

Going like the clappers in Emmer Green and Caversham

by Phil Chatfield

In our last edition we reflected on how our lives have been transformed in a matter of days. As I write, it is more than six weeks since the 'lockdown' began. For most of the time we have been fortunate in having good weather which has helped many to cope with the constraints on their lives. Our green spaces have provided an opportunity for exercise and have been supplemented by Reading Golf Club opening their course for the walking public.

In the last few weeks, we have begun to look forward to celebrating our key workers on a Thursday evening. Neighbours stand on doorsteps or in the street clapping, ringing bells, banging saucepans or even sounding horns and bugles. A break from the monotony, a chance to chat across the road and a milestone in the lockdown period.

Rainbow posters in windows have been supplemented with rainbow ribbons on school gates, bunting, clever crochet work, notices thanking our postmen and women and a cartoon for our bin men. Across the area there was relief when we were told the green bin collection would resume. The loaders were happy to take extra bags which had accumulated over the preceding weeks, so now we can attack the pruning with renewed enthusiasm. These collections may help prevent bonfires, which can be a real cause of distress for some people. See the article on page 6 for more on this. Our road repairers have also been busy patching up potholes in the area.

Many who are not key workers want to do something useful to support the community as a whole. Some have volunteered to collect and deliver prescriptions and essential supplies. In response to requests from healthcare workers for personal protective equipment, a cottage industry has sprung up. Sewing machines across Caversham and Emmer Green have been called up to make headbands, scrubs, wash bags and facemasks. Our article on page 5 has more on this.

In some areas, for example in part of Chiltern Road, neighbours have an agreed time for coffee together 'apart', sitting in their drives and front gardens and chatting across fences and the road. There was a flurry of excitement in South View Avenue, when a bulk order of composted manure arrived. Bags were delivered to houses along the road, to the delight of gardeners who had been unable to obtain supplies due to the closure



of garden centres.

One sad reflection of the times has been the regular sight of a hearse with only one car behind it. Many people have been unable to attend funerals, or have done so on-line,

continued on page 3

You snapped into action

by the Editors

Thank you to all who submitted photos for our Spring Photo Competition. When we planned the launch of our seasonal photographic competitions, we could not have anticipated the impact the Coronavirus pandemic. Suddenly, our ability to explore the area around Caversham has been constrained. But people are still taking exercise daily, walking their dogs or undertaking essential journeys. Even our gardens have provided inspiration, with spring blossom to brighten them and fine weather throughout April. To take account of the changed circumstances, we extended the closing date to 8 May. We have each chosen our favourite three entries before coming to a decision on the winner.



River Thames, Early Morning

photo R Yetman

The winning entry was from Rachel Yetman with an early morning view of the River Thames and the Caversham bank taken 18 April. We had one entry taken by a junior photographer which captured the family dog, Dazzle, in action. We have decided to award a special prize of a £10 voucher for this shot, which will feature next month.

The best entries can be seen on our web site at www.cavershambridge.org

Our summer competition is now open, with a closing date of 1 August. Can you capture the essence of summer in Caversham? For full terms and conditions, go to www.cavershambridge.org

INSIDE

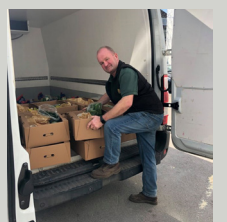
Sally the sews
scrubs
- p 5



Gloria gets
weaving
- p 12



Dudmans
transformed
- p 15



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Rev'd Derek Chandler, 20 St Barnabas Road.
Tel: 947 8239.
www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

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

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

Rev'd John Dudley Tel: 9470265
Rev'd Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331810
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www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk Tel 9474529

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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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The Editors reserve the right to edit contributions submitted for matters of style, grammar, vocabulary and factual correctness, and to conform to the standards of our established editorial practice. In cases of difference the editors will endeavour to refer back to the submitter of content for resolution.

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TALKING POINT

by Dr Alison Johnston
Caversham Park Church



Over the weekend of VE Day 75 we had heard some wonderful memories, some so inspirational. Those stories felt so familiar in our world today, with our current battle against COVID-19 and the resultant impact on mental health. They are helping many of us to get through the troubles we encounter in isolation due to the lock down. We are learning again from the building of relationships in ways we had forgotten over time, and to help and share with each other, just as God has done in being here for us. Let us not forget it is a battle for survival we fight; and our front-line key workers are doing this for us. In this we must not forget, and pray for them and for the wonderful work they do.

Reading from John 14:1-14 (NIV), we find the words "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am".

Now wouldn't it be great if we had a dream for our church that was so big that we would have to depend on God to accomplish it? And wouldn't it be great if we searched our hearts and souls with prayer so that our dream would match God's dream? Wouldn't it be great if we yearned for the pure spiritual milk that will helps us to grow in our salvation - and which affects the whole world around us?

There have been many surveys in recent years years. On general questions asked of church leaders is how Christ would rate their church if He were to return today. Fifty-three percent of those leaders believed, on average, that Christ would rate their church as having little or no positive impact on souls or society.

How sad. How very sad indeed. Wouldn't it be great if we could see concrete evidence that ours is a better community and Caversham is a better place because God's church is here?

Christ tells us we can see such evidence - if we dream great dreams and if those dreams are to God's glory and not our own.

What do we desire? What do we long for? All prayer is answered. Even the prayers that we ask strictly for ourselves and for our families.

Sometimes the answer is no, 'I have plans, trust me in this'. Sometimes it is, 'no, not yet, the time is not right'. Other times it is 'yes - I thought you'd never ask'. And still other times it is 'yes - and just wait to see what else I have in store for you'.

What God does for the faithful, what God allows to happen to them, how God answers their prayer, always works out for the greater good. As that is true for each of us who believe, it is doubly true for us as the church, for those who gather in God's name to worship, either in the physical sense, which is currently difficult, or virtually, through the technology God gave us the knowledge to develop, so as to work together the works he calls us to.

If we dream a dream for our church and if it is truly God's dream, then great things will happen and each of us can be part of it.

What is your dream? What do you desire the most? Is it pure spiritual milk that you may grow in your salvation and continue to know that God is good? Is it to do the works of God, even greater works than Christ did, that God's name may be glorified?

We have a purpose - and we have the tools that we need to accomplish that purpose, so much so that we can do even greater things than did Christ - should we desire to.

Verse 14 of John Chapter 14, Jesus says to us "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." So therefore, I leave you with a question to ponder upon, one which only you can answer - Why not put Christ to the test?

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
0118 948 3466

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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
9.00am and 10.30am Sunday

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (Quakers)
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10.30am (House study groups Sept-June Tel: 9475783)

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD
Church Street, Caversham
9.30am Sunday School
11.00am Divine Worship
6.00pm Evening Service

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ST BARNABAS
St Barnabas Centre
Tuesday and Thursday 8.30am-10.30am
Tel: 947 6310 Website: www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

Caversham Bridge

The Caversham Bridge is sold for 40p per copy and is available in Caversham at the Caversham Emporium in Church Street and in Emmer Green at the True Food Community Co-Op in Grove Road, opposite St Barnabas church.

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Email address is: editors@cavershambridge.org
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Email address is: advertising@cavershambridge.org

Going like the clappers in Emmer Green and Caversham

continued from page 1

and the inability to comfort one another in grief has been hard to bear.

Church services are being conducted using the internet, either as Zoom meetings or YouTube broadcasts. As a result, people who cannot travel to visit relatives have been able to join services with them from many miles away or even from abroad. For current information on church services, please visit the church web sites, details of which will be found on our web site at www.cavershambridge.org:5154/local-churches

People of all ages who would normally feel a little out of touch with IT have learned how to join Facetime family get togethers or have become part of local WhatsApp groups. In one case, a group of friends who had planned to meet up for a reunion weekend rescheduled to a Facebook session. Not quite the same, but nevertheless making the most of the circumstances.

Some businesses have had to close, others have stepped up home deliveries or adapted in other ways. Our features on *pages 14 and 15* provides some local examples and I am sure there are plenty of others.

The wet weather at the end of April seemed to make people feel very weary. After all, it was five weeks since the lockdown began and there was no apparent plan for an end at this time. A return to better weather and a reduction in infection rates, gives us a chance, perhaps, to begin to look forward.

Many of you will have stories to share of this strange time. Perhaps someone has helped you, or you have taken a photo of the 'Clap for Key Workers' in your road or something else which has inspired or lifted you. Please send us your experiences and thoughts for inclusion in our next edition. You can e-mail them to:

editors@cavershambridge.org

Covid 19 as I see it

What's good you might ask .

by Jo Nicholls

'am looking hard and I can see so many things happening to me. Homes, loved ones, spring time now here, contact by telephone to bring us good cheer.

World pollution is now dropping fast,
Sadly we all know this fact just won't last.
Reflecting now on which books to read and jobs being done, there's always a need.

Fridge, freezer, all stocked up so

high you'd think I was nourishing all who pass by.

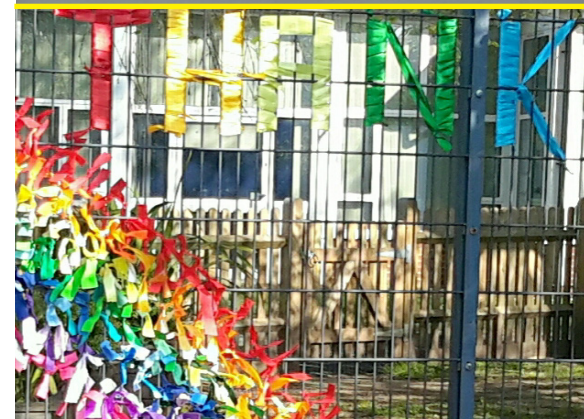
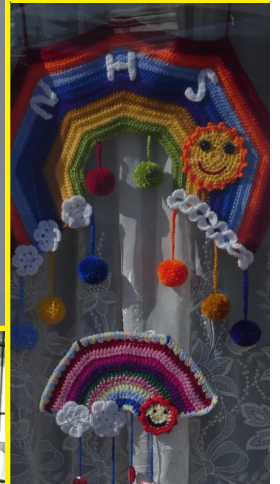
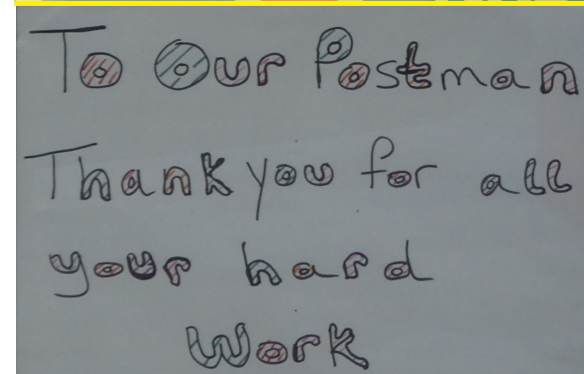
I love the fact that few 'planes are on high,
That goes for buses and trains that go by.
Our gardens look good now- and very well tended, but bedding plants, no , supplies all suspended.

The papers and letters pushed

thru' every day for us isolated, it's a life line we say.

And to keep the ole brain cells ticking away,
I'll write the odd poem- but not every day.

Try something new, just have a go, see what talents you have, or you'll never know.
Banging our pans on each Thursday night
To thank all the carers who help in the fight.
Yes, I'm so grateful for all of my needs often met by strangers - a real gift indeed.



photos P Chatfield, J Offord

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Gorilla Curate

by Anna Clarke

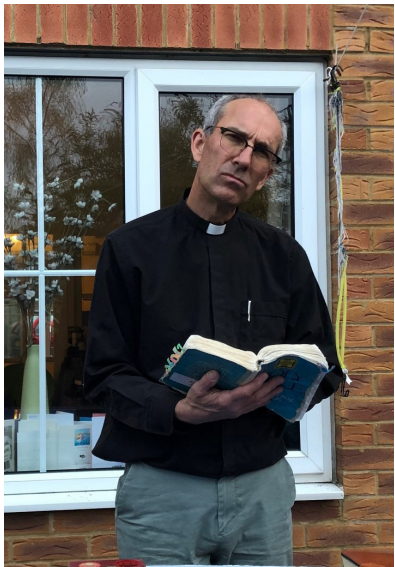
In summer 2019, the Parish of Caversham, Thameside and Mapledurham were delighted to welcome Andy Storch to join the team as a curate. Since then Andy has been involved in a whole variety of groups and activities – one of these being St John's BLAZE group, aimed at children in Year 6 and above.

I'm sure parents will agree children are particularly good at asking questions. It's no different in Blaze where we have looked at

- why did Jesus have to die?
- did Jesus really come back alive again?
- can we trust the Bible?

Now we are no longer able to meet together, we are using technology creatively to continue asking these important questions. Originally thinking along the lines of "GRILL – A – CURATE", it wasn't long before this was shortened into the title "GORILLA CURATE" and Andy's starring role was born!

Children send in their questions to anna@ctmparish.org.uk and our Gorilla Curate (aka Andy Storch) produces a video answering them.



The Gorilla Curate - photo A Clarke

The first two episodes of Gorilla Curate can be viewed on the CTM Parish YouTube channel. Episode 1 dealt with the question, "Is Coronavirus part of God's plan?" Episode 2 looks at the question, "Is this the only universe God has made?"

It's fantastic to be able to give children the opportunity to voice their questions, as well as helping us to consider these big questions and issues from a Christian perspective. Catch up with the first two episodes on YouTube and/or keep your eyes peeled for the next one... COMING SOON!

31 Ways to be Thankful

during the Covid-19 Outbreak

A fun, family, faith at home activity from GodVenture.co.uk

Use this list as a jumping off point to find something each day to be thankful for. You can do this on your own or with your family, taking it in turns to say what you are thankful for. If one or more of these sentences doesn't work for you, invent your own to replace it. If you would like to, you could thank God for these things.

1. I'm thankful for our home, especially
2. I'm thankful that I can
3. I'm thankful for the NHS, especially
4. I'm thankful for our family, especially the way we
5. I'm thankful for people who helps us, including
6. I'm thankful for the internet, because it lets us
7. I'm thankful that we haven't
8. I'm thankful for post, especially
9. I'm thankful for children who
10. I'm thankful that after this pandemic we will
11. I'm thankful for new ways of connecting with friends, including
12. I'm thankful for food, especially
13. I'm thankful that we will
14. I'm thankful for friends like
15. I'm thankful that I don't have to
16. I'm thankful for parents, especially
17. I'm thankful for our local area especially
18. I'm thankful for people who encourage us, including
19. I'm thankful for music, especially
20. I'm thankful for shops such as
21. I'm thankful that we won't
22. I'm thankful for online resources, especially
23. I'm thankful for the outdoors, especially
24. I'm thankful for friends who
25. I'm thankful that in this country
26. I'm thankful for our extended family, especially that
27. I'm thankful that we are
28. I'm thankful for time to
29. I'm thankful that we have
30. I'm thankful for things I can hear outside, especially
31. I'm thankful for people I know are working hard to help us, especially

GodVenture

Rev William Carpenter (1935 – 2020)

by Teresa Hore



The Reverend Bill Carpenter, vicar of St Andrew's Church, Caversham from 1988 to 1999, died peacefully on Sunday 5 April after a short illness.

Bill, as he liked to be known, was born in Harrow in 1935, the eldest of four children. During the war, his father's work as a dentist was essential, so the children were not evacuated. In 1959 he married Rosemary Bird at Tring and they had four children, Penny, Phillip, Tim and Teresa. Bill was an animal lover and a Fellow at Whipsnade Zoo, and particularly enjoyed visiting the meerkats and lemurs.

Following a career in the Aerospace industry, Bill was drawn to the ministry and was ordained in 1979. He worked as a priest in Hatfield and Hemel Hempstead before he came to Caversham as vicar of St Andrew's. Tim and Teresa, their two youngest children, moved with Rosemary and Bill. Whilst at St Andrew's, he directed a number of musical productions including Joseph and HMS Pinafore. He is still remembered at St Andrew's, where his photo features in the new wing of the church complex.

Bill retired in 1999 and returned to Tring with Rosemary, where they enjoyed being part of church and community life. It became clear he had dementia between six or seven years ago. Last year he moved to Lime Tree Manor Care Home, where he appreciated the many visitors who came to see him.

Adapted from an obituary by Teresa Hore, Bill's daughter. The full obituary is published on Page 33 of the May edition of the Churches in Tring "Comment" magazine, available on-line at: https://720a08ce-34e7-4c0e-99e5-d6f88b6e5194.filesusr.com/ugd/b934cf_de925da46a0e4c459a1b278fa80faa87.pdf

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Stitching up the NHS

by Pam Chatfield

Ladies (mostly but not exclusively) have been dusting off their sewing machines, raiding their stashes of fabric, sorting out their threads and started to stitch for the NHS.

Our national news has been reporting daily on the need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for frontline care staff. Both hospital and community staff have requested the loose fitting and hygienic uniforms, called scrubs, (the term comes from 'scrubbing' before operations), bags to wash them in, and headbands with buttons to hook over face mask straps to prevent ears from getting sore from almost constant wear.

In response, a Facebook page, 'For the Love of Scrubs' has been set up. It has become a communications hub, where requests can be co-ordinated and resources collected and delivered to the staff who need them. Advice about patterns and sewing techniques is shared, along with where to source fabric. A Caversham WhatsApp Covid Support group has helped to get requests out. Simple requests, such as those for elastic and thread, are responded to quickly, and a small package will soon be found on a doorstep, enabling stitchers to continue their work.

Some people have found other ways to provide support, for example, one Caversham resident has been using a 3D printer to produce alternative, plastic face mask straps.

Waitrose in Caversham has agreed to act as a collection point, with packages marked 'For the Love of Scrubs' arriving regularly for onward dispatch.

Because a wide variety of fabric has been put to use for scrubs and headbands, hospital wards and local surgeries have become very colourful, with medical staff sporting floral scrubs and colourful headbands. They report it is helping to boost morale on the wards. For more on this, see the BBC Berkshire website - www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-52359124

What has been most touching, and humbling, has been the response of the frontline staff and their gratitude to this new community of busy and committed stitchers.

The following article by Caversham resident Sally Stevens provides a very personal account of her experience in stitching scrubs.



Headbands in use

photo Sophie, RBH Midwife

Silk, satin & scrubs

by Sally Stevens

I hated my job so I left. A bit impulsive you may think, but I've never been good at being ordered around and I had a plan – of sorts. It was 2004 and I wanted to work from home so I didn't have to worry about childminders or bossy bosses. I decided to use the skills I'd inherited from my grandmother. She was a prolific and talented seamstress who supplied the St Johns fete's and Xmas fayres with items such as peg bags for many years.

So I started a new career as Sally Stevens Alterations, mending and repairing clothes. I quickly found I had a flair for this. Using social media, the internet, and with much time and determination in the creation of my

website, I built a strong customer base, with some influential, wealthy and even celebrity clients. Not only that – I was enjoying myself immensely and making a decent living. Life was good!

I was in the middle of several alterations for a large wedding party and had appointments booked for dresses for Ascot, The Proms, and for several other weddings when Corona hit the UK. The dresses I had done are still hanging in my work room, but the wedding was cancelled and the dresses turned out to be my final job.

I was stuck at home with nothing to do and my Mum always told me that you shouldn't waste time. So, as soon as I heard that scrubs were needed by the NHS, I got in touch with The Royal Berks Hospital, who said they would be happy to receive them. My family and I donated the first fabric, but there were no patterns to be had anywhere. So I made my own and got busy.

The first three sets were duly delivered and, to my surprise, my picture was taken for the website. I was a bit hesitant, as I hadn't bothered with make-up. Actually I've almost forgotten what make up is. My outfit was a bit eccentric too, but who was going to see me?

I wanted to make many more scrubs, but was a bit short on funds and out of fabric so I asked on Facebook if anyone would like to donate. Due to the generosity of members of Caversham Methodist churches, I had enough to buy a 35m roll of fabric. Also I had an offer of help to make



Sewing scrubs

– photo John Cudmore

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continued on page 6

continued from page 5

Silk, satin & scrubs

Many people have said "Well done" and "I'm proud of you" (mostly Mum). This makes me slightly uncomfortable, as I don't feel proud – just privileged to be able to help our brave hard-working front-liners in some small way. I consider myself fortunate to be able to stay safe at home and, when I'm bored stiff with cutting out bottle green trousers again and again, I think of our nurses, doctors and care workers.

Like many people, I don't know what the future holds for my working life. I would like to go back to where I was, but fittings are not going to be advisable for a while. I could still do repairs and alterations which require little contact, but is anyone interested in clothes anymore? Our world has changed – maybe forever, but thank goodness the people in it are mostly kind and generous.

Stay home and stay safe!

A burning problem – "It's only asthma?"

by Stella Clark

"It's only asthma?". This slogan from Asthma UK and a questionnaire about how asthma influences your life got me thinking. I was surprised by the number of things I listed. Not being able to sit next to someone wearing heavy perfume in a theatre or on the bus. Not being able to use the bathroom after my son has used an aerosol deodorant. Having to buy toiletries made with natural or no perfume online. Facing embarrassment when I go to someone's home and have to ask them to extinguish perfumed candles. Having to remove plug-in deodorisers in bed and breakfast rooms. Being unable to use some shopping centre toilets because of the gadget that puffs perfume at you when you open the door. Having to walk out when a pub has a fire that isn't drawing well. Having to carry an inhaler every single time I go out.

However, the very worst thing is bonfires. One lungful of fumes and I know that I will spend the rest of the day with a tight chest, however much I increase my inhaler dose. My reaction to a bonfire would seem comic to an observer. As soon as I smell one, I stop whatever I am doing. I rush around the house shutting windows and pulling curtains across the doors. I stand on chairs to shut any vents open above the windows.

When the bonfire is really bad I have even been known to wear a DIY face mask indoors. I peer out of windows to see if I can work out who has the bonfire, but never can – one bonfire affects a very large area. Even if I could tell, I don't know if I would be brave enough to confront someone directly as there is so little understanding.

An exaggerated response? According to Asthma UK, someone in Britain has a potentially life-threatening asthma attack every 10 seconds and on average 3 people a day die. Over 5 million people in the UK are currently receiving treatment for asthma: 1 in 11 children and 1 in 12 adults. Of course, there are many other lung conditions that are adversely affected by bonfire fumes – not least Covid 19.

I had looked forward to one positive affect of the lockdown – a drop in air pollution from cars and the 'planes from Heathrow – until the green bins collections stopped. I appreciate people find it difficult to know what to do with their garden waste. We have a large pile of prunings and weeds in our garden too and I understand what fun it can be to have a bonfire.

But please, follow the advice from Reading Borough Council: Do not light bonfires at this time to protect the respiratory health of the vulnerable and to avoid an unnecessary burden on the NHS.

See: www.reading.gov.uk/garden-waste

Of course those of us with lung conditions would ask people not to light bonfires at any time.

If you do have garden waste which would normally be collected, perhaps now it the time to consider home composting. The RHS encourages this as the most environmentally-friendly way of dealing with kitchen and garden waste because it does not involve heavy transport, with its associated environmental costs. Plus it produces compost that can be used as an excellent soil improver. Composting is useful in all gardens. Only in the very smallest gardens will it be difficult to find space for a compost heap and material to fill it. Owners of such small plots could consider worm composting instead. Their web site provides much more information on composting. See www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=444

For more information on asthma, see the Asthma UK web site: www.asthma.org.uk and the British Lung Foundation at site: www.blf.org.uk

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Samuel Elliott & Sons

It's surprising what was manufactured in Caversham – in some cases until fairly recently. Today, Elliotts are commemorated by a street called Elliotts Way, off Gosbrook Road, which was built on the site of their works.

The building of vehicle bodies was only a sideline of theirs, the main business being high-class joinery. Samuel Elliott started in business in Newbury in the 1860s. The firm had a bumpy ride, suffering fire damage and bankruptcy and, in 1902, Mr. Elliott lost control of the company, and the directors demanded his resignation. However, Newbury's loss was Caversham's gain. He must have been known to the Reading property developer, J. C. Fidler – the man largely responsible for Queen Victoria Street in Reading, and the Arcade in Friar Street, the grand frontage of which was demolished by enemy bombing in 1943. Mr. Fidler persuaded Mr. Elliott, and a few of his key workers, to move to Caversham, which must have proved highly profitable for both of them.

Elliotts built up an enviable reputation for top quality work, and won contracts for fitting out department stores, banks, corporate headquarters, hotels, churches, and even ocean liners. Architectural metalwork and revolving doors became something of a speciality.

Between the 1930s and the 1950s, when vehicle bodies were built largely by hand, there were many small manufacturers. Almost next door in Wolsey Road was H.E. Cars – but that's another story. Elliott's were building car bodies from the end of the First World War. The 'three-quarter Landalette' in their advertisement looks as though it dates from the 1930s. The rear part

of the roof folded down when required.

During the Second World War, they were working on vehicles day and night, many of them for the U.S. Army in preparation for D-Day. They built nursing mobiles, 'clubmobiles' to feed the troops, and 'cinemobiles' to entertain them. They also built mobile pigeon-lofts, and it is said that the first news on the progress of D-Day was brought back from the Continent by pigeons from Elliott's lofts. At the same time, they were building aircraft bodies, and landing-craft for the Royal Navy – the engines being supplied by Thornycrofts nearby, and the boats being tested on the Thames behind the works.

After the war, they did a deal with Donald Healey, and were building the bodies for Elliott-Healey cars – aluminium panels on an ash frame. In 1947, the Elliott-Healey was the fastest four-seater saloon in the world, reaching a speed of 110.8 m.p.h., but these heady days were not to last. This kind of bodywork was expensive, and was not suitable for mass production, and Healey went over to Austin for his car bodies. The last Elliott-Healey was built in 1950.

After that, and for a further ten years, specialist bodywork continued.



Elliott's built mass radiography vehicles for the National Health Service, and three-wheeled 'invalid carriages.'

Sadly, in the 1990s, the firm was bought out and passed through a succession of larger companies. For a short time, it moved to a site on the Basingstoke Road Industrial Estate in Reading; the Caversham site was sold off, and Elliott's went out of existence in 2000.

Tiles, tulips and tacos

by Fiona Greenhalf

Amersham Road Cookery Club has been running for nine years now and because of lockdown we are currently on hold until community clubs get the signal to restart. I have been involved with the club for 18 months and as a new member would like to share with you my thoughts on this experience. I was looking for a new project and, as I love cooking and being with children, I thought ARCC might be right for me. As time went on, I realised it was and that it was much more than just a cookery club.

The club, run by a small group from local Churches, is for primary school age children. Their parents or guardians drop them at the Weller Centre in Amersham Road on the third

Sunday of the month for a 4pm start. As I am often on the front desk at registration this means that we also get to know the wider family a little. Some of the parents choose to stay for the 2 hour session, sometimes to settle their child in but also to join in and perhaps see what goes on. There is a theme and plan for each session which includes games, quizzes, cooking, craft, quiet circle time with a story and/or song. Finally, we sit down together around a large table and share the cooking delights. Tacos with tasty fillings, pizzas, smoothies, hot cross buns, homemade fruit juices, salads, spiralized vegetables, fruit shapes, varied biscuits and cakes are just a few treats I remember.

Last year Caversham Tiles donated some tiles for the children to decorate with special china pens. You can see for yourself what talent they have – the vibrancy of the colours is stunning. In January this year some of the children planted bulbs and decorated and labelled their pots. The following month one of the parents brought back the tulip in bloom – what a joy to see it! We have made paper flowers, collages, bird feeders, animal sculptures, Pudsey bear bandanas, decorated jars and administered first aid to sick teddies. I think the adults get as much fun out of all this as we hope the children do!

From my short time with the club, I feel a sense of community, caring, learning, sharing, experiencing and behaving based loosely on Christian principles underlies all the activities.

I miss it all and look forward to planning the next session with the team who work so hard to make it all happen. We look forward to welcoming the children and wider families again. We will tell everyone as soon as we can when that might be.

Let us know via the Weller Centre admin@wellercentre.org.uk, telephone 0118 947 5828 if you would like to be involved as a helper or to bring a child to the club.

Keep well and safe.

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Decorated Tiles

– photo F Greenhalf

New Life for Bugs Bottom

by Carol Moloney

WITHIN Caversham's Hemdean Valley lies Bugs Bottom, a delightful meadow grassland with a small mature woodland. A bridleway for cyclists and horses passes through it which still has parts of old hedgerows, and there are several trails regularly used by dog walkers. It is a registered Local Wildlife site managed by Reading Borough Council. For many years the area has benefitted from the work of volunteer groups. They undertook hedge laying in 2011-13 and ragwort clearance from 2014 to 2018. The ragwort plant is poisonous to horses and can eventually cause liver failure.

When the Hemdean Valley was developed in 1994, 'Snowberry', a versatile, ornamental shrub from North America was planted by the developers. However, it is a fast growing and invasive shrub, producing numerous suckers and dense thickets, and the berries are considered to be poisonous. It has made

it hard for our less vigorous native plants to grow, and so Snowberry has lost its popularity.

In order to tackle the Snowberry invasion, the Woodland Improvement Team, working with The Conservation Volunteers, started to remove it from Bugs Bottom in November 2019. In January this year, 50 hedge plants and 350 sapling trees were planted. These included oak, rowan, hazel, hawthorn, maple, downy birch, silver birch, wild cherry, crab cherry and sessile oak/aspens. The energy company OVO paid for the trees through the '#1 Dig Trees' campaign. OVO's strategy is to help drive progress to zero carbon living by 2030 by planting carbon fighting trees that will absorb carbon dioxide and counter carbon emissions. It has planted over 1 million trees across the UK since 2015. The project was funded by Network Rail as part of their 'no net loss of biodiversity' commitment. This aims to replace the 1000s of trees they have felled, often due to electrification works.

Wildlife Recording: The Woodland



Saplings planted in Bugs Bottom

photo C Moloney

Improvement Team would very much like help from the community to record how nature responds to the work undertaken at Bugs Bottom and also at Clayfield Copse and Blackhouse Wood. They would like us

to note any wildlife spotted at these places – butterflies, plants, bees, flowers, insects, mammals and birds and report to ben.caddy@tcv.org.uk including the words "Wildlife Recording" in the subject line. If you come across something that you can't identify, take a photo and send it in.

For more information on the Woodland Improvement Team and to learn how you could support their work as a volunteer, see their web site:

www.tcv.org.uk/southeast/volunteer-south-east/woodland-improvement-team

Russell's barking legacy - Muntjac

by William Cecil

WHENEVER I am lucky enough to see one in the garden, I wonder how our smallest species of deer, the muntjac, made its way from the forests of southern China to the wooded slopes of Caversham.

The answer is John Russell, the 6th Duke of Bedford who, back in 1838, had some muntjac imported to enhance his estate at Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire.

There are at least seven species of muntjac. Most common here is the Reeves' muntjac. The Duke's were sent by a naturalist, John Reeves, who was then working as Assistant Inspector of Tea for the British East India Company in China.



Muntjac deer

photo Wikimedia Commons

The Reeves' muntjac is reddish brown with dark stripes on its face and rarely more than 4ft high. Since the 1920s, escapees have been spreading to other English counties and Wales. When they reached Oxfordshire, they marched south and some came eventually to the sylvan slopes of Bugs' Bottom. From there it was a short walk down Hemdean Road, turn left up to Balmore Park, or right where they found shelter in the wilder parts of Caversham Cemetery. From there up to the leafy gardens of the Heights.

I like muntjac. Other people don't. Muntjac eat bluebells, tulip bulbs, juicy shoots and seedlings. And spookily they bark at night. They are aggressive with each other. They have short antlers, but tend to fight with short tusks which are, in fact, downward-pointing canine teeth.

But I would be very sorry not to see them shyly looking through my window as the sun is beginning to go down.

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ENVIRONMENT

Cut the waste

by Tricia Marcousie

Reading's "red bin" doorstep recycling scheme collected 6,200 tonnes of material in 2018/2019: but 17% was contaminants. Some of this contamination reflects a lack of responsibility (for example putting soiled nappies into the recycling bin). But some happens because we do not understand how the recycling plant handles incoming materials.

Our Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) at Smallmead was built to process food and drink cans, plastic bottles, paper and cardboard, i.e. relatively large things which are either flat or roll. Manual pickers remove the oversized and obviously wrong stuff from a conveyor belt in the first stage. The next step sifts out small stuff, including dirt and small pieces of paper and plastic, such as bottle lids.

Knowing this, here are three simple actions you can take to improve recycling rates:

1. Rinse plastic bottles, put the top back on, and make a hole in the bottle with knife or scissors. Bottle and top will go through the sorting plant together and be squashed for onward transport. At the reprocessing plant they are separated and both recycled. If you put the top in your recycling bin separately, it will fall through the sorting plant in the sifting stage and go for incineration. Leaving the top on the bottle without puncturing it means it will not be squashed in the baler, and transport energy use per tonne of plastic increases.
2. Good quality cardboard is manually picked off a moving belt and recycled into new board. If you rip off a box top, putting two pieces into the recycling bin rather than one, it is probable the smaller piece will be left behind. This will go into the lower quality, mixed paper and board recycling stream.
3. Small pieces of paper fall through the plant machinery. Tearing paper into pieces reduces some of the fibre lengths and their value in recycling. Don't tear paper before recycling. If you are worried about sensitive information leaving the house, then remove the top of your statements with your name, address and account number and only shred that smaller piece.

You can make a difference.



Keep topped up and cut plastic bottle use

by Phil Chatfield

Many of us like to have water to drink when we are out and about.

Picking up a bottle of mineral water from a shop along the way has become a routine for lots of us. The problem is, in the UK, we use 35 million plastic bottles every day, most of which are immediately discarded.

But it doesn't need to be like this. Increasingly, people take their own bottle of water with them on their trips, whether it's a visit to town or a day in the countryside.

So what can you do if you need to refill your bottle? This was the question City to Sea, a Bristol based, not-for-profit organisation, tackled. They worked with owners of businesses across the country to set up a network of refill stations. They developed an app for Smartphones to find your nearest refill station, identified by the logo shown here. With more than 20,000 businesses registered, including major railway stations, you are never far from one.

It may seem like a small step, but if just 1 in 10 of us refilled once a week, we would save around 340 million plastic bottles a year.

Item based on information from City to Sea.

To find the App, go to www.refill.org.uk/

For more information on City to Sea - www.citytosea.org.uk/

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LES COOPER IN THE GARDEN



I was a gooseberry fool

All this self-isolating has meant that we have all had plenty of time for gardening. My guess is that by the time the crisis is over most of us will have had more than enough. So here is something you will never have read before in a gardening article, when I confess that I sometimes hate gardening. What is more, I will bet everyone who regularly spends time in the garden has occasionally had a similar feeling. For example - the moment when you discover one of your favourite flowers has been destroyed overnight by hungry slugs. Perhaps when weeds grow faster than Jack's beanstalk or maybe when vine weevils have eaten the roots of those special plants that cost a small fortune. Of course gardening also has its moments of bliss, such as when you step out on a beautiful Spring morning with the birds singing and the sun shining.

My guess is that you can consider yourself a reasonable gardener when such moments outnumber the failures. I flatter myself by thinking I am reasonably intelligent but, over the years, I have made the most stupid errors. The other morning I spent ages weeding

around a few gooseberry bushes. It was a real slog and was all due to some really bad gardening on my part. Two years ago I decided to put a mulch around my gooseberry bushes so I spread a layer of home-made compost from my compost heap around each bush. I should have known better, because compost making is not one of my talents. Later, as the year went by, I had the finest crop of weeds ever, completely entangling the bushes.

The following year, to put things right, I decided to spread shredded bark around the bushes. The result was not good at all and I guess we picked two gooseberries, although the weeds still managed to do extremely well. Quite why I thought bark would be good to put around gooseberries that like to be well fed I know not. I can only think I had a bag of bark available and felt I ought to use it. This year I hope to do better, so I have put manure and feed around the bushes instead. Here's hoping?

We have always been told we learn from our mistakes. I wonder?



Tea for two

by Eunice Cooper

We celebrated our Diamond Wedding during "lockdown" in April. Later in the month came my birthday. I had some cards and presents from my son and family, and a few books ordered online from Les (no card, he couldn't get out to get one.) We had a nice day, with phone calls and emails. At 5pm there was a knock at the door and a young lady delivered "Tea for Two" as a present from Les. It looked lovely, fancy sandwiches, little cakes, jam and cream scones, all strewn with fresh raspberries and strawberries.

A delightful surprise, the whole three-tiered cake stand all beautifully festooned in starry cellophane with pink ribbons topped with a rose. Considering we have only had on-line shopping for the last few weeks, it was a really lovely present. So to my husband of 60 years, Les, many thanks.

Blackcurrant and Mint Pie

The first blackcurrants appear in June for this sharp delicious sweet.

1lb/500gms blackcurrants

1 tablespoon of chopped mint

4ozs/125 gms caster sugar

8oz/250gms shortcrust pastry

+ 18cm/7in pie dish

- Top and tail blackcurrants, wash well and drain.
- Put blackcurrants into pie dish
- Mix mint and sugar and sprinkle over blackcurrants
- Roll out pastry and cover pie dish
- Decorate pie with left over pastry and make a hole in the centre
- Sprinkle a little extra caster sugar on top
- Bake at gas 6/400F/200C for 35mins
- Serve cold with cream

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Engage gear for a Mini expedition

by Alan Bradbury
Caversham Heights Society

As reported in our May edition, the British Motor Museum (BMM) was the destination for the last meeting of the Caversham Heights Society before travel restrictions came into force. Around 30 members and friends took the trip to the Museum in Gaydon, Warwickshire.

We were greeted by our guides for the day and divided into two groups. Each engaged in two activities. In "Boxes" we examined, identified and discussed the contents of a number of boxes of motoring photographs, artefacts and other memorabilia. This evoked many memories and really whetted our appetites for the treats in store in the remainder of the museum.

In the other activity, we were entertained by a lady dressed in Edwardian costume who introduced us to some very early motor cars. All dated from around the turn of the 20th century or even earlier, one of which is still driven in the London to Brighton run each year.

After lunch in the museum restaurant, we had a talk entitled 'Wizardry on Wheels'. This had been developed

especially for us, as we had been unable to arrange a presentation on "60 years of the Mini" as part of our regular programme. The speaker traced the development of the Mini from concept, through design and development and into production. It started in the period before the car was conceived. The Austin and Morris companies were separate until 1952, when they merged to form the British Motor Corporation (BMC). The lead designer at BMC was Alex Issigonis, who introduced ground-breaking innovations. A transverse engine enabled the car to be shorter than any other car in its class. It needed a new gearbox design and a reduction in engine size to 848cc.

There were many teething troubles, including the car breaking down because the electrics were prone to getting wet. The basic car without a heater cost under £500. It did not sell well at first, and BMC made a loss on each one. However, as a result of their popularity with a number of famous people, sales improved. The sporty Mini Cooper was developed, and won many rallying prizes. A van and a countryman estate version followed. The last car was driven off the production line by Lulu in 2000. A very entertaining and informative talk.

We then had free time to wander around the museum on our own. The vast number of exhibits include vehicles covering the whole history of motoring, from the late 19th century up to the present day. If you are at all interested in cars and motoring, the museum is well worth a visit.

Travelling there is easy from Reading. By train and taxi the journey takes about 1 hour 30 minutes each way. By car, it is about 65 miles (around 1 hour 20 minutes) from Caversham. The museum is located close to junction 12 of the M40 motorway.

For further information see the museum's website:

www.britishmotormuseum.co.uk

The Caversham Heights Society is now in recess and will restart in September.



Rover 14 at British Motor Museum – photo A Bradbury

Mini Memories – a reader's comments

Following publication of our May edition, we received the following e-mail from Caversham resident, Nicky Liddon-Horncastle.

Dear Editor of Caversham Bridge and also Keith Watson, I was amazed to see my Father's car on the front of the May edition of Caversham Bridge! I was also intrigued to see it again on page 11 and read about the museum at Gaydon.

My Father was Henry Liddon, who was the Navigator in this Mini (Rauno Aaltonen was the driver), who won the Monte Carlo Rally in 1967. My Father went on to win this famous Rally three times in the Mini Cooper S.

We have been to the British Motor Museum and it's amazing to see such large pictures of him on display, as well as the Minis. I enclose a couple of photos of him with that Mini.

Best Wishes

Nicky Liddon-Horncastle.

PS - My Father is the one with glasses!



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The Annual Caversham Arts Trail, normally held in May, has been postponed in response to the pandemic restrictions. For the last ten years, the Trail has given visitors the opportunity to meet the artists in their own homes and studios, to learn about their techniques through demonstrations and to buy work directly from them. The current plan is for the Trail to take place on 26 and 27 September. In the next few months we will be featuring some of the artists and their work. This month, meet Gloria, who spins, dyes and weaves to produce her scarves and woven textiles. For more details, see www.facebook.com/cavershamartstrail

Let's get weaving

by Elestr Lee

Anyone who has completed the Caversham Arts Trail, or visited exhibitions put on by our Caversham Artists, will have seen the stunning scarves designed and woven by textile designer Gloria Pitt.

As well as displaying her latest creations, Gloria is also frequently to be spotted demonstrating her skills at the spinning wheel, turning wool or silk into yarn. In addition to creating her own thread, Gloria makes her own natural dyes using plants from her Caversham garden or the surrounding countryside.

Gloria discovered the ancient crafts of spinning, dyeing and weaving whilst busy with a full-time teaching career in her native Belfast. "It was in the 1980s, in the middle of the Troubles - an 'Alternative College' was set up with lessons in yoga, weaving and so on. I enrolled for weaving, but it had a waiting list so I joined the spinning class instead - and I was hooked! I couldn't wait to get my own spinning wheel!"

Gloria developed her interest whilst continuing to teach full time, and signed up for the Bradford Diploma for Handloom Weavers. Having completed the two-year course in one year, she started to teach weaving as part of the A-level art course at her Belfast Grammar School while selling her scarf designs at shows.

The offer of redundancy from teaching provided the springboard for Gloria to set up her own business and soon she had customers from around the world. Now based in Caversham, she sells her unique hand-dyed scarves at local shows, open studios and exhibitions.

The whole process still fascinates Gloria, who owns several looms, as well as four spinning wheels. To dye her yarns, she uses both common plants as well as slightly more unusual ones. "I was introduced to dyeing whilst undertaking the Bradford Diploma. I started out trying onion skins, which are the

easiest to begin with. You can use lawn clippings, privet, raspberry leaves, and bark from trees as well as buddleia flowers to name just a few. I also find things in hedgerows like cow parsley and nettles," she explains.

Most of these plants create shades of yellow or brown. Gloria grows Japanese indigo and woad to create shades of blue but madder root (for reds) is easier to obtain online. She experiments with hollyhocks, coreopsis, marigolds and even dead dahlia heads, creating quite unexpected shades. Once primary colours are sourced, the yarns can be over-dyed, so blue over yellow makes green.

Gloria dyes silk, various types of wool, cotton and linen. Plants are placed in an aluminium saucepan with some water plus alum crystals, which act as a mordant to fix the dye. Add the thread, then heat the water (the temperature and length of heating appropriate to the plant used). The result is always something of a pleasant surprise. "It really depends on when the plant was picked, the season, the soil it grows in and if the weather has been hot or cold," Gloria says. "You never get the same shade twice!"



Spinning, weaving and scarves

photos E Lee and G Pitt

Trekking in the Holy Land

by Bet Tickner

With a group of friends who have walked, rambled and trekked far and wide together for decades, I walked part of the Masar Ibrahim Trail through Palestine (the West Bank) in early spring.

Masar Ibrahim in Arabic means Abraham's Path, and along the trail we often stopped to discuss with our guide the points of convergence between Islamic and Christian beliefs, especially in relation to the Old Testament prophets.

Our guide was Naser Ka'abneh, a Bedouin who now lives in a concrete house, where his mother still hankers after the traditional nomadic way of life. As well as a sharp eye for flowers, herbs and wildlife (distant gazelles or rock hyrax), he imparted a sensitivity to the stark and arid beauty of the landscape and the rich history it contains.



Abraham's Path

photo B Tickner



Night in a cave

– photo B Tickner

We started our walk through green valleys, then into deep river gorges and on to mountain trails. The day spent walking towards the Monastery of St George was particularly spectacular, through a deep ravine where the remains of ancient hermit holes can be seen in the steep cliff of the opposite side. Although well-maintained, the path would not suit the faint-hearted.

Every day Naser encouraged us to spend an hour walking in silence. We soon appreciated that time of more intense experience of the landscape, wildlife, olive groves with their carpets of spring flowers, almond trees in blossom, dry rocky hills and deep gorges. The green spring grass was appreciated everywhere, by the goats, sheep and camels, as well as by us.

We often felt ourselves to be wandering in a wilderness, though Bedouin camps, Israeli settlements and Palestinian villages were never far away. It is difficult for the Bedouin to maintain their nomadic way of life. If they follow their grazing animals, they may find settlers have moved onto their land when they return.

Overnight we stayed in homestays, or Bedouin tents, with their rich carpets, cushions and hangings in the dining area and, one night, on the most remote point on the trail, in a cave. Some anticipated this experience anxiously, but we had fun. After sleeping soundly on mats, I awoke to the most beautiful dawn I have seen, a red line of bright light rising over the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea.

Palestinians we met everywhere were hospitable, interested in us and very keen to tell their own stories. There was the social worker helping disabled and traumatised teenagers recovering from spells in an Israeli prison and the young architect interested in rediscovering traditional architectural practices. In Hebron, there was the shop owner who declined offers of millions of shekels from settlers who wanted to buy his shop close to the Al-Ibrahimi mosque, believed to contain the tomb of Abraham and his sons Isaac and Jacob.

The frustrations of Palestinian life were summed up for me by the young woman who said, "Sometimes it feels like all we have are our stones". But children are no longer encouraged to throw stones on Fridays, because too many have been maimed. The only remaining mode of resistance is to stay put, acquire education, and bring up children, some of whom may stay, and not surrender to hate.

Hebron (at the end of our trail) felt particularly tense. Settlers have purchased housing above the old Arab souk which Israeli army conscripts patrol in full combat gear. The show of force felt intimidating, oppressive, and intentionally divisive.

We finished our trip with two nights in Jerusalem, exploring the souks and churches of the old city. Despite the phalanxes of tourists, peaceful contemplation could be found in St Anne's Church, a simple stone basilica where those entering are asked to be silent unless wanting to sing. I listened to a choir who sang 'How great thou art' and another who sang (in either Chinese or Korean - so far as I could tell) to the tune of 'Amazing Grace'.

If you'd like to read more about the history of Christianity in the Near East up to the near present, I recommend From the Holy Mountain by William Dalrymple

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Business – but not as usual

The Coronavirus pandemic has affected every aspect of our lives and we have had to make rapid changes to the way we live. Local businesses have had to either close down temporarily or have had to adapt. We asked three local businesses to tell us how they had changed in response to the current constraints.

Caversham's Hardware Store

Neil Asbury

HOME CRAFTS has been serving the hardware needs of Caversham for more than 50 years. The shop is on the corner of Prospect Street and Church Street, by the mini roundabout. I took over the shop in 2011 and have worked hard to keep my customers happy and build the business. I have a small team that help me to keep the store "open all hours".

When I first heard of the "lockdown", I thought I would have to close the shop. But a friend sent me a message with the exemptions to closure, which included hardware stores. I must say it was a relief as I, like so many others, would far rather be busy. Initially it appeared essential items only could be purchased. Of course that was an impractical scenario. How to limit access to some of the 9000 lines we hold was something I did not even want to consider. I think people need to be kept busy to keep a grip of their faculties. It is tough to be able to do absolutely nothing.

We have been busier than I might have expected. At first we and our customers were a bit unsure about social distancing, but most quickly adapted and generally accept the limit to the number allowed in the shop. As with any group of people, most have been compliant, but a few behave in a way that suggests the rules don't apply to them. We have marked out the shop with tape at two metre intervals and do our best to keep everyone apart. It is challenging in such a small space. One noticeable plus is the improvement in air quality in the area, as a result of the reduction in traffic.

With so much time on their hands, it is hardly surprising people are constantly asking for paint (decorative and fence paints), DIY and garden supplies. Haberdashery stocks were depleted as people took to knitting and other handcrafts. Elastic is being sold quickly as people sew headbands for NHS staff. Perhaps the most unexpected item in demand is coloured chalk, used for drawing rainbows on pavements and for hopscotch grids.

I have had a few supply problems as some suppliers have shut down for a spell to replenish their own stocks, but I am really pleased with the level of stock I have been able to maintain. Some companies are unsure of delivery schedules, quoting long lead times, but are being able to deliver sooner than expected. I buy much of my stock from a wholesaler, which hopefully is also managing to maintain high stock levels. We are temporarily closed on Sundays to accommodate my shopping trips.



Neil Asbury at Caversham Homecrafts

photo P Chatfield

It can be stressful, as it unusual for us to ask people to wait and there is less time to chat with our customers. Thank goodness it's been sunny. I believe we are helping people to keep busy and occupy their time usefully. And at least six people a day say 'Thanks for staying open'. We are open because we are well. By following the guidance from the Government, I hope we and our customers remain so.

I have to say a huge thanks to the Caversham

community for supporting us and to the Caversham Gossip Girls for spreading the word. Lauren, who is not working at the moment due to maternity leave, helps focus attention on what we have in stock.

Anti-bacterial masks, sanitiser and hand wash are new lines for us which will become normal in the future.

Stay Well, Stay Safe - and we'll meet again "some sunny day"

Wholesaler to retailer in one bound

Garry Dudman

DUDMANS the greengrocer was established at about the same time as Reading Football Club, 150 years ago. At one time our family business had a number of shops in and around Reading, including two on Union Street and one opposite Waitrose in Caversham. In recent times the business has focused on wholesale supplies, mostly for the catering trade. We also supply care homes, schools, farm shops, village shops and hospitals.

We operate from a unit in Emmer Green opposite St Barnabas Church and the primary school. Normally two lorries a day deliver around 20 pallets of stock. This is then sorted and distributed to our customers. With the Coronavirus restrictions closing pubs, restaurants and many business premises, much of our trade vanished overnight.

We realised we needed to change quickly to serve the new needs of the community. We needed to adapt rapidly to help customers who could not visit the shop because of their

vulnerability and to deal with an increase in the number of retail customers buying directly from us. Our shop is far too small to cope with this, so we utilised our wet weather gazebos and created a market stall outside our unit. This has enabled us to trade whilst observing the social distancing rules and is a safe, calm way to shop.

Rather than amending our web site to the changed circumstances, our family set up a Facebook page. This is much easier to maintain and update and we can use it for special offers and competitions as well as posting our news. We have added one short video about our deliveries of 25 food boxes a day to the Royal Berkshire Hospital for their hard-pressed staff.

www.facebook.com/dudmansberks/videos/947840638978285/

The boxes were funded by a Just Giving page

continued on page 15

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Business – but not as usual

continued from page 14

set up by a friend of ours. Many donations came from our customers, along with the general public and a local insurance company. All the family is helping out. My wife is a dance teacher, so cannot work normally and is helping out in the warehouse with the mountains of paperwork. She has also had to adapt her own business by using Zoom for dance lessons in the evenings! The kids were helping to serve, but are now having online Uni lectures, and we have some students helping to pack boxes of fruit and veg. I have had to furlough some staff, because of the changing pattern of trade. One interesting change has been a five-fold increase in orders from small village and farm shops. Many people are choosing to shop locally rather than visit supermarkets. Many of our newfound customers have wanted to help support local businesses at this time and we hope will continue as customers for the foreseeable future.

See www.facebook.com/dudmansberks/ for more information



Garry Dudman

photo Dudmans

Making Music Online

Elestr Lee

I PLAY both violin and viola and teach these instruments in Caversham and the surrounding area. Teaching takes place in my house, in local schools and sometimes in pupils' own homes. My pupils are aged from 4 year olds to retirees, and come from a wide range of nations, backgrounds and abilities.

As the recommendations for social distancing came in, going into schools became more and more stressful, as we teachers tried to work out how to manage. Children find social distancing requirements difficult to comply with at the best of times. Looking at what was happening elsewhere in the world, I could see a 'lockdown' was inevitable. In some ways it was a relief when it came, but

it meant a complete loss of income. And the suspension of lessons would also have an impact, damaging progress, and depriving pupils of a developing interest. For some, music has a significant therapeutic benefit.

Knowing some of my pupils already regularly took online lessons, it occurred to me to give this a go, using Skype. When asked, most of my private pupils agreed immediately. I was pleased when the schools I work in all agreed I could make a similar offer, although the take-up was not as high. Some parents who live in south Oxfordshire made the point that their broadband signal is not reliable.

I was worried about how my pupils would manage to tune their instruments (normally string teachers do this until students are reasonably advanced). But another problem quickly loomed – two pupils had broken strings! An excellent supplier quickly sent in replacements and, with the support of their parents, they managed to fit them. Phone apps can be used to guide tuning. My pupils have turned out to be far more adept than I had ever imagined.

Normally I take a break for Easter, but this year most of my pupils decided to continue through the holiday. I think the lessons have provided some structure for the week which has helped in these difficult times. In a variation from my normal practice, I ask pupils to email me music they would like to work on, so I can print it off and follow what they have chosen in the online lesson. It has been interesting, and sometimes surprising, to see their choices. The quality of Skype sound is not ideal, however the basics of rhythm and intonation come over loud and clear, so I concentrate on where I can help them to improve.

For me, I have had to change the way I work and accept it will be less than perfect. For example, when you can't see a pupil's posture clearly you can't offer corrective advice. I do what I can, as well as I can, and hope the impact of 'lockdown' on my pupils' learning will be limited. I am concerned for the future of music, as I fear there will be an economic impact that will reduce pupils' opportunities - let alone the difficulties of making live music, which is not going to be easy until Covid-19 has been successfully vanquished.



Elestr's online lessons photo Kim Lee Harvey

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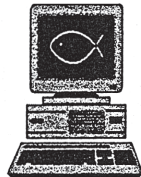
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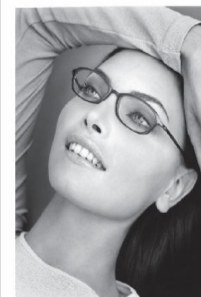
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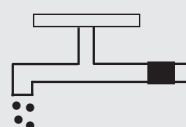
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