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WINTER 2008



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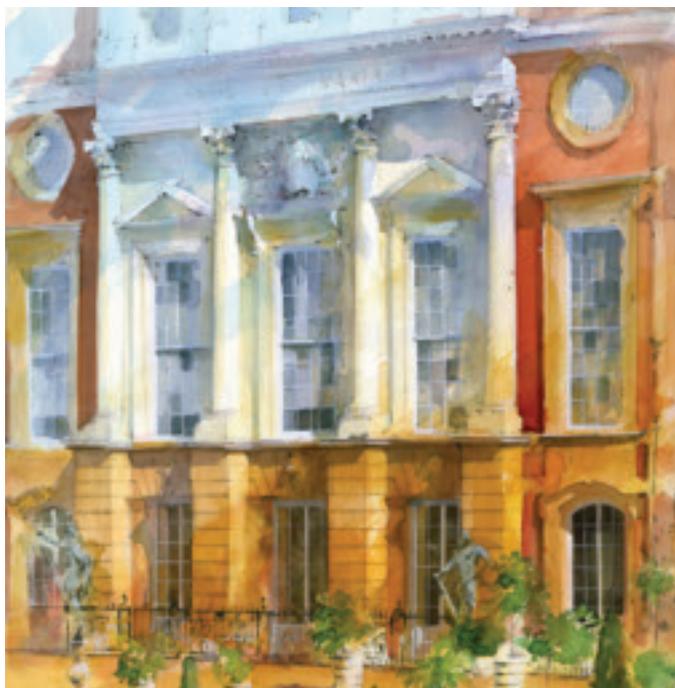


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THAMES DITTON TODAY

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

WINTER 2008

Published quarterly since Spring 1970

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You are welcome to submit
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Next deadline 10 February.

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Cover photo: *Christmas pudding* – generously provided
by ©Tony Harris, Photographer, 020 7385 8158,
www.tonyhphoto.com

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 Moss 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 organisation concerned with protecting the amenities and furthering the interests of the inhabitants of Thames Ditton and Weston Green. We work to preserve and enhance the best in our attractive environment and the quality of life of everyone in our community.

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

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

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

President: Ann Levick,
8 Basing Close, Thames Ditton

Vice-President: Edward Rowe,
23 Portsmouth Avenue, Thames Ditton

Vice-President: Maureen Sheldrick,
34 The Woodlands, Esher

Thames Ditton Councillors

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

Ruth Lyon,
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Karen Randolph (see above for details)

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1 Boyle Farm Road, Thames Ditton 020 8786 6882

www.residents-association.com

**THE NEXT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION OPEN MEETINGS ARE
TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY AND
TUESDAY 24 MARCH (AGM), 2009 AT 8.00PM
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News from the Residents' Association



15 September to 16 November

Planning:

After months of relative quiet, several major planning applications are now at the forefront of local consideration.

The Newlands

Owners Rosemary Simmons Housing Association have applied for demolition of part of the existing property, alterations to the main house to provide 6 flats; seven three-storey terraced houses in two blocks and one two-storey detached house. The Newlands was built in the late 17th century and is Grade II* Listed as one of very few significant large houses in Weston Green to have survived to the present day. Interior features include a magnificent ceiling and staircase. Some eighty years ago it was run as a school for boys. It was used by the Home Guard in World War II and later as an orphanage. In more recent years it has been residential sheltered accommodation for the elderly. Sadly the large redbrick additions during the past century were entirely out of keeping with the original house. It should be expected that redevelopment should not only preserve the historic house but significantly improve its immediate context. We are keeping a close eye on this proposal and consulting with residents. Meanwhile the planning application for six detached houses of cell-block appearance on the nearby **Harrow** site was withdrawn and a new application made for 4 detached and



The Newlands

3 terraced houses of three storeys and forbidding appearance, with new access from Weston Green Road.

Jolly Boatman

Developers Gladedale – acting in conjunction with Network Rail and the Star and Garter Home – propose a development that will see Hampton Court railway station renovated and a new location for the Star and Garter Home, along with the provision of further shops and living accommodation and a large underground car park. However, to generate profit for the project Gladedale intend to build a large scale four-storey hotel on the Jolly Boatman site

Evening classes at Esher College

Get dancing for fitness and fun

Two Friday evening dance classes for adults. Qualified and experienced dance teachers take you through your paces, getting the body moving, and helping you to get fit and have some fun at the same time.

Dansercise, Friday 9 January for 6 weeks, 6-7pm, £30

Tap for Fitness and Fun, Friday 27 February for 6 weeks, 6-7pm, £30

Loving Literature

Why do we love the Byronic heroes?

An in-depth look at the characters Rochester, Heathcliff, and Mr Darcy to explore their appeal. Starts Tuesday 6 January for 6 weeks, 7-9pm, £60

Phillip Larkin—The Witsun Weddings: An exploration of the man and his poetry

A look at Larkin's later writings, and revelations about the man after his death. Starts Tuesday 24 February, 7-9pm, £60



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immediately facing Hampton Court Palace across the river.

The issue has been divisive. The developers' PR company has deployed every device in the book to gain traction for the proposals, including several mailshots to around 9000 residents in this area in the name of 'Hampton Court Station Residents.' The future of the Star and Garter Home, an emotive matter (and we have every sympathy with Star and Garter), has been milked for maximum leverage in favour of the development as a whole. While there are several good grounds for objection to this development as it stands, by far the most important one has to do with the massive hotel that would face the Palace for the coming centuries. Historic Royal Palaces are aghast, and leading Tudor historian David Starkey has described the prospect as a scandal of international proportions. Although there is some support among local residents for the proposals, the majority of them are against the scale and mass of the development. Almost needless to say, Conservative councillors voted in the Planning Committee to side with the development as it stands. This matter was in our view too important to be prey to local sectoral interests and the professional lobbying of a PR firm. We supported calls for it to be decided at national level. However, Labour's Secretary of State Hazel Blears has now ruled otherwise.

By the time this issue of TD Today is on the streets the deed will have been done. Our offspring will be looking at the erection opposite Henry VIII's beautiful Palace long after those who pocket the money have spent the proceeds.

Sandown Park Green Belt

With great concern we report that Conservatives again voted en bloc in the area planning committee, to side with developers Racecourse Investments Ltd. who intend to use Green Belt land to build a 109-bed hotel at Sandown Park. This overturned the Elmbridge Planning Officer's recommendation for refusal. Voting by party whip is likely to steamroller this development through when it is referred to full Committee and Council. Not for the first time, and not for the last, we regret that their electoral statements in support of the Green Belt seem of little worth.

High Street

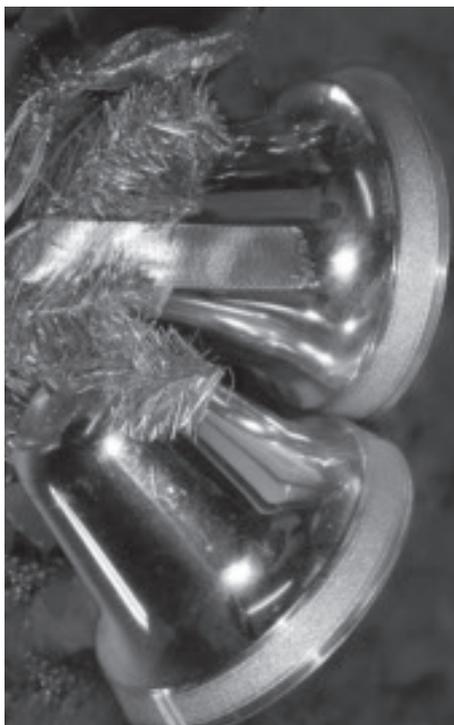
Residents are concerned by the prolonged eyesore from 29 High Street to the former Rose restaurant. Planning conditions for the new office building and associated houses at rear have not been fulfilled. In late October, RA Cllr. David Lowe met with Elmbridge Planning Officers, who undertook to pursue formal enforcement action. Planning Enforcement section completed their searches at the Land Registry and on 5 November issued Planning Contravention Notices to each of the three Limited companies with an interest in the site (all registered at the same address in Wimbledon). If the owners do not respond by 28 November, after we go to press, they will be committing a criminal offence. Meanwhile the developer's appeal against the refusal of planning permission for five flats over the double-fronted building currently occupied by Hawes and Co is due on 10 December at the Civic Centre, Esher. Our councillors

David Lowe, Ruth Lyon and Karen Randolph will be there to support Elmbridge's decision: Residents please come and support.

The Home of Compassion

The owners of the Home of Compassion, Caring Homes Group, have submitted a planning application for renovation of the property and alterations and additions to provide a total of 65 bed spaces with associated communal facilities. The application is a substantial one and details of the plans were exhibited on the site on 13 November. See also our last issue. The Association and the Thames Ditton Conservation Area Committee will work to ensure that alterations to this historic listed property are sensitively undertaken.

The Home is being closed pending refurbishment that inter alia will enable health and fire safety regulations to be met. Caring Homes are moving the residents gradually by Christmas to the most appropriate home for them. Any who would like to move back to the home when it re-opens will be offered a place at the same rate. Meanwhile staff are being assisted in relocation to work in other nursing homes within the Caring Homes Group if they wish to do so. We are delighted to hear that Ted Woolley, caretaker / handyman to whom we are perennially grateful for planting and maintaining flowers at the Fountain roundabout, will stay on. The Charity Shop will continue to operate in the old chapel for the time being. The Trustees of the new charity, Walsingham Care, are searching for a local empty shop in Thames Ditton or Molesey so that they can continue to raise funds for the charity.



Christmas decorations are being sold at the Charity Shop, Home of Compassion

Council doings

With their new absolute majority in Elmbridge the Conservatives have announced they will **increase the borough's Council tax**. That this is not a local election year for Elmbridge has, they say, nothing to do with the matter. Residents' Group leader Chris Sadler (Walton) noted that the budget was underspent and the reserves healthy, and saw no need for the increase. The Conservative administration is again **hugely increasing charges for services to the old and most vulnerable** residents of the borough, from 9% to over 50%. Residents voted against.

The Conservatives raised **car parking** charges by around forty percent last year, and voted themselves a similar increase in allowances. Revenue from the community's car parks then dropped. Now they plan to increase charges by another large amount. Lastly, having done a U-turn two years ago on **Alternate Weekly Collection of "residual waste"** (i.e. the waste that is not in your recycling bins), which they had earlier espoused, the leader of the Council has announced that soon they will bring in AWC. Residents' representatives believe that while kitchen waste collection, when introduced in all the borough, will mean a further decrease in residual waste and particularly that part that may smell, not enough thought has been given to the many residents with limited space for an increasing number of containers, or to problems such as disposable nappies.

Keep it clean

We have long been nagging S.W. Trains to get the unsightly **graffiti** cleaned off the 'Thames Ditton' sign on the railway bridge at the intersection of Station and Spear Roads. They plan to relocate the sign lower down – where it will be harder for taggers to reach – within a few months, and were unwilling to clean it up meanwhile. So on Saturday 8 November Andrew Roberts, our newly-elected Residents' Association Highways and Drainage Convenor, took direct action with the permission of S.W. Trains and the aid of a ladder and a contractor whose modest fee of £50 was met by the Association.

Andrew, who with his wife Caroline and two year old daughter Alice moved to Boyle Farm Road 18 months ago, is a

welcome reinforcement to the Association's volunteers.

We also found it difficult to get the Post Office, whose responsibility it is, to focus on graffiti disfiguring the lovely old postbox on Watts Road. However, this was within the reach of EBC's section for removal of graffiti and they agreed to clean it off. Meanwhile graffiti along Ash Path seems to be an intractable problem. We appeal to taggers not to disgrace our environment.

Some villagers are less scrupulous than others about cleaning up their dog's mess. Signs have been renewed along Ash Path and Church Walk and Elmbridge's cleaning team has been out to clean up. But there is still ample evidence of **inconsiderate dog owners**. It is an offence, under the Dogs Fouling of Land Act 1996, for an owner not to clear up after allowing their dog to foul in areas such as a public footpath.

Residents have lately been concerned about inconsiderate cyclists on footpaths. Many do not mind small children on bikes but adults blasting at speed along much-used footpaths in defiance of clear 'No Cycling' signs are quite another matter. We urge consideration, and respect for the bye-laws. Worse, a youth has repeatedly ridden a small motorcycle at around 25 mph along Church Walk. Police have been alerted to this dangerous and illegal practice.

Not for the first time, Esher College's image is tarnished by many **students who cheat on rail fares**. Ticket inspectors ambushed them on several days one week in October, nabbing many dozen and, we hear, garnered several thousand pounds in fines.



path across the Common

Commons working parties

Since 2003 we've actively supported the Lower Mole **Countryside Management Project**. Together with EBC's Countryside team, volunteers (including our Councillor Tannia Shipley and husband Nigel) spent three days working on Ditton Common in late September. Proper management of the ponds and commons helps to safeguard not only our habitat, but that of some rarer plants and animals too. The work included clearing holly and scrub, and cutting side branches from larger trees, to restore views and make the path easier and safer to use. The **photo** above shows the lovely path from Marney's Inn to Ember Lane that they cleared. There will

be future volunteer days that we will announce on our website. Should you wish to help, it's great fun! Everything bar suitable clothing is provided including biscuits, and hot gossip, and there is an ingenious Forestry tea-making device.

Remembrance

On Remembrance Sunday Councillor Ruth Lyon and our Vice Chairman Martin Wilberforce laid wreaths at St. Nicholas Church and at the war memorial on Giggs Hill Green. Councillors Tannia Shipley and Lorraine Sharp laid wreaths at the Weston Green war memorial and our County Councillor Peter Hickman laid a wreath at the war memorial in Long Ditton.



Rev. Martin Hussey performs the dedication at Thames Ditton War Memorial

School crossing

Surrey County Council has approved recommendations to make the **school crossing near Thames Ditton station** safer, including better signage and a red tarmac top to the crossing. Residents' County Cllr. Peter Hickman is funding the improvements from his council allocation, as SCC won't make funds available from the relevant budgets.

The campaign to get better safety at the crossing has taken a year, with a substantial petition and persistent pressure organised by resident Melisa Byatt helping greatly to shift SCC's Transport, Highways, and school safety staff on the issue. The safest solution remains the recruitment of a paid lollipop person: if you would be prepared to do this job, please apply to the Infants' School.

Winter's Bridge

The Residents' Association donated £500 towards a lay-by for short-stay parking and deliveries to help the shops at Winters Bridge. Surrey Highways' budget was again not sufficient to cover this much-needed improvement. Work has paused following discovery of Virgin's fibreoptic cables lying below the surface but should be completed by Christmas .

High Street shops

We are delighted to welcome two new permanent shops to the High Street. Gianna Shinozawa has long dreamed of opening a fashion shop. As the proprietor of newly-opened **Adiva** at 30 High Street, she has some beautiful Italian designer dresses and accessories. An arrangement with suppliers will enable her to rotate stock through the seasons.



Gianna of Adiva

Paula Tennant and husband have opened **Maison Bleu** next to Angelina Colarusso's fantastic couturier's in the High Street. They stock high quality items for gifts and the home. Thames Ditton is well-endowed with shops of this nature and we hope that will attract more shoppers to the village. They are likely to succeed in finding something nice for a gift or for themselves.

Festive fun

The fifth **High Street Christmas Fair** will take place on Wednesday 10th December between 6 and 9.30 pm. The associated raffle for the Guide Hut Appeal has been very well supported again by many local businesses, who have donated over thirty good prizes so far. Please buy tickets – a bargain at 50p with a chance of winning £100 or a lesser prize!

The Friends of Thames Ditton Hospital are putting on Charles Court Opera's Christmas Pantomime **Aladdin** on Saturday 17th January in aid of the Thames Ditton Hospital Appeal. Young professional singers, will bring us the traditional Widow Twankee, Wishee Washee and Principal Boy with all the usual fun and pastiche at the Vera Fletcher Hall. Tickets including a three-course dinner are £32 from Karen Randolph on 020 8398 5005.

Cover photo:

We are delighted to feature a fine photograph by Tony Harris. However harsh the economic climate may be, we hope you have a warm and merry Christmas and a rather more prosperous New Year. Our special greetings to all who help to make this such a wonderfully diverse and heart-warming community.



"Aladdin Saluted Her with Joy" – illustration by Virginia Frances Sterret, 1928, Arabian Nights

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All Wrapped Up



Imagine being able to buy ALL your festive gifts locally in the tranquil haven of Thames Ditton High Street. Yes, that's right, being able to forego the annual trudge into Kingston, the endless queuing for a hideously expensive parking space and the miserable experience of fighting your way through the crowds of equally disgruntled shoppers. To prove it can be done, we've enjoyed an extremely pleasant browse of gifts for all the family, all available locally. Even better, we've sourced ideas for every budget – so they won't cost the earth or break the bank.

£5 and under

Youngsters to grannies will love Bradley and Brown's range of heart shaped gifts, with prices starting from £2.50 for a pretty hanging beaded heart in nine shimmering colours, or their heart shaped soap in a dish, £4.50 or hanging heart which comes wrapped with a phial of fragrance to surround her with scent. Or newly opened Maison Bleu has a pretty heart shaped Lexington, ideal for a wall or tree for £4.95. Head for Stitchery too, for a grotto of gifts all under a fiver from sparkly Indian bracelets at just 40p a bangle. Youngsters especially will love the range of stocking filler gifts – Spider Puzzles at £2.99, Barrel of Slime, £2.45 and dog and cat shaped staplers, £2.99 are some of our favourites; then moving up the age bracket teens and the young at heart will equally appreciate the 'retro



wine goblets from Maison Bleu

inspired' games that Stitchery have new this year: Grand Prix, Family Bingo, Egg and Spoon Race and Hoopla, priced from £4.95. For more bargain finds, the Pro-Shop have fantastic quirky 'odd' socks at £4.99 per pair. Teens especially will love them teamed with their UGG boots. Mums, aunts and grannies meanwhile, will be thrilled with a gift wrapped, bow tied hyacinth from The Secret Garden, a snip at £3.95 or a bulb in a ceramic pot at £4.50.

£15 and under

Discerning dads are always difficult to buy for (or so they say!), but no man could be disappointed by Maison Bleu's extremely tasteful wine goblets at just

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£7.50 and £8.50. The Pottery & Craft Studio is also a great destination; we love their personalised clocks, ideal for a study, or why not combine a personalised mug, from £8 and coaster, £4.50? Mums meanwhile will be tempted by Maison Bleu's 'best chocolate in town' set of mug, spoon and dish, priced at a very reasonable £14.99. Over at Bradley and Brown, fans of all things vintage will love their retro mugs and jugs from £8 while for dads there's an extremely stylish HLA classic tie and silk scarf, in a debonair gift box, from £14.95 at Stitchery. Head for the Pro-shop for your fashion conscious teens – their pink thermal hats are, apparently, just as popular with boys and girls while dads and mums will look cool (and keep warm) on the touchline in navy. Looking for something more glamorous? Newly opened Adiva is a must-visit. Here you'll find exquisite gold and silver pashmina style fringed shawls – a snip at £12.99 – and a fabulous accessory for all those parties.

Jewellery is always a winner at Christmas, and if you are looking for an exquisite, affordable piece, then the High Street really is your one stop shopping destination. Adiva has glass multi strand necklaces starting from £7.99; while the Zsiska jewellery collection, exclusive to Bradley and Brown, has prices starting from £12. Stitchery is an 'Aladdin's Cave' this Christmas for jewellery. They are one of the few nominated stockists for Cath Kidston jewellery, with prices ranging from £12 for gorgeous enamel 'star' earrings. My personal favourite, however, is a 'love, luck and wisdom,' necklace featuring a heart, shamrock and owl on a delicate chain for £38 (hint hint!).

£30 and under

Pushing the boat out a little further, little ones will love Lottie & Thomas' new range of gifts from Villa Carton where your kids can let their imaginations run riot decorating their own cardboard Doll's House, Castle or fully usable Rocking Chair, from £19.99.

There are masses of jewellery options in this price bracket too on the street, while if it's fragrance you're after check out Stitchery or go for scented candles – we love Bradley and Brown's Bahoma's spicy 'Spirit of Christmas' range from £18-£25. Older party girls will adore Adiva's sparkly evening bags with diamante handle at £29.50, while for a few pounds more you can buy an extremely desirable 1920's style clutch bag for £32.50 rising to £49.99 for a mirrored bag, if that's your bag! Equally brimming with 'wow factor' is Adiva's beaded, velvet and chiffon scarves, in jewel bright colours for £25. Their peacock shawl, at £45, is just fabulous for throwing over a little black dress.

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And for something extra special...

Head for Assimi, for exquisite bespoke, designer jewellery pieces, handmade on the premises. The list of 'to die for' pieces is endless but we love the trademark 'bobble' earrings in silver, £95, and 18ct gold, £505 and their real pearl earrings, from £155 and solid silver link bracelets, £295 and two

strand freshwater pearl bracelets in black, red, green, grey or pure white, from £195. Any woman would be absolutely thrilled to receive these treasures on Christmas morning. Then there's View Gallery, which has a fine selection of art work including good paintings for under £100.

Plus for foodies...

The Lime Tree has mouthwatering seasonal fare. Top of our gift list are the stylish bespoke wicker hampers with contents even the most discerning gourmet will love. Take the panettone cake made from free range eggs and wildflower honey from a small baker in Tuscany, Christmas pudding made to a traditional English recipe plus traditional artisan made preserves and regional cheeses. There's lots more for foodies too, including hand made chocolates. Stitchery



those Stitchery chocolates...

is famous in these parts for hand made Crème d'Or Belgian chocolates: for Christmas you can make up your own scrumptious assortment in a special festive gift wrapped box from £6.50.

Whilst on this delightfully sticky subject, Bachmann's Patisserie, proven as the best patisserie in Britain, is another must visit destination for delectable hand made chocs ranging from their famous stocking filler 'B' bars at £3 and exquisitely wrapped mini praline sticks, mini Florentines and orange match sticks from £5 to their appealing champagne truffles and boxed assortments from as little as £7. Great for him is this year's Wonderland Winter Chocolate laced with smoky whisky, from £9. Meanwhile, for those preferring a drop of the old nectar, there's plenty to savour at Wine Rack. Here you'll find a high quality Glenmorangie Scottish single malt at a keenly priced £28, while for the same amount you can bag a 20 year old bottle of Taylor's Port, just the ticket for after lunch.

Leaving the freshest till last, don't forget that the Ives will take orders and deliver to you the best of seasonal fruit and vegetables for your Christmas meals from the Secret Garden. You can order a proper Christmas tree from them too, and help support one of the village's essential shops, Phew! Santa's list must be sorted by now, time for a well deserved piping hot cappuccino break – luckily The Bakery and Lime Tree deli offer the best refreshments for miles, better still, you'll get service with a smile. And you can't put a price on that.

Tricia Bland

When not a busy mother and RA Hon Sec, Tricia is style columnist for the Sunday Express

Getting Things Done

– from your RA County Councillor



On reaching the County Council chamber I imagined that “getting things done” would now be a smooth and hassle free process. How wrong one can be! Just as I got my feet under the table a project catchily-entitled ‘Business Delivery Review’ began. I supported calls for budget discipline, but this was badly managed and caused chaos with a severe drop in staff morale. In Highways for example, the most common area of residents’ issues, numbers were reduced and the Elmbridge group relocated from Esher to Leatherhead; managers were changed several times, experienced staff left or retired. That wasn’t the end of it: there were more bureaucratic upheavals and even now the Parking Group’s been reduced, reorganised and relocated from Leatherhead to Kingston while the budget’s been slashed – with consequences for our own parking scheme. All very costly: and you can imagine the frustrations in trying to get things done.

On top of this, other interesting aspects come into play! To give you the flavour:

Lights in Church Walk and Ash Path:

Over the past two years several street lights have been reported as faulty. We still have problems. One of them is that electricity suppliers EDF are responsible for the cabling and they have few statutory requirements for public



the street lamp that worked by day...

installations. Surrey pass the buck to EDF and turn to other things. I am told: “We are not allowed to touch the electric supply; that is for EDF to do. EDF are nothing to do with us. They are a law unto themselves.” The light outside 46 Church Walk, occupied by an elderly and infirm lady who with her carers rather wanted the light on that dark path to work, is a

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fine example. During eight months or more of trying to get this fixed, I was told at various times by council officers working with contractors:

“Church Walk is a private path, nothing to do with us.” In fact, Church Walk is registered Public Footpath no.19 on Surrey’s own map, and has always been publicly maintained since adopted as a ‘new street’ in 1932. Then: “We could not get access with our van so we went back to the depot.” Followed by: “One man came to fix the light but could not replace the bulb as he was not permitted to use a ladder by himself.” You can imagine the time and cost involved with phone calls, meetings etc. and my temperature had risen to boiling point! Then a neighbour had the inspired idea of reporting the fault again not to Highways, but to the Health and Safety office. Almost immediately, a team of no less than five showed up with both van and ladders and replaced the bulb. The light spent the next five months permanently on! Lately, Surrey have added a second lamp standard so now there are two (only one of which is working). The new one is in unpainted galvanised steel inappropriate to the conservation area. I’m working on it...

Along Ash Path, two lights were out but I was told officially that “all the lights are working” and that all reported faults had been fixed within the timeframe of a few days!

Speeding in Thames Ditton Village:

There are always some who ignore our 20 mph limits. Most of you are concerned about safety especially of school children

crossing roads. In an attempt to get things tightened up the following conversation took place:-

PHH. ‘Many drivers don’t know we have a speed limit’

SCC. ‘The entrances to the village have a sign.’

PHH. ‘The signs are one of many and drivers don’t read them. Can we have 20 mph roundels painted at intervals on the road?’

SCC. ‘No they are not permitted.’

PHH. ‘They are repeated on the road in Kingston where there is a 20 mph rule.’

SCC. ‘Kingston is different, it is within London. The law is different in London, anyway they have a 20 mph limit and Thames Ditton does not. You have a 20mph zone.’

PHH. ‘So what? Aren’t they the same thing?’

SCC. ‘The law is different. A 20 mph limit allows repeated roundels and a 20mph zone does not.’ Does this remind you of “Yes Minister”? The conversation took place after several years of requests for SCC to do something. At least, safety changes are now due around the Station Crossing, where I’m using some of my allocation to pay for red tarmac topping: but we cannot have roundels on the road unless we can change the word ‘zone’ to ‘limit.’

“Dittons in Bloom:”

After SCC failed to clear weeds from our roads and pavements – their responsibility – I had to resort to drastic action last year. I was told that all staff were involved with tidying up Cobham for the “Cobham in Bloom” competition. Boiling point again!

What to do? I suggested we publish photos on our website to shame the council into action. The title “Dittons in Bloom” was coined. This proved to be a successful initiative! The story was picked up by the BBC and local media, and within a few weeks all the weeds, some of them taller than I, were cleared at last.

There have been similar problems this year in ensuring grass verges were cut, along with the grass outside Thames Ditton Hall (different department...). Well, nobody was able to tell me what the schedule of cuts was, and I believe that nobody knew. Again some judicious publicity seems to have helped matters along and eventually, the job was done.

Pressing on...

There have been other successes. Persistence finally brought about new, robust kerbstones with widening of Basingfield Road last year. Persistence and some private and RA subsidy has finally got works started to provide some extra parking for shoppers at Winter’s Bridge. Sustained pressure on officials by Cllr. Tannia Shipley and me – and more publicity on our website – finally brought about a great improvement in drainage and flood relief around Esher Station, this Spring. Since when, officials have not kept maintenance up to speed...

Other things remain to be done. Potholes are a perennial problem (the council and its contractors apply a tedious bureaucratic process to assessing and acting on potholes that leaves any practically-minded citizen dumbfounded). The road surface of Thames Ditton High Street and the state of the octagon there,

the pavement surface in Ashley Road and similar problems elsewhere in the Dittons are an affront to taxpayers particularly in conservation areas. Drainage still leaves ‘a lot to be desired,’ weeds re-grow, roadside trees and foliage can get dangerous, and it seems to require endless pressure and often publicity to get the council to discharge responsibilities that should be a matter of simple routine. It should not have to be this way. But we have learned valuable lessons with our successes, and I have become even more determined to ‘get things done’ whatever it takes.

You can help:

- Make sure you report problems to the council (RA councillors can advise which council has responsibility for what).
- Please keep your councillors informed in parallel: with Surrey, I can pursue, then it is harder for officials to put a problem in the ‘bottomless pending tray’.
- If you want to organise a lobby or a petition, these can be helpful. Do maximise their effect by consulting and co-ordinating with your councillors.
- Consider the effect and the timing of possible publicity. We may be able to use our own media to exert leverage or to extend your reach. Keep our webmaster and editor informed. You can sound out others easily via our website forum, or email suggestions for publicity.

And of course you can raise issues for discussion at our Residents’ Association Open Meetings, which I attend.

Peter Hickman

In The Arctic



temperature inversion on Spitzbergen, Svalbard archipelago

This year, most of my friends headed south out of ‘summertime’ Thames Ditton. I went north to the Arctic Circle with the British Schools Exploring Society, which organised a five-week expedition to the archipelago of Svalbard, a long way northwest of Norway of which it is part. Preparation starts a year in advance, and anyone can apply. They

help you with ideas to raise funds to finance your participation. You have to attend a basic training weekend, get fit enough to hike with a full pack, and get some decent boots! Around 70 of us in all were divided into groups with qualified leaders, specialising in geology (my interest), climatology, meteorology and glaciology.

When we reached Svalbard in July, temperatures were warm – not lower than minus 4 Centigrade. We spent a week in base camp making short expeditions and learning survival skills. The main risks are falling down crevasses on glaciers, falling out of a rubber dinghy among the ice floes, or being eaten by polar bears. Several people on Svalbard have been killed by bears over the past few decades, so we had to rig bear alarms round our camps, learn to shoot a rifle, and keep bear watch. We didn't see any!

After the first week my group trekked many kilometres to set up camp on coastal scree from where we contributed to mapping baseline information about the island. Then, 'ice training' back at base camp was followed by a trek up on the glaciers where we camped, trying – and failing – to make an igloo, and making several short expeditions. Later we trekked to the former Russian mining town of Pyramiden, abandoned in 1998: everything including a community room with film projector, and a canteen, was intact and spookily deserted. Then to Dicksonland to map two glacier fronts, investigate rock formations and categorise fossils.

Living on dehydrated ration packs, we were three to a tent, boys and girls all mixed up from week to week to avoid cliques. No mobile phones, no internet connections, no TV and no ipods! We sang songs, played cards and invented hilarious games. I swam in the Arctic Sea – briefly, once! – and the girls even washed their hair upside down in a



towing polk sleds across glaciers

saucepan. It was hard work towing our equipment on sleds across the glaciers. I was either too hot or too cold, depending on what we were doing, but apart from chapped hands and feet I survived with no problems. The scenery was quite fabulous. It was a terrific experience, and a real wrench leaving Svalbard and my new friends. We were all utterly exhausted. But oh, the luxury of getting home to hot running water, clean laundry and pizza!

Eleanor Evetts

Eleanor took all the photos, too. TD Today last ran a piece on a British Schools Exploring Society expedition by a young villager 20 years ago, also to the Arctic. This excellent organisation is still going strong – see www.bsos.org.uk



horizon



melting ice floes provide rest for a seal



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Thames Ditton Conservation

– the “CHIP” project



The Community Heritage Initiative Project between Elmbridge Borough Council and English Heritage is reappraising the conservation areas of Giggs Hill Green and Thames Ditton with local participation. Many readers will have a lively interest but won't have had time during weekdays to join the Working Group that is preparing for the public exhibition and consultation in January. So here's what has happened so far.

On 16 October we met to review the architectural, planning and contextual principles that make an area 'special' and to hear a brief history of our area presented by resident David Pascoe (we may draw on this in future issues of TD Today). In essence, a conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. There is much that may make up the key word 'character,' – the quality and interest of an area includes its history, its uses, and the views that unfold as one passes through it, as well as buildings of note. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that the character and appearance of a conservation area are protected and that new development makes a positive contribution to it. The Council should also enhance the appearance of the particular area by, for example, planting trees and providing appropriate street furniture and lighting. Property owners also have a shared responsibility to keep a



ROSE COTTAGE

conservation area well, enhancing the value of all as well as preserving our community heritage.

That may be the theory but residents will recall that in practice there have been retrograde examples in recent years: lamentable development in the High Street or the inappropriate juxtaposition of a new redbrick suburban house next to delightful listed white-painted cottages can prompt cynicism about the 'management of conservation areas.' But there have also been several examples of excellent new developments within our



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conservation areas, of properties that harmonise with, even add to, the existing charms of the area. The current exercise is not just to ‘tick boxes.’ It should help reinforce and improve guidelines for planning applications and development; to educate a generation of residents in the best arguments and language to use in connection with planning applications; and to schedule at least some specific works that can be put into effect by public bodies to enhance the areas.

At a further Working Group session on 22nd October our Councillors were among over 15 villagers who gave up a day to walk the areas with the consultants and officials, viewing and discussing. An informal summary of the main questions follows.

Main themes:

- The two conservation areas were designated at different times. They are of distinctly different character, and should not be merged into one. The approach to, and management of, the wide vistas of Giggs Hill Green and immediate environs should be different from those of the High Street, Church Walk, riverside and Ashley Road triangle.
- The trees of Thames Ditton make a very significant contribution to vistas, end-points, and the pleasant aspect of the area.

Giggs Hill Green

- The western boundary of the Giggs Hill Green area is the grass verge and trees along the road. The new houses fronting that boundary make a significant contribution now to the vista along the



a tall pine reaches for the sun, Watts Road

Green. Should their frontage be included within the conservation area boundary?

- Should the Victorian houses at the beginning of Claygate Lane be included?
- Should the 1930's style apartment buildings of Ditton Close be included? Along with their mature landscaped frontage they provide a charming backdrop to Watts Road and comprise a micro-area of its own character.
- Should the conservation area be extended some way up Angel Road to include the houses on that section?
- The grassed area by Thames Ditton Hall might benefit from the planting of specimen trees.



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Thames Ditton

- The unfolding views on approach along Watts Road and St Leonards Road in particular are noteworthy.
- Major trees including the Holm oaks and the beech in Ashley Road are valuable to the scene.
- Several micro-areas along the High Street were noted, including the stretch incorporating Maybury and Laurel cottages and Maybury Lodge (these are not locally-listed buildings) and the stand of shops that includes the Bakery. Also the octagon area which acts as a ‘node’ for village social life, and deserves better maintenance and enhancement.
- The poor state of road surface along the High Street was noted. Some street signs and furniture need refurbishment.
- One consultant raised the question of whether Ashley Road should be retained in the conservation area? Although the road was judged not of itself significant enough for designation, consensus seemed to be that its peacefulness, proximity to the High Street area (from which it forms part of the view) and series of well-preserved Victorian villas (many retaining the original windows) justified retention.
- The fine Edwardian villas on the west side of Speer Road between Church Walk and the station should perhaps be included along with the original part of the United Reformed Church.
- The brick walls along Church Lane and in front of the Manor House, and the raised area of pavement with railings by the latter, are important boundary features to retain.



features such as the decorative masonry on the Old Bank are also worth conserving

- Should the Islands be added to the conservation area, as their aspect is important? Consensus was that they should not be added but that the border of the area should align with the nearside border of the islands. The Island bridge is locally listed and is part of the conservation area already.

The heritage consultants will compile a first draft and organise a final session with Working Group participants in November. Further feedback will be incorporated to produce formal Consultation Documents. During a six week public consultation period from early January 2009, EBC officers will send information to all residents and there will be an exhibition in the Library. Your comments and views will be warmly welcomed. See our website for more, and for links to key documents on EBC’s website.



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Singing for Pleasure

– the Ripieno Choir



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The Choir sprang from an idea hatched over sixty years ago by a group of friends who thought it would be fun to get together regularly for a sing-song around the piano. They realised they were good enough to sing in public and went off round the local hospitals at Christmas to sing carols. At first they called themselves The Carol Singers, but when they started to branch into part-songs and madrigals they changed the name to the Ripieno Choir. ‘Ripieno’ has several connotations in music, one of which is that there is no single soloist.

Singing for charity was part of the enjoyment, and it wasn’t long before the choir were singing for all sorts of causes, twice being invited to sing for charity around the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square. Within a few years they had gone from strength to strength, winning competition trophies, and taking part in the BBC’s “Let the People Sing” contest. Twice they reached the national semi-finals. The choir went on to sing at the Royal Festival Hall on the BBC’s Light Programme Music Festival and at prestigious international venues including the Cathedral of St John the Divine, New York.

So when the choir’s diamond anniversary rolled round last year, it was

agreed that no ordinary celebration would do. The singers, most of them living in and around Thames Ditton, felt that sixty years of history deserved to be marked by something special – especially as one of the original tenors was still going strong. So they flew to South Africa to give nine concerts in the Cape for a St John Ambulance project there. The choir raised £17,500 towards building a health centre and hospice in one of the townships they visited.

This Christmas the choir has chosen a charity on its own doorstep. After hearing about the £45,000 repair bill for the Guide Hut in Church Walk, just a few hundred yards from where they rehearse, they will help raise money for it with a **carol-singing pub-crawl around Thames Ditton on Thursday, December 18**. They will start at the Angel at around 6 pm, move to the George & Dragon at 6:30 pm; the Red Lion, 7 pm; the Swan, 7:30 pm; the Albany, 8 pm and the Marquis of Granby at 8:30pm. A popular tour where you may bid for the choir to sing a carol of your choice!

Shirley Davenport

The splendid Ripieno Choir, which includes our RA minutes secretary Emma Barton, performs at Greenwich Royal Naval College on 28 December, and sings Bach’s St Matthew Passion at Guildford Cathedral on 14 March.

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It's Good To Talk



In a recent survey of company executives and in-house lawyers by the law firm Field Fisher Waterhouse, 47% of respondents admitted that a personal dislike of the other side had led them into expensive litigation. If so many commercial decisions by senior executives can be influenced by emotions, how much more likely is it that decisions that affect us personally are influenced by non-rational factors to our detriment?

As an accredited mediator, and the wife of one, I can bore for England on the benefits of mediation! But at a personal level, as a councillor, I have experienced the benefits myself: latterly I arranged a mediation which, in little more than an hour, successfully resolved a dispute which had been running for **four years**. Apart from the, time, frustration, disturbance, and bad feeling experienced by those involved, it had also taken up a great deal of Elmbridge Council officers' time, causing them considerable frustration in not being able to resolve the issues.

What is mediation?

Mediation is a form of ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) providing a means of settling disputes without the need to go to court, or even to go to a lawyer. Cheaper and quicker than conventional litigation, it is more likely to leave both parties content with the outcome.



birds in their nest don't always agree

How does it work?

A formal mediation will involve an independent trained mediator (who may or may not be a lawyer) simply *facilitating* an agreement between the parties. Usually the mediator will speak to both parties jointly and will then meet with them separately, 'shuttling' between them over a period of hours to obtain an agreed solution. The mediator will explore issues and surrounding circumstances with each party on a confidential basis, and a solution is usually found within a matter of hours. The success rate for mediations overall is in excess of 75 – 80%.

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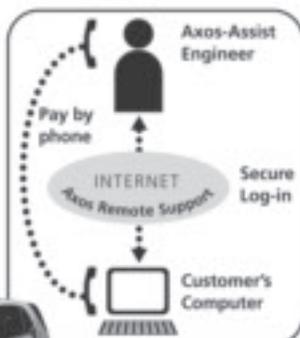
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When should mediation be tried?

At present, mediation is often used at a late stage and as a last resort, in an attempt to save huge Court costs. Much time, expenditure, frustration and distress can be avoided if mediation is chosen early on in a dispute. It is not necessary to go to a solicitor first though many people prefer to do so. Nor is it necessary to have a solicitor present at the mediation.

Can mediation be used for all disputes?

Mediation is suitable for most disputes and particularly useful for commercial claims, consumer disputes for goods or services, Probate and Inheritance issues, boundary and property disputes, as well as a host of others.

How do I organise mediation?

If you are using a solicitor, most are now well informed about mediation. But you can approach an independent mediator directly, either via the National Mediation Helpline website which is at nationalmediationhelpline.com or simply search the web. The mediator will usually be happy to approach the other party to persuade them to try mediation.

How much does it cost?

Like everything in life, it varies... But as a guide, it will depend upon the value or amount in dispute. For amounts up to £5000, the National Mediation Helpline tariffs are £50 + Vat per hour, rising to just under £100 per hour for sums at stake of the order of £15000. Mediators will generally not charge for time spent preparing the case beforehand. A mutually acceptable venue needs to be provided, which may involve additional expenditure, as will legal representation if you want it.

So next time you have a dispute, why squander money, time, effort and emotional energy on lawyers when you can achieve the same more quickly, more cheaply, more effectively and far more amicably through mediation?

Karen Randolph

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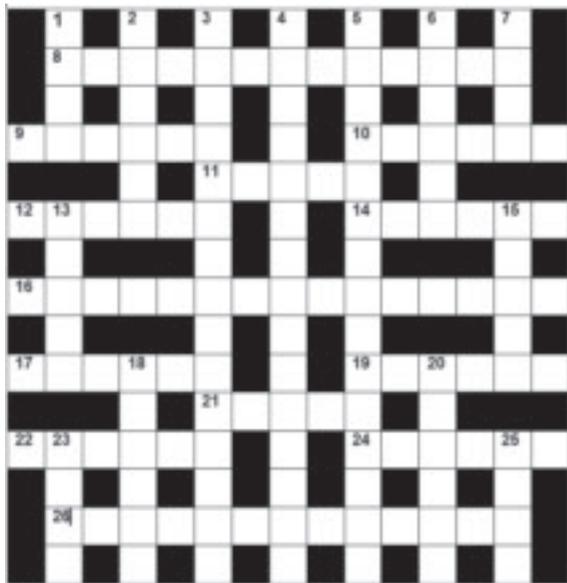
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Winter Crossword

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 February 2009

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

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

ACROSS

8. A hobby, recording from a starting point (5,8)
9. Five are in a valley (6)
10. Anglican motet (6)
11. Reads about being destroyed (5)
12. It's a hot world by the fire (6)
14. ...Jack of quarantine (6)
16. Palace courier (6,9)
17. Played smoothly (6)
19. ...by George Frederick... (6)
21. Watered silk (5)
22. Life is glum in wood (6)
24. Lizards (6)
26. Having no regard for others is not nice dear (13)

DOWN

1. A portico (4)
2. Tasting it converted a vicar (6)
3. A Captain's ship and crew is... (5,3,7)
4. E.M.Forster's last novel (1,7,2,5)
5. After 'stormy days; see ghost; sea rough' Captain orders... (6,2,3,4)
6. Falstaff's ancient firearm (6)
7. Moulding with a double curve (4)
13. Chopin's study (5)
15. Daisy has a disc with Ray's 'Mayweed' on it (5)
18. Cyril starts after the Princess for the French Lake (6)
20. Bees collect it, Gods drink it (6)
23. Venerable wader (4)
25. Heard from the Town Crier, then "All's well" – "Happy New Year"

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Solution to the Autumn Crossword



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SERVICES

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Cheer Home Visiting		01372 474535
Dittons and Weston Green Neighbourcare	Sue Mayes	020 8398 6714
Elmbridge Borough Council Community Support Services		
Information, Meals Services, Community		
Transport, Bus Permits		01372 474552/4
Elmbridge Community Alarm Service		01372 474560
Elmbridge Relief Carers Scheme		01372 474547
Ember Centre for the Retired	Mon & Thurs	020 8398 9870
	At other times	01372 474553
Esher and District Stroke Club	Ann Pollock	020 8398 6132
Voluntary Action Elmbridge	Mrs Carole Roycroft	01372 463587
M.D.H.S. Household Services (& garden tidying)	Carolyn Smart (Manager)	01932 248533
Surrey Mobile Library Service		01483 517402
Surrey Youth and Adult Education Service	Elmbridge Area	020 8979 8334

GROUPS

Girl Guiding in TD & WG	Mrs K Williams	020 8398 1300
1st Thames Ditton Brownies	Mrs. Bronagh Hughes	020 8398 1628
3rd Thames Ditton Brownies	Mrs Heather Horler	020 8398 0364
2nd Thames Ditton Rainbows	Mrs K Williams	020 8398 1300
1st Weston Green (All Saints) Scout Group	Mrs. Becky Gardiner	020 8398 3647
1st Weston Green Guides (All Saints)	Mrs. Louise Lewis	020 8398 4843
2nd Thames Ditton Guides	Mrs. Bronagh Hughes	020 8398 1628
1st Weston Green Brownies (All Saints)	Mrs K Williams	020 8398 1300
2nd Weston Green Brownies	Linda Hall	020 8941 4913
1st Weston Green Rainbows	Mrs Helen Hill	020 8398 3135
4th Thames Ditton Ajax Sea Scouts	Alison Derrick	020 8398 0041
Dittons Scout Group	Mr. G. King	020 8398 7624
Coffee and chat (United Reformed Church)	Mrs. E. Barker	01372 467491
Emberbrook Trefoil Guild	Mrs. Adrienne Nealing	020 8398 5582
Esher Floral Art Group	Mrs. M. Dingle	020 8398 3943
Friends of Bushey and Home Parks	Mrs. Julie Cohen	020 8943 2017
Friends of Walsingham Care	Miss Valerie Chicken	0208 398 2932
Molesey and Dittons Neighbourhood Watch	Chairman: Pat Farmiloe	020 8398 2787
Parents and Toddlers (St Nicholas church)	Information	020 8398 7211
Ripieno Choir	Nick Harris	020 8399 7231
Surrey Bell-ringers	Nick Pattenden	Nick@FSLimited.com

CLUBS

Albany Motor Yacht Club	Secretary	01784 466651
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	020 8398 1642
Dittons & Hinchley Wood Royal British Legion Club	Secretary	020 8398 6263

Ember Players (Drama) Ember Sports Club	Kelly Bradley	07971 839 648
Ember Sports Club	Mrs. Pauline Wareham	020 8979 8977
Ember Sports Club: Bowls	John Garland	01932 220221
Ember Sports Club: Croquet	Dr. David Cooke	01932 862841
Ember Sports Club: Tennis	Margaret Robinson	01372 842401
Esher Bowling Club	Roger Cooper	01372 468109
Esher Bridge Centre	Paul Whicker	01372 460157
Esher Camera Club	Billy Buchanan	020 8398 3169
Folk Dance Club	Pam Phillips	01372 373745
Hinchley Wood / Dittons PROBUS Club	Ken Thomas	020 8398 0526
Long Ditton Cricket Club	Nigel Hardy	020 8398 8361
Long Ditton Garden Club	Mrs. Ann Allen	020 8398 1718
Model Railway Society (Hampton Court)	Secretary	01932 241224
Mothers Union (All Saints)	Val Lomax	01932 860344
Old Cranleigh Rugby Club	Tony Price	07801 837129
Old Cranleigh Hockey Club	Eds Copleston (Men)	07775 940703
	Helen Hawes (Ladies)	07771 557900
River Club (BMYC)	David Walker	0870 460 3586
Rotary Club, Esher	Geoff Morris	01932 868454
Rubber Bridge TD Lawn Tennis Club	Val	020 8399 9972
Surbiton Croquet Club	Alec Thomas	020 8398 2391
Surbiton Golf Club	Secretary	020 8398 3101
Surbiton Hockey Club	Secretary	020 8398 2401
Thames Ditton Lawn Tennis Club	Martha Gordon	020 8398 6800
Thames Ditton & Esher Golf Club	Mark Rodbard	020 8398 1551
Thames Ditton Squash Club (Colets)	Dave Peck	020 8398 7108
Thames Ditton Cricket Club	Howard Frish (Secretary)	07947 561449
Thames Ditton Marquetry Group	Jasmine Berry	020 8398 4358
Yoga for Health Club	Mrs. Celia Rowe	020 8398 2700

SOCIETIES AND ASSOCIATIONS

Ember Choral Society	Linda Bridges	020 8399 5402
Esher Recorded Music Society	Miss S. M. Garrat	020 8398 8541
Esher and Molesey Garden Society	Mr. B. Andrews	020 8398 5063
Hampton Court Way Allotment Association	Secretary: Basil Rainbow	020 8398 8471
Lynwood Allotment Society	Barry Jordan	0776 282 5041
Molesey and District Antiques Society	Linda Lambert	020 8398 1476
NADFAS (Decorative & Fine Arts) Kingston	Mrs. Valerie Windsor	020 8549 9967
National Trust: Richmond Association	Membership Secretary	020 8894 2972
Soroptimist International (Kingston District)	Secretary: Pat Harman	020 8390 3507
Thames Ditton Women's Institute (W.I.)	Secretary	020 8398 8615
Thames Valley Amateur Radio Transmitters Society	Chairman	0148328 4279

OTHER

Cancer Research UK	Mrs. Vivienne Harris	020 8398 6787
University of the Third Age (U3A)	Ken Kingham	0208 979 8053
Vera Fletcher Hall	Lettings: Helen Mason	08456 528 529
	Membership: Sue Morris	020 8224 2536

Please contact the Editor to amend these listings



By Hook or Crook



Whether we are to live through another Great Depression, or this time a Great Reckoning for past profligacy, the season will see a good deal of sober reflection. The perceptions of young children can cheer us up. Here's what some wrote or said in class:

"Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption"

"The greatest miracle in the Bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him"

"St. Paul preached holy acrimony which is another name for marriage."

"Christians have only one wife. This is called monotony."

On dating and marriage, boys said:
"On the first date, they just tell each other

lies and that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date."

"You have to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the crisps and dip coming"

"Tell your wife that she looks pretty, even if she looks like a lorry."

Girls said: *"It's better for girls to be single but not for boys. Boys need someone to clean up after them."*

"It's OK to kiss someone when they're rich."

"Even boys have something to say if you listen long enough."

And these days: *"You might have to guess that two people are married, based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids."*

A Merry Christmas to all. – Stay calm!



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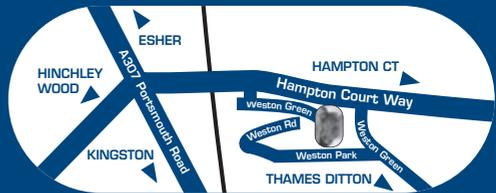
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