

NO WAY TO BUILD SOCIETY

by F Smith

THE PEOPLE of Caversham and Emmer Green have been shocked to learn of the closure of the one remaining bank serving our community. Members of the Nationwide Building Society who use the Caversham Branch received a letter at the end of



Nationwide drawing

January headed 'Information' with the title 'We're sorry to say your Caversham branch will be closing'.

The letter, from Regional Director Andrew Westhead, told members the Society had 'decided to close your Caversham branch on Thursday 22 April 2021'. He put the closure down to inadequate numbers of members using the branch and the cost of bringing it up to 'the standards you deserve'. Branches at Tilehurst, Woodley and in Reading town centre are identified as 'nearby' alternatives which have been, or are about to be, modernised.

It is clear a decision has already been made, as the letter gives no hint of consultation. We have lost all the banks in this area and, although on the map it looks like a short distance to the branch in Reading, this does not reflect the inconvenience which will be incurred. It is not possible to park close to the Reading Branch and many local members are not particularly mobile. In addition, as a consequence of the pandemic, people are reluctant to travel to the town centre.

For a mutual organisation which prides itself on being at the heart of community, members are asking how it can leave the 32,000 people in our immediate area

(as well as those served in the south Oxfordshire area) with no dedicated banking facilities? Members will be left with no local means of paying in cheques and cash and dependent on a very small number of third party cashpoints.

For our Caversham and Emmer Green society, the closure of our one remaining bank at any time would be a blow but at this time, when we are already fragile as a result of Covid-19, it is devastating news.

An on-line petition has been started by local resident Carolyn Steed which has more than 700 signatures at the time of writing.

www.change.org/p/nationwide-building-society-save-our-nationwide-branch-in-caversham

Local MP and resident Matt Rodda has taken an interest and is gathering local opinions in an online survey at:

www.mattroddamp.com/content/nationwide-caversham

The Nationwide Building Society has put further information, including an impact assessment, on their website at www.nationwide.co.uk - search for Caversham.

Local artist Janina Maher, who we profiled in our Creative Caversham feature last August, has recently painted the Nationwide/Age Concern building. We are grateful to her for permitting us to use it here.

You can find out more about her work at:

<https://janinamaher.artweb.com/drawings>

Reasons to be cheerful

by Phil Chatfield

IN RECENT weeks we have had snow, floods and daffodils. We have also seen local surgeries calling retired GPs to the front line to administer the Covid-19 vaccine. Volunteers have been marshalling car parking at Emmer Green surgery and an orderly procession of patients have rolled up their sleeves. Care home residents and staff have had their jabs, and our older and vulnerable residents now have their vaccination cards.

This winter has been a particularly difficult time for many of us. Captain Tom played a big part in keeping us positive last year and it was wonderful to hear clapping in his memory echoing around the streets on 3 February – as well as a bugler playing *The Last Post* and a piper playing *Auld Lang Syne*.

The selflessness of Captain Tom and the need to show

kindness to those around us feature in several articles in this edition. Nigel Jones reassures us we are not alone in his Talking Point for March (page 2) and Community Connections features Mark Brown, who works with young people (page 11). The kindness of neighbours is the subject of Wine Gums (page 14), and support for those in need is the common theme of articles from the Weller Centre and Veg4Reading (page 15).

We have several articles looking at trees from different perspectives this month. Les Cooper considers planting trees in the garden in his article (page 10). Jude Oliver offers us a chance to experience South America in Clayfield Copse (page 9), and Alice McGuigan writes about health benefits from trees (page 8).

We have a couple of short contributions from readers this month. If you would like to send something for a future edition or comment on anything in the paper this month, contact us at editors@cavershambridge.org



Fresh snowfall

photo F Smith

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HOWEVER IT FEELS, YOU ARE NOT ALONE

AS I WRITE, it is yet another cold, grey, drizzly day in February and there are weeks to go before we can expect to feel the Spring. People have said how much easier the weather made last March's lockdown.

Proverbs 13, verse 12 says 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick'. Although we know theoretically there is every reason to have hope we will emerge from the pandemic, it is deferred. We have weeks and months more to wait/endure/struggle on. (And that's assuming we do not get sick and need the help of an NHS at breaking point). One of the effects of the way the pandemic has evolved has been the continual deferral of hope. The horizon in which life returns to some kind of normal has continually moved back. When every day is cold, grey and drizzly this is especially tough.

Having a faith does not alter these facts, but part of the problem is our isolation from each other, so the point of this article is simply to remind you that you are not alone. We are all struggling in different ways. You may be bored and lonely. Or you may be exhausted from never getting a moment's quiet. And isolation means we cannot even



Talking Point by Nigel Jones

comfort and reassure one other in the way we otherwise would do.

But you are not alone.

'Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life'. If we can get through a few more months the second half of this proverb will be our reality. The summer will come, the vaccine will work, and we will

be able to go into each other's homes and talk and touch and hug.

But we also need to live in the now, like people who live in a war or other disaster zone with no end in sight. You probably know the things that can help. Making a deliberate choice to be thankful for whatever is good. Praying (talking to God in your imagination), meditating (embracing the silence). Switching your focus to someone else and reaching out to help them, with a word or gesture of encouragement – a phone call, a letter, a gift. St Andrew's church porch remains a drop-off point for donations to the local foodbank, and the church is open every day if you want to come in and say a prayer or light a candle for yourself or someone else. Alcohol in anything other than small amounts does not help and carries serious risks. So there are some things we can do, although they all need a little investment of effort, but that's hard if you are already exhausted.

I'm really just writing to say that you are not alone in finding these days really hard. If you shed a few tears, know as you do so that you are not the only one. At the church we pray for our local community, and I encourage you to do the same. It may not feel like it, but we are in this together. God bless.

*Rev Nigel Jones, Vicar St Andrew's Church,
Albert Road*

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
Rev'd Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331 810
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

Current services

Sunday 09:30 – You Tube service - www.youtube.com/channel/UCYMgve_d64enHsm1FUfwntA
10:15 – Zoom service – <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84366839832?pwd=M2xJSUtFbGkycG1DbEFxQ1JGYWRsQT09>
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

Current services

St Andrew's weekly service is at 10am on Sunday mornings and is a livestream on the St Andrew's YouTube channel. Details on the parish website.
www.standrewscaversham.org/services
Tuesday – 20.00 - Compline service by Zoom. E-mail the vicar to join - vicar@standrewscaversham.org

St Barnabas Emmer Green

Rev Lionel Onugha
Rev'd Derek Chandler, 20 St Barnabas Road.
Tel: 947 8239. Email: vicar@saintbarnabas.org.uk
www.facebook.com/StBarnabasEmmerGreen

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

CAVERSHAM PARK CHURCH (LEP)

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

Current services

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

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

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor: Colin Baker
Church office Tel 0118 954 5353
Email: secretary@cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

Current services

A link is placed on their website each week at:
www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk
and on their YouTube channel
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

Current services

See their web site for details: www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

RIVERSIDE CHURCH (Reading)

www.riversidechurchreading.co.uk

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Tel: 947 1787 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

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 are open in a limited way at present. 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.

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 April 2021 issue should be submitted by 15 March and for the May edition by 12 April. These should be e-mailed to:
editors@cavershambridge.org

Dates for advertising copy are 23 February for the April issue and 27 March for May. These should be e-mailed to
advertising@cavershambridge.org

WHAT'S ON

THERE are a few events planned for March. Because we do not know how the lockdown rules will apply, it becomes more important than ever to check to see if events are running. Our on-line events diaries are updated regularly, so it is worth checking to see what has been added at

cavershambridge.org:5154/archives/category/around-caversham

If you have an event planned, please send details to

editors@cavershambridge.org

Caversham Library is open for booked appointments. Limited opening: 10.00 -13.00 Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, 13.00 - 16.00 Thursday

www.reading.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/libraries-reopening

Online throughout March – Art Gallery featuring Simone Bonnett – Caversham Picture Framer.

cavershampictureframer.co.uk/in-another-land-simone-bonnett

Mondays – Time for U pram push 10:00-11.30 Caversham Baptist Church. Term time only www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk

Sunday 7 March – Farmer's Market and Artisan Fair 10:00 – 15:00 Caversham precinct www.facebook.com/CAFMarket

Sunday 21 March – Farmer's Market and Artisan Fair 10:00 – 15:00 Caversham precinct www.facebook.com/CAFMarket

Tuesday 23 March – National Day of Reflection – One year since lockdown – Remembering loved ones and supporting the bereaved – Marie Curie www.mariecurie.org.uk/get-involved/day-of-reflection

Saturday 27 March – Friends of Reading Abbey Spring Lecture – 14:30 – Professor Brian Kemp Memorial Lecture on *The Heraldry of Reading Abbey and its Legacy*, by Dr Adrian Ailes using Zoom.

Contact secretary@readingabbey.org.uk for details

A new look for the Caversham Bridge

by the Editors

IN RECENT months we have been looking at the results from our reader survey and considering what these mean for the paper. This month we address the comments you made about the appearance of the front page. Not every response touched on this. However, a number of readers suggested changes to the appearance of the front page and the 'Masthead' at the top of the page in particular. A regular reader, artist and former lecturer in graphic design, Martin Andrews, offered to develop an alternative 'logo' for the Caversham Bridge. He aimed to keep the link with Caversham Bridge itself but to provide a modern interpretation suitable for the 'Masthead' of the paper and other uses, such as our website. His design was digitised for us by another local resident, Anke Ueberberg.

The appearance of the paper has changed a few times since it was established in 1964, reflecting changes in design and printing techniques. The printing process now allows the use of colour throughout. This gives us an opportunity to adopt something which is both modern and reflective of our heritage. Martin's design (below) is clean and modern, but features the bridge which inspired the paper's name.

The new design was considered at our Board meeting in January and unanimously approved. So starting with the April edition, our front page will have a new look featuring Martin's design. Our website and correspondence will also make use of the logo. We hope you like the new look.



Caversham Bridge

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No 667

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January 2021

Spiderman cleans up

CHRIS SMALLEY-WARD, a window cleaner working in Caversham, has blown the cobwebs off a superhero costume to provide some much needed relief to a close friend who, like many parents, is battling with the home schooling challenge. Her son is a superhero fan so, on her regular window clean, Chris decided to arrive as

Spiderman. It was a bigger success than he could have hoped. Mum was over the moon to have 30 minutes relief, and the kids were amazed, running through the house trying to spot Spiderman.

This made Chris think that perhaps he could do the same for other customers in a similar situation. So for £5 on top of his normal charge, Spiderman will arrive

to do the job! Chris said, "It's a bit of fun and I love seeing the parents smiling, as well as the children's excitement."

You can see more on Chris's Facebook page – search CSW Window Cleaning.

Contact CSW Window Cleaning by phone on 07774 321561 or by e-mail cswwindowcleaning@outlook.com



Spiderman calls

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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.



World Day of Prayer

by Dorothy Abrey, co-ordinator for Caversham

THE THEME of the World Day of Prayer this year is 'Build on a strong foundation'. It is the women of the Republic of Vanuatu who have prepared this service. The scattered islands of Vanuatu lie just over 1,100 miles to the east of Australia in the south western Pacific Ocean. The black and white sandy beaches, coral reefs with coloured fishes, lovely birds, fruit and nuts in the forest, all make the islands a pristine environment, but they are vulnerable to frequent tropical storms, earthquakes, cyclones, tsunamis and active volcanoes. Women, men and children of all ages are called to 'Build on a strong foundation' and live in unity, love and peace, in the context of ethnic and cultural diversity like Vanuatu and so many other places around the world.

Unfortunately, because of the uncertain times we live in due to the Covid-19 virus, we will not be holding our service on Friday, 5 March. However, it is important to mark this global ecumenical annual event, and so the churches in Caversham have been asked to include some prayers from the prepared service during their Sunday service on 7 March, and perhaps take the theme of 'Build on a strong foundation' as the theme for that particular Sunday. [The theme is of course based on Matthew 7, verses 24 – 27]. This is something which can happen whether the service is live or streamed and should avoid last minute cancellations. Anyone wishing to know more or wishing to make a donation to the work of World Day of Prayer should contact their church representative for details.

Design a Pancake

by Anna Clarke

ST JOHN'S Church has recently joined with local primary schools Thameside and Micklands to run a DESIGN A PANCAKE competition for pupils in Key Stage 2. Their task is to draw, decorate and describe their very own pancake in the most mouth-watering way possible, with entries being judged on creativity, originality and appeal!



Pancake competition

photo A Clarke

By the time you read this we will have selected a winner and two runners-up from each school. They will be the lucky winners of a certificate and *The Garden, The Curtain and The Cross* – a colouring and activity book which tells the Christian story of Easter alongside various puzzles and mazes. Our two winners will also be the recipients of a gift voucher to spend at our local *Warings Bakery*. A big thank you to *Warings* for supporting the competition.

Winners and runners-up will have been announced in a special *Discover Lent* video on 10 February. So if you fancy seeing the fabulous pancake designs of our winners, then do head to the CTM Parish YouTube channel to check them out and perhaps even test *your* knowledge of Lent too with our Discover Lent quiz included in the video. www.youtube.com/ctmparish

John Mullaney recommends reading....

The God Paradigm Revisited

Neil Thomas (2021) £5.75

A FOLLOW-ON to the author's *Darwin Disproved?* (2020), where he traced the sceptical voices of a number of scientists to Charles Darwin's theories of evolution, this volume has a similar theme, but with an emphasis on Alfred Russel Wallace as co-discoverer of natural selection.

The book takes up the story of how Wallace began to believe natural selection was quite literally impossible in nature. He began to doubt the ultra-complex human brain could have come about by the serendipity of natural selection. He then saw what later scientists dubbed 'the irreducible complexity of all plant and animal life' as unimaginable if viewed solely as the result of random natural selection.

The topic of how Dawkins and others have used Darwinism against religion is an important focus of both volumes, and a theme to which Thomas will return in a third volume.

Neil Thomas is a Reader emeritus at the University of Durham.

Canon Giles Goward (1965 - 2021)

ON 29 JANUARY, the Archbishop of Birmingham, the Most Reverend Bernard Longley announced, "It is with great sadness that I am writing to let you know that Canon Giles Goward, the Rector of St Mary's College Oscott, died peacefully yesterday afternoon (Thursday 28 Jan) in the Seminary after a brief illness." He was 55 years old.

Canon Giles was ordained at St Chad's Cathedral on the 14 July 1995. He served as Parish Priest at Our Lady and St Anne Caversham 2005-2013. Father Giles is remembered with great affection by the people of Our Lady and St Anne, where he was a very diligent parish priest. He was appointed as Rector of St Mary's on 28 June last year.

See www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/news/death-of-rector-of-oscott-college for further information.

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www.cavershamgoodneighbours.org.uk
0118 948 3466

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

What next for our young people?



by Romy Biscoe, Starting Point Advance Programme Manager

NOW WE'RE in 'Lockdown 3.0' and schools are closed again, what is next for our young people? Where do they go to ask questions and to get help, particularly if they don't have the support at home? A challenging job market, hours of education missed and worsening mental health are just a few of the ways young people are being affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

I grew up near Caversham and recently started working for *Starting Point*, based in Reading. We provide mentoring and create opportunities for young people who face disadvantages. A young person told me recently how abandoned it felt when schools closed in March last year. This will deepen existing inequalities.

Organisations like *Starting Point* can then step in, particularly over the next few years, to help all young people feel believed in.

Mentoring takes a relational, tailored, and holistic approach. We match each young person with a mentor who provides consistent and reliable support, helping them towards a brighter, more hopeful future, whilst celebrating small steps along the way.

In 2019, we mentored 101 young people on our *Aspire* programme, which supports young people aged 15-25 who are 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training' (NEET).

We have recently launched a new programme – *Advance* – for young people aged 11-19, which supports young people at risk of exclusion and/or becoming NEET.

"Mentoring [...] has benefited me a lot. I was in stupid places, doing stupid things, but now I see a brighter future because of it." – Young Person

"Volunteering a small amount of time once a week has the potential to change someone's life." – Volunteer Mentor

We couldn't offer the support we do without the help of brilliant local volunteers. But we do need more mentors. Is this something you might be able to do? If you are interested or simply want more information, please get in touch:

E-mail us at:

startingpoint@themustardtree.org or call us on 0118 956 7000



Starting Point young people and mentors

photo S O'Rourke

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IT'S ALL HAPPENING

Pavilion help needed

by Elisa Miles, Chair of WADRA

THE WARREN and District Residents' Association (WADRA) is organising a weekly 'open afternoon' at the Mapledurham Playing Fields' Pavilion.

As soon as we are past the Covid restrictions, we will be serving drinks, and hope to have baked goods from *The Ways & Means Trust* for sale, a book swap facility, board games to use, and occasional demonstrations and speakers.

The open afternoon is for all ages and will be every Thursday between 12:30 and 16:30. The Association is looking for volunteers to help in the kitchen. If you are interested, please contact us at info@wadra.org.uk for more information.

Building our community

Planning update from Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA), bringing you a summary of planning and transport matters affecting the RG4 area

A new outline planning application for 257 new homes on the Reading Golf Club site has been submitted. CADRA will be looking at it carefully and commenting. Comments made on the previous application will not be carried forward automatically. If you want your views to be heard, you will need to comment again on the new application, quoting the new application number 210018. The CADRA Planning List may be a convenient way to find details. You will find a vast array of documents. Section 6 of the Planning Statement is a useful start, and this has been uploaded to our website.

The nearly complete, 22 storey tower on the former BMW site (now "Thames Quarter") at the beginning of Napier Road has recently acquired a bright blue light all around its top, which can be seen from all over Reading. CADRA is concerned by an unnecessary and unwelcome form of light pollution. The developers have submitted a retrospective planning application for it and CADRA has objected (application 210094).

Two appeals are due to be heard. Permission to demolish the Drews buildings and construct a seven-storey block was refused by the Planning Applications Committee. There has been some fascinating research into these maltings buildings which are rare survivors of an industry once extensive in Reading - a significant factor in the decision to grant local listing. The other appeal relates to extensions associated with an HMO in St John's Road.

You will find a list of all significant applications, with links to further information on www.cadra.org.uk. Look for Current Planning Applications – Planning List. This also includes a few applications of interest in South Oxfordshire and Reading, including the new leisure facilities at Rivermead and the three major schemes north of the station.

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Cutting Food Waste – Food Waste Week

by Tricia Marcouse

THE ROLL out of food waste collection bins has been completed in Caversham, but please remember that reducing your food waste is a much better option for your pocket and the climate than filling the food waste bin. This month sees the inaugural *Food Waste Week* where retailers, manufacturers and Local Authorities work together to encourage everyone to reduce their food waste. Watch out for local and national information, but I think the best resource is at <https://lovefoodhatewaste.com> which collects

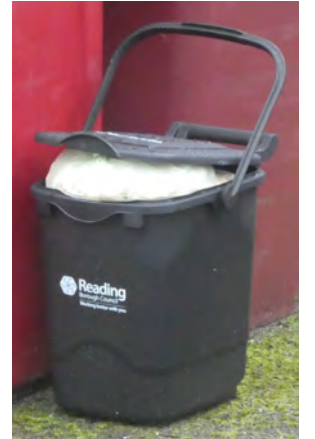
together storage information for every variety of food, hints for storing and using leftovers, and recipe suggestions. These recipe suggestions may help in trying to use seasonal vegetables, which is another excellent way of reducing your climate change footprint.

Here are two of my food tips:

I often have a spare half a lemon. I slice it and freeze it. The slices do the duty of ice cubes and lemon slices in drinks, and are also amazing in cooking, as the freezing process breaks down the structure and the lemon slices dissolve completely into a stew or soup.

If I buy bunches of parsley, coriander or dill at

the supermarket I often have spare bits. These are chopped and go into the freezer, using one of those weird little plastic pots that every so often fall out of the kitchen cupboard. They might go into a soup or into a parsley sauce but, most often, are used to flavour cooked bulgar wheat or couscous. A better organised person would label them properly, but at least the dill looks different!



Food Caddy photo F Smith



by Alex Forbes



For your bookshelf....

Dreaming of lions

published, *The Lion Tamer Who Lost* was easily one of my favourite books of that year, and is still a book I love to discuss and introduce to new readers.

The next book is a classic, *The Iron Man* by Ted Hughes (ages 9-12). I've picked the more recently released illustrated version by Laura Carlin, which won V&A Best Illustrated Book of the Year. I'm always amazed how some of the classics seem so relevant despite their age. Everyone knows the story of the 'metal man' who wreaks havoc, before a young boy (Hogarth) befriends him, giving a story of peace and hope that transcends generations. However, the illustrations help bring the story to life and are truly stunning, which makes it easier if children need to read it for school! This version of the book is perfect for children learning to read bigger books on their own or those who enjoy being read to.

Welcome to 'Fourbears Reviews', where we review a couple of chosen titles from our bookshop 'Fourbears Books' on Prospect Street.

THE ADULT book this month is *The Lion Tamer Who Lost* by Louise Beech, published by Orenda Books. Ben had a dream to work with lions, but when it happens, it's not for the reasons he imagines. Ben also keeps meeting Andrew in unexpected places, and the intense relationship that forms seems to be guided by fate, or is it something else? This is a beautiful, breathtaking love story which touched our hearts with the moving storyline. Louise does an excellent job of creating magnetic characters and creating an atmosphere which transports the reader, which is perfect for these wet, dark evenings. When this was



The Bear recommends photo Alex Forbes

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Happy Wanderer

ON THE SCENT OF A FLORAL CLOCK

THE PHOTOGRAPH that accompanies this article looks nothing like a town hall clock, I know, but the flowers of this small plant look out at right-angles at the tops of the stems, like tiny tower clocks. And there's a fifth flower, which looks upwards. The whole plant is only a few inches tall, and it's all green, including the flowers, making it hard to see, but you can find it around Reading, here and there. Typically it grows on the edges of woods and hedge-banks, and it starts flowering in March, giving rise to another of its English names, Good Friday Flower. It covers whole patches of ground, spreading by underground rhizomes. By midsummer, the whole plant has shrivelled and gone underground until the next spring.

A close look at a flower-head reveals that the individual flowers take two forms: those that look sideways have five petals each, and five stamens, but the ones that look upwards, have only four stamens. Not only that, but each stamen is forked, so the



Adoxa moschatellina

photo Happy Wanderer

flowers look as though they have ten or eight stamens.

The insignificance of the plant gives rise to one of its botanical names, *Adoxa*, which is Greek and means 'without glory'. In Somerset, according to Geoffrey Grigson in *The Englishman's Flora*, one of its English names is Gloriless, which reads like a translation made by a scholar, rather than what the people who worked on the land where it grew called it. It would be interesting to know if the name is still used in Somerset.

The full botanical name of the plant is *Adoxa moschatellina*, the second part of which has given rise to another of its English names, Moschatel. This also sounds like something from the study rather than the

open air. 'Moschatel' first appeared in print in a botanical textbook of 1732, referring to this plant which has a musky smell.

This smell is said to be faint, but more pronounced in wet weather. You'd probably need to get down on the ground, or to pick a bit, in order to experience it – but beware - I have also read that if you bruise the plant, the smell of musk will disappear! This is all rather curious and hard to believe.

Interestingly, scientists studying plant genetics have recently grouped Honeysuckle, Elder, and Viburnum in the same family as Town Hall Clock – all plants noted for their scent. Most people enjoy the scent of honeysuckle and viburnum, but opinion on Elder seems to be divided. Some like its scent but, for others, elderflowers remind them of tom-cats.

This set me wondering if I would recognise the smell of musk if I came upon it. It used to be used in perfumery, and was obtained from the scent glands of various male animals, the collection of which involved killing the unfortunate creatures. Now, it can be made synthetically, but even synthetic or 'white' musk still has the power to attract wild animals. The Wikipedia article on the subject of musk tells how in India, the fragrance called *Obsession* by Calvin Klein has been used to attract and trap wild tigers!

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Puzzle Corner

WORD PUZZLE
by Erin

Find the word that has the same meaning as the clue; or rhymes with; or has one letter that is different. For example: *smack* has 5 letters, rhymes with *black* and differs from *stack* by one letter from *stack*.

Rhyme ———

Letter change ·····

Meaning ———

Word Ladder

by Cloistered

Change SONG into LARK by altering one letter at a time in four moves.
For example CAT into DOG in three moves: cat/cot/cog/dog.

FOUR MOVES

SONG

LARK

FIVE MOVES

HARD

TIME

SIX MOVES

CAMP

SITE

All answers on page 15

Give trees some love



Maggie and Jim by the
Thames, Pangbourne
photo A McGuigan

by
Alice
McGuigan

MANY OF us have been going out for long walks and spending more time in nature over the last year. Perhaps we have been drawn to our local parks or woodlands, wandering among the fellowship of trees, whose qualities may remind us of the strength and forbearance we have been asked to cultivate together in these times.

If we were to look under the earth, we would see that these trees are interconnected. Through shared root systems woven through various fungal networks, they are able to support one another, including frail stumps. Together they create an ecosystem, share nutrients and build an environment resilient enough to withstand storms.

I first learned about this behaviour in the book *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben, and it was this understanding that led me to start communing with trees last year. While walking through Clayfield Copse, my arms quite spontaneously embraced the trunk of an old oak tree. Until then I hadn't realised how grounding and relaxing hugging a tree could be.

Trees remind me that we are relational beings. Right now we can't hug each other, but we can embody a sense of reciprocal care and comfort in recognising ourselves as a part of nature. Science also demonstrates the importance of this connection; did you know trees release phytoncides, volatile compounds with health benefits?

Humans from around the world have been embracing this idea during the pandemic. In Iceland, their forestry commission cleared snow-



Nicola in Sulham Woods

covered paths to give locals access to trees while socially distancing. Here in Reading, a couple of Facebook groups have been created to celebrate trees around the town, one of which was the genesis of a global community portraying tree-hugging pictures from around the world.

Hugging trees is now an act of solidarity with our local wildlife and community. The Earth Living Festival has organised a campaign to raise funds for Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trusts. Hug a tree and donate £3 to the cause below:

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/treehugathon

On 27-28 March, the Earth Living Festival will be running an online festival for local charities, including BBOWT. To find out more visit

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Wildlife
by William Cecil

The cosiest nests in town

RED KITES are a familiar sight wheeling and swooping over Caversham. They were once seen all over the country, and were common in dirty medieval London, where they were encouraged to feed on carrion and waste littering the streets.

As London was cleaned up, the kites moved out to the countryside, but then keepers shot them to protect their game birds.

By the end of the 19th Century only about a dozen breeding pairs survived in mid-Wales. From 1989 Spanish red kites were reintroduced into the Chilterns, and soon spread to Cambridgeshire and Norfolk.

Kites have been notoriously successful in this area, and have become a spectacular feature of our skies – though the issue of putting out titbits in our gardens for more close up viewing is controversial.

High flying kites are looking out for 'high' meat and, if we put out rotten scraps, we could attract rats and other unwelcome visitors.

Our knitters, crocheters and other workers with wool have the answer. One knitting bird lover I know remembered walks when she saw nest builders gathering scraps of fleece from farm hedges and barbed wire. So she threw handfuls of leftover wool on to branches in her garden.

Red Kite

photo Rob Stallard



Sure enough, within hours a kite flew in and helped itself. Then another, and various other birds joined in.

Lovely to think that all this toiling and knitting in the field could have resulted in Caversham's kites bringing up their young in the cosiest and most colourful nests in Reading.



Eat Ethical Easter Eggs



by Phil Chatfield

EACH YEAR, we eat over 8 kilogrammes of chocolate per head in the UK¹. We eat more than almost anywhere else on Earth and much of it at Easter. Around 80 million Easter Eggs are sold each year in the UK. Most are packaged in cardboard or plastic, generating around 3,000 tonnes of packaging waste. Cardboard packaging is readily recycled, but much of the plastic is likely to be thrown away.

This Easter, when you choose Easter Eggs, try to think about the packaging. Look for those sold without plastic packing. Most of the major manufacturers have set targets for reducing their plastic use, so there should be plenty of options. Some have even introduced 'Plastic Free' logos on their egg boxes.

As well as the packaging, look for eggs made with fairly traded chocolate. Products bearing the Fair Trade Mark are made from chocolate for which the cocoa growers have been paid a fair price.

For vegans and those with milk allergies, there are

a surprising number of alternatives to traditional chocolate eggs. These are increasingly available from mainstream supermarkets, as well as local specialist stores, such as the True Food Co-op in Emmer Green.

1. Data from the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries:

www.cbi.eu/market-information

You don't have to go to Bogota to see an Andean Oak tree!

VARIOUS *Friends of Clayfield Copse* walk around the ash dieback areas regularly looking for ash survivors – it is estimated that maybe 5% of the trees may be resistant and could survive this deadly disease. Other trees coming through are being monitored, though it is difficult for young trees where the bramble has become rampant.

Many native trees, such as oak, hawthorn, birch, rowan are there, as are several garden escapees, such as buddleia and

by Jude Oliver

cotoneaster. There are many wild versions of apple, pear and cherry, and a few exotic surprises, such as a pacific cherry, a ginkgo and, this month, when evergreens can be picked out easily, an Andean Oak (*Quercus humboldtii*).

In some areas, volunteers have been carefully cutting back some of the bramble to help the new trees come through. Self-planted trees have a better chance of survival than planted ones.

Finding the Andean oak and the other species just goes to show how unsatisfactory it is to mass clear areas of ash die back.

Unfortunately this has happened recently in the field which adjoins Blackhouse Wood, (alongside the pear

tree bridle path). Every tree and bush in that field has been razed to the ground. Who knows what might have been there?

In normal times, *Friends of* meet monthly on the first Sunday. Meanwhile, let us know if you spot any interesting plants there.

Website: www.econetreading.org.uk for details or Facebook.



Andean Oak foliage
photo *Friends of Clayfield Copse*

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Trying Trees



by Les Cooper

AS WITH many television viewers, I watch 'Countryfile'. Recently, the presenters, in conjunction with the Woodland Trust, were urging us to plant trees. I admit my knowledge of trees is very basic, but I do have a few growing in my fairly small garden. I have a crab apple called *Red Sentinel* and another called *Wedding Bouquet*. They have lovely white flowers turning pink, followed by small bright red apples. They were both delightful in 2020, and let us hope they will be as good this year. However, crab apples can be a bit 'biennial' when it comes to flowering, so we will have to wait and see. Another real joy each spring is a flowering cherry called *Ukon*, with pretty cream flowers, which never fails to please us. (I hope I haven't tempted providence by writing that). A downside is that it never has any cherries.

Previously I have rattled on about being misled by some gardening articles and catalogues. For example, my memory is scarred by how I was deceived into buying an *Amelanchier lamarckii* tree several years ago. I had seen a beautiful picture of one in bloom and was thrilled by the sight of it. I just had to buy one and, when the time came, I was thrilled to see it covered with masses of buds. Then one spring morning I looked into the garden and was ecstatic at the sight of my lovely tree covered in blossom. It



photo E Cooper
Crab apple *Red Sentinel*



Prunus 'Ukon'

photo E Cooper

was an absolute picture. But a day went by and petals began to fall and soon all the flowers were gone. I couldn't believe how quickly the flowers had disappeared. I have probably now given the impression that it was a bad buy. Well, it wasn't really, because a tree is not all about flowers, and an *Amelanchier* has many merits, especially when its fruit ripens and the birds have a feast.

So you may ask what am I going to plant this year? I have always fancied a *Hamamelis* (Chinese Witch Hazel) because it has beautiful flowers during the early months of the year. I think it is termed a shrub, but it would appear to be a fairly large shrub, so will count as a 'tree' for me. There is a range of colours, and I have decided to buy *H. Jelena* with bright orange flowers, *H. Mollis* with yellow flowers and *H. Magic Fire* with red-orange flowers. I plan to have these planted in large pots by the time you read this. I just hope they live up to my expectations.

Simple soda bread recipe

by Kim Pierce, introduction by Sarah Roy

For our March recipe, we asked Sarah Roy, The Caversham Jam Lady who we featured last month. She suggested:

Super-easy soda bread

I AM OFTEN asked by customers and people trying my preserves, what is the best way to use different flavours? I always think home-made jam deserves to be enjoyed on something home-made. This is one of my most favourite recipes, from my friend Kim's blog¹. It's the easiest bread recipe you could ever hope to find! No kneading or proving required— just measure, mix, pat into a loaf shape and stick it in the oven. What could be simpler? It's perfect for all types of preserves and just right when it's fresh out of the oven warm. Delicious!

Ingredients

- 8oz/225g wholemeal flour
- 8oz/225g plain white flour (plus extra for dusting)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 2 tsps cream of tartar
- 11 fl oz/325ml milk (semi-skimmed or full-fat)

Method

1. Start by switching your oven on to its highest heat setting and put a lidded pot or casserole dish in to heat up for at least 15 minutes, with the lid on. (If you don't have a suitable pot you can just bake it in an 8" cake tin or on a baking tray.)
2. Mix all the dry ingredients together (I use an ordinary table knife), then pour all the milk in at once and stir just until it starts to come together as a dough. Shape it roughly into a ball in the bowl, dusting with just enough extra flour to stop it sticking to the bowl and your hands. Cut a deep cross in the top with a sharp knife.
3. Take your pot out of the oven, remove the lid and carefully drop the dough in, cross up. (You don't need to grease or line it, but make sure there's plenty of flour on the outside of the dough.) Put the lid back on, and return it to the oven.
4. Turn the heat down to 220C, Gas Mark 7 and bake for 35 minutes, by which time it should be risen, browned and crusty.
5. Use a palette knife or silicon spatula to loosen the bread from the pot, then turn out onto a cooling rack and leave till just warm or cold before slicing.



Serve with lashings of butter and home-made jam!

¹smugfacelazybones.wordpress.com/2017/03/17/super-easy-soda-bread/



Every cloud...

by Rachael Staines

As a parent or relative of a young person, have you ever wondered what you could do to encourage them to become more resilient? It's a question I am often asked and for which I have only ever previously offered a multi strand answer. However, having attended a webinar recently on resilience and after watching a powerful TED talk by Dr Lucy Hone on the topic, I feel better equipped to share an answer providing both informed and practical suggestions.

It is evident that resilient people use their skills and strengths to cope and recover from problems

and have a sense of optimism to help them face difficulty. Maybe you can start by considering the following: what were the three toughest times in your life? How did you get through those challenges? How does this help you now? Think about how you coped when something awful happened and what you learnt about yourself and your coping mechanisms as a result.

Then call to mind just one difficult experience. Try to list three positive things about it. For example, you might reflect on how disagreeing with someone brought some important issues out into the open and allowed you to learn something about their point of view. This is called Finding Silver Linings

and can help to change our thought processes by focusing on the positive.

Can you think of a challenge you currently have on your plate? Ask yourself: what are my options? Are there other options I am avoiding because I don't want to do them? If that option became reality, what would I do? Resilient people think creatively around problems, rather than getting stuck on them, and plan rather than procrastinate. Often the simple notion of identifying a solution to work towards, rather than inactivity, can in itself lead towards greater resilience.

Above all, the greatest take away is to ask yourself the simple question, 'does what I'm doing help me or harm me?' Having the discipline to pause long enough to reflect on this can be a simple starting point in making an accountable positive choice and, in the long term, developing a more resilient mindset.



Community Connections

by Caroline Gratrix

This month we get to know something about Caversham resident Mark Brown



Mark Brown photo C Gratrix

MARK BROWN is a youth worker based at Grace Church Caversham, in Emmer Green. His work is not exclusive to those who are part of the church, all young people are welcome.

Mark and his team run the *Sync Youth Club* from Grace church on a Friday evening, fortnightly, 19:30 – 21:00 - pre Covid, they were getting 50-80 young people attending.

The youth club offers a wide range of activities, including table tennis, pool and air-hockey, games consoles, and a chill out area where there are sofas to sit and chat, the milkshake bar with tuck shop, and main hall area with inflatables and recreational activities. In addition to this, they organise a summer festival for youth, working with an international family of churches called 'Commission'. For more on the organisation, see www.commission.global

During lockdown, they are offering zoom support sessions for Year 7 – Year 11 (Deeper Youth Group) and you can find the details via the Grace Church website:

www.gracechurchcaversham.org.uk

Mark also runs *Shuffle* lunchtime sessions at Highdown School, offering the pupils a safe space to chat, a listening ear, team building and confidence techniques.

You can find Mark and his youth support buddies in Emmer Green park, shops and skatepark most Wednesdays from 16:00 – 17:30 as part of their detached youth work, they are always ready to listen and support any youngsters in need.

Mark says, "All young people need to know they are valued and important".

Tell us a bit about you:

How long have you lived in the area?

Two years now. I moved to the area to take up a post as full time Youth Worker for Grace Church, Caversham.

What's your favourite thing about Caversham?

I like Clayfield Copse, for community space for walking and recreational activities.

Best local coffee shop?

I enjoy visiting Bite Coffee shop in Emmer Green for a hot drink and light snack, as well as an occasional meeting place for work. The staff are friendly.

Where do you like to eat out?

Mainly do home cooking, but occasionally go to Alto Lounge for a light meal.

Where to shop in Caversham?

Terrys Hardware Shop, Costa and Iceland.

If you could bring anything to our area, what would it be?

A Youth Centre/community space for young people.



photo M Brown

Mark and his coffee trolley

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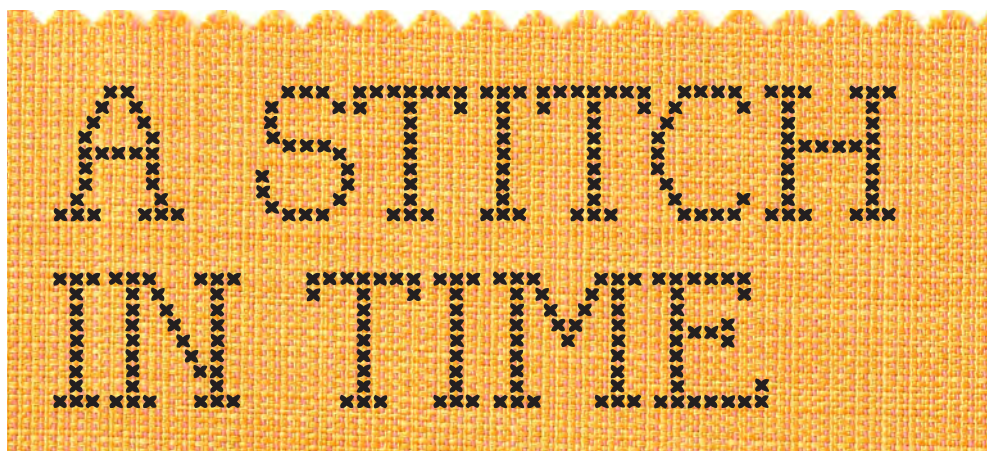
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Lou Jessop, textile artist

*Embroidery and the use of
textiles can be raised to an
art form in talented hands,
as Lou tells Elestr Lee*

HERE has always been a tendency for the art world to regard embroidery or stitched work to merely be 'craft' – despite great examples down the centuries from tapestries to fashion clothing, not to mention contemporary pieces by artists including Grayson Perry and Tracey Emin.

Local artist Lou Jessop is determined to make the case for her art, and was very pleased that her embroidered picture entitled 'Running With Wolves' was selected as part of the exhibition, 'Animal – World Art Journeys', on show at the John Madejski Gallery in Reading Museum until April, and available to view online.

"People have always used embroidery to make pictures," Lou says, "But mine are a bit different, as they include the use of relief appliqué elements."

Biblical stories, literature, plays,

characters from Hinduism, and themes from ancient myths and legends, have all fed into the inspiration behind Lou's embroidered pictures. She first became fascinated by embroidery and stitching whilst at school.

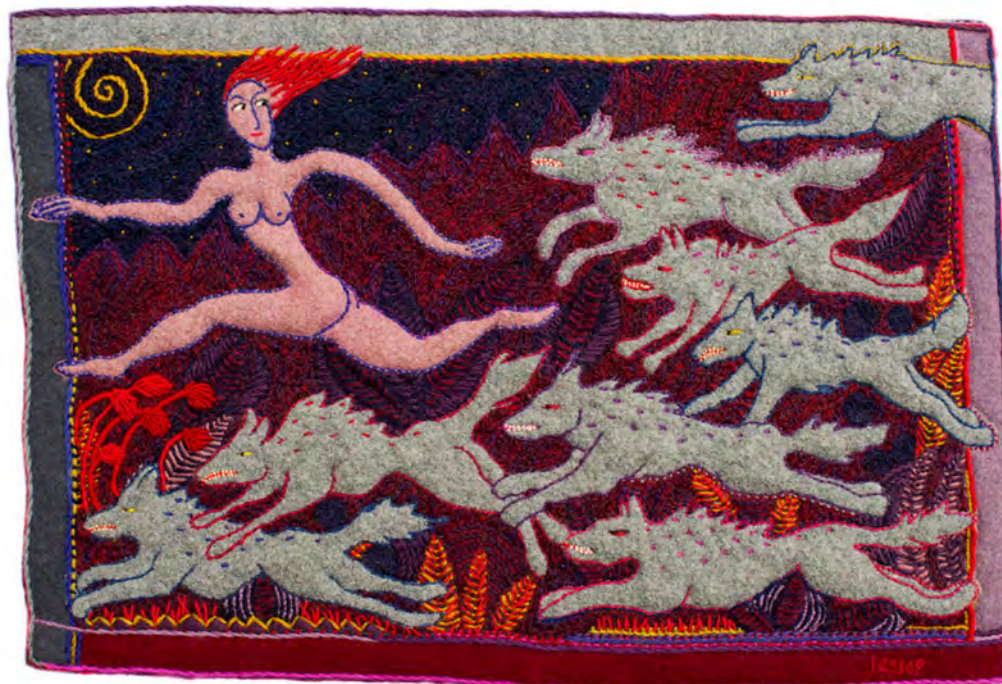
"All the girls at my primary school did sewing, and I loved my first project stitching coloured thread to make a needle case. Then, when I was at secondary school, my woollen gloves needed repairing. I darned the holes and found myself carried away with the pleasure of working with coloured wool and didn't stop until I had the gloves completely covered!" she recalls.

Lou, who is a professional gardener, didn't go to art school or take her interest any further – apart from decorating things for her own children as they were growing up. However, around 12 years ago, an aunt sent her some beautiful colourful old but



Tyger Tyger

photo Lou Jessop



Running with Wolves

photo Lou Jessop

moth-damaged jumpers, and she was inspired.

"I had the idea to copy a Matisse nude. I cut out a figure from the purple jumper, padded it a bit, then added a background to the image with thickly layered stitching. I developed this technique as I went along. Odd as it sounds, when I am working, I imagine the characters are communicating with me, helping with decisions about colours and patterns," Lou explains.

Lou's vibrant embroidery pictures are certainly eye-catching. "The central characters are cut from re-cycled knitwear, tacked on to a cotton backing fabric. The surroundings are a mixture of pictorial elements and patterns. I always use brightly coloured wool and the stitching is very thick. It is all done by hand. I layer stitches over one another for density and texture – it's very time-consuming, but utterly absorbing," she says.

Her work has certainly attracted attention; as well as being selected for the Madejski Gallery, she submitted a piece for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition a few years back, and, on her first attempt, made it to the short list. "I didn't get any further – but I was very pleased just to be considered."

Lou also creates woollen figures. When she can she spends a lot of time travelling by train, visiting her grown-up children. "These small woollen figures use up scraps of fabric and are something I can do on the train," she says.

Lou is pleased that one of her daughters followed in her footsteps by completing a degree in embroidery design in Manchester. As a member of the Reading Guild of Artists (RGA) as well as of S.E.W (Society for Embroidered Work), Lou remains determined to make the case for textile art.

"Much of my spare time is spent stitching," she says. "I get engrossed in completing a picture. My interest is in the doing; the slow filling of the spaces, the choosing of colours, and the rhythm of the needle. Once it is finished, I put it away and am ready to start on the next one. I can get side-tracked such as recently when the RGA decided to put on an online exhibition

inspired by Reading. I decided to make a figure, loosely based on the Elizabeth Frink statue near the Reading Abbey ruins. I can be a bit of a flibbertigibbet – starting one thing, then moving on to another! I sometimes wish I had more hands and many more hours in the day!

I usually take part in the Caversham Arts Trail, so I was sorry it was cancelled



Red Haired Madonna

photo Lou Jessop

last year as I like to have an open studio and to meet people. But I have to say, the pandemic hasn't affected my work except it has meant I have slightly more time than usual, as we have no guests or visitors.

"I am fortunate in that I just don't know what it is to be bored!"

Find out more about Lou's work:

[@jessopstitches](https://www.loujessop.com)
www.loujessop.com

Or visit the RGA exhibition online:
[www.rga-artists.org.uk/
online-exhibition2.html](https://www.rga-artists.org.uk/online-exhibition2.html)

Reading Museum exhibition online:
[www.readingmuseum.org.uk/
animal-world-art-journeys-
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A Fair Trade Journey –

Celebrating Fairtrade Fortnight 22 February – 7 March 2021

by Pam Chatfield

A LONG long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away - actually in the early 1990s in West Reading, a young couple attended St George's Church, where the minister's wife ran a Fair Trade stall once a month. This young couple supported her stall, and when the Minister and his wife moved, they were asked to take it over. So started our involvement with Traidcraft and the Fair Trade movement. Since leaving St George's, with a toddler, a new baby and two boxes of Traidcraft goods, and moving to Caversham, it would not be an exaggeration to say our lives have not been the same.

We moved to Priest Hill and began attending Caversham Heights Methodist Church in Highmoor Road. We soon graduated from helping with their monthly Traidcraft Stall to running it. We began opening our home (an upstairs flat) every year in November to host a Traidcraft sale, putting out all the stock we had. We still open our home, now in South View Avenue, and those two boxes have morphed into a large stock requiring its own storeroom.

During the first Covid lockdown we realised we would have to do things differently. As the autumn approached, we decided to set up a marquee in the garden for our sale and open it for a full week (rather than 2 days). We made sure we were complying with the Covid rules and, to

our delight (and relief), the residents of Caversham and further afield supported this event amazingly. For those unable to get out, or isolating, Phil made local deliveries by bicycle.

Being Traidcraft 'Fairtraders' has opened doors and introduced us to many new friends. We feel privileged to be able to support artisans and producers in developing countries to gain more independence and an improved quality of life.

To find out more, you can see Traidcraft's full range on their website www.traidcraftshop.co.uk or follow our Facebook page www.facebook.com/cavershamfairtrade



The Marquee Fair Trade Stall!

Photo Pam Chatfield

Caversham Heights Post Boxes

by Rodney Oliver - a member of Reading Philatelic Society

AS I JOIN the many walkers around the streets during lockdown, I have looked more closely at the variety of post boxes we have.

In my area, Caversham Heights, I have found a Victorian cylindrical box in Kidmore Road at the junction with Richmond Road, (probably placed there due to the rapid housing development to the north of Caversham), and a cylindrical Edwardian one, initials E VII R, along The Warren, at the bottom of Grass Hill. During the reigns of George V and George VI, several cylindrical and wall boxes were installed up here [G V R and G VI R].

So how did it all happen? The roadside position was introduced in Britain following the 1840 Postal Reform, which provided universal affordable postage. The new adhesive stamp, the famous 'Penny Black', made prepayment of delivery easy. However, letters had to be taken to

the nearest receiving office, which could be miles away. This, linked with the growth in demand for postal services, led to a need for more convenient places to collect letters for delivery.

In 1852, the novelist Anthony J Trollope, a general post official in Jersey, provided a system of locked cast iron boxes at the roadside, with arrangements for regular collections. This was extended to the mainland in 1853.

The boxes' design evolved over the years, with many changes in shape, from the wall box to hexagonal and finally to cylindrical in 1859. They all had, and still



Kidmore Road post box



Edward VII post box

have, the insignia of the reigning monarch – in various styles.

A small but interesting part of our heritage; has anyone else found interesting landmarks on their daily urban lockdown walks?

All photos R Oliver



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Wine Gums



by David Baldock

Les Cooper, who writes our 'In the Garden' feature, sent us this story from an old friend.

IF I ASKED you what rouses your emotions, you might answer that it's a piece of music, a particular song, a royal parade with pomp and pageant along the Mall, or the sight of a new-born baby. I doubt any of you would answer 'wine gums'. Nor would I until recently!

I have always loved Maynard's wine gums. Note Maynard's wine gums - beware of cheap imitations! I like chocolate but avoid eating too much for weight reasons, and I don't eat boiled sweets out of respect for my teeth, as I am a 'cruncher' not a 'sucker', but Maynard's wine gums are my downfall. If I open the packet, I need all my willpower to stop before I have eaten them all at one go.

What on earth is he going on about, I hear you say? Well, during lockdown in 2020, when persons of my age were advised by the government to stay at home, two very kind neighbours did my shopping for me. I would ask one of them now and then to include a packet of my favourite wine gums in my order and Sue (that being her name!) commented that her husband was partial to them as well.

Eventually I was able to resume my own shopping. Then, a day

or two before Christmas, the doorbell rang and there was Sue with a package wrapped in festive paper. Handing it to me, she said, "That's just a bit of fun for Christmas, and a reminder that I'm here for you if you need anything". I thought it was a packet of Roses chocolates, as it was that shape, but kept it until Christmas Day.

On Christmas morning I opened the package and laughed as the contents were revealed - two boxes of Maynard's wine gums! Never mind the Ferrero Rocher and Lindt assortments, these were the real deal. I then paused, and started to cry. I realised that Sue had remembered that they were my favourites and had taken the trouble to



buy and wrap them for me. That simple act touched me deeply and I thought with gratitude what capacity humans have for kindness.

We have seen countless examples of it during the past

troubled year. The sacrifice of medical staff, the tenacity of Captain Tom, the establishment of neighbourhood help groups looking after the elderly and vulnerable. People doing chores and errands for those living close by to whom they had hardly ever spoken previously, and countless other unseen and unsung acts of random kindness. I cried because someone remembered me; a completely unexpected gesture which stirred my emotions, gave me a wonderful lift, and renewed my faith in human nature.

To be kind must be one of our greatest aspirations. It is my hope that, in a society which in my view was becoming very selfish, the acts of kindness we have seen during this wretched pandemic will become the norm and the hallmark of a more caring, inclusive society.

Right, wine gums anybody?!!

Editor's note: Wine gums were my mother's panacea for minor aches, grazed knees – the list is endless. Even now, after so many years, I can hear her saying "Never mind, have a wine gum"!



Balmore House

photo PChatfield



Write to the editors

The mystery of Balmore House

One of our readers sent in the following message by e-mail this month. We wondered if any of our readers know anything more about this. What was the building used for in the Second World War?

I REMEMBER a few years ago chatting to an elderly gentleman, in his 90s I should think, whilst waiting for the bus on Peppard Road, opposite Newlands Avenue. He told me Balmore House was once the Forces Payroll Office during the war. He also mentioned that the night watchman was West Indian. The watchman was not 'comfortable' being there, as he was convinced the place was haunted. Fact or fiction - about the house and the watchman?

I can't help thinking about this 'story' (or is it?!) every time I walk pass Balmore House on my daily walk.

Please contact editors@cavershambridge.org if you have any information about the house or the watchman.



Balmore House

photo PChatfield



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Can you 'Grow for Reading'?

by Naomi German

FOOD4FAMILIES, and its sister project Veg4Reading, are encouraging people to 'Grow for Reading' by sowing seeds at home this spring; the seedlings will then be planted out at community gardens across Reading. The resulting vegetables will be distributed to people who join in with Food4families community gardening sessions (when this is possible again!) as well as going towards the Veg4Reading project.

The Veg4Reading project was set up in July 2020, in response to the Coronavirus crisis, to provide fresh produce for those experiencing food poverty. Over 70 volunteers signed up to grow additional fruit and vegetables at the larger Food4families community gardens. The project was able to donate nearly a tonne of fruit and vegetables to six organisations in Reading – The Weller Centre, CIRDIC, New Beginnings, Reading Red Kitchen, Sadaka and Whitley CDA – all of whom provide food parcels or hot meals to those in need. These organisations have all said what a difference the fresh produce made, and Red Kitchen told us, "Our chefs have made incredible meals and also cooked with vegetables some of which they'd never previously seen or used."

We are planning to continue growing for these organisations this year and look forward to when more people can come along to the community gardens again and help with growing



Fresh produce photo Food4Reading

and harvesting. In the meantime, while the current lockdown situation continues, we are asking those who already grow vegetables to grow a few more seedlings for us. We are also hoping to encourage those new to gardening to get involved and, for beginner gardeners, we will provide seeds, compost, pots and advice. We will run free, online workshops on topics such as seed sowing, sustainable growing methods, plant care and seed saving. It's a chance to learn new skills and do something positive for the community.

If you are interested in taking part, please email:

food4families@risc.org.uk

Food4families and the Veg4Reading project have also been selected as one of the Co-op's 'Local Causes'. If you are a member please support us <https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/51412>

WORD PUZZLE ANSWERS:

(from left to right) slap, paws, smack, feel, slam, feet, clam, **lamb**, meat, clan, meal, flan, teal, tribe, lunch

A reindeer is for life....

by Hazel Bingham

WE ENDED 2020 on a real high with Santa and his Elf visiting homes across the estate delivering presents to the children. These gifts were donated by Caversham residents, Reading Family Aid and The Salvation Army. We saw lots of children smile, and a few cry, during our visits. There were lots of photographs of Santa, his Elf and his reindeer (socially distanced of course) which we loved to see.



Weller Reindeer photo H Bingham

We've great plans for the Easter Fairy and delivery of Easter eggs, so watch this space.

2021 has begun, at the Weller Centre, quite like 2020 ended. We are continuing to provide food parcels and delivering these to anyone in need in RG4, whether because they have to shield, or aren't able to get out, or are hit financially, or have Covid – if this includes you then please do email admin@wellercentre.org.uk or call 0118 947 5828 to chat to us. We can do a one-off delivery or weekly. We also cook a varied menu of food each lunch time for the local residents in need across the estate, which we deliver Monday – Friday. All the food in these packs is donated by Caversham residents and businesses, as well as local schools. Without these donations we wouldn't be able to provide the food we do. Thank you Caversham.

January saw the launch of our community bakery, which runs Tuesday and Thursday from around 9:30 until it is all gone. Food has been donated by Tesco, Co-op, Waitrose and True Food, for which we are very grateful. We also launched 'The Clothes Rail' alongside this, which allows people to come and browse a vast selection of women's, men's and children's clothes and shoes and take them home, all for free.

WORD LADDER ANSWERS:

song/sang/sank/lank/lark lion/loon/loan/roan/roar
hard/hare/care/came/tame/time
camp/came/case/base/bate/bite/site

A community newspaper published by Caversham Christian News Ltd, Church House, Church Street, Caversham RG4 8AX

EDITORS: Dr Alison Johnston, Mrs Janet Offord, Mrs Carol Moloney, Mrs Heather Gale, Phil Chatfield
Email: editors@cavershambridge.org

ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER:
Mr A Wright, Tel: 0118 947 6958.
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COMPANY SECRETARY: Mr Tony Holland.

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Mrs C Moloney
Tel: 0118 947 1370
Email: circulation@cavershambridge.org

COMPANY CHAIR: Mr Phil Chatfield
Email: chair@cavershambridge.org

COMPANY TREASURER: Mrs J Belcher.
Tel: 0118 947 4772
Email: treasurer@cavershambridge.org

POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER:
Mrs J. Belcher Tel: 0118 947 4772

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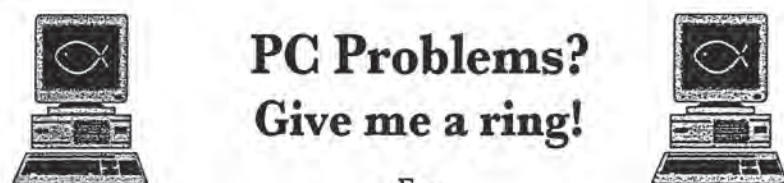
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