

# War and Peace

## Support the Poppy Appeal

by Pauline Palmer

THIS YEAR has been different for all of us and, unfortunately, the Remembrance and Poppy Appeal period this year will also have to be very different.

The Royal British Legion has decided there will be no locally organised face-to-face collections this year. Any collections will be organised and undertaken at Regional level.

In the past, I have worked with many willing and loyal volunteers to organise collections in the area, including house-to-house, the streets and any establishment prepared to host a collection tin. Our team has raised over half a million pounds since I took over as Poppy Appeal Organiser. However this year even the Oracle and Reading Town Centre collections will be organised by the Regional team.

These Covid-19 constraints are really challenging for our team, as so many local people have contributed in so many different ways in previous years. As a result, Caversham's collection for the Appeal is regularly one of the best in Berkshire.

The second blow to us here in Caversham is the decision not to hold the regular parade through Caversham this year. This is very sad as the parade and service have been amongst the best attended in Berkshire and the vicinity. Social distancing would have been very difficult with the wide range of ages of the participants in the parade and at the service. In addition, the Police and the Legion have new rules about street closures which would need to be taken into account.

....'many local people have contributed'...

The only thing we can do locally is provide wreaths. We expect to have contacted most organisations and individuals who usually lay wreaths by the end of October but, if you still require a wreath please ring me on 0118 947 5345 – the supplies are limited as they had to be ordered by August.

Anyone wishing to lay a wreath (on behalf of an organisation or as an individual) should make their own arrangements to do so at the war Memorial at Christchurch Meadow. Please note there will be no service at the Memorial this year. When laying wreaths, please ensure local distancing requirements are met at all times.

The Royal British Legion continues to work hard to support the most vulnerable in our society, be it older veterans they care for, those who suffer from social isolation, or those who are simply overwhelmed by the challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. If you would like to support their work at this difficult time, you can find out how to do so on their website:

[www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/ways-to-give](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/ways-to-give)



Caversham War Memorial photo F Smith

## Readers remember the best and the worst of times

by Phil Chatfield

RELUCTANTLY I have to admit summer has ended and darker evenings are now with us. November is a month of remembrance. The month starts with All Souls Day, also known as the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. This is a day of prayer and remembrance for those who have died, which is observed by some Christians. Then Bonfire Night on 5 November, when we remember the 1605 Gunpowder Plot the subject of our wordsearch on page 7.

November 11 brings us to Armistice Day, marking the end of the First World War in 1918. In Britain, beginning in 1939, the two-minute silence was moved to the nearest Sunday to prevent it interfering with wartime production. This became the Remembrance Sunday we know now. This year we recall the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain and the 75th anniversary of the end of the war in 1945. But the way we observe the day will be different as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic – see the article on this page.

In this edition we include two very different articles of wartime memories. In *A long way from home* regular reader Rowena Waddington shares the story of her father and uncle who travelled from Jamaica to volunteer for service in the RAF – even though her dad was underage. See page 6. Another of our readers, Heather Baker writes of her experience as a child evacuee. See page 13.

As well as looking at the past which has shaped us, this edition looks at the creative talents of local people. We report on local artists in our Creative Caversham



Allotment Colour, Grove Road

photo P Chatfield

articles – this month the work of Liz Real (see page 12). Her painting of Maria, the *Big Issue* vendor with a pitch outside Waitrose will strike a chord with many of us. Our 'Community Connection' article celebrates the work of photographer Matt Emmett (see page 11) and we also have an article on local writer Anita Frank on the same page. We have been able to share a sketch of some of the shops in St Martin's Precinct by Pooja Fernandes on page 15. The sketch includes *Vegivores*, a vegetarian restaurant, whose Head Chef, Sarah Lowndes, shares a seasonal recipe with us (see page 10).

We are still living with the pandemic. As a result people are wearing face masks in the streets as well as in shops and churches and on public transport. Unfortunately, many disposable masks are being discarded carelessly. Scientists warn that it could take up to 500 years for polypropylene face masks to degrade. We need to remember to take reusable face

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# What a Year

THIS IS the time of the Church's year when we remember, when we look back through what we have done and what has gone on around us, and what a year! 2020, the numbers suggest perfection, from perfect vision. We started the year with high hopes. After a wet winter, things turned nasty - we had more rain which brought floods and gales. And then we had heard of a new virus affecting thousands of people in China - for which there was no cure. We prayed it would not come here but, within three months, it was marching across the world and had arrived. Within days, we were locked down, confined to our homes and allowed out only for exercise and essential shopping: restrictions which were eased gradually after ten weeks. Now, as I write, the infection is spreading again, and we are experiencing local restrictions which are getting ever more severe. Frightening for older people and mainly inconvenient for younger ones. Will we have to part from our families again? But many good things have come out of the situation. Neighbours have rallied to bring food to the vulnerable, people have volunteered to run food banks and to collect food, and some of us have been entertained in the street. We have learned to appreciate the NHS, the sacrifices of Medical Staff and the dedication of cleaners, those who have delivered our online shopping and medicines, and have kept essential food shops open. We



## Talking Point by Margaret Dimmick

have learned to garden and appreciate Nature. And you may be able to think of other things. We have come to realise our dependence on each other and to say 'Surely things must change when this is all over.'

What a boon visual technology has been. I had heard of Skype, though not of Zoom, but rapidly learnt to use them, and even Vimeo when attending this year's Stroke

Club Conference. Then taking part with Caversham Park Church's team producing services, along with other Caversham Churches. I felt as though I was on permanent retreat, feeling, as I said to myself, that I was like Mrs Job. In the book attributed to Job in the Old Testament, he had the misfortune to lose all of his six children to a plague. His friends came to comfort him, and advised him to curse God, who was supposed to have caused his misfortunes, and then die. This is where we get the expression 'Job's Comforters' from. Even his wife backed them up. Job refused their advice. He prayed, he spoke to God, and waited for an answer. In the aftermath of a storm, he had his revelation 'I know that my Redeemer lives... and that at the last, I shall see him face to face.' This book is a real lesson in patience. Remembrance Day is going to be very different this year, with leaflets in the post asking us to make a donation and to light a candle in our homes, a good thing also to do in remembrance of loved ones who have died. We may have to postpone All Saints ceremonies, too. Through the rest of the year, although we may have to continue to live with patience until a vaccine for Covid is found, let us live in hope, knowing that our Redeemer, Jesus, lives, loves us and strengthens us.

Margaret Dimmick is an Anglican Minister at Caversham Park Church.

## Local clergy and church services

### ANGLICAN

#### Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Ministry

St Peter, St Margaret, St John  
Rev'd Mike Smith, The Rectory, 20 Church Rd  
Caversham RG4 7AD  
Tel: 947 9505 [rector@ctmparish.org.uk](mailto:rector@ctmparish.org.uk)  
Rev'd John Dudley Tel: 947 0265  
Rev'd Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331 810  
Rev'd Judith Ryder Tel: 947 3783  
Rev'd Andy Storch Tel: 07365 555 905

#### Parish Office

Church House, 59 Church Street, Caversham RG4 8AX  
Tuesday and Friday 9.30 to 14.00  
Tel: 947 1703 e-mail [secretary@ctmparish.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ctmparish.org.uk)

#### Current services

Sunday 09:30 - You Tube service - [www.youtube.com/channel/UCYMgve\\_d64enHsm1FUfwntA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYMgve_d64enHsm1FUfwntA)  
10:15 - Zoom service - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84366839832?pwd=M2xJSUthFbGkycG1DbEFxQ1JGYWRsQT09>  
11:15 - Zoom service - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82793512985>  
Wednesday - 09:30 - Zoom morning Prayer - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/786384026>

### St Andrew

Rev'd Nigel Jones, St Andrew's Vicarage, Harrogate Road.  
Tel: 947 2788 [www.standrewscaversham.org](http://www.standrewscaversham.org)

#### Current services

Sunday - 18.00 - Service on the 'St Andrew's Caversham' YouTube channel  
Tuesday - 20.00 - Compline service by Zoom. E-mail the vicar to join - [vicar@standrewscaversham.org](mailto:vicar@standrewscaversham.org)

### St Barnabas Emmer Green

Rev'd Derek Chandler, 20 St Barnabas Road.  
Tel: 947 8239. [www.saintbarnabas.org.uk](http://www.saintbarnabas.org.uk)

#### Office

St Barnabas Centre, Emmer Green  
Tuesday and Thursday 8.30 - 10.30  
Tel: 947 6310

#### Current services

Sunday 09.30 - Morning Service on St. Barnabas Facebook & Website  
Monday 14.00 - Busybees - for pre-school children and their carers on Youtube  
Details on their web site - [www.saintbarnabas.org.uk](http://www.saintbarnabas.org.uk)

### CAVERSHAM PARK CHURCH (LEP)

(Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and URC)  
Contact: Dr Alison Johnston  
Tel: 0118 947 5152 [www.cavershamparkchurch.com](http://www.cavershamparkchurch.com)

#### Current services

Sunday - 11.00 - Livestreaming on YouTube  
Details on their web site at: <https://cpvc.org.uk:5152/live-stream>

### METHODIST CHURCH IN CAVERSHAM

Rev'd Martin Beukes, 72 Highmoor Rd.  
Tel: 0118 947 2223 <https://cavhmc.org.uk>  
Rev'd David Jenkins Tel: 0118 327 1592

#### Current services

Sunday - 10.30 - Zoom service  
E-mail the Minister for details [martin.beukes@methodist.org.uk](mailto:martin.beukes@methodist.org.uk)

### CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor: Colin Baker  
Church office Tel 0118 954 5353  
Email: [secretary@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk)

#### Current services

A link is placed on their website each week at: [www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk) and on their YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/user/CavershamBaptist](https://www.youtube.com/user/CavershamBaptist)  
Live broadcast starts at 10.30am each Sunday

### GRACE CHURCH

#### (formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)

Pastor Keith Saynor  
Tel 9474529 [www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk](http://www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk)  
**Current services**  
See their web site for details: [www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk](http://www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk)

### RIVERSIDE CHURCH (Reading)

[www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk](http://www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk)

### NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD

Rev'd H R Gayle  
Tel: 946 3009 [www.ntcgreasing.org.uk](http://www.ntcgreasing.org.uk)

### ROMAN CATHOLIC

#### Our Lady and St Anne

Mgr Patrick Daly, The Presbytery, 2 South View Avenue.  
Tel: 947 1787 [www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk](http://www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk)

#### Current services

See their web site for Father Patrick's weekly homilies and details of opening for services at: [www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk](http://www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk)

### St Michael Sonning Common

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

At the time of writing, church services are affected by the pandemic restrictions, disrupting normal worship. However, church communities have adapted to the circumstances and are alive and active in new ways.

Some churches have re-opened in a limited way. Most have a range of on-line services, house groups and social meetings, using web based systems like YouTube and Zoom. For current information, see individual web sites for each church on this page or on the Churches Together in Caversham website: [www.cavershamchurch.org](http://www.cavershamchurch.org).

The Caversham Bridge is a community newspaper produced by Caversham Christian News Ltd  
Company details will be found on page 15

#### Future editions:

Contributions for the December 2020 issue should be submitted by 3 November and for the January edition by 23 November. These should be e-mailed to: [editors@cavershambridge.org](mailto:editors@cavershambridge.org)

Dates for advertising copy are 2 November for the December issue and 23 November for January. These should be e-mailed to [advertising@cavershambridge.org](mailto:advertising@cavershambridge.org)



# War and Peace

coverings with us whenever we go out. If you do use a disposable mask, please ensure it is disposed of safely. Notices around lamp posts outside schools promote 'Active Travel' encouraging parents and pupils to walk or cycle to school. There are still many rainbows in windows celebrating the NHS workers and a recent addition reminding us to use facemasks. Some people have gone further and made their front gardens into a feature which brings a smile to the faces of passers-by. See page 14

It looks like Autumn has now arrived, as there was torrential rain at the start of October, which resulted in flooding in Buckingham Drive (*photo this page*). The leaves on the trees are starting to change colour. So remember to keep your camera or mobile phone to hand to capture the season in Caversham for our photo competition – see the box on this page for details.

If you have a story, photograph, or artwork you would like to share, please contact us at:

[editors@cavershambridge.org](mailto:editors@cavershambridge.org)

## Enter our Autumn Photo Competition

by the Editors

LAST month we published details of the winning entry in our Summer photo competition. Our autumn competition is open now with a £25 John Lewis Gift Card as the prize. The closing date is 1 December 2020, so not much time now!

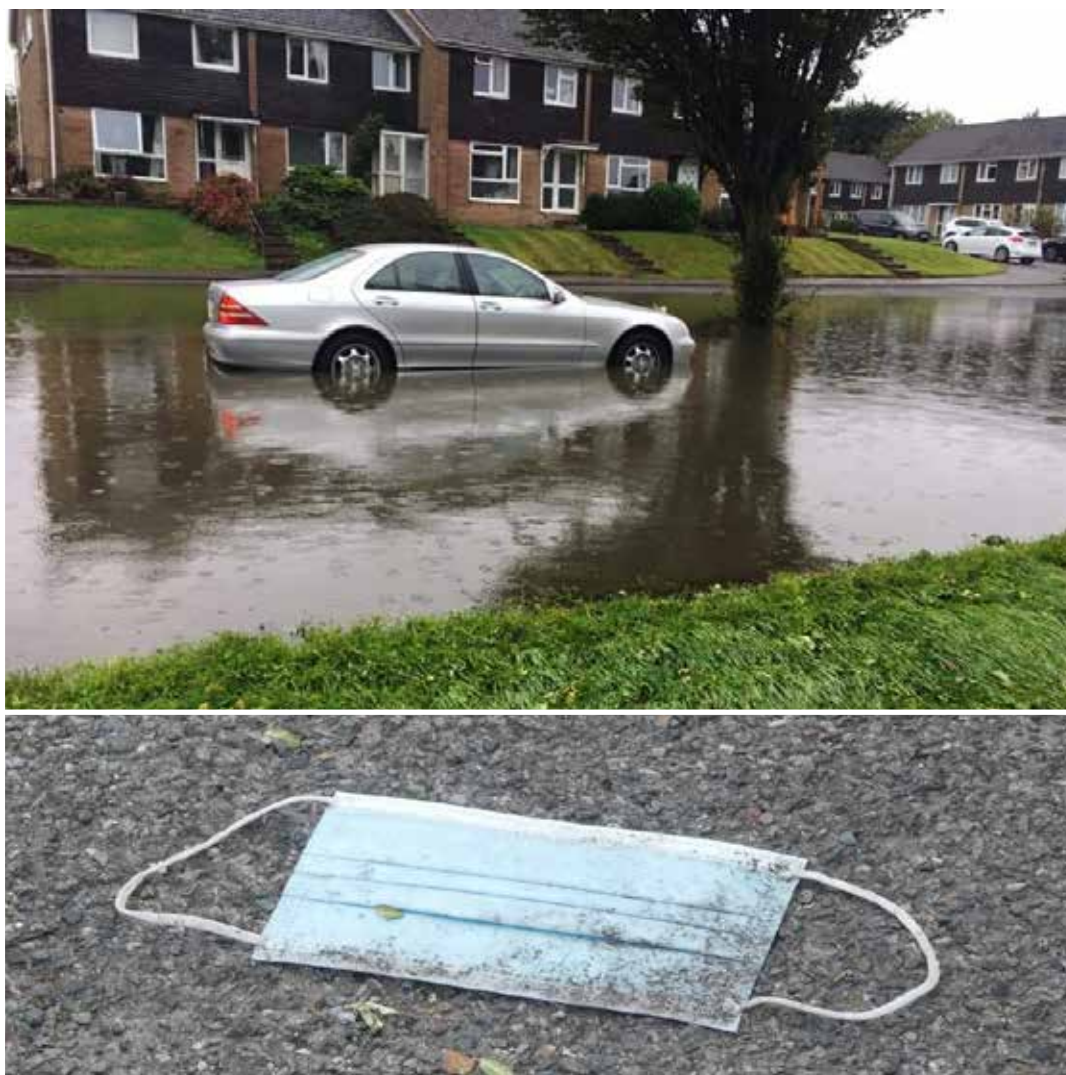
Please state where and when your photo was taken, and include the story behind it. Images featuring people are welcome, especially if they are engaged in some form of activity. But you must have their consent to the use of the photo and provide evidence of this. All entries should be taken in and around Caversham and Emmer Green between September and November 2020.

For full terms and conditions, go to [www.cavershambridge.org](http://www.cavershambridge.org)



Active Travel poster, Washington Road

photo P Chatfield



Centre Top – Buckingham Drive Flood

Above – Discarded face mask

photo F Smith



Top – Rainbow window hanging, Grosvesnor Road

photo P Chatfield

Above – Face mask poster, St John's Road

photo F Smith

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The annual subscription including delivery is £5.00. Alternatively copies of this paper can be purchased from: Caversham Emporium in Church Street and in Emmer Green at the True Food Community Co-Op in Grove Road, opposite St Barnabas church.



# A new start

by Phil Chatfield

A NUMBER of our churches are now able to welcome worshippers into their buildings after many months of closure. In each case a great deal of planning and risk assessment has been involved in the preparation of something we all took for granted until the Coronavirus struck.

At Caversham Heights Methodist Church, a small number of people who cannot access services on Zoom are now invited to attend, with seats set out at



Methodist Church Zoom service screenshot

the appropriate 'socially distanced' spacing.

There is a one-way system into and out of the church and the service is limited to 40 minutes in total. Singing is not allowed in the church and masks must be worn. It is a small move in the right direction, but still a long way from the normal service.

The service is being relayed to Gosbrook Road Methodist Church, where a large screen has been set up, and similar precautions are in place.

St Peter's Church has a said communion every Sunday at 16:00. St John's Church on Gosbrook Road has also been able to re-open for services. They have a prayer meeting on Sundays from 18:00 to 19:00, and a Holy Communion service on Thursdays at 10:00. The services are all socially distanced with face-coverings and hand gel. All strange, but Penny Cuthbert, the minister says, "It's good to have doors open and to look like we are alive!" Caversham Park Church has also been able to reopen for services.

## A strange harvest

SEPTEMBER and October are usually the months when the Harvest Festival is celebrated in our churches. Traditionally this involved bringing

produce from farms and gardens to the church for distribution to the needy. These days, the produce is likely to be from supermarket shelves and is often given to local charities such as Churches in Reading Drop in Centre (CIRDIC) and Launchpad.

## ...support our local charities...

This year even harvest traditions have been affected by the pandemic. Whilst some churches such as St Peter's have organised collections of canned and dried food, many charities are reluctant to accept donations of this kind unless through local supermarkets and shops. In many cases they are asking for on-line donations to help them in their work.

If you would like to make an offering for harvest time, consider supporting some of our local charities in their work with those who are homeless or otherwise in need. These include:

Christian Community Action (CCA) -

[www.ccam.org.uk](http://www.ccam.org.uk)

CIRDIC - [www.cirdic.org.uk](http://www.cirdic.org.uk)

Launchpad - [launchpadreading.org.uk](http://launchpadreading.org.uk)

Readifood - [www.readifood.org.uk](http://www.readifood.org.uk)

# One more step on the way

## Andrew Storch ordained and farewell to Judith Ryder

by P Cuthbert

ANDY STORCH, curate in the Caversham Thameside and Mapledurham Parish, was ordained priest on 19 September at Reading Minster by the Bishop of Reading, Olivia Graham. The service, which had been postponed from June due to the Covid-19 pandemic, had restrictions in place, such as a requirement for face coverings.

Three deacons (Andy, Amy Cavender and Julie Howell) were presented to Bishop Olivia. They declared their intentions to pray, lead God's people, proclaim the gospel, administer the sacraments, and fashion their lives according to the way of Christ - all by the help of God. The Bishop laid (sanitised) hands on each candidate and anointed them (via cotton buds) with the oil of chrism. She prayed the ordination prayer - which asks for grace and power to proclaim the gospel and minister the sacraments, work for reconciliation, proclaim God's blessing, and absolve in Christ's name those who turn to him in faith. Each



Andy Storch

photo P Cuthbert

were presented with a Bible as a sign of their God-given authority to do these things and, after sharing in communion, were led out into the sunshine to begin their priestly ministries in the world.

The next day, Andy presided at the 16:00

During the service, the parish also said goodbye to Rev Judith Ryder, as she and her family move on after four years of service as a curate in Caversham. The parish Rector, Mike Smith, thanked Judith for her ministry. In particular he spoke of her key role in the creation of the youth group and the input of her entire family to the life of St Peter's, not least the choir! Judith was presented with a number of parting gifts, including a painting of St Margaret's, a wooden duck, and a year's family ticket to Blenheim Palace.



## 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](http://www.cavershamgoodneighbours.org.uk)  
**0118 948 3466**

Monday to Friday 9.30am-11.30am  
Church House 59 Church Street Caversham RG4 8AX





Judith Ryder

photo N Smith

communion service at St Peter's, in a church as full as social-distancing regulations allow. The congregation included people from St John's, where Andy has served his year as deacon, St Peter's, and St Margaret's, where Andy will now have pastoral oversight.



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# IT'S ALL HAPPENING

## Ray Goodman at 100

ON 14 OCTOBER, the Methodist Church in Caversham celebrated the 100th birthday of one of its members, Ray Goodman. But in these strange times, Ray's celebrations had to



be adapted. So to comply with Government guidance, instead of hosting a buffet lunch for 40 people, he has been having a series of smaller events for friends and family.

Ray was able to attend the regular service at Caversham Heights Church on 11 October, although the Covid-19 rules meant the number of people in church was limited.

Kathy Munns sang Happy Birthday as a solo,

as group singing is not allowed, while those attending the service via Zoom joined in from their homes.

## WHAT'S ON

THERE are a number of events planned for November in which we can take part. Our on-line events diaries are updated regularly, so it is worth checking to see what has been added at [cavershambridge.org:5154/local-info/whats-on](http://cavershambridge.org:5154/local-info/whats-on). If you have an event planned, please send us details.

**Mondays** – Time 4 U pram push 10:00 – 11:30 Caversham Baptist Church. Term time only. [www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk)

**Sunday 1 November** – Farmer's Market and Artisan Fair 10:00 – 15:00 Caversham precinct [www.facebook.com/CAFMarket](http://www.facebook.com/CAFMarket)

**Monday 9 to Sunday 15** – Reading Climate Festival – A week long festival of free events to promote positive action on climate change. The events include a webinar on the successful rearing of urban peregrines from Reading and District Natural History Society. The full programme is listed on [www.readingculturelive.co.uk](http://www.readingculturelive.co.uk)

**Sunday 15 November** – Farmer's Market and Artisan Fair 10:00 – 15:00 Caversham precinct [www.facebook.com/CAFMarket](http://www.facebook.com/CAFMarket)

**Tuesday 24 November** – Monthly meeting to discuss local issues, plan projects and make decisions 19:30 – 21:00 Hosted by Caversham GLOBE. Open to all supporters and local residents. See their Facebook page for details: [www.facebook.com/cavershamglobe](http://www.facebook.com/cavershamglobe)

Ray served in the RAF before becoming a teacher in Caversham. He has written a book about his life, from which we plan to publish some extracts in the next few months. *by Phil Chatfield*

## The Heights are alive to the sound of music again



Still from the video of the concert

JUST AS Covid-19 was starting to impact our lives, the April Edition of the Caversham Bridge included an article on the Concerts in Caversham series of performances held at St Andrews Church. The first of these was in November 2010, and there are usually four or five concerts each year with professional musicians. Because of the pandemic restrictions, the concerts planned for 2020 were cancelled.

However, Adrienne Black and Morgan Goff have recorded a beautiful concert to celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of Concerts in Caversham. This 30 minute performance of viola and piano music is available for you to view on the St Andrew's YouTube channel at

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLTrKUFGbAI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLTrKUFGbAI)

Two further performances with small audiences were scheduled for October – a limited but welcome return of live music to Caversham. *by Revd Nigel Jones*

## The end of the road

AFTER almost 100 years, Jennings of Caversham, one of our local butchers, is to cease trading at the end of October. This family business, established in 1922, had a retail shop on Prospect Street for many years. More recently they have specialised in supplying the hospitality and catering sectors. With the pandemic effectively ending this business, they have focused on home deliveries. Despite

the efforts of their staff, Dawson, Nick and Mat Jennings have decided their business is not sustainable for them over the coming, uncertain months. They have therefore decided to bring forward their longer-term retirement plans. The news was sent to their customers in a letter dated 30 September, thanking them and their staff for their custom and support over the years.

Dawson Jennings said, "We will be forever grateful to our loyal staff, our customers and suppliers who we have enjoyed working with over many years. However we do, feel that now is the right time to go." *by F Smith*



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# A long way from home - Braving the war to 'do their bit'

By R Waddington

IT WAS VE Day, and we were on Lockdown. I got to thinking how I could celebrate my late Jamaican father's part in WWII. I lost my dear dad in 1996, and I'm so sorry we didn't talk at any length about what he did during the war, but I do know he served as a clerk in the RAF Medical Corps.

Digging deep, I found a couple of photographs of dad in uniform, and posted them on WhatsApp to friends and family. It was lovely to hear their comments, so that made my VE Day.

Back in 2009 when I visited my late honorary uncle and his wife in Jamaica, he recalled how he and dad were the greatest of friends at school. He related how they joined the RAF to serve in England to help the 'Mother Country' win the war, mentioning they were two young men seeking adventure! The Jamaican recruits sailed to New York where American GIs and army personnel joined the ship for England, travelling in a large convoy. There were troop ships, destroyers, aircraft carriers and all manner of other vessels. My uncle remembered the food did not agree with him, which he put down to it being English, and that they slept in hammocks.

One frightening incident, the worst experience of his life, he told me, was doing guard duty on the top deck. He lit a cigarette and, to his horror, an order came over a loudspeaker from a destroyer, which had pulled up alongside. 'PUT THAT CIGARETTE OUT!', it bellowed. A soldier had a gun aimed at him ready to shoot! Their ship docked in Liverpool on a cold November morning and he recalled seeing bombed buildings. They were shocked and puzzled and wondered if this could really be the beautiful 'Mother Country' they had learned about at school.

My dad and uncle were sent to a camp in Stafford where it was discovered my dad was underage for service – and he was not alone! These 'adventurers' were housed on camp in what my uncle remembered to be a 'lovely brick building' until they were of age to serve. He emphasised how much they hated the cold and snow, and remembered many times going to bed in full kit!

After the war, my dad and uncle were repatriated and continued their military career in the Jamaica Defence Force. Both married, and my two brothers and I were born in Kingston between 1948 and 1953.

Despite the climate, many ambitious Jamaicans (including my dad and uncle) decided to return to England. They knew that, unlike Jamaica, there was work to be had in all areas, and Great Britain needed help to rebuild the country. Dad returned to England in 1954 to start a home in Streatham, London, in preparation for the family to join him. He worked hard to save enough so my mum and elder brother could join him in 1956, leaving my youngest brother and me in the care of my grandmother. A year later, in 1957, my brother and I, both minors, flew with BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation) to join them.

I'll never know what dad and my uncle did on VE Day, but, knowing their characters - their happy disposition and 'any-excuse-for-a-celebration' attitude, they wouldn't have missed out on the nation's joyous celebration!



Dad in Jamaican Defence Force uniform with Mum, my eldest brother and me



My Dad (16), in RAF uniform

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Happy Wanderer reveals the secrets of...

# Mysterious Elf-cups

I HOPE to go down to the woods this autumn to see the colours of the falling leaves and to look for fungi. Maybe the sounds of the tone poem 'November Woods' by Arnold Bax will be going through my mind which, for me, invokes the wind in the branches and the swirling of leaves.

The fungus I've chosen as the subject of this article is one you'll be lucky to see, but it's easy to see where it's been at work, and it is common. The Green Elf-cup turns the wood of fallen trunks and branches a bright, metallic bluish green. It will grow on different kinds of wood, but favours oak. The colouring is a sign

that the mycelium, the 'business' part of the fungus, has been active in taking up nutrients.

As with many fungi, this feeding goes on, unseen, until the energy has been built up to enable it to produce the little green cups which shed the spores. The Elf-cups are only a few millimetres across, at first cup-shaped and tending to become flattened later. The bright bluish green colour means that you're unlikely to miss them if they're there.

...'Elf-cups are only a few millimetres across'...

If taken before the decomposition was too advanced, the green-stained wood was known as green oak, and was prized by craftsmen producing Tunbridge Ware. These were wooden objects with inlaid designs using woods of different colours, like marquetry. Other wood-eating fungi produce black and brown staining, sometimes in intricate patterns, known as 'spalting'. This wood was sometimes made into decorative turned bowls and platters.

There is a whole range of fungi called Elf-cups, living on fallen timber. I have a book published in 1909, Fungi and How to Know Them, which gives their old names – the Scarlet, the Chalice, the Orange Peel, the Toad, the Hare's Ear and the Bat's Ear Elf-cups.

The elves themselves were a Teutonic race, who arrived here centuries before the fairies. They came with the Anglo-Saxons, whose most famous King was Alfred the Great. His name meant something like 'elf counsel', 'advised by the elves', or 'crafty counsellor'. And the notion of elves was used to explain all kinds of things that were inexplicable



Chlorosplenium aeruginascens

at the time. Elves were tricky, and the things they caused were usually unpleasant. For instance, they could cause illness by shooting at people and their livestock with tiny flint arrows, called 'elf-shot'. The presence of the arrow heads, in fact left behind by Stone Age people, was a sure sign that elves were around. And they would steal human infants, and substitute 'changelings', which did not thrive, or learn to walk or talk, and soon died. Elves had to be humoured by leaving out food, clothing, or coins for them. And, of course, cures were invented for the ills they caused, as well as preventative measures against them.

Whether they were ever thought to be so small that they drank out of Green Elf-cups seems doubtful. Each cup would hardly contain a raindrop. But both elves and Elf-cups were mysterious, and could arrive seemingly out of nowhere, and that might well be the connection.

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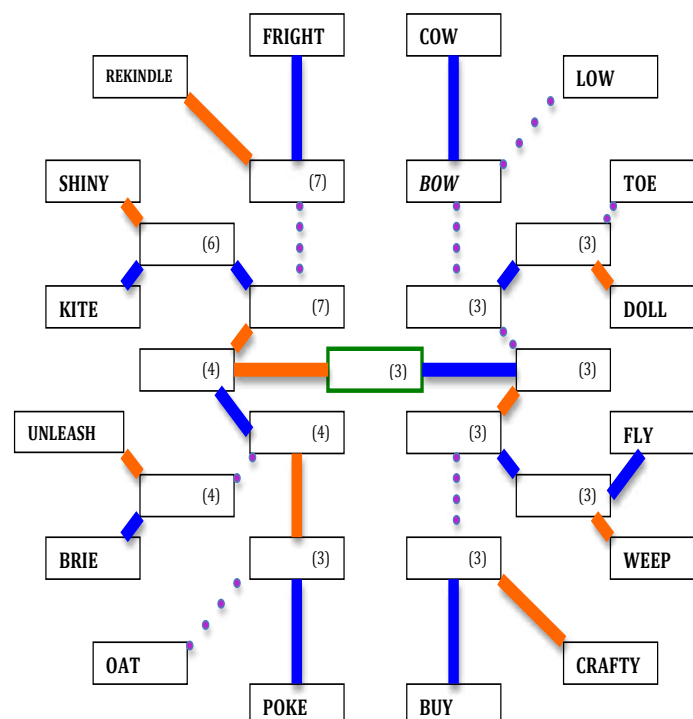
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## Word puzzles

### WORD PUZZLE by Erin

Find the word that has the same meaning as the clue; and/or rhymes with, and/or has one letter that is different. For example: BOW rhymes with COW and has one letter different from LOW

RHYME ———  
LETTER CHANGE .....  
MEANING ———



Answers on page 15

### Remember Remember the 5th November!

by C Moloney

S E M A J G N I K D H U L J S  
S L E R R A B K I U Q B C U T  
G S E L D N A C N A M O R M E  
Y U G E H T R O F Y N N E P K  
F Q Y N H R O B N S O F D I C  
I P K F C W L L P Q S I W N O  
R A E Z A O E I P R A R O G R  
E R E R W W R N E J E E P J Y  
W L D U U A K L I Y R N N A B  
O I P G C L K E L R T I U C S  
R A I Y D R I Q S Z E G G K E  
K M S W A L L A N E P H Y S T  
S E L P P A E E F F O T T A  
A N S N M S I C I L O H T A C  
M T D N O V E M B E R C W Y C

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BLOWUP  
BONFIRENIGHT  
CATESBY  
CATHERINEWHEELS  
CATHOLICISM  
CONSPIRACY  
FAILURE  
FIREWORKS  
GUNPOWDER

GUYFAWKES  
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## ENVIRONMENT

# Nutkin's going crackers

### Squirrels hide far more nuts than they can eat

Wildlife by William Cecil

FROM early autumn onwards the hazel by the bottom hedge has been alive with activity. It was coppiced some years ago and the vigorous new stems produce side shoots which are heavy with hazel nuts at this time of year. There is nothing the grey squirrel likes better than cobs, so from dawn until dusk, Beatrix Potter's Squirrel Nutkin leaps from branch to branch gathering nuts in November.

As soon as his cheek pouches are full he comes down, scoots across the lawn - then pauses. He or his family can't possibly eat all he gathers, so he must hide them for harder times to come. First he scratches a hole in the lawn and buries a nut, to be turned up later by the irritated driver of a lawn mower. Other nuts will be buried in flower pots or patches of soil. In the spring one of my first jobs is to go round the garden removing hazel seedlings.

The busy, cheerful grey squirrel is not a native. He is an interloper from North America, brought here in the 1870s.



Derby Road Squirrel

photo F Smith

Britain and Ireland are the only European countries where they have settled. In Britain it is looked on as a pest by the agricultural authorities. Foresters call it the tree rat because of the damage it does to thin-barked trees like beeches and sycamores, and game-keepers hate it because they eat birds' eggs and chicks, as well as nuts. They try to control it by destroying squirrel dreys, football sized nests, with long poles.

The grey squirrel has double-jointed ankles so that its feet can face forwards or backwards, very handy for dashing about in trees. Males live 2-3 years, females up to 5 years, and there are estimated to be nearly 3 million of them. They don't hibernate but in the winter they have been known to curl up and use their tail as a blanket for a snooze.

It is illegal to release a grey squirrel into the wild in this country. But despite all this official disapproval and outright unfriendliness my greys carry on picking my nuts, eating them, hiding them and then forget where they hid the wretched things.

However I must admit that I would miss the cheery way they go about their business.

Carry on going nuts, Nutkin.

## Tree Time

by Trish Marcouse

EVERY garden has space for a tree. Perhaps for beauty, for fresh fruit, for wildlife, for shade to sit under in our hotter summers, or to conceal the ugly shed next door. Perhaps even just in a pot if there is very limited space.

Recently much has been made of planting trees to suck carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, and that's brilliant IF the tree is in the right place and will grow to maturity. Otherwise the overall process of growing it in a nursery, soil disturbance during planting, and a limited life could release more greenhouse gases than it absorbs. So think about what is best for your space in the long term.

Autumn is the best time to plant, but do your research first. Is it a deciduous tree which gives you shade in the summer and lets more light through in winter? Or an evergreen which provides full screening all year round? There are more options for flowers, fruit, autumn colour and winter structure with a deciduous tree. Then there is the size: for most small gardens, trees with a final height of more than 4 metres will outgrow their space and be difficult to manage (although columnar forms may fit). Don't rely on garden centre labels that tell you the size in 10 years.

Our tree list on [www.ReadingCan.org.uk](http://www.ReadingCan.org.uk) gives maximum height and preferred growing conditions. It concentrates on native trees, as these are beneficial to wildlife as well as to people. But remember, a cultivar will probably have the same benefits for wildlife, but may be smaller and have far greater garden value. For example, the hawthorn *Crataegus lavalleyi* 'Carrierei' has more flowers, leaves and fruit for insects and birds than the common form and is almost thornless. It also has a far more delicate leaf making it more attractive than the native version.

A wider selection of trees for small gardens, and advice on planting and maintenance, is on:

[www.rhs.org.uk/plants/types/trees/small-garden](http://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/types/trees/small-garden)



*Crataegus lavalleyi* 'Carrierei'

photo A Ayres



## Greening your Home this Autumn



WITH 40% of UK carbon dioxide emissions coming from household energy use, our homes have an important part to play in meeting our 2030 emissions reduction targets. As we move into winter and temperatures drop, you can help to tackle climate change and reduce your heating bill by testing how draughty or leaky your home is. Find the gaps that let the cold air in and warm air out (think keyholes, letterboxes, gaps around the edges or bottoms of windows and doors, loft hatches, floorboards etc.) and fix these gaps using the correct materials. For some helpful advice on what to do, see:

[www.thegreenage.co.uk/tech/draught-proofing/](http://www.thegreenage.co.uk/tech/draught-proofing/)

Now is also a very good time to prepare for winter by sticking reflective foil or purpose made radiator panels between walls and radiators, as these will help reflect heat back into your room during the colder months.

By Phil Chatfield based on an article from the October A Rocha e-newsletter. For more on A Rocha, see their website:

[www.arocha.org.uk](http://www.arocha.org.uk)

## Generating interest

by Phil Chatfield

THE SCHEME to install hydroelectric turbines at Caversham Weir has made significant progress in recent months. Reading Hydro, a community benefit society, has now managed to raise sufficient funds for construction to begin. This follows a successful share offering early on this year and a second opportunity for local investors in August, which saw the total raised reach £980,000 by mid September. Ninety six percent of the investors are people and businesses that are local to Reading and the Reading area.

Reading Hydro set out to raise funds from local investors and community members to build twin Archimedes Screw hydroelectric turbines adjacent to the Weir to produce sustainable energy from the Thames. The money raised from selling the electricity to customers will be invested back to shareholders and into a range of local community projects. See their website for more details: [hydro.readinguk.org](http://hydro.readinguk.org)

Preparation work on site has been undertaken by volunteers over the last few months and the construction contractors, Land & Water, have now set up their works compound adjacent to the Caversham Mill backwater. These contractors will be building the foundations for the turbines during the rest of 2020. This is the first phase of building for the project, with the planned installation of the Archimedes



Footpath Closed!

photo P Chatfield

screws taking place in early 2021.

As a consequence of the work, the public footpath across the weir is closed from 5 October until 31 March 2021. The path beside the Hills Meadow Car Park and the backwater is diverted around the works compound duration construction.

For more information about community benefit societies see:

[www.communityshares.org.uk/resources/handbook/community-benefit-societies](http://www.communityshares.org.uk/resources/handbook/community-benefit-societies)

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# In too deep ...



by Les Cooper

I was watching *Gardener's World* on the television the other day and Carol Klein was talking about one of my favourite herbaceous perennials, Monarda. This took my mind

back to some time ago, probably in the 1970s when I had a small group of these lovely flowers that were really attractive. I loved their aromatic plumed blossoms of crimson, pink and mauve, and the bees loved them too. But, fickle gardener that I am, time went by, boredom set in, and I neglected them when a new fad took over. Eventually they disappeared.

Some years later I thought, "I'll grow some Monarda plants again just like I had before." I bought a few plants and planted them in what I imagined was a good spot. The summer came and, guess what, they were absolutely hopeless and not a patch on the ones I had grown before. Quite what had gone wrong I really don't know although, listening to Carol, she did mention that Monarda are surface growers, and I suspect I may have been too enthusiastic and stifled any new growth with a mulch.

Anyway my interest in Monardas has been reawakened and I have purchased some new plants that I intend to pot up to plant out next Spring. Monarda is a hardy and long flowering plant, particularly if you deadhead regularly. Growing approximately two feet high it doesn't need staking, and the bees and the butterflies find it irresistible.

That is the good side, but the downside is that it likes full sun, it doesn't like to be too wet, and it gets powdery



Monarda Flowers

photo E Cooper

mildew when it is too dry. So it needs to be planted in fertile, well-drained soil and in a sunny position. A little worryingly, I suspect this year the drought did not favour the Monarda any more than it did a lot of other plants.

But never mind - keep your fingers crossed and let's hope my new plants enjoy 2021. The ones I have purchased are *M. Beauty of Cobham* (pink), *M. Blaustrumpt* (violet/purple), and *M. Schneewitchen* a white that is described in an article I found on-line as 'less robust'. Oh dear, that sounds worrying.

# Cook up a seasonal treat

by Sarah Lowndes

We asked local restaurant *Vegivores*, based in St Martin's Precinct, if they could come up with a seasonal recipe for us. Sarah, their Head Chef, sent the following:

**Squash & Almond Hot Pot (Vegan & Gluten Free)**

Serves 3-4

**Ingredients:**

- 1 large leek, finely sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
- 1 handful fresh sage, stems removed and finely chopped (sub 1.5 tsp dried sage)
- 1 large butternut squash, peeled, de-seeded and chopped into 4cm chunks
- 1 vegetable stock cube, crumbled
- 150g ground almonds
- 200-250ml almond milk
- 2tbsp vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Additional sides - crusty bread or crushed potatoes as well as your favourite greens!

**Method:**

1. Start by tossing the squash in 1tbsp oil and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Place the squash on a baking tray, spacing the chunks evenly, into a hot oven (180-200°C)

to roast. This should take approximately 40 minutes, but all ovens vary so best to check them after about 30 minutes.

2. Whilst the squash is roasting, heat the remaining oil in a large saucepan and add the sliced leek. Stir for a few minutes before covering with a lid. Allow to cook down for a further 5-10 minutes.
3. Remove the lid of the saucepan and add the chopped garlic, sage and stock, along with a splash of water if the pan is starting to dry. Stir and cover with a lid once more for a couple of minutes.
4. Add the ground almonds and stir to incorporate. Slowly add the almond milk, stirring all the while. The sauce should begin to thicken. Keep the lid off the saucepan and stir occasionally, on a low heat, for around 5-10 minutes.
5. Once your squash is cooked, carefully transfer it from the baking tray into the saucepan and stir gently into the sauce. Add a pinch of pepper and taste for seasoning, adding more salt and/or pepper to taste.
6. Serve with your choice of either crusty bread, crushed potatoes and your favourite seasonal vegetables. We love rainbow chard wilted with a little lemon and salt!

For more information on the *Vegivores* Restaurant, see their website: [www.wearevegivores.com](http://www.wearevegivores.com)



# Dreams really can come true - How I Came to Write The Lost Ones

by Anita Frank



SOMETIMES I have to pinch myself: dreams really can come true. All I ever wanted was to be a writer, but it seemed such an unattainable goal. My first serious attempt came when I entered a competition run by Reading Libraries and Historical Mills & Boon - to my astonishment I won. But the celebrations were short-lived – soon after, my infant son was diagnosed with a rare form of epilepsy that was to leave him severely mentally disabled. Overnight my priorities changed and my writing dreams firmly shelved. In the years that followed, I never stopped jotting down my book ideas, but somewhere along the way I lost the courage to write; as long as I didn't try, I couldn't fail, and thus I could keep my dream alive. All that changed in 2017, when a friend encouraged me to write a ghost story. Having grown up in a haunted farmhouse, I am fascinated

by ghosts, but what has always interested me most is why a spirit might linger, hence the dark mystery that I put at the heart of my novel, The Lost Ones.

I submitted my manuscript to literary agents in April 2018 and secured an agent shortly after. That September, I signed a two-book contract with HarperCollins imprint, HQ Stories. The Lost Ones was published in October 2019 to favourable press reviews and has since been shortlisted for the Goldsboro Books Glass Bell Award and longlisted for the Historical Writers' Association Debut Crown 2020. My second novel, The Return, will be published in July 2021, and a new contract with HQ Stories means there are two more books yet to come!

If I have learnt anything, it is this: there is no shame in failing to achieve your dreams, but it is a shame not to try.

The Lost Ones by Anita Frank is available in hardback, paperback, e-book and audiobook at Amazon, Waterstones, and all good book shops.



# Community Connections



by Caroline Gratrix

This month we get to know something about Caversham resident Matt Emmett.



Matt Emmett photo C Gratrix

MATT Emmett is a Caversham based landscape and heritage photographer. His eight-year photography project titled 'Forgotten Heritage' won him Architecture Photographer of the Year in 2016 and then the inaugural Historic Photographer of the Year the following year. His work captures and documents ruins and at-risk heritage, and is not only stunning but historically important. Matt works with Heritage Open Days and gives lectures on photography around the country.

During lock down, he took his allotted exercise time late at night. Enjoying the peace and quiet of the streets, Matt was inspired to produce a body of work in and around Caversham and Reading. His stunning images are now being made into a calendar for the local homeless charity Launchpad, and will be on-sale raising funds for them in time for Christmas.

Recently he has turned his talents to video, and was commissioned by the Friends of Caversham Court to produce

a short film for them, which you can view via the home page on their website <http://home.fccg.org.uk/>

**How long have you lived in Caversham Matt?**

Most of my life.

**What's your favourite thing about Caversham?**

That it is compact with lots of lovely independent shops.

**Caversham's best coffee shop?**

I don't drink coffee or tea, but my other half likes Geo café.

**Where to eat in Caversham?**

We tend to go to The Bina, The Alto Lounge or just over the bridge to The Moderation.

**Where to shop in Caversham?**

My favourite shop is Homecrafts Hardware Store in Church Street. The guys who run it are super friendly and helpful, often with lots of honest advice on the best way to tackle a DIY project.

**If you could bring anything to Caversham, what would it be?**

It would be quite nice to have a decent bowling alley on our doorstep, it's an activity that is enjoyed by our whole family.



St Anne's Well, Priest Hill, Caversham. Lit using 7 different exposures and then blended into a final composite image in post production photo Matt Emmett



Hornsey Wood Reservoir - The view along one of several brick lanes inside a subterranean cistern below Finsbury Park in North London. Lit using a moving light source over a 15 minute exposure photo Matt Emmett

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Our Creative Caversham series continues this month with the work of local artist Liz Real. Liz has taken a particular interest in homelessness and is supporting Reading's homeless charity, Launchpad.

## Pop Art - to help out!

by Elestr Lee

Life may be changing in ways that were unimaginable at the start of 2020. But creative new ways of coping and living with the 'new norms' are being discovered. Caversham artist Liz Real has come up with new ways to bring her work to the community, whilst helping to raise awareness and also much-needed funds for Reading's homeless charity, Launchpad.

"I have come up with 'Art In The Arbour' – a special little space I have outside the front of my house, where I can display my greetings cards and my art. It's a socially-distanced pop-up gallery," explains Liz. "I advertise it on social media, and people make appointments to come around – some I already know, or else they have spotted my Facebook page. Some people don't want to go to the shops, but they are happy to come to me when they need to buy cards."

Liz came up with the idea a few months after the start of lockdown in March, and has used the pop-up gallery to sell her hand-made greetings cards to raise money for Launchpad. "All the money I raise from the cards goes to the charity. I also display my art – limited edition prints, mixed-media, paintings and collage – by request to anyone who is interested in purchasing a



Liz's portrait of *Big Issue* seller Maria (above); her view of Balmore Park (top); Henry's hands (bottom right)

piece of my work. The idea has taken off, and I have just had a bumper week!"

Having raised two now grown up daughters in Caversham, Liz has been developing her artistic techniques of collage, printmaking, painting and drawing. "I am the daughter of two artists – my father was a potter and my mother an art teacher – and they both warned me, don't go into art, there's no money in it. However, it was always something I did in my spare time and, over the past 15 years, I have had more time to devote to it and I have done a number of part-time courses, including the open access printmaking course at Maiden Erleigh."

Liz loves to use Gelli printing as a base for her greetings cards, as she is fascinated by the interesting effects achieved from using acrylic paint rolled out on the Gel printing plate. Using a range of different media, she creates collages, and combines this with her interest in textiles, painting and drawing.

As a member of the Caversham Arts Trail as well as the Reading Guild of Artists, Liz normally has a busy schedule of exhibitions to prepare for. "There should have been a big drawing exhibition, but it didn't happen," Liz explains. In previous years she has been involved in some fascinating local projects, such as Reading In The Margins. Liz was deeply struck by images she photographed when Reading Prison was opened to the public in 2016. "I took lots of photographs of the graffiti left by prisoners and of the collection of Oscar Wilde's books. I was very struck by the police mug shots of the prisoners in Victorian times – men and women – all with their hands in front of their chests."

In previous years, Liz has worked as an artist facilitator with CIRDIC (Churches in Reading Drop In Centre), which resulted in an exhibition of work at the

Holybrook Gallery, Central Library in Reading by clients of CIRDIC - homeless and other marginalised members of Reading's community. And Liz is particularly proud of a portrait she painted of Maria, the *Big Issue* seller many will have seen selling copies of the magazine outside Caversham's Waitrose. "With her permission, I took a photograph of her sitting under an umbrella to protect herself from the sun. This turned into a portrait, which was reprinted in a copy of the *Big Issue* – Maria was very proud of selling that particular edition!"

Liz is planning to continue supporting Launchpad by inviting viewers to 'Art In The Arbour' in the run-up to Christmas – weather permitting!

Find out more: [lizreal.co.uk](http://lizreal.co.uk), or [Facebook@lizrealart](https://www.facebook.com/lizrealart)



Graffiti by prisoners has inspired some of Liz's work



Reading matter in cell C3.3 – Liz was struck by Oscar Wilde's book case in Reading Prison





by Heather Baker

Heather Baker, who lives in Matlock Road, Caversham, was 90 years old last year. With the VE Day celebrations in May she was inspired to record her own story of living through the Second World War. Heather writes,

'THE SECOND World War was a very traumatic period in my life and that of my family. At the outbreak of war on 3 September 1939, I was living with my parents in Eastleigh, near Southampton. My father, a very skilled engineer, worked at Woolston on Southampton Water making the urgently needed Spitfire aeroplanes. As enemy intelligence increased about vital production sites in England, the airfield in Eastleigh and the factory where the planes were made soon became targets for their bombers. In September 1940, the factory suffered a big air raid in which over 100 engineers were killed when the shelter they were in was hit by a bomb. Following this, two days later, a second heavy raid killed more engineers and wrecked many of the production lines. At this point, in order to continue Spitfire production, Churchill decided to split the factory into 56 units, with five of them coming to Reading. This meant 50 families were left without a father in September and October 1940.

Nazi fighter planes would often come in before the air raid sirens sounded. On one occasion when I was ten, I was out walking with my sister Gillian, who was eight and brother James, five, when we were machine-gunned by one of them. Fortunately we survived unscathed. Our parents told us that if such an occasion arose again, we should lie down in the gutter to avoid being hurt. A couple of days later, whilst we were in the garden, it

happened again. The plane was so low I could see the pilot's face, which I still remember. At school, when the air raid siren sounded, we left whatever we were doing and went outside and down into the school air raid shelter. It was very dark and we sat on benches and sometimes sang songs until the all clear sounded when we returned to our classrooms.

...'Fortunately we survived'...

As circumstances were now very much more dangerous, my parents discussed evacuating us, possibly to New Zealand, where my father's cousin was employed in a government post. However, it was ruled out, as ships carrying children to America and Canada had been sunk. It was therefore decided that our grandparents, who lived in Lancashire, would be a safe haven. So, in October 1940 my father, who had been away on Spitfire construction, came back to Eastleigh to take us on the great adventure of evacuation. He took us by train to London and then on to King's Cross station with labels around our necks, gas masks and our luggage. The arrangement was that we were to meet our two maiden aunts who we hadn't seen for five years, under the big clock on platform three of Manchester Exchange Station. The train was full up with young RAF men going up to Padgate, near Blackpool, for training. Coincidentally, two years later, my future husband was to travel that route on a similar train. Our two aunts were waiting for us when we arrived. I was taken to Great Harwood, a mill town north east of Blackburn, to stay with our maternal grandparents – our mother had been a cotton weaver, working four looms at the age of 18. My sister and brother were to live with the two maiden aunts and paternal grandmother in Rishton, another mill town four miles from Great Harwood – all three of us going to a very different way of life.'

(To be continued next month)



My sister Gillian, brother James and myself in the garden in 1937

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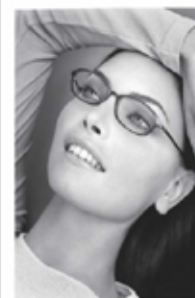
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## Happy Caversham Christmas

TO ADD a little cheer in difficult times, Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA) is working with two local artists: Liz Real (who features in our Creative Caversham article this month) and Janina Maher. Liz and Janina are producing six black and white drawings of Caversham landmarks with a Christmas theme. From mid November, these will be available on the CADRA website [www.cadra.org.uk](http://www.cadra.org.uk) for anyone to download, print and colour in. Please share with schools, groups or individuals who may be interested. Perhaps they could be displayed in windows to send out a message across Caversham?

By Helen Lambert



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# If you go down to .....

by Phil Chatfield

DURING the lockdown, many of us put posters, bunting and soft toys in our windows to cheer up passers-by. But in Hemdean Road, two neighbouring gardens close to Balmore Park Surgery have gone much further and become quite a local feature.

Local residents Mike and Hester have lived in Hemdean Road for more than 20 years. Their front garden has been used for small displays, often with a theme relating to current affairs. Since the pandemic restrictions were imposed, the space has been invaded by a Fairy Castle, with logs and twigs transformed, as if by magic. To finish the scene, there are delicate ladders made from twigs, fairies wearing facemasks, wooden doors and windows, and an aerial ropeway.

Mike and Hester worked together to make something which would bring a smile to the faces of those walking past. It has certainly worked, with people even stopping their cars to look, plus mentions on Facebook.

Their neighbour, Jill Knight has also had an invasion



The Teddy Bear's Picnic

photo P Chatfield

in the front garden. In this case, when lockdown began, Jill was sent information from a friend about a bear hunt for children, with bears displayed in front windows.

She writes 'As our windows are set back from the road I put a bear in a hammock in our van.

It didn't seem enough, so I moved it to the front garden and added a few more, then a few more until we had a picnic in the woods!'

## ... 'Heart-warming comments' ...

With encouragement from Hester and some really positive feedback, the display grew over time.

"Each time I think about putting it away I receive another heart-warming comment and know it has brought pleasure to a lot of people of all age groups and a lot of smiley faces. I love to see the element of surprise when people peer over the wall and see the display. It is also rewarding to hear so many animated

conversations from children and parents."

Mike and Hester have had letters delivered thanking them for providing something to make people smile and engage passing children through this difficult time, and Jill believes photos of the display have travelled as far as Portugal and New Zealand.

She also commented, "It has given me something to focus on and helped me through lockdown. I just asked myself how can I help people?" She believes one of the consequences of Covid-19 has been improved communications between people who might otherwise have passed each other by. Perhaps with a little more time to spare we have been more inclined to talk to one another. The bears are currently awaiting a waterproof home and will hopefully be back before too long.

So next time you are in the Hemdean Road area, take a close look at the front gardens – you may be in for a big surprise!



Hester, Mike and the Castle

photo P Chatfield

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## A smooth ride

by Phil Chatfield

READING Borough Council have been resurfacing a number of roads in our area. Specialist contractors have been preparing roads for the application of a relatively thin layer of material which flows into depressions and cracks, sealing them and providing a level finish. Roads are closed while the work is carried out. In early October I saw the unusual sight of Chiltern Road with no traffic or parked cars – for cyclists it is certainly a big improvement over the previous state of the road!



An empty Chiltern Road

photo P Chatfield



# Caversham Precinct – a different view



St Martin's Precinct sketch

by Pooja Fernandes

by Pooja Fernandes

I HAVE drawn from a young age and studied womenswear design at university which involved a lot of artwork; but doodling and sketching have always been a hobby. In recent years I have dabbled in it by doing little cartoons for my kids' lunchboxes. I haven't done anything this detailed for some years but thought I would give it a shot. I posted the sketch on Facebook where it attracted some attention – perhaps because of the contrast between the vegan café and the butcher's! I have now set up a Facebook page to showcase my work at:

[www.facebook.com/RockPaperString/](http://www.facebook.com/RockPaperString/)

As a member of a group called Caversham Rock Hunt, I also paint on rocks, which we hide for others to find locally, and there is a Facebook group where people can post photos of the rocks they have hidden or found. They can then keep them or re-hide them. See [www.facebook.com/groups/1996619170586845/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/1996619170586845/)

## Pop in to a pop-up

by Pat Gray

NEITHER a dull, windy morning, nor the Covid-19 virus stopped me from holding my thirtieth Macmillan Coffee Morning on 25 September. In the early days, when I was Leader at Crawshay Playgroup it was held in the grounds of Caversham Park Primary School. Since I retired, I have supported Macmillan Nurses every year at my house in Caversham Park Village and I was determined to do so again this year. I decided to hold the event outside, so, with the help of my husband, a small 'pop-up' café appeared on our drive. Three small tables, each with two garden chairs, were set on the drive, spaced in socially distanced positions. Tea, coffee and home baked cakes were prepared in the kitchen and my husband, attired in his DJ, acted as Maitre D, taking orders and serving at the tables. In all, 17 people attended, fortunately no more than could be accommodated at any one time. After the café closed, a number of deliveries of cakes were made within the area. A total of £532 was contributed in support of this good cause. My thanks go to all who supported me in this venture and ate all the cakes.

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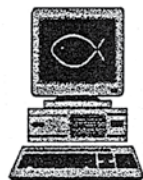
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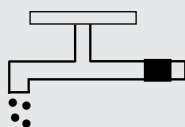
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