

'Caversham means Caversham': replacement Post Office must be located in Caversham centre

Post Office proposal for site in Caversham Road is not acceptable

The front page feature in the last issue of *Caversham Bridge* drew attention to the impending closure of the Caversham sub-Post Office (located inside the Day Lewis pharmacy) in Church Street in the heart of Caversham centre. By the time this issue has gone to press it will be close to the closure deadline of 31st January 2019. Since November last Matt Rodda, MP for Reading East, has taken up the campaign to secure a sub-post office for Caversham Centre as part of its commercial and community mix.

On 30th November Matt Rodda hosted a meeting at the Caversham Baptist Church which was very well attended and we reported the outcome of this and his immediate report on proposed actions to follow up the matter with the Post Office. Matt followed up on 14th December to report 'progress'. For the record the text is as follows: 'Prior to the public meeting that I held and which the majority of you very kindly attended, I had obtained a press release from the Post Office which undertook to update the local community on efforts to find a replacement sub-post office.'

Since the meeting, I have been advised that the Post Office have conducted site visits for suitable new premises. It was then brought to my attention that Caversham Road may be the preferred site, which I consider to be utterly unsuitable and I wrote to the Post Office to make this point, politely but firmly and I asked them to confirm the position'. The Post Office replied as follows: "We are currently seeking a replacement Post Office to provide a Post Office counter service for the people of Caversham after the current branch closes on 31st January 2019. There will be a number of factors which we will take into account when assessing applications from potential new Postmasters, of which location is one. I will update Matt and local Councillors as soon as possible if and when we have an applicant who successfully completes the recruitment process to become the Postmaster for a new Caversham Post Office."

'Whilst this does directly address my actual question, it does appear that the process to find new premises is still ongoing, but I have responded, asking for unambiguous confirmation that this is the case and have re-iterated the need for a counter service in the centre of Caversham'.

On 14th January Matt was able to provide a further update, which alludes to talk about a location on Caversham Road (possibly between the Richfield Avenue junction and Vastern Road roundabout): The full text follows. 'I have received reports from some of you suggesting that the new sub post office for Caversham is to be sited on Caversham Road. In his email to my office of 14th December, repeated in a subsequent

email on 27th December, the Post Office's Public Affairs Manager, Ken Penton, said. "I can confirm that we have not made a decision about the location of any proposed replacement Post Office for Caversham yet.....If and when we do so, I will inform Matt and other local elected political representatives as soon as possible."

'I have received no further updates from the Post Office. This email followed a briefing given by Mr. Penton to Cllr Tony Page in mid-December which stated: "Our Field Team are currently looking for alternative locations for a replacement branch and will update local stakeholders and residents as soon as we are able to on any positive developments in our search for a replacement Caversham Post Office."

'Staff at the Caversham sub-Post Office tell me that they have been informed by those from the shop identified as a potential site on Caversham Road, that they are indeed taking over from the beginning of February. I have written again to Mr. Penton to ask for an explanation. When I have additional information to pass on, I will brief you. I gather that the sign outside the shop in Caversham Road stating "Post Office coming soon" is still in position, so this seems pretty unambiguous. Please rest assured that I understand that Caversham Road is unsuitable and have already communicated this to Mr. Penton and will obviously do so again. I had an initial positive conversation with the Minister, Kelly Tolhurst, but when I requested an actual meeting with her (and indeed some of you made the same request) the response was non-committal to say the least. I will continue to find clarity in this situation and am disappointed at the lack of engagement here'.

So, where is this matter going, and what is next? Firstly, we would like to thank the current sub-Post Office staff for their forbearance and great community spirit in assisting customers who have sought information and reassurance. By contrast, the Post Office seems to have dragged its feet, evaded a community response and so far has not delivered an acceptable solution in spite of the considerable efforts of our MP. Few in the Post Office, we assume, would like to argue that a postal presence in the heart of a community is not a goal to pursue? Caversham centre is without a doubt at the heart of the urbanization north of the Thames. All the indicators of social and economic geography confirm this: road network, bus services, concentration of retail facilities, community services and amenities, business rate values and above all movement and concentration of flows of people. No people ... no life: No sub-post office No community. Post Office: please do better and live up to your social and public responsibilities.

[As CB goes to press Matt Rodda has received PO confirmation that any sub-office in Caversham Road is not a solution for Caversham centre. The PO assures him that a site for Caversham Centre is still being sought. CB will continue to cover this story in the March issue]



Matt Rodda's meeting in session

INSIDE

Talking point	page 2	Mapledurha Playing Fields	page 7
Traidcraft update	page 3	Environment	page 8
Retirement of Head Teacher	page 4	Probus	page 9
Christingles at St Peter's 2018	page 5	Clubs	page 10
Reading in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.....	page 6	St Peter's Tsunami Appeal	page 11

Caversham Clergy

ANGLICAN

St Barnabas
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Tel: 947 8239.
www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

St Andrew
Rev'd Nigel Jones, St Andrew's Vicarage,
Harrogate Road. Tel: 947 2788
www.standrewscaversham.org

Caversham Thameside Ministry -
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Rev'd Mike Smith, The Rectory, 20 Church Road, Caversham RG4 7AD Tel: 9479505
rector@ctmparish.org.uk

Rev'd Marion Pyke Tel: 947 5834
Rev'd John Dudley Tel: 9470265
Rev'd Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331810
Rev'd Judith Ryder Tel: 9473783

CAVERSHAM PARK CHURCH (LEP)

(Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and URC)
Contact: Dr Alison Johnston
Tel: 0118 947 5152. www.cpv.org.uk

METHODIST TEAM MINISTRY

Rev'd Jenny Dowding, 72 Highmoor Road.
Tel: 947 2223
Rev'd D Jenkins Tel: 0118 327 1592

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev'd Colin Baker
Church office tel 0118 954 5353
Email: secretary@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

RIVERSIDE CHURCH (Reading)

www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk

GRACE CHURCH

(formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)
www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk Tel 9474529

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Our Lady and St Anne
Mgr Patrick Daly, The Presbytery,
2 South View Avenue. Tel: 947 1787.

St Michael

Fr Michael Sharkey, St Michaels,
Sonning Common Tel: 972 3418

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

Rev'd H R Gayle Tel: 946 3009

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TALKING POINT

by Dr Alison Johnston

Our God of All Weather

Well we are heading for the peak of winter during February and March, where everything is cold, hard, and seemingly dead. Then we come to spring, summer and autumn. This is when praising God for the weather stops and complaining abounds for a large number of people.

But we need to change our thinking and consider God's work of providence. God is the God of all weather. He didn't create the seasons to run themselves, but carefully ordains every falling snowflake, drop of rain, bolt of lightning and ray of sunshine, and. If we look carefully at the weather, we can see the awesomeness of God.

So, let us look at God's mighty hand at work in all weather.

The God of Storms

There are many people who are afraid of storms. They can seem loud and wild and even appear to be out of control. We certainly recognize just how little control we have in such situations. While storms seem unpredictable and uncontrollable, they always remain under the control of our great God. His finger draws the path for the wind and it can't stray from it. He fixes the exact volume of thunder and the intensity of the rain.

He set a limit for the rain and a course for the thunderbolt, He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth; he sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

The God of Rain

How many times do you complain about the rain – especially when you had plans? Rainy days can turn us into grumpy adults. And yet the Bible is clear that "this is the day that the Lord has made."

"He gives rain on the earth and sends water on the fields,"

'They do not say in their heart', "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain in its season, Both the autumn rain and the spring rain, Who keeps for us The appointed weeks of the harvest."

God of Snow and Ice

Winter is the hardest season for many, particularly the elderly or in hard times. We do not like being cold and the grey skies can really mess with our moods. But there is good and beauty to be found in all seasons and in all weather.

Snowflakes are delicate, if you try to catch one it immediately melts on your hand. But God can create and mould each snowflake into a uniquely beautiful creation, directing where it should land and how long it should last.

He says to the snow, "Fall on the earth," and to the rain shower, "Be a mighty downpour."

The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen.

He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes.

These winter months are designed for the ground to rest and produce nutrients for the coming spring. What a cycle. What about you and me? Maybe, you are in a winter month too. Possibly you feel as though you are going nowhere. Perhaps this is your rest time where you just press into Him, feed on His Word and just enjoy His presence. Maybe winter is not all bad. Quite possibly this is the season just before new revelation springs forth.

Get ready church! I believe that God is about to take the church to the next level. Revelation takes us from glory to glory. God is going to pour out His glory upon the church as the church responds to the world and reaches out to all of God's children in the light of His true Word.

We are going to see glory as nothing we have experienced. This glory will produce a harvest of miracles, signs and wonders and the most glorious harvest we have yet to see. God's heart is that His House might be full.

Are you ready to be a part? Are you ready to partner with the Holy Spirit in the greatest revival of souls this world has yet to experience? I believe this will usher in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The air is changing. Smell it. The fragrance of Jesus is everywhere.

Dr Alison Johnston, Caversham Park Church

Talking Point: a correction to make

The Revd. Margaret Dimmick based at Caversham Park Ecumenical Church contributed the Talking Point piece for the January 2019 issue and we thank her for this to start off the new year's cycle. Unfortunately, we failed to note her name in the heading, so that her piece was mistakenly attributed to Derek Chandler who wrote the December 2018 piece. Apologies to both our contributors from the editorial team.



CAVERSHAM GOOD NEIGHBOURS

Are you a people person?

Caversham Good Neighbours is a group formed to offer essential transport to the elderly and disabled in our neighbourhood. If you would like to give to the community by joining us as a volunteer driver or helping in our office, then please do get in touch with us.

www.cavershamgoodneighbours.org.uk
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Monday to Friday 9.30am – 11.30am
Church House 59 Church Street Caversham RG4 8AX



SUNDAY SERVICES

ANGLICAN

St Peter, St Peter's Hill

8.00am Holy Communion – BCP (first, second and fourth Sundays)
Matins – BCP (Third Sunday)
9.30am Holy Communion (second, third and fourth Sundays)
Service of the Word (First Sunday)
6.30pm Holy Communion with Healing Prayers usually 1st Sunday, Evensong (usually Choral on second Sunday)

St John, Gosbrook Road

9.30am Holy Communion (first, third and fourth Sundays)
9.30am All Age Worship (second Sunday)
Fifth Sunday – Parish wide service (check website for details)

St Margaret, Mapledurham

11.15am Holy Communion (first, second and fourth Sundays) Morning Worship (third Sunday)
Fifth Sunday – Parish wide service (check website for details)

St Andrew, Harrogate Road

8.00am The Eucharist
10.00am Parish Eucharist (Sung)
First Sunday, Family Eucharist
11.30am The Eucharist first Sunday BCP

St Barnabas, Grove Road, Emmer Green

8.00am Said Communion (BCP)
9.30am Parish Communion
9.30am COGS for all ages (1st Sunday of Month)

RIVERSIDE CHURCH (READING)

Meeting at Hemdean House School, Hemdean Road, Caversham
10.00am Morning Worship & Teaching

CAVERSHAM PARK ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

Meeting at Caversham Park School
11.00am Holy Communion (1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays)
Morning Worship (2nd and 4th Sundays)
All Age Worship (at Festival Times)

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH, South Street

10.30am Morning Worship each Sunday
6.30pm House of Prayer (praise and prayer) – 2nd Sunday each month
3.45pm Messy Church – for all the family
Fourth Sunday of the month

GRACE CHURCH, Old Peppard Road

10.30am Worship and Ministry, Children's Church

THE METHODIST CHURCH IN CAVERSHAM

Caversham Heights, Highmoor Road

9.00am (first Sunday), 10.30am
6.30pm (second and fourth Sundays)
Gosbrook Road
10.30am

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Our Lady and St Anne, Southview Avenue

Saturday 5.30pm,
Sunday 10.00am and 6.30pm
Mapledurham House 6.00pm Mass (last Sunday of the month)

St Michael, Sonning Common

5.30pm Saturday
9.00 and 10.30am Monday

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Church Street, Reading
10.30am (House study groups Sept-June Tel: 9475783)

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Church Street, Caversham

9.30am Sunday School
11.00am Divine Worship
6.00pm Evening Service

Caversham Bridge 2019: Copy price and subscription price

Caversham Bridge is sold at £0.40 per copy. The subscription price which includes delivery to your home address is increased to £5.00 / year (for 12 issues) from January 2019.

Caversham Bridge

Contributions for the March 2019 issue should be sent to the Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Parish Office by Monday 4th February. The date for the April issue is Monday 4th March.

Email address is: editors@cavershambridge.org
Advertising copy for the March 2019 issue should be sent to Mr A. Wright, Twigmoor, Upper Warren Avenue, Caversham by Friday 1st February. The date for the April issue Friday 1st March. Email address is: advertising@cavershambridge.org

PARISH OFFICES

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The Flowering Teapot

In the 2018 Reading Retail Awards, 'The Flowering Teapot', a delightful little cafe in Prospect Street Caversham, was voted by the public 'the best in Reading' in the 'Cafes, Coffee and Lunch' category. The 'Flowering Teapot' which opened in November 2017 is owned by Samantha Cudjoe and Tim Leonard and they were presented with their award at the Hilton Hotel in Reading.

Samantha grew up in Caversham said, "Everything is made 'in-house' from sweet to savoury and this includes traditional meals like scrambled eggs on toast and jacket potatoes to the more exotic offerings like Hibiscus Granola, Avocado Toast, Vegetable Falafel and Brie and Bacon with Cranberry Paninis. There are also Artisan breads, loose leaf teas and a wide selection of cakes, pastries and quiches." 'The Flowering Teapot' also provides



Award winners Samantha Cudjoe and Tim Leonard at the Flowering Teapot, Prospect Street, Caversham

other catering services such as Dinner Parties, Afternoon Tea Parties, Children's Cupcake Parties and Cookery Classes. Bespoke cakes and pastries can be made to order, including

Wedding/Celebratory cakes and all with vegetarian and vegan options. Tim has plans to develop the back garden for 'al fresco' dining. Congratulations to Samantha and Tim from 'Caversham Bridge' on their great success.

Opening times are: Tuesday to Saturday from 9.30am to 5.30pm.

The 'True Food Community Co-operative' in Emmer Green were also winners in the Reading Retail Awards in the 'Sustainability in Retail' category.

Congratulations to both food enterprises for their winning success and for adding to the diversity and quality of our food and café culture!



Pride of Reading winners at the presentation ceremony

Traidcraft update

In the article published in the September edition of the *Caversham Bridge*, we reported on the difficulties faced by Traidcraft and the possibility that the company might cease trading. Following an outpouring of support for the company from across the UK, the Directors announced the adoption of a new business plan on 4th November 2018.

The plan contains both good and bad news. The improvement in sales has given the company the confidence to take forward proposals for a significant restructuring and downsizing. However, the new company will employ only 12 staff (reduced from 68) and will have to reduce the number of products stocked, in particular the number of craft items. They will focus on a core range of products that customers repeatedly purchase. This means that many food producers will continue to have access

to the market through Traidcraft. It is likely that many craft producers will be adversely affected. Traidcraft Exchange, the independent charity established by Traidcraft to support producers, is now appealing for funds to support work with those affected to help them find alternative markets or products: see <https://www.traidcraft.org.uk/> for more details.

The new *Traidcraft 2* will be exploring other ways of working and ways of reducing warehousing, packaging and delivery costs. To this end, it is considering how it could encourage bulk purchasing on behalf of small communities of friends, interest groups or churches.

Much of the detail of how the business will operate and the products it will market is yet to be decided, and a number of consultation meetings are planned with the Traidcraft community in the coming months. The announcement of the proposals for the future concluded with the following request:

'Please continue to support us by purchasing those items you need directly from us and not in your local supermarket. Sales have improved, but we are still not by any means certain of reaching all the milestones.'

In Caversham, Phil and Pam Chatfield, who work with a number of other local fair traders to provide Traidcraft stock to local churches, report improved sales over the last few months. The sale held at their home in November 2018 was well supported and very successful. Locally, there was an opportunity to purchase Traidcraft gifts for Christmas, cards and chocolate at their stall in the St Peter's Christmas Market on 8th December. For more information visit their Facebook page www.facebook.com/cavershamtraidcraft/ or ring them on 0118 947 2444 for a catalogue or to order Traidcraft products.

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Retirement of Helen Wallace: Head Teacher of Thameside Primary School

In commenting on the retirement of Helen Wallace as head teacher of Thameside Primary School, Mark Harper the Chair of governors was reminded of the saying that the best time to start thinking about your retirement is before your employer does! Well, in that regard Helen Wallace, headteacher of Thameside Primary School on Harley Road, was well ahead of the game. Helen is moving on to the next chapter in her life

Prior to joining Thameside, Helen taught at Geoffrey Field Infant School in Whitley. She first started there in April 1993 with a mixture of temporary contracts and supply teaching. She became a class teacher in September 1999, then an acting team manager in April 2000, before becoming acting Deputy Head in September 2000. She became permanent Deputy Headteacher in September 2001 where she remained until she left to join

Thameside in January 2009.

She has overseen a transformation of Thameside Primary school from one that was struggling to what is now a thriving school community. Pupil numbers have increased significantly from 270 in 2009 to 412 today, standards have improved, the school has a strong teaching staff and senior leadership team, a supportive parent body and happy, safe and well taught children.

In March 2016 Ofsted rated the school as 'Good' from its previous 'Requires Improvement' and was effusive in its praise of the school community, safeguarding, well-being and behaviour of the children as well as identifying the progress that had been and continues to be made. As the report stated:

'The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The headteacher has established an environment where every child, parent and member of staff is valued and their needs considered carefully.'

After ten years of leading Thameside Primary School, Helen should look back on her time at Thameside with great pride on a job very well done. In November, the school was awarded the Pride of Reading School of the Year accolade.

Mark Harper (Chair of governors, Thameside Primary School) concluded: *"As a school we are indebted to Helen's leadership. She has led with authority, professionalism, a strong focus on values and doing the right thing, mindful of the well-being and development of her staff. She has made submissions to Government and recently gave evidence to The Education Select Committee in the Houses of Parliament on the subject of funding for Special Educational Needs children"*.

"As a school we would like to thank Helen for her dedication, commitment and drive, as well as her striving to do the very best for the children, her focus, her resilience in often challenging situations, and her willingness to adapt and move forward. Helen leaves the school in a strong position ready for the next stage of Thameside's growth. Simply, we will all miss her".

[Feature contributed by Mark Harper (Chair of governors, Thameside Primary School)]

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Caversham Bridge Hotel and the Reading Rowing Club Boathouse

One of our readers (Mr Peter R. Taylor) has been able to correct the editors on a point of fact and has been able to enhance the piece contributed by 'Happy Wanderer' in the January 2019 issue. Mr Taylor read with interest the article in the recent edition of 'Caversham Bridge' about the building of the present Caversham Bridge, and has kindly offered us a minor correction to the article concerning the Caversham Bridge Hotel that was demolished to make way for what is now the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The Caversham Bridge Hotel was demolished in 1986, not 1988. Editorial apologies for our error and for your much appreciated correction.

Mr Taylor continues the theme: As a member of Reading Rowing Club now, and at the time the new boat house was built in the late 1980s, I was acutely aware of the builders (JMJ) giving the Club just two weeks notice in June 1986 to remove their small wooden clubhouse building from the land on the west side of the hotel, and the boats from what had been until 1964 the hotel boathouse. The Club succeeded in selling the clubhouse in the short time allowed, and it was taken to pieces and relocated to Kiln Green Cricket Club where it still stands today. The boats were also relocated, some for storage provided by Reading Borough Council, some

for continued use from the site of the former foundry that Waites the builders had acquired some time earlier to build the flats that now overlook the river and Pipers Island, and some to other local rowing clubs. The Club has a collage of dated photographs one of which shows the site of the old Caversham Bridge Hotel, after demolition in August 1986. JMJ took three years to complete the new hotel, Rivermead Leisure Centre and the Reading Rowing Club boathouse. The Rowing Club was not able to move in until September 1989. The builders JMJ went bust shortly after the completion of the hotel, the leisure centre and the boathouse.

Christingles at St. Peter's 2018

Why were fourteen buggies stabled in St Peter's at 3.00pm Christmas Eve? No, this isn't a cracker joke! Actually - a sign of the marvellous attendance at the first of two Christingle services. Their very young occupants came for a special Orange - having a red band around it; impaled by four cocktail sticks, each piercing a jelly tot, and a candle. And there also came more than 700 others of all ages: with about as many Grandparents as Mums and Dads as children. It is perhaps surprising how many 'grown-ups' come unaccompanied by children. So why are these services so popular?

Christingle services have been held in St Peter's for some years, increasingly well attended; and became so popular that we just could not accommodate all those wishing to enter - the church was full! So a few years ago, it was decided to hold two services, fitted in between lunch and tea on (usually) Christmas Eve, at 3.00pm and 4.30 pm: giving just a few minutes for a quick clear-up between

the first congregation leaving (quite slowly) and the second arriving (promptly). And now, in 2018, we had two full congregations - making these the most popular services over Christmastide.

The format of the Christingle service actually first happened in the German Moravian Church in 1747 and took two centuries to travel to this country.

Rector Mike Smith told us that December 2018 marked the 50th anniversary of the first ever Christingle Service in this country, organised by The Children's Society in the vast Lincoln Cathedral, which was a great success. Thus it was repeated and quickly spread; now it is held in Churches nationwide. It is a most important fundraiser for the work of the Society which looks after many children in need.

To demonstrate how much else has changed over the last 50 years - and to test the memories of the older people present (several admitted to being born that year) he asked us a few questions: which team won the Cup Final that year? (Manchester City); what was the Christmas No. 1 hit? (Lily the Pink by Scaffold); what was the most popular Christmas toy? (Hot Wheels track). Testing the memories of the older people, some interesting suggestions emerged! But, children had to provide the answers and, if correct, win a chocolate.

Then, the children were asked to approach the altar, housing the Nativity Scene, and pick up their own Christingle, lovingly prepared that morning by some of the younger members of St. Peter's (under supervision of course).

After an exhortation to be very careful, parents must keep close watch, the Candles were lit. The main lights were turned off, prayers said and carols sung under candle light. Of course, the candles cannot be allowed to burn for too long - but fire extinguishers were at the ready!

A vigorous PUFF... and electric light was restored. Is this the magical moment when, for many, Christmastide commences? So many happy cheerful faces leave the Church, giving thanks. These Christingle Services have become a major part of the Church's celebrations of Jesus' Birth.

The very generous collections at the two services amounted to around £1500 with Gift Aid - all to go to The Children's Society.

St Peter's experience of Christingle reminds us that many people still want to come to Church, if they receive a warm welcome and the service is short and focused on their needs. Perhaps we need to think about how we do that throughout the rest of the year!

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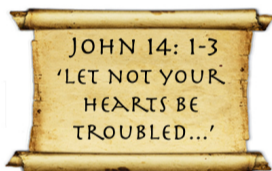
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Reading in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I

The subject of the December talk was 'Reading in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I'. The speaker was Joan Dils, the Society's President.

Elizabeth was crowned Queen of England on 15th January 1559; she was the last monarch of the House of Tudor, the only issue of the marriage of King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. At the beginning of her reign Reading was comprised of three ancient parishes: St.Mary, St.Laurence and St.Giles. The extent of the built-up area lay within the triangle of New Street (today's Friar Street) in the north and flanked by London and Southampton Streets to the south, the population was around three thousand inhabitants.

With the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the demise of the abbey in the 1530s the economy of Reading suffered: the large monastic household disappeared and with it the many visitors it had attracted which led to a decline in trade. Many of the responsibilities once held by the Abbey passed to the Crown and its negligence had become apparent: the condition of the two hundred houses, an important source of income, and the nineteen bridges it had owned, was parlous. At the commencement of Elizabeth's reign the town was bankrupt.

In 1560, the Queen gave a new charter to Reading for self-government: it confirmed the charters and liberties formerly granted and it defined the town's boundaries and helped to solve the town's financial problems.

The Queen gifted the former monastic house of the Grey Friars to the Corporation (the town's government) for use as their Guildhall. Also, all deeds and documents issued by the Corporation would have its own seal upon them. The town would be governed by nine head burgesses who would serve for life and, annually they would elect from among their number, a mayor. In addition, they were supported by twelve secondary burgesses. This system of government and the extent of the borough's boundaries would last until the nineteenth century.

The charter granted the Corporation the assize of ale, bread, wine and other provisions; it would receive the income from the profits of the town's various fairs and markets and the rents collected from former crown property as well as the responsibility for its maintenance. Lamentably, the Corporation was granted the right to pillage building material from the former Abbey.

During Elizabeth's reign there were many trading companies (the guilds) in the town. The four main guilds were: the clothiers and cloth makers; the mercers and drapers; the tanners and leather sellers, and the cutlers and bell founders. Each guild set the rules for the regulation of its trade such as where in the town a business could trade.

Two eminent citizens of Elizabethan Reading are remembered today. One the clothier Thomas Aldworth, who served four terms as mayor of Reading and was elected its MP in 1558. The other, the mathematician John Blagrave, born circa 1561 at Bulmershe Court. He was educated at Reading School and St. John's College, Oxford and he built the first Southcote Manor and published four eminent mathematical books.

Queen Elizabeth I paid many visits to Reading and the last was in 1602: she lodged at the former abbey, which was still a royal palace, and attended services at St.Laurence's Church. She died at Richmond, Surrey on 24th March 1603.

The subject of the next talk is 'The Influence of Victorian Mourning in Reading Cemetery'. The speaker was Anna Ellis. It took place at Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading on Wednesday 16th January at 7.30pm.

[Contributed by the History of Reading Society]



Timber frame houses at St Mary's Butts, Reading



John Blagrave monument at St Laurence's Church

The Mapledurham Playing Fields: solutions emerging but many problems and issues still outstanding

Many Caversham residents are aware that there is something going on at the Mapledurham Playing Fields but maybe most are not aware of everything that is going on!

Mapledurham Playing Fields (MPF) is a charitable trust, bequeathed for the recreation of the residents of Mapledurham and Reading, now owned by the Charity Commission, but managed and maintained by Reading Borough Council (RBC) as trustees. It is enjoyed by many different groups including footballers, tennis players, dog walkers, ecologists and children as well as clubs using the Pavilion, all in amicable harmony.

For a long time the facilities at MPF, in particular the Pavilion, have been in a state of disrepair. Apparently the income generated from the hire of grounds and facilities (Pavilion, football pitches and tennis courts) is insufficient to meet the cost of maintaining them. In 2014 the Education Funding Agency (EFA) offered RBC £1.36m, with which it could enhance the facilities, in return for a 1.23 acre plot on which to build a school.

The rules governing charitable trusts bequeathed for a specific purpose, as in this case for recreation, stipulate that parts may only be sold if, as a result, there is a net overall improvement in amenity (i.e. recreational) value. The plot on which it is planned to build the school will eliminate two practice football pitches, encroaches on a full size football pitch and necessitates felling 55 mature (20+ year old) trees. To mitigate the loss of football pitches RBC has developed a "Landscape Plan" which also includes other improvements. The crux of the plan is to level and drain more of MPF in order to be able to provide equal or greater football capacity with slightly fewer pitches but of better quality. This will necessitate felling a further 28 mature trees, relocating the children's playground and demolishing the basketball court.

To protect the more tightly configured and intensively used football pitches hard footpaths will be laid across the centre and around the perimeter of MPF. Other planned changes include restoring the Pavilion, which was closed in 2016 after it had deteriorated to such an extent that it had become unsafe, and installing a fitness trail. In addition, once built, the public will be granted access to some school facilities outside school hours. Happily, the Warren and District Residents' Association (WADRA), sympathetic to the plight of clubs displaced by the closure of the Pavilion, has instigated and funded essential repairs required to make it safe and reusable in the meantime. You may have noticed the work underway. It should be available again in the very near future.

The plans have caused some consternation. Many people are dismayed at the large number of mature trees which will be lost and the consequent impact on the ecology of MPF: although some replacement is planned, it will be mainly with American gum rather than

indigenous species. The introduction of paths, one of which will be lit, is worrying as perhaps another step towards urbanisation of what has always been a primarily rural open space. It will take at least 5 months to implement the 'Landscape Plan', during which it is likely to require closure of the grounds. It is to be hoped that all of this will not disturb the harmony which has so far always existed between different user groups.

There are also serious concerns about further encroachment on MPF. It has been noted that, to prevent unwarranted interaction between school children and park users, part of Westfield Park (in Lower Caversham) has been fenced off for the exclusive use of the School in its current location. Availability of access and parking for MPF users will be dependent on the School's success in achieving the very ambitious design travel target of reducing the number of children travelling by car from the current 76.5% to just 23.4%. Once the precedent, of building upon MPF, has been set what protection is there against further expansion or other developments?

One way would be for RBC to sign a Deed of Dedication with Fields in Trust. A Deed of Dedication obliges the signatories to retain a piece of land for a protected purpose in perpetuity. Fields in Trust was previously the National Playing Fields Association, to which MPF was originally bequeathed. This was an option put forward by RBC in the 2016 Mapledurham Playing Fields Consultation. Fields in Trust has indicated its willingness to work with RBC on this. This would certainly resolve some of the more pressing long-term concerns.

What may we expect in 2019? One item of immediate interest, awaited by MPF users and due imminently, is the Construction Method Statement agreed between RBC and the contractor, Kier, which will specify among other things what impact there will be on access to the MPF drive and car park during the construction of the School. Closely following this will be the application for planning permission for the 'Landscape Plan', Hopefully any MPF users' pressing concerns which have not yet been addressed can be resolved or mitigated during this process. 'Landscape Plan', will also require a Construction Method Statement, agreed between RBC and the managing contractor, specifying what impact there will be on access to MPF as a whole during the implementation. Both the construction of the School and implementation of the 'Landscape Plan', will be subject to conditions, detailed as Directions which will be listed among the planning documents online, such as permitted working hours and prohibition of fires. The Community Use Agreement, which will specify the access the public has to school facilities outside school hours, and details of the priority access the School has to MPF facilities, including the car park, have yet to be approved but this may not be until next year.

[Contributed by Gordon Watt]

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ENVIRONMENT

WILLOWS

After a rainy Friday, the Saturday before Christmas dawned sunny, and I decided to get out of the house and go for a walk by the Kennet. The bare branches of the different kinds of willow tree by the water glowed faintly yellow, green, orange and red, giving the landscape the look of a watercolour painting, and I was happy.

But music was coming into my head which reminded me that willows have often been associated with unhappiness. There was Desdemona's 'Willow Song' from 'Othello'. Before her murder, and uneasy in her mind, she sang:

*"A poor soul sat sighing by a
sycamore tree
Sing all a green willow
Her head on her bosom, her hand
on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow"*

This association of willows and sadness probably goes back to Old Testament times, where Psalm 137 begins:

'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof'.

The words were turned into a song which became a hit for Boney M in 1978, but strangely, the Weeping Willow, '*Salix babylonica*', was brought from China, and the willows on which the Hebrews hung their harps were probably the ones that grow along the banks of the Euphrates, '*Salix euphratica*'.

In this country, willows became especially associated with disappointment in love – hence the folk songs, '*The Seeds of Love*' and the even better-known '*All Around my Hat*', which became a hit for the folk rock band Steeleye Span in 1975.

It is perhaps not surprising that I am not so '*au fait*' with willows as I would like to be, since there are around 40 native species which can hybridise. They are fast growing, and pollarded willows are used for basket-making, and sometimes as fuel.



Willow timber for cricket bats stored at Fisherman's Lane, Aldermaston

Around ten years ago, many will remember that the banks of the Thames between the two bridges in Caversham were reinforced using willow spiles. These were willow twigs, pushed into the mud at close intervals where the banks had been washed away. They rooted, collected sediment, and a host of other plants then grew between and over them. The result looks a lot better than revetments formed from metal plates.

But to return to the banks of the Kennet, I took the accompanying photograph in Fisherman's Lane, Aldermaston, where a friend told me that the timber stored in the long shed was destined to become cricket bats. A glance at the Aldermaston village website showed that this was so. The business has been going since the 1930s, and the timber is harvested from Harbour Hill Copse. Presumably the trees are Cricket Bat Willows, a kind of White Willow. All Cricket Bat Willows are female, grown from cuttings from a female tree which grew in Norfolk in the eighteenth century. These trees are now grown in different parts of the country for this particular purpose. It is good to know that these old traditions continue – though it seemed a pity, as I discovered when I read on, that after seasoning, all the timber was shipped to India where the bats were actually made!

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Probus

The talks at the final two meetings of the Reading and District Probus club in 2018 were on wildly varying subjects.

The speaker at the November meeting was Tony Weston, whose subject was 'A Woman of Wax'. Tony told us the story of Madame Tussaud, the founder of Madame Tussaud's, the well-known waxworks show in London. She was born in 1761 as Anna Maria Groshaltz, known as Marie. Her mother worked for Philippe Curtius, a physician who produced portraits in wax. He moved to Paris, to be followed in 1767 by Marie and her mother. Marie learnt all about the art of wax modelling from Philippe. Her life and work around 1790-1794 were heavily influenced by the French Revolution, and she produced many death masks of people who met a violent end in those days, particularly on the guillotine. Tony went into much detail about the events of that time, and Marie's involvement in them.

In 1794 Philippe Curtius died, and Marie continued to produce wax models. She married M. Tussaud, and had two sons. Eventually she moved to London with one assistant and developed her waxworks show, with which she toured the country, and she even lived in Ireland for three years. She was on tour in the UK for 30 years, visiting 75 major towns and cities and countless smaller locations, including Reading in 1816. In 1822 she created the chamber of horrors. In 1835 she set up her exhibition in the Baker Street/Portman Square area. She was still working well into her 80s, and died in 1850 aged 89. The exhibition moved to its present site in 1884. This was a fascinating talk, well presented with many illustrations.

The speaker at the December meeting was Peter Smith, whose subject was 'State Carriages in the Royal Mews - in miniature'. Peter has, for many years, been producing scale models of many of the State Carriages. The real carriages are housed in the Royal Mews in Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace. Peter's models are accurate representation of the state carriages, and are built to a one-eighth scale. One of the first carriages he modelled was the King Edward VII town carriage, but Edward died before it was finished.

It takes Peter up to two years to produce each model, because they are constructed as faithful

reproductions of the originals. Each component is an exact copy of the original, and produced in the same material. Any moving parts, such as doors and windows must work in the same way as the original. Even the upholstery and cushions match the original. He has won many prizes for his models which he has entered at national model exhibitions.

Peter brought along a number of his models to illustrate his talk, including those of the King Edward VII town coach, the Queen Alexandra state coach, the Scottish coach, used at the 1953 coronation, the 1902 state landau, and the Irish State coach, built in Dublin in 1853 and used by Charles and Camilla at the state opening of parliament in 2018.

Peter is the only person who has been permitted to enter the Royal Mews to allow him to measure the coaches so that the models can be constructed accurately to scale. The audience were amazed at Peter's skill and persistence, and many took photographs of the models.

Probus is a club for retired men, who enjoy a meal once a month in the congenial company of other retired men. Lunch is followed by a talk, which may be on a variety of interesting subjects. The club meets at the Caversham Heath Golf Club on the second Monday of each month.

For further information visit the club's website www.probusclub-reading.org.uk New members are always welcome; if you are interested in joining, please contact the club secretary David Laird on 0118 9470709.

Ninebarrow



Top-rated Dorset folk duo 'Ninebarrow'

Dunsden Village Hall are proudly hosting the top-rated Dorset folk duo 'Ninebarrow' on Saturday 23rd March (www.ninebarrow.co.uk). Their last appearance was a sell-out. 'Stunning', 'immaculate', 'beautiful' (*The Telegraph*), and 'exquisite' (*Radio 2 Magazine*) are just some of the amazing reviews these rising young stars have received. Tickets just £13 from buytickets.at/dunsden/.

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One of the models in the collection: the Irish State Carriage

Concert by 'Parenthesis': Laudamus – Songs of thankfulness and praise

The latest concert to be given by 'Parenthesis' at Caversham Heights Methodist Church, in Highmoor Road, showcases music from Handel to Karl Jenkins, taking in Bruckner, Rutter, Haydn and others 'en route', all with the themes of thankfulness and praise.

The choir has loved learning the repertoire for this gorgeous concert. It reminds us all how much there is to be thankful for, even in difficult and divisive times. And how very different composers across the ages have approached some similar themes.

The concert, directed by the young and dynamic conductor of 'Parenthesis', Matthew Thomas Morgan, and accompanied by two wonderful musicians, Martin Jones on piano and Ian Westley on organ, is at 7.30pm on Saturday 9 February 2019. Tickets are just £10 each, available on the door, or call 0118 954 6833, or knock on the door of a house in Caversham displaying a poster. The concert is free for under 16s.

Caversham Bridge: subscription and prices for 2019

There has been some adverse reaction to the announcement of the annual subscription price for Caversham Bridge. In 2018 the annual subscription was £4.80: at the last meeting of the Board of Directors approval was given to raise the annual subscription to £5.00 for 2019. The great majority of sales come through annual subscriptions collected by our local distributors all of whom are volunteers. Material costs have risen since the last increase was made to the annual rate and the very small proportionate rise provides some compensation. The issue price of 40 pence has been held. A once a year payment guarantees doorstep delivery and convenience to readers, and simplifies the process for the distributors who collect the amount. We believe the monthly paper provides excellent value not only for the paper itself, but for what it has achieved and strives to continue to do for our readership and the Caversham community.



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Caversham WI

The December meeting for our WI was both our Christmas party and 57th Birthday party. After the success of line dancing last year, we thought we would try folk dancing. We welcomed a local caller, who had chosen dances which fit some very festive tunes and we had a great time with some well-known and some new dance steps. This was followed by a buffet and a home-made celebratory cake.

January's meeting is traditionally our Members' meeting, and this year one member will be describing how it felt to be at the meeting in Versailles, Paris, when 60 countries formally agreed to adopt the new definition of the kilogram (and kelvin, mole and ampere). Maybe you saw or read about this in the news back in November? The talk will also describe some of the scientific work that goes into maintaining the global co-operation which underpins reliable measurement of everything – from every litre of petrol bought and sold, to the chemicals emitted from power stations.

Ladies are very welcome to visit our friendly group: your first three visits are free. We hold meetings on the third Thursday of the month, at 7.30pm, which helps to avoid childcare issues. There is nearby parking and a lift to the first floor meeting room at Church House, Church Road RG4 8AX. More details can be found online at <https://tinyurl.com/hwzj6zy> or search for "Caversham WI".

For enquiries please contact our Secretary, on 0118 947 5176.

Rosehill WI

The December meeting of Rosehill WI meant that Christmas was not far away. Our President Arlene Riley welcomed all present with a glass of Prosecco or soft drink. Arlene began the afternoon by introducing our entertainment which was given by Sam Brown and her Ukulele Band. This was made up of 16 members from different groups. They entertained us with such songs as: 'The Bare Necessities of Life'; 'Bring Me Sunshine'; 'Sway' and 'Boots' ('Made for Walking') and more. A vote of thanks was given by Barbara Wood.

After our visitors had departed we had our meeting. Arlene informed us that the record of the November meeting was available for all to see. Mary Robinson reported that an invitation had been received from Caversham WI to their birthday meeting on 20th December. Treasurer Judith Sharp said that envelopes had been distributed to all members for the 2019 subscription (£42.00) to be paid by the January meeting. Margaret Seal distributed birthday buttonholes to those members with birthdays in December.

Now for the groups. There will not be any Scrabble meetings in December (everyone is too busy). January dates will be the 9th and 23rd respectively. The book club will meet on the 7th January. Barbara Wood will co-ordinate the film group when a suitable film is being screened. Thanks go to Gill Sawyer who has taken on the preparation of the toiletry packs for RBH A&E. For the time being

RBH have enough twiddle muffs, but they will let us know when more are required. Arlene announced that nomination forms for committee members for 2019 are available.

Finally, we enjoyed our cup of tea and the festive goodies that had been provided by members. As usual thanks go to all those who provided the food. This was followed by the raffle and Arlene closed the meeting wishing all those present a happy Christmas!!

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month at St Barnabas Church Hall, Emmer Green, at 2.00pm.

Chazey WI

The final meeting of the year for Chazey WI gave us a chance to see the first gallery of work by the new Chazey Art Group. Our artists have been meeting regularly throughout the year to brush up their skills, learn new ones and encourage each other in a friendly atmosphere. This was the first opportunity for the rest of the Chazey membership to see the work of our artists. The verdict was encouraging as they admired the display of portraits and still life. The art group will continue its activities in the coming year.

The art group is just one of the interest groups run by Chazey for our members. The recently created knitting group was set up at the hospital's request specifically to provide knitted blankets for patients at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. The result has been an outpouring of the most beautiful work by our knitters, some of whom are experienced craftswomen and produced their own knitted works of art. The group has also encouraged some absolute novices to learn to knit for the first time and even if their results were a bit rough around the edges, they found themselves with a new skill and a blanket of their own to contribute.

The longest established group at Chazey is our book club which meets each month in the convivial atmosphere of the 'Caversham Rose' in Kidmore Road. Some readers find a glass of wine helps the conversation along! The routine of reading a new book each month – most of them books which members admit they would not have chosen for themselves – has led to some fascinating discussions, even if members occasionally disagree about a book's merits. The group is thriving but new members are always welcome.

We met at St Andrew's Hall in Caversham Heights on 7th December for the last meeting of the year and for our Christmas party. There was a delicious array of food provided by members - plus Prosecco - and a topical talk by social historian Barbara Hateley, who gave us a presentation on the history of Christmas carols, with lots of musical examples.

Chazey, however, weren't going to leave the festive season at that – and a week later we got together for the annual Christmas lunch, this year at the 'Horse and Groom' at Harehatch.

There's so much going on at Chazey you may want to join us in 2019. You can find us on Facebook or email us at: chazeywi@gmail.com

St Peter's Christmas Market raises £3200 for Indonesian Tsunami Appeal

On 8th December the Christmas Market in St Peter's Church raised the wonderful sum of £3200 to help the people of Indonesia recover from the devastating tsunami that struck the island of Sulawesi last September.

One and a half million people were affected, many were killed, thousands were seriously injured and whole villages were destroyed. The survivors need food, clean water, shelter and help to rebuild their shattered lives and livelihoods.

Thank you to all who came to the Market and bought super handmade toys and gifts,

homemade foods and Christmas decorations and had fun guessing the weight of the cake, finding where the treasure was buried, playing Hoopla and much more besides.

Children enjoyed decorating (and eating) biscuits, trying to throw the beanbag into Father Christmas' mouth and playing Christmas Tree Tombola. All enjoyed the seasonal refreshments.

The sales from the challenging Quiz and the 'Caversham through the year' calendars helped to swell the magnificent total raised at the event.



Ann Larkin and Janice Walker on the Homemade Produce Stall.



Mike Smith, Rector and Nigel Smith, Churchwarden enjoy the Christmas Market.

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




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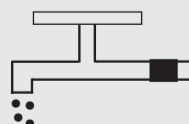
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