in reducing the amount of anti-social behaviour over the past two or three years. It's not eradicated, but it's much less. Three years ago there were five ASBOs in our area. Now there are none. Most crimes are comparatively minor and opportunist, and some could be eradicated if residents were more sensible about locking windows and vehicles. One of our PCSOs lately tried all the car doors along Speer Road of an evening, and found seventeen unlocked. Seventeen! One with a mobile phone, laptop and satnav left on view.

Residents are supportive, and their vigilance and observation is essential to the effort. Generally they don't waste police time, although on occasion they could be more tolerant of, or more proactive with, their neighbours. The team favours mediation, and in the event of a local dispute the first question is always: "Have you spoken to your neighbour about it?."

There is a lighter side: a straight face may be needed when you find an expensive unlocked Mercedes with the keys inside on the drive of a Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator; or you are called to deal with a 'dangerous stray Alsatian' but arrive to find it eating a biscuit and playing with a three-year-old! Or when an ornamental tree is reported missing – whilst on patrol a day or so later the local officer was amused to observe one of our lighter fingered residents planting the very same tree into his own front garden (quickly recovered, returned and the thief's aspiration for a slot on Gardener's World shattered!).

Police aren't automatically liked everywhere in the UK. The tough, hard images of the television series may impress villains, but they can alienate the ordinary citizen. Neighbourhood policing bridges this gap. In this area, we're fortunate to have an intelligent, approachable and patient neighbourhood team that works. They're good. They know and like the area and are part of it. You should make a point of getting to know them – on the street or at the police panel meetings. They deserve our support.

See their web page at www.surrey.police.uk

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Why Residents' Association Councillors?



In February this year former Esher Councillor Peter Heaney and I met residents from Barnet, North London, who wanted to set up a Residents' Association and put up candidates in the local elections on May 6th. Fed up with being excluded from decisions by the Tory administration and feeling they had no voice on how their council tax was spent on their services, and furious at plans to build on playing fields that had been gifted to the local people in the 1920s, they felt their only action was to form a Residents' Association and put up candidates – whose sole mandate would be to represent local people.

We shared with them our constitution, registration with the Electoral Commission and details of how our Residents' Associations worked – officers, open meetings, Thames Ditton Today magazine and Residents' Association website. What impressed them most was the way RA councillors attended the open meetings and were accountable to the local community.

As a councillor of many years I can take for granted the value of having Residents' councillors on Elmbridge Council compared with national party political ones. The main difference is independence and accountability. Residents' councillors are not attached to a national political party, which has a whip which can override local concerns

and has an ideology from Westminster. Unlike councillors from the national parties who often see local government as a stepping stone to Westminster – as shown in the recent jostling to be selected as Conservative parliamentary candidate – RA councillors have loyalty only to their local community.

The Thames Ditton & Weston Green Residents' Association was set up in 1934 and put up candidates for the Esher Council in order to have a voice on the decision making body – on issues such as the route of the Esher Bypass, which was proposed to go through the commons of Weston Green. Today our Residents' Councillors have seats and votes on the Council committees and can influence decisions. Last year the Conservative administration proposed to close the Ember Centre for the retired. Our Residents' Association led the successful campaign to save this vital facility for our older residents. They were able to do this because we had councillors on the committee who saw the documents that alerted us in time to the proposals to close the Centre.

The lesson from this is that, without councillors on the Council committees where decisions are made, a Residents' Association is toothless.

Another area in which we are distinctive is in our consistent support for

the Green Belt and heritage. It is unfortunate that for all the protestations of support from the political parties, they have all too often found excuses for voting for developments which would irretrievably change the character of our borough. Last year the Conservatives voted en-bloc for the massive development on the Jolly Boatman site opposite Hampton Court Palace over the heads of ward councillors and disregarding 3,000 local petitioners. They also all voted en-bloc to build two hotels on green belt land at Sandown Park and

Moore Place, Esher, – against all the Council’s own policies to protect green belt from development.

Defending our environment means constant vigilance. The Residents’ Association, through its planning committee, vets every planning application, makes representations to the Council’s Planning Department and gives evidence at appeals. It was Residents’ Association councillors who led the successful battle against the housing development on the Tennis Club site, the



Ember Centre Chairman Joy Woodhead joined by Residents’ Councillors Karen Randolph, Tannia Shipley and Long Ditton councillor Shweta Kapadia present a huge petition to save the Centre. We were first alerted to the plan to close it, buried in a long council committee document, because we had councillors on the committee. With representatives on the council and support across the whole community we mounted a successful campaign to preserve this excellent facility for the elderly.

over-development on the site of the Olde Harrow and the proposed flats at 29 High Street, Thames Ditton, which would have harmed the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and meant loss of employment.

We do not work in a vacuum. We hold regular open meetings where everyone can air their views on current planning proposals and other matters of concern to residents from major traffic proposals to dog dirt and litter on the riverbank. The political parties hold no open meetings and so their councillors are not so well informed on local needs.

Residents' Association committee members are seasoned volunteers who care about the community but would not want to work within a party political framework. The varied experience of RA committee members such as surveyors, architects, lawyers, business people, provide a backing for our councillors not found in the political parties so that RA councillors are the best briefed in the council.

I often meet the argument that "consultation is fine but don't you need party politics to get things actually done?" My own experience is that the opposite is true. Party politics are largely irrelevant for the issues we face at the local level. We take a practical approach to local issues – not some ideology like contracting out of providing public services leading to selling off public halls, closing public lavatories, putting up charges in all car parks, ending frozen meals for the elderly and cutting back the children's Shout holiday scheme. We never forget that we are spending public

money on public services and our aim is to deliver value for money. Here Residents councillors have a record of maintaining and increasing services through good management. In the 14 years 1992 – 2006 Residents councillors, supported for most of this period by the Liberal Democrats, ran the Council very successfully, building the new Xcel Leisure Centre, introducing recycling, enhanced old people's services, the children's Shout scheme and our Arts programme. The Council was awarded "Excellent" status, putting it in the top 10% of all councils in England.

All the political parties profess support for greater freedom for local government but in practice they ensure they increase their control of our affairs. Voting by party whip all too often overrides voting on the merits of each individual case. I often recall W.S. Gilbert's lines:

***"I always voted at my party's call
And never thought of thinking for
myself at all"***

At a time when trust in the national political parties has reached a new low, we firmly believe that the way forward is through community policies not national politics, and through local solutions to local problems. We are lucky in Elmbridge that we have a real alternative. RA councillors are not a "front" for any other group but have always stood on their own merits and policies, believing that at the local level councillors should be accountable first and foremost to their electorate and not to a party political grouping. RA councillors exist to give expression to this belief.

Councillor Ruth Lyon

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Felicia Browne

Weston Green's revolutionary



The Elms – a fine old house

On the eighteenth day of a drear cold February in 1904 came the cries of a newborn baby girl from a house overlooking Milbourne pond, then full of water. It was a day after Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* was premiered in Milan, and about a week after the Japanese torpedoed the Russian Fleet in harbour at Port Arthur – unsportingly, they omitted to declare war beforehand. Welcome to the world, Felicia Browne, and to Weston Green.

Her father Harold was a director of the family firm in a new field that was to be iconic in the twentieth century: advertising. Of liberal views and keen on the arts, he had plenty of money. He

attracted and in 1898 married Edith Johnson, a twenty-seven year old actress and singer with the D'Oyly Carte Opera company. Children followed swiftly, and the growing family moved to The Elms three years later.

Now The Elms is a fine mellow house dating from Queen Anne, which radiates national and local history. General Sir John Lambert lived there, mentioned by Wellington in dispatches from Waterloo – where the General commanded the 10th Brigade against Napoleon's dictatorship. Then Leonard Seeley, a significant force in publishing, lived at The Elms with his printing works in sheds in the back garden and offices in Fleet Street: his nephew Sir John Seeley became Professor of Modern History at Cambridge and endowed the Seeley History Library there. Other owners include a member of the Burmester family famous for banking and port wine; and more recently, Dr. Ewart Akeroyd, who developed the means to make drinkable water from sea water which saved the lives of many torpedoed seamen and downed aviators in the second World War. In short, there is nothing to suggest fertile ground for revolution in The Elms.

But Felicia, the fourth of five Browne children, was to carve her own path. She studied art at the Slade from 1924-26, with a bent for line drawings and for sculpting in metal; then from 1928 she



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pursued sculpture in Berlin, winning a state prize for a metal plaque. Felicia did not inherit her mother's looks: a male fellow-student described her as 'a rather plain dumpy young woman in horn-rimmed spectacles and a black hat.' She was an intense and private person, characterised as painfully truthful and honest but with a lively sense of humour. Sadly, her parents drifted apart and sought legal separation: by 1916 Edith had returned to the stage. Harold Browne died in 1924 and Edith seven years later, by which time Felicia was already deeply engaged with the anti-fascist left, and over the next few years she is said to have given most of her money to help those who wanted to get out of Berlin. She visited the Soviet Union in 1931, and when she returned to England from Berlin in 1933, the year Hitler became Chancellor, she joined the Artists International and the Holborn branch of the British Communist Party near to her studio in Bloomsbury.

Then, while at Guy's Hospital, she distributed leaflets and attempted to convert some of the nurses to communism. The Security Service – MI5 – was not slow to spot this, and opened a file on Felicia Browne which is now in the public domain at the National Archives. They put an intercept on her mail. It became clear that her addresses in Bessborough Gardens and then Guilford Street were being used as cover for overseas postal communications to communists in Britain. The file in the National Archives has copies of intercepted mail, including some of Felicia's own letters with line drawings much in the socialist-realist style.

Felicia went on to win a special prize from the Trades Union Congress in 1934 for designing a medal to celebrate the centenary of the Tolpuddle Martyrs who, led by Methodist preacher George Loveless, had founded the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers to protest against the gradual lowering of wages in the 1830s. (Although trades unions were no longer illegal, the Martyrs were arrested, found guilty under an ancient and obscure law of swearing an oath to each other, and transported to Australia. This was too much for the collective conscience of the nation, and Home Secretary Lord John Russell arranged their release and return two years later).

The Tolpuddle Martyrs had raised "*...the watchword liberty. We will, we will, we will be free.*" A century later, in the gathering gloom of the 1930s, liberty was being threatened across Europe. In the second Republic of Spain an unstable Popular Front government was in elected office by the skin of its teeth. Came 1936, and a 'People's Olympiad' was to be staged in Barcelona as counterpoint to the Olympic Games in Hitler's Berlin. An enthusiastic Felicia set off by motor car with a left-wing photographer friend to see it. They reached Barcelona in July, just as General Franco's colleagues mounted a military coup against the Republican government. The rebel *fascisti* botched the coup, and things degenerated into complicated civil war. Barcelona and most of Catalonia were detached from central control and fell into anarchy.

Felicia Browne did not hesitate. Hold in your mind's eye a picture of this

Continued on page 27



Your Residents' Association

500 more bulbs planted in Thames Ditton and Weston Green total now over 10,000

Notification to planning ap

Active support for police panels

Active support for redefinition of conservation areas

Successfully campaigned to prevent closure of Ember Day Centre

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Action against graffiti

Maintenance of Milbourne Pond

Action for proper enforcement of planning conditions

Supported objections to siting of phone mast



on in Action 2009 - 2010



Residents of
applications

4,000 copies of Thames Ditton Today
produced and distributed quarterly

Blue plaque scheme launched

Web site developed as
resource for all residents

Action to resolve flooding

Supported Guide
Hut Appeal

Supported St. Nicholas
Appeal

Restoration of
Fountain lamp

Flower beds planted
and maintained

Supported traders to roll
back parking charges

Active support for Christmas
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of shops

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improved street cleaning

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dummy, quintessentially determined young English woman as she applied unsuccessfully, in *macho* Spain, to join the Republican militia or failing that the local Red Cross: “*I am a member of the London Communists and can fight as well as any man,*” she protested. Eventually, on 3 August, they gave in. She joined the militia and was sent to Tardienta on the Aragon front.

Some three weeks later, with minimal training, Felicia Browne was in a small raiding party waiting to blow up a rebel munitions train. They were ambushed themselves, and wiped out. The only surviving eye-witness, another foreign volunteer, reported that Felicia met her death when she went back to help an injured Italian comrade. They were both riddled with bullets. She was 32, the first British combatant, and the only British woman combatant, killed in action in the Spanish Civil War. Her nephew Peter writes to me that Felicia’s brother William (Billy) Browne also died later in the Spanish Civil War,

posted ‘missing presumed killed’ in 1939.

Felicia Browne’s name is unremembered in the place of her birth. Her local connections are not strong. She’s not one of the many who moved here after making their pile elsewhere, or inherited or married their money and position. Her ideals were not so very different from Christian ones. Naïve she might have been, not knowing that the worldly will always seize ideals and pervert them to gain dominion over others. But she gave her art for her ideals; gave her money away to help others; and finally gave her life not only for a cause but to help a comrade. There is no grand headstone to mark her end. Her grave is unknown.

So let’s raise a toast to Felicia Browne of Weston Green. Somehow I think General Lambert, from The Elms a century before, would have been pleased to invite her for dinner. And, I like to think, she would have accepted.

Keith Evetts

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Mercer Collection, and private sources, on The Elms



1936: London billboard proclaims Felicia’s death

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What Community Hospital?!



*Strapped for cash, the NHS is closing community beds. This means that patients either stay in expensive acute hospital beds or are heaved out to fare as best they can at home. There's no extra funding for home nursing. The NHS are avoiding the required consultation with the community. **Karen Randolph** is leading the county-wide, cross-party resistance based on caring and common sense.*

For many of us our main contact with hospitals is as an occasional outpatient. And even fewer of us have had any reason to understand in any detail how the health system works. We expect it to be there for us, to provide the care we need, when we need it, and where we need it.

Technical improvements now mean that if we do have to go into hospital we are likely to be home in a few days. But what if we have a stroke? Or break a hip? As we get older we are increasingly prone to these and other health related problems. But once the immediate operation, or treatment has taken place, what happens if we no longer need to stay in a large general hospital but are not ready to go home?

This is one of the areas where Community Hospitals are so important. With their location within the community,

these smaller, less high tech, hospitals (not always easily identified as they may not have community or cottage in their name) offer a variety of health services including in most cases, beds. Although they differ in the range of health services they offer, in general community hospitals provide skilled nursing care, appropriate therapies (eg physiotherapy, occupational therapy – ie helping people to relearn or adapt the skills required in their daily lives so that they can live life to its fullest) and general help with the adjustments needed after illness or treatment. For example, a number of years ago my father was failing to make any progress for many weeks from a stroke – until he was placed in a hospital where the nurses actively encouraged and cajoled him into walking into the dining room for his meals, or to the bathroom or day room. Had he stayed in a major hospital, where the staff had no time to help him or to understand his needs, or had he been forced to go home (which admittedly he wanted to do) he most certainly would have remained in a wheelchair or bedridden. Because of the frequent help he was given by the nurses in a hospital environment, he regained his independence.

It isn't just patients who have been in a major hospital who benefit: many benefit by being able to go into a community hospital instead of an acute

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Spring is on the way and the forecast from the NAEA is 'wait and see' as the General Election, the possible scrapping of HIPs, VAT increase and the end of the stamp duty holiday could all have a devastating effect on the market. All in all, they believe prices will remain flat for the first 6 months of the year before picking up again and remaining stable in the 2nd half.

Licensing Scheme—update

Edgars is now a fully licensed member of Government endorsed NALS (National Approved Lettings Scheme). We were waiting to see if NALS would follow ARLA (Association of Residential Lettings Agents) who has already introduced its own licensing scheme for members. We are pleased they have and it's good news which will hopefully lead to improvements in an industry that has been lacking any formal requirements to practice for too long.

Facts & Figures

The average UK house price has increased by 273% since 1959 in real terms (i.e. after allowing for retail price inflation), at an average annual rate of 2.7%. This is faster than the 2% per annum average rise in real earnings over the period. **House prices** recorded their biggest increase in the latest decade with a real rise of 62% during the 2000s; marginally ahead of the 61% increase in the 1980s. **The worst performing decade** for house prices was the 1990s when prices fell by 22% in real terms. Pronounced cycles have been a key feature of the housing market since 1959. There have been **four distinct periods** of rapid real house price growth: 1971-73, 1977-80, 1985-89 and 1998-2007. Each of these periods was followed by a significant fall in real house prices.

Tenant's Q&A

Question: Do I have to pay my rent until the end of the notice if my landlord finds new tenants before?

Answer: If new tenants are moved into the property after you have vacated but before the end of your notice period, then you will not have to pay rent for that period. The landlord cannot claim rent under two tenancy agreements for the same period! As soon as the new tenants take over, this will end your tenancy agreement and your liability for rent.

Landlord's Q&A

Question...? I used a letting agent to find me a tenant, paid a fee and unknown to me (although written in the T&C's) there is a subsequent fee for an indefinite number of years for as long as the tenant stays. They have phoned the tenants who have agreed to renew their tenancy agreement and the agent is now demanding £800. Is this legal??

Answer: ...

Probably! A legal case brought by the OFT against Foxtons regarding agreement clauses for commission on renewals where they were not managing the property, went against Foxtons but the Judge failed to comment on whether commission renewal clauses were valid as such. The general view is that they can be if properly drafted and not hidden in the small print. **Edgars** does NOT charge renewal fees unless specifically instructed to draw up new contracts or negotiate between client and landlord.

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hospital especially if they might need repeated stays in a hospital setting for one reason or another (for minor infections, sorting out drug doses etc). Obviously where possible people should go home, but there can be many reasons why returning directly home may not be appropriate.

But what about Thames Ditton Community Hospital? What is it? Where is it? For those of you who don't know already, our own 'Community Hospital' was planned and built at Emberbrook in the 1990's, providing both outpatient and intermediate care/ rehabilitation inpatient services. Outpatient services would be provided at Emberbrook Health Centre and the NHS authorities agreed that up to 14 intermediate care beds would be provided, by contract, within the nursing home adjacent to the Emberbrook Health Centre. Unfortunately, the NHS reneged on this arrangement and withdrew from the contract. So we now have, thanks to MEDICS with the help of the Friends of Thames Ditton Hospital, a very successful outpatient clinic at Emberbrook Health Centre – but no inpatient beds. Although we still refer to this arrangement as 'Thames Ditton Community Hospital at Emberbrook', the hospital as it was planned just a few years ago, does not exist in this form, though efforts continue to find a way to enable local people to have the benefits of locally provided intermediate care beds.

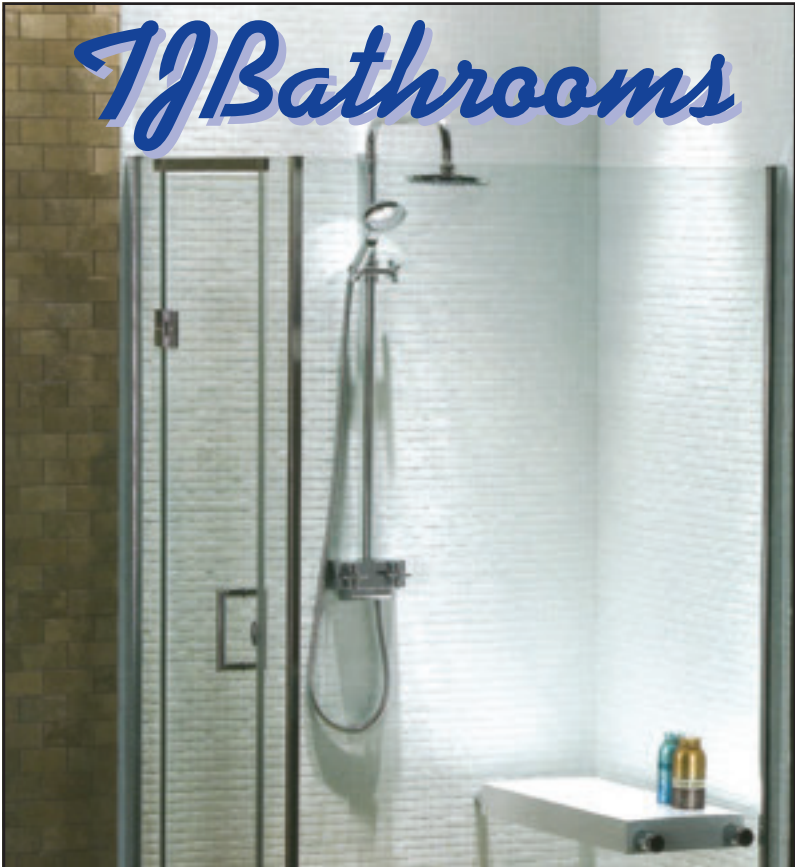
The very provision of community hospital/intermediate care beds anywhere in Surrey is now very much 'on the agenda'. We all know that public sector economies are just around the corner.

NHS Surrey (formerly known as Surrey Primary Care Trust) however has its own, existing financial pressures even before the public sector economies kick in. Their immediate response has resulted in the cutting of 70 community hospital beds since the beginning of October 2009. This has included 6 of the 18 beds at Molesey, our nearest community hospital. At the same time the major hospitals serving Surrey are encountering crippling 'bed blocking' problems because they are unable to discharge those patients who no longer need a bed in an acute hospital but who are not yet ready to go directly home. So while patients are 'stuck' in acute hospitals, beds are being closed in community hospitals! Even without the present bizarre situation over hospital beds, the loss of these beds has potentially serious consequences for the health service in Surrey as a whole – and for all of us. To quote Linda Nazarko, a consultant nurse and visiting lecturer from the Nursing Times, 3 January 2006: "[Community Hospitals] offer sub-acute care so that acute hospitals can discharge quicker, and provide ongoing rehabilitation following illness or injury and high-quality palliative care..." Is it any wonder then that we see community hospitals (with beds), not as the problem but as part of the solution for the present problems in the health sector in Surrey?

Karen Randolph

*You can help support the continuing case for **Thames Ditton Community Hospital** by documenting for Karen cases where patients need a community bed in Thames Ditton but are denied one.*

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Margaret Briggs, Writer



Margaret ‘Peggy’ Briggs, who died on Christmas Day aged 93, edited this magazine for nearly eight years in the 1980s (and survived). Her passion was writing, and she would love to know that the death certificate describes her simply as ‘writer.’ She was a warm and remarkable woman, a joy to know.

Determined to have a career as well as a family, she worked for ‘Punch’ – where she was sacked for causing an advertisement to appear upside down; then for an author and a literary agent. She saved £1 a week until she had enough to start a secretarial bureau. She married John in 1939. While he was with the RAF she took refuge with her first child in the countryside where she ran a small-holding and later, a tea shop during the War.

Three sons produced, Margaret became a professional writer for the Evening News and other publications, including occasional pieces for The Times. Her one book ‘Jam Tomorrow,’ as Margaret Norton, was published by Gollancz in 1965: but it was at the short story and occasional verse that Margaret excelled. Twenty of her stories were featured on the BBC’s ‘Morning Story’ and she gave three talks on ‘Women’s Hour.’

When John died in 1980, Margaret looked for somewhere to live and, recalling the beautiful Green with old white houses that she once admired during train journeys, she found Thames Ditton, settled in Ditton Close, and quickly became part of village life. She gave her time to this magazine and was active in establishing the University of



the Third Age in Elmbridge, where she taught creative writing to students seasoned by the years.

One’s initial impression of a rather straitlaced old lady – a Quaker, to boot – was soon dispelled by the twinkle in her eye and by reading her verses, dealing with subjects from politics to sexuality in a robust fashion, often salty, often amusing. One of our crossword-setters of national rank, with a brain still sharp as a diamond, she liked to go through the clues before publication. I recall one recent moment when, agonising over a clue for the words ‘hop picker,’ she tentatively suggested an anagram: “hope ***** is in order.” We looked at each other, and burst out laughing. Clearly, not on!

So farewell, Peggy Briggs, writer – and a good one. We will all miss you.

Editor

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Curtain Up

at the Vera Fletcher Hall



Newcomers to Thames Ditton, Weston Green and Esher are amazed to discover the Theatre in Thames Ditton at the Vera Fletcher Hall, where the old Victorian Village Hall built in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee was restored and reopened in 1992 into an intimate 126 seater theatre/concert hall/pocket opera house. Not many small theatres, let alone village halls, have been able to attract stars such as Petula Clark, who is the Hall's Patron, Dorothy Tutin, Denis Quilley, Janet Suzman, John Julius Norwich, Susannah York, Virginia McKenna, Covent Garden opera star Donald Maxwell, Louis de Bernieres of "Captain Corelli's Mandolin" fame, Rodney Bewes, top poets such as Wendy Cope and Jenny Joseph, and the Royal Shakespeare Company.



Rodney Bewes – Three Men in a Boat

A highlight of our Spring programme is the return of Rodney Bewes with his **"Three Men in a Boat"** on Friday April 23. Jerome K. Jerome's classic tale of three friends' trip up the Thames – not forgetting Montmorency the dog – has given pleasure to millions since the book first appeared in 1889. Rodney's adaptation of how Harris got 40 strangers lost in Hampton Court maze and other adventures was a hit at the Edinburgh Festival and at the Yvonne Arnaud and

the show reflects his own love of the river and of his 24ft Edwardian skiff which features on stage. It seems a long time since Rodney starred in the "Likely Lads" but he has lost nothing of his ability to charm, amuse and entertain his audiences.

Michael Friend Productions have brought to Thames Ditton their productions of Ayckbourn's "Damsels in Distress" and "Role Play" and Shaw's "Pygmalion" and "Mrs. Warren's Profession" which all received rave

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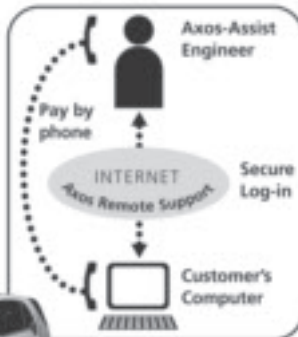
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reviews on their national tours. On Friday March 19 they return with Shaw's "**Arms and the Man**", his classic 1894 play set against the background of war in the Balkans and which is as fresh and relevant today as when it was first performed. He called it an "anti-romantic comedy" attacking the then popular heroic view of war and it features one of his most charming and memorable characters- the chocolate cream soldier.

World class musicians **The London Mozart Trio** and the **Harpham Quartet** with Ramon Wodkowski bring us top quality concerts in April and June. It is quite a coup getting the London Mozart Trio on Saturday 5 June who go on to play at the Wigmore Hall in July. British pianist Colin Stone plays for BBC Radio 3, has performed around the world and recorded many CDs, combining his performances with his work as Professor at the Royal Academy of Music. Polish violinist Krzysztof Smietana's Wigmore Hall concert in 2000 moved The Strad to write "...some of the loveliest string playing I have heard" while Israeli Sagi Hartov hardly needs an introduction as his wonderful cello playing has given such pleasure to us at the Vera Fletcher Hall in earlier concerts. They will be playing Dvorak's Dumky Trio Opus 90 and Rachmaninov's Elegiaque Trio Opus 9.

The Harpham Quartet on Friday April 30 brings back clarinettist Ramon Wodkowski with Anna Harpham, (violin), Ciaran McCabe (violin), Ann Beilby (viola) and Rowena Calvert (cello) in a concert which includes works by Brahms, Mozart and Howells. They are rising stars in the music world and were chosen to

perform at the opening night of the 2008 New Year Series at the Purcell Room and have appeared at the Wigmore Hall, the Cadogan Hall and for BBC 3.

On the lighter side of music Molesey Musical Theatre bring us their "**Broadway Dreams**" on June 16-19. You are invited to join the tension and drama as performers audition for a new Broadway show right up to the first night, with great music and dance from shows such as Anything Goes, Carousel, Chicago and We Will Rock You.

Our children's shows are always popular and this Spring is no exception with "**Dangerous Dave**" on Saturday March 20 and "**Arabian Nights**" on Saturday May 1st. In inimitable street theatre style Dangerous Dave and his sidekick "Herbert Lemon" fights his way out of a Wet paper bag, climbs the slippery pole of Peril, escapes from the pickled egg jar of Doom and becomes the fearless inhuman Cannon Ball !! Sheherazade's fabulous tales of the Arabian Nights stories of are brought to life by The Theatre of Widdershins with superb puppets, storytelling and original music. A tale from the desert, a tale from the bed of the ocean and a tale straight from a donkey's mouth – they transport the children into a mystical land in a show dripping with lavish colours and textures.

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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Michael Friend Productions presents

ARMS AND THE MAN

Bernard Shaw's classic 1894 play set against the background of war between Bulgaria and Serbia. This 'anti-romantic' comedy about the chocolate cream soldier was an original, witty attack on the popular heroic view of war.

Tickets £12.50

Friday 23 April 8.00 pm

Rodney Bewes in

THREE MEN IN A BOAT (To Say Nothing of the Dog)

The star of "The Likely Lads" brings Jerome K. Jerome's classic story of three friends' trip up the Thames – how Harris got 40 strangers lost in Hampton Court Maze and other adventures. Highlight of the Edinburgh Festival.

Tickets £12.50

Friday 30 April 8pm

THE HARPAM QUARTET

Anna Harpham (violin), Ciaran McCabe (violin), Ann Beilby (viola), Rowena Calvert (cello) join Ramon Wodkowski (clarinet) to play clarinet quintets by Brahms, Mozart, Howells.

Supported by the RC Sherriff Trust

TICKETS £11 (under 16 years free)

Saturday 5 June 8pm

THE LONDON MOZART TRIO

Colin Stone (piano) Krzysztof Smietana (violin) and Sagi Hartov (cello): three outstanding world class musicians play trios from the great romantic composers: Dvorak's Dumky Trio Opus 90 and Rachmaninov's Elegaique Trio Opus 9.

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Spring Crossword

By Michael Jackson



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

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

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Crossword Competition
6 Church Walk
Thames Ditton
KT7 0NW

ACROSS

1. Adoring nothing more than a French dance (8)
6. It's ups and downs in the playground (6)
9. Recommended opinion (6)
10. Men immersed in dogma in this building (8)
11. Circular tower with guns on top (8)
12. Cocktail mixer from American sect? (6)
13. He of the dreaded Inferno (5)
14. Let's face it are meals ready for taking here? (9)
17. Monarch was veering so erratically (9)
19. Chastise by hand (5)
22. Roman Legion leader is on a par (6)
23. A crowned poet (8)
24. Declare a lightweight mountain cat (7)
25. Make certain (6)
26. He dodges tackles or Tax liabilities (6)
27. Who is reflected in the mirror (8)

DOWN

2. State gets an addition for another (7)
3. Pupil of Plato (9)
4. Eyelike spots as on peacock feathers (6)
5. My paintings are 'all leg.' I annoy purists here (8,7)
6. Mavis is in the church choir (8)
7. ...and Martin is out of the chair! (7)
8. Design impressed on paper showing height of river (9)
13. An egg dies when you tread on the clutch (9)
15. Gives an opinion very quickly (9)
16. One recumbent (8)
18. Dave ran on porch of 5 down (7)
20. Quite spontaneous browning returning to mountains (7)
21. On a Norfolk river is gold and a writing table (6)

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Solution to the Winter Crossword

by Michael Jackson



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

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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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
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Please contact the Editor to amend these listings



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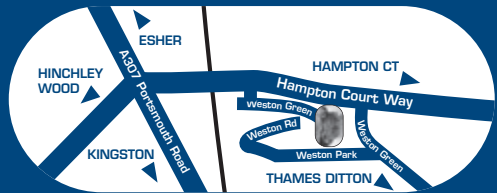
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