

Caversham Bridge

No 678

www.cavershambridge.org

August 2021

CELEBRATING OUR DIVERSITY

By Phil Chatfield

A NEIGHBOUR recently commented on the diversity of people who call Caversham and Emmer Green their home, which is coincidentally reflected in this edition of the Caversham Bridge. The BBC Monitoring Service employed people from around the world, many of whom settled in Emmer Green and Caversham. On this page we report on the plans for its former home, Caversham Park.

Our article about Marie Rogers, who has been painting portraits during

lockdown (p3), features both NHS staff and local Gurkha ladies who attend her English classes.

We remember and celebrate the life of Carol Munyamana (p6), a native of Kenya who settled in Caversham Park Village and brought smiles to so many of us at the Henley Road Post Office.

Our regular articles include Talking Point, by Derek Chandler (p2), who is leaving Emmer Green after 21 years, Creative Caversham, which spotlights the paintings of Mary Phelan (p12), and Wildlife by William Cecil (p8), with the brown rat! For those with green fingers, Les looks at some cheery additions to the garden and Jacqueline Winston-Silk

introduces us to another houseplant, caladiums (both p10).

In Community Connections (p11), we meet Italian Jacopo Lanzoni, who has been campaigning to clean up his local area in Nire Road. On the same page, Ruth Martin meets up with Gunja Bhatt, who recently moved here from America, for a Crafty Cuppa. Finally, we have our first Wellbeing article from yoga teacher Ami Roy, who grew up in Mumbai, looking at immunity (p15).

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Caversham Bridge. If you would like to comment or contribute to the next edition, please contact us at:

editors@cavershambridge.org.



Bhanu Burathoki by Marie Rogers

Monitoring change

by Fred Smith

THE BBC HAVE announced the sale of Caversham Park to Beechcroft Developments. The developer has stated it intends to renovate the site for “high quality retirement housing” and will add new buildings for independent and assisted living. It is also



Caversham Park from the south

photo Yablochko, Wikipedia

proposing a new care home and affordable housing for sale and rent. Beechcroft also said it will be consulting on its proposals in the autumn and intends to submit detailed plans to Reading Borough Council by the end of the year.

The Victorian stately home and 93-acre (38-hectare) estate, which occupies a prominent position above the Thames Valley, was bought by the BBC in 1941. Two years later it became the headquarters of BBC Monitoring, which summarised news from 150 countries in 100 different languages for the BBC and is now based at Broadcasting House London. While based at Caversham Park it played a key role in analysing communications from Nazi Germany during World War Two and through the Cold War.

The Grade II estate was put on the market by the BBC in 2017. One issue of concern to local residents is the lack of public access to the extensive area of green space in the estate. Campaign group ‘Don’t Fence Me In’ are looking at opening the estate’s footpaths to the public and would then like to work with the developer to use some of the facilities on the estate for the community. They are interested in speaking to anyone who can remember there having been footpaths across the site before the BBC purchased it so the status of any such paths can be established by the Council.

The BBC will maintain a presence in the immediate vicinity, as their Written Records archive is remaining at its site next to the Hill School on the Peppard Road. A less tangible legacy is the number of people who moved to the area to work at the Monitoring Service over the years, from around the UK and from all corners of the world who now call our community their home.

INSIDE

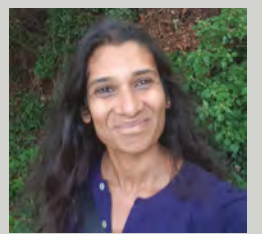
Remembering
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IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE VERB

I HAVE served in ordained ministry in the Church of England as a parish priest for 28 years. I have had the privilege of laughing and crying and experiencing perplexity and joy alongside many people from all walks of life. If there is one quotation that encapsulates this period of time, it comes from Rev'd Dave Tomlinson's 2012 book, 'How to be a Bad Christian.... And a Better Human Being'. In the book Dave writes:

"I think that the word 'Christian' is much better thought of as a verb than a noun. Jesus didn't call people to wear a badge or join a club. He called them to follow him: to join him in spreading love and healing in the world. When we treat 'Christian' as a verb – a 'doing word' – instead of a noun, it changes everything. We stop saying 'I am a Christian', and start looking at how we can behave in Christian ways. The Christian faith is then seen as a spiritual practice rather than a belief system."

As a Christian I have to admit I have inherited and passed on some incredible nouns over the years – our worship, preaching, and prayers can easily be filled to bursting point with them. And yet, when I look back, it is probably the times when I have dared to express my faith as a verb that remain with me most vividly. These are the times when I have



Talking Point – by Derek Chandler

come to understand the wonder of such inherited Christian language as, 'Incarnation', 'Resurrection', 'Reconciliation' or 'Salvation'. No dictionary on Earth could ever do this for me in quite the same way.

Perhaps now more than ever, being a Christian verb (as opposed to being a verbal Christian), is the one gift we can offer to an anxious, broken, beautiful world. That is the thought I take with me as I move on to become chaplain at the College of St. Barnabas, Lingfield. A place where I am eager to learn from the residents and staff what it means for them to be Christian verbs. Together in community, my

prayer is that we may enrich one another's vocabulary of daily service and servanthood in Christ.

And that is also my prayer for all of you who make up the churches, schools, and communities, of Caversham (plus Heights, Lower, and Park), Emmer Green, Thameside, and Mapledurham. It has been my privilege to know many of you through many roles, groups and committees, for over 21 years, (far too many activities to list here!).

As a new chapter unfolds for all of us after the global events of the past 18 months, a new, personal chapter is beginning to unfold for Hayley and me. There are not enough words to encapsulate everything I wish to say to you, or any of those we leave to continue God's work in this part of God's Kingdom. Therefore I will leave the final words of this, my last 'Talking Point', to a Hobbit, created by the Christian author and lecturer, JRR Tolkien, from his work, 'The Lord of the Rings':

*"The Road goes ever on and on
down from the door where it began.*

*Now far ahead the Road has gone,
and I must follow, if I can,
pursuing it with eager feet,
until it joins some larger way
where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say."*

(Bilbo Baggins)

With sincere gratitude for your fellowship.

*Derek Chandler was the minister at St Barnabas Church
Emmer Green*

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

Services will be held on Sundays at:

St Peter's Church – 9:30
St John's Church – 9:30
St Margaret's Church Mapledurham – 11.15
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 services are Sundays at 8 and 10am.
The 10 is also livestreamed on the St Andrew's YouTube channel. Prayer Book Communion at 11.30 on the first Sunday of each month. More info on the parish website.
www.standrewscaversham.org/services
Tuesday 8pm Compline (in church only)

St Barnabas Emmer Green

Vicar: Rev'd Derek Chandler 20 St. Barnabas Road,
Emmer Green, RG4 8RA.
Tel: 947 8239. Email: vicar@saintbarnabas.org.uk
Website: www.saintbarnabas.org.uk
Curate: Rev'd Dr Leonard Onugha
Tel: Parish Office 9476310.
Email: curate.emmergreen@icloud.com

Current services

All services listed below open to the general public and in accordance with safety guidelines. Sunday 9.30am also accessible live via Zoom and then uploaded to Youtube,

please contact the vicar for details:

Sunday 8.00am - Traditional Communion (BCP)
Sundays 9.30am - 1st Sunday: All Age Service.
2nd, 4th, 5th Sundays: Parish Communion.
3rd Sunday: Service of the Word
Wednesday 10.00am - Communion (Common Worship)

CAVERSHAM PARK CHURCH (LEP)

(United Reformed Church, Methodist and Baptist)
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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Rev'd H R Gayle
Tel: 946 3009 www.ntcgreeding.org.uk

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Mgr Patrick Daly, The Presbytery, 2 South View Avenue.
Tel: 947 1787 www.ourladyandstanne.org.uk

Current services

See their web site 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

Future editions:

Contributions for the September 2021 issue should be submitted by 9 August and for the October edition by 13 September. These should be e-mailed to:
editors@cavershambridge.org

Dates for advertising copy are 27 July for the September issue and 24 August for October. These should be e-mailed to advertising@cavershambridge.org

A picture of gratitude

by Pam Reynolds

EMMER GREEN resident Marie Rogers responded to a call to paint Key Workers during lockdown, creating portraits of NHS staff and volunteers to thank them for their services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In her spare time, Marie supports a local SSAFA project as an English teacher providing weekly English-language sessions for local Gurkha women. Founded in 1885, SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association), is a UK charity providing lifelong support to serving men, women and veterans from the British Armed Forces, plus their families or dependents. Marie served in the WRNS before marrying a sailor and spending 20 years as a Naval wife.

As a result of the pandemic, all the classes had to stop, but Marie took up her paint brushes. "I began painting portraits for NHS staff when an artist called Tom Croft did a call-out on social media asking artists to paint the portrait of an NHS Key Worker. I did a portrait of my son first, who is based at ICU in Huntingdon, and then my daughter-in-law, who works in the Blood Transfusion Department."

"I then contacted the Royal Berkshire Hospital page on Facebook to invite other keyworkers to submit their photos for portraits, as well as the Vaccination team at Emmer Green Surgery. I took two photos of nursing staff, and then gave them their portraits on my second visit for my vaccination. The response was wonderful, and they asked me to do a group one in oils."

Marie has now gifted 38 portraits to members

of the local community, including Gurkha women in her teaching group. Many people have struggled through the constraints imposed over the last year or more. Marie

remarked, "Painting the portraits gave me an incentive to get up in the morning! It really kept me occupied."

To learn more about SSAFA, see their website: www.ssafa.org.uk

Photos of all paintings by Marie Rogers



Bal Kumari Gurung



Staff at the Emmer Green Vaccination Centre

WHAT'S ON

WITH CHANGES in lockdown rules, there are more events planned for August. Because of the impact of the virus, many events require booking, even if free. Do check. Our online events diaries are updated regularly, 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 now open for browsing. 09:00-14:00 Tuesday, 13:00-17:00 Thursday, 9:00-14:00 Friday, 10:00-15:00 Saturday.

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

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

Wednesday 4 August – Art in the Arbour – 10:00 - 16:00 12 Longhurst Close, RG4 5ER. Liz Real's pop-up gallery of art, cards and hand-made jewellery and embroidered bags from charity working in India. Facebook @lizrealart Instagram @lizreal2

Saturday 14 August – Artists & Makers Fair – 10:00-16:00 – Caversham Methodist Hall, 272 Gosbrook Road. Local artists and craftspeople display their work for sale. Free entry. Phone Jean 07808 966928 for information.

Sunday 22 to Tuesday 24 August – Outdoor Cinema – Caversham Court Gardens
<https://summerscreens.co.uk/venue/abbey-ruins-reading/caversham-court-reading>

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Caversham Emporium and Fourbears Books and
at the True Food Community Co-Op in Grove Road,
opposite St Barnabas church.

GREEN REFLECTIONS by Meryl Beek

NOT LONG AGO, were you watching the BBC's Springwatch TV programme? If so, you will have noticed a new feature. For a few moments, instead of the enthusiastic chatter of the presenters, we were asked to join in a 'Mindful Moment'. This was a quiet time to enjoy a beautiful landscape, an animal at play or perhaps a close-up of a bee entering a wildflower. Whatever part of the natural world was used, we were encouraged to feel part of it.

When we pick up a new book called 'Green Reflections' by Martin and Margot Hodson, we are invited to go one stage further. Here our natural world is linked with biblical interpretation. There are sixty short meditations, accompanied by colourful paintings of the countryside. This book contains something for everybody. Starting with 'The wisdom of the trees' through to 'Sharing resources' and 'Storms and fair weather', it ends with 'Christian reflections on environmental issues'.

The Hodsons have been busy. A second edition of 'A Christian Guide to Environmental Issues' has also been published by them this year. It has been fully revised and is absolutely oozing with information. This is presented under eight headings which include biodiversity, climate change, population and energy. It will be invaluable for study group leaders and others.

Martin Hodson is a plant scientist and environmental biologist. Margot is a vicar in Oxfordshire, and both are involved in a number of Christian environmental groups.

Both books can be obtained through Fourbears Books in Caversham.



Green reflections – Biblical inspiration for sustainable living, paintings by Martin Beek. Price £8.99

ISBN 978 1 80039 0683

A Christian Guide to Environmental Issues, 2nd Edition. Price £9.99 ISBN 978 1 80039 0058

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A farewell to Caversham



Caversham's Ministers

Photo taken by staff at Vegivores'

THE CAVERSHAM Church Ministers have a very close and positive relationship and meet regularly as part of Churches Together in Caversham. But they have had to make do with online Zoom meetings since lockdown began. However, they finally managed to meet in person at Vegivores in the Precinct to say goodbye to Revd. Derek Chandler (front row, left), who has been Vicar of St Barnabas, Emmer Green, for 21 years, and Rev. Joy Atkins (front row, right), who has been Vicar of New Hope Church, York Road for 6 years.

As they each move on to new and exciting spheres of service elsewhere in the country, we wish them well for the future.

David Jenkins

Services are changing

WITH THE removal of lockdown restrictions, our churches are each adapting to the new circumstances. Patterns of services are likely to change in the coming weeks. Please check church websites for up-to-date information (see contact details on page 2).

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IT'S ALL HAPPENING

Coming and going

THERE HAVE been a number of changes to shops in our area in recent months. At the time of writing, the premises of Caversham Emporium are being transformed to provide a new home for three local businesses. The Flowered and Plant-Powered Eco Store featuring Noodskin, Midrib Plants and The F Word Flowers is opening on 24 July. This will see a return of the cleaning products refill service offered by Noodskin in their former pop-up stores and provide a home for two of their fellow Sunday market regulars. For details see: www.facebook.com/NOODSKIN ~ <https://midribplants.com> ~ www.facebook.com/thefwordflowers

Caversham Emporium will be moving to the 'Hungerford Arcade' antique centre from 1 September and will continue as an on-line store at CavershamEmporium.co.uk

A new doughnut store is opening at the Henley Road shops. Bart's Doughnut Bakery is in its infancy and will be opened fully in September. In the meantime, it is open on a Monday and Tuesday at around 10:30, closing at 18:00. On a Saturday it is open from 10:30 until 15:00. The doughnuts come highly recommended by reader Rowena Waddington!

by Fred Smith

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

THE MOST significant **Planning news** is the recommended refusal in the officer report on Reading Golf Club. It will be considered by the Planning Applications Committee on Wednesday 21 July. A related application for a replacement halfway hut with proposed family golf centre is being considered by South Oxfordshire DC.

Other planning applications include some modifications to the internal conversion to apartments of the old surgery on Priory Avenue. An application for vehicle access on land adjacent to the Moorings, Mill Green is causing local concern.

The government is proposing substantial changes to the planning system. These are expected to include the removal of community consultation on local planning applications, as well

as new Permitted Development Rights allowing building or conversion to take place without requiring planning permission.

www.reading.gov.uk/planning/pdr-submission

CADRA is sad to lose Kim Pearce who is moving away from Caversham. His professional expertise has been invaluable, and we are pleased that he has agreed to provide some support in the background. A recently retired architect can play an important role in the community so if you know of anyone, please do put them in touch with us at

info@cadra.org.uk

A recent article in the "Henley Standard" has disappointing news on potential funding towards a **Third Thames Bridge**. The Borough Council have granted a licence to **Reading Festival** which is expected to take place over the August Bank Holiday. Beechcroft Developments recently announced it had signed a contract with the BBC to renovate the **Caversham Park** site for "high quality retirement housing" (see page 1).



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SHOWING OFF IN BINFIELD



Binfield Heath Church Art Exhibition

THE ANNUAL ART and Craft Exhibition at Binfield Heath Church will be held between Wednesday 18 - Saturday 21 August from 12:00 to 18:00 daily. In previous years, they have had an amazing range of talent and creativity in all mediums and styles. Pay them a visit at Binfield

Heath Church, Dunsden Way, Binfield Heath, RG9 4LJ - they hope to be serving refreshments!

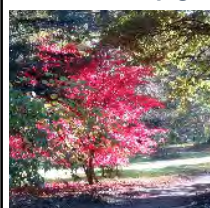
If you are interested in exhibiting your artwork and crafts, please contact Ysanne Broady (ysannebroady@yahoo.co.uk). The deadline date for submission is 14 August 2021.

Text and photo Orla Brown

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A simpler life

Welcome back to 'Fourbears Recommends' where we look briefly at a couple of titles from our shop, 'Fourbears Books' on Prospect Street. At the time of writing, we have just finished our very first 'Independent Bookshop Week'. Thanks to all who supported us throughout the week.

by Alex Forbes



The Bear is back photo A Forbes

THE CHILDREN'S book I have selected is 'I'm almost always kind' written by Anna Milbourne and illustrated by Asa Gilland. It was 'Indie Book of the Month*' in June. The book shows us what it means to be kind, considerate and thoughtful, and that sometimes, even though we try to be kind it doesn't always work out that way. The warmth of this book will make you smile, and each page is packed with illustrations, with cute holes cut into the page which add creatively to the picture, depending on the page you are reading. This book really is delightful, with a good message throughout.

There are many books with a great ending, twist or 'reveal', as in many Agatha Christie books, and many chase the elusive surprise the reader didn't see coming. Then there are some books which don't need the 'hook' to entice the reader, just a good story well written. That's what I love about 'When All is Said' by Anne Griffin. Set in Ireland, Maurice is an 84-year-old farmer, sitting at a bar. He is going to raise five toasts

to the five people who meant the most to him. This is his story. It is not complicated or flashy. There is drama, but it is heart breaking and heart warming all at once. Maybe this book resonated with me because both my Grandads were farmers and I saw memories of them in the main character. Nevertheless, I thought this was a beautifully written book. I didn't want to pick it up after a certain point, as I knew the end was fast approaching and I didn't want to finish reading about Maurice. A lovely read for those who like a simpler life.

Happy reading, whatever you have picked up. Please do contact us and tell us about the books you have enjoyed.

*The Indie Book of the Month is chosen by a panel of independent booksellers.

In celebration of Caroline Munyamana



photo Richard Grey

REGULAR customers at the Henley Road Post Office were shocked and saddened to learn of the death of Caroline (Carol) Munyamana, known to many as Whoopi Goldberg. Carol was born and educated in Kenya and moved to Reading in 1999. She lived in Caversham Park for the last 15 years, and worked at the Henley Road Post Office for the last six. Carol, who was 50 years of age when she passed away, was popular with her customers, 'a ray of sunshine', whose cheery banter and wonderful smile brightened up the day. Her funeral was held at the Crematorium in Henley Road on 28 June.

She passed away after a short illness, leaving behind husband Richard and 18-year-old son Jack, to whom we extend our sympathy.

Ami Roy

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A ride on Barrow's Bus

with Happy Wanderer



THE BUS in the picture may or may not have belonged to Mr Barrow, but it is certainly a double-decked horse-bus, standing outside The Prince of Wales in Prospect Street in about 1899. It's a very well-known picture, and my reason for

digging it out is because an interesting document has recently come my way which may relate to it.

It's a printed petition addressed to the Mayor and Chairman of the Watch Committee at Reading, asking that the bus service between Caversham and Reading, run by Mr. Barrow, should not be stopped. Apparently, the vehicles did not meet the 'New Regulations'. Whether these regulations were national, or simply a bylaw of the corporation itself, I have so far been unable to discover. Very little has been written about horse-buses in Reading, though the local studies illustrations

collection at the Central Library includes a few photographs showing horse-buses in the town centre and in Tilehurst, as well as this one.

The petition letter says, "As Regular Riders on these 'Busses', we beg most respectfully to express our opinion that these Vehicles are quite safe and comfortable for the traffic, and we view with alarm the probability of them being taken off the road."

The spelling of the word 'bus' with the double 's' suggests that any kind of bus was something new in Reading in 1899. From the letter, it seems that Mr Barrow had been running the Caversham service since around August 1898, and two buses are mentioned, Nos. 43 and 77. All of this makes one wonder how big an operation this was – did he really have 77 vehicles, and if he did, why is he not better known? Or maybe 43 and 77 were the numbers of the routes.

...'extend the tramway to Caversham'...

Another reason for not taking the buses off the road was the plan to extend the tramway system to Caversham. This was 1899, and the tramway, also horse-drawn, was still run by the Reading Tramways Company. The letter reads, 'In view of the establishment of a line of trams on this route, the proprietor of the Busses cannot be expected to purchase new vehicles for so short a period, and we trust therefore they may be allowed to continue.' The perceived imminence of taking the tramway across the river is surprising at this date. The nearest the trams ever came was a terminus on the Reading side of Caversham Bridge.

The petition was signed by Francis Cooksey, and Joseph and S. A. Bobin, all of Caversham. How many copies of it were signed and returned is not known, or whether they had the desired effect. When Reading Central Library re-opens for browsing, I'll have a look at the local papers for 1899 and see if I can find out.

In the meantime, enjoy the old picture. The advertisement for Vincent's, the coachbuilders of Castle Street, is just about legible. The bus conductor stands at the bottom of the stairs, and the innkeeper, the local policeman and the postman obligingly pose outside the old pub, which is now re-named The Last Crumb.

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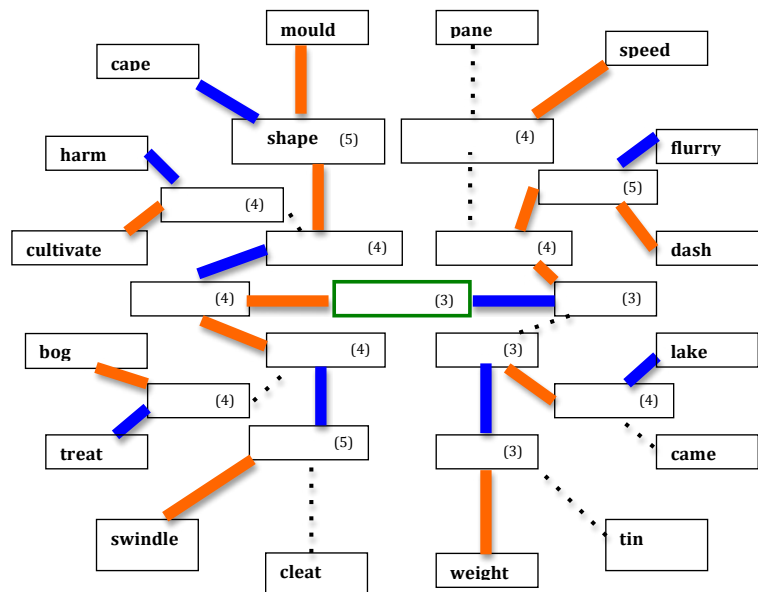
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Puzzle Corner

Word Challenge by Rachel

Find the word that has the same meaning as the clue; or rhymes with; or has one letter that is different. For example: *shape* has 5 letters, rhymes with *cape* and means *mould*.

Rhyme ———
Letter change
Meaning ———



WORD SEARCH

Can you find 16 British butterflies in the grid?

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Comma
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Heath Fritillary
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Answers on page 15

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Wildlife

by William Cecil



IT IS NOT the most decorative corner of the garden, but one morning recently the whole family was gathered round a window, eyes fixed on the downpipe that takes water from the gutters into the sewer system.

The object of our attention was a large brown rat preoccupied with the plastic grid that covered the drain to stop leaves from blocking it.

First reaction from the most practical (alarmed?) of us was "Shut the cat flap!" Then we resumed watching. No-one had any thought for the safety of our two cats who were both out on their morning prow. Indeed, one was also watching with great interest, but no enthusiasm for what cats are supposed to do.

Obviously, the drain was where the rat came from. It had pushed the grid up to come out - and the grid had fallen back into place. The rat had spotted the cat - and needed an escape route, fast. First the rat walked round the drain, assessing the problem. Then it tried pushing the lid in. No luck there. However, it quickly seemed to realise that if it stood on one edge of the grid, the other side lifted up. Solution! It used its own weight to obtain enough leverage, it could then lift the grid with its teeth and slip away to safety!

There was relief to know the rat had gone back to the sewer - but also some amazement at recognising its intelligence in dealing with the situation (and a large flint was quickly obtained, to keep the grid firmly held down).

Not all people dislike rats. One of my favourite walks years ago was past an idyllic country cottage named Rat's Castle. Kenneth Grahame's Ratty in the 'Wind In The Willows' is likeable - but then, he is a water rat, and anyone who likes messing about in boats can't be bad!

I don't like them but I respect them.

Pledge your veg

by Steve Hendry,

RVA Volunteering Development Manager

DO YOU have some beans to spare or a bumper crop of salad leaves? Does your apple tree always give more than you can eat? If so, why not pledge your veg to the Reading Town Meal.

First held in 2011, Reading Town Meal is an annual event that takes place in Forbury Gardens each



Donated produce

photo Reading Voluntary Action

September. Reading Town Meal aims to celebrate and promote home grown and locally produced food. Food4families developed Reading Town Meal as part of its broader vision for a significant increase in the amount of food grown locally and more sustainably. This embraces a broad approach to sustainability, incorporating economic, health and well-being, community capacity and resilience, and carbon reduction aspects.

This year's event, scheduled to take place on

Saturday 25 September, will see a delicious meal, cooked by Reading College catering students from produce grown and donated by local allotment holders and home growers served free to over 1,000 people.

The meal is accompanied by music from local bands, family fun activities, plus the chance to learn more about growing your own food, shop with local producers and find out what local community and sustainability groups are doing in Reading.

You can find out what fruit and veg donations the organisers are looking for at:

www.readingtowntownmeal.org.uk/producerlist.cfm

Don't have any produce to spare but still want to be involved? There are plenty of other opportunities to volunteer or you could just go along and enjoy the day, more information can be found at:

www.readingtowntownmeal.org.uk



A pre-Covid town meal!

photo Reading Voluntary Action

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How green is your front garden?

RESEARCH BY the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) reported in March 2021¹ shows front garden greenery has grown by an area 70 times the size of Hyde Park since 2015. This increase in plant cover is expected to bring far-ranging benefits for health and wellbeing, the environment and wildlife. It will also improve air quality, help conserve water from rainfall and keep our streets cooler in hot summer months.

An extra one million more UK front gardens contain nothing but greenery and the number of front gardens containing no plants at all has halved. However, more than a third of front gardens contain less than a quarter plant cover, and 2.5 million have no plants at all. So there is still work to do to unlock the true potential of UK gardens and green spaces. The

RHS has been promoting the importance of adding plants to paved front gardens since 2015, and believe the improvement has been helped by millions of people taking up gardening over lockdown.

However, a third of front gardens are still mainly paved over so, given the ease of incorporating a few plants, there is plenty of scope for improvement. The RHS would like us to fill our gardens and homes with plants, no matter how small the space, to feel better for it and give the environment a boost. They say even adding a single plant to an empty space has the power to uplift.

Even if you've gravelled or paved your front garden to make space for parking a car, it doesn't mean that there's no room for plants². The RHS provides plenty

of advice on greening front gardens – see their webpages at:

1. www.rhs.org.uk/garden-inspiration/garden-types/front-gardens
2. www.rhs.org.uk/science/articles/Green-front-gardens
3. www.rhs.org.uk/garden-inspiration/plants-we-love/10-easy-plants-for-driveways



Lots of plants and still room to park

photo RHS

Tell it to the trees

by Kathryn McCann

I'M A VOLUNTEER for local social enterprise, Ethical Reading. We aim to make Reading a better place to live and work, mainly by encouraging businesses to prioritise doing the right thing.

One of the ways we do this is by offering organisations the opportunity to fund the planting and care of trees around the town, through our Trees for Reading initiative.

Urban trees can make a massive difference to the local environment, helping to cut air pollution, regulate the temperature, reduce flooding and erosion, and increase biodiversity. They can bring social benefits too, including improving mental health (reducing depression and anxiety and improving focus), and physical wellbeing (cutting rates of respiratory disease and childhood obesity and actually lengthening lives).

Working closely with Reading Borough Council and Reading Tree Wardens, we are focusing on bringing substantial young trees to the built-up parts of town where they will have maximum positive impact. So far, we have managed to bring more than 20 extra trees to the town, mostly funded by Thames Lido. We hope to plant many more over the coming years.



Vastern Road roundabout Plane Tree

photo Ethical Reading

To do so, we need to engage with more businesses which would like to support this feel-good initiative. There are lots of options available, from sponsoring an individual tree to setting up a dedicated donation page, so people can contribute to the initiative in the name of your business. All the trees will be marked with an eye-catching plaque, so everyone passing will know how it came to be there.

If you work for a company that might like to get involved, have a look at bit.ly/trees-for-reading or drop us an email at sustainability@ethicalreading.org.uk. Thank you!

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A FEW CHEERY ADDITIONS



by Les Cooper

AS A GARDENER, are you like me and always seeing advertisements for plants that you think you really should have in your garden? Some weeks ago, the Saturday Daily Telegraph had an offer of Erysimum, those so-called perennial wallflowers. The enticement included one called 'Constant Cheer'. I am easily persuaded and perhaps after all these months of lockdown constant cheer was something I needed. Anyway, I bought the collection of Erysimum and to be truthful I am pleased I did.

I have grown Erysimum before and they grew well, so they must be easy. Erysimum really do live up to their reputation as short-lived perennials, so it's best to take cuttings every year. In the past I have been very conscientious and done as I am told, but sadly only for a number of years. Then my enthusiasm wanes and I become lax. My poor old plants gradually fade away and then one year I look around only to wonder what ever happened to my Erysimum? They are nowhere. However, I am sure a thing like that never happens to you.

Determined to do better this time, I have bought fifteen young plants, three of each variety. These were Constant Cheer, Winter Passion, Bowles Mauve, Gogh's Gold and Plantworld Lemon Yellow. They are now planted in a sunny area and looking good, but I must make a note in order to remember to take cuttings.

Changing the subject, I must mention roses. On the whole, my section of the garden has not looked very good, but in my wife Eunice's part, she grows lots of roses and they have been wonderful. The late Spring and plenty of rain has, I presume, really suited them and we have been delighted. However, two roses in particular have really attracted my attention. One called 'Bright as a Button' has lovely single lilac blooms with magenta eyes, while its foliage is dark glossy green. According to the grower's blurb it



For your eyes only

photo Eunice Cooper



Erysimum Constant Cheer

should be repeat flowering into September. The other one is named 'For Your Eyes Only', with flowers that are a single rich salmon pink with a red blotch at the base of each petal, fading to a lighter pink with age. Eventually both roses will be approximately 3 feet high and 4 feet wide. Sadly, there is no fragrance.

Obviously, time will tell but so far we are very pleased with them.



House plant of the month Spotlight on: Caladium

by Jacqueline Winston-Silk

CALADIUMS, or *Angel Wings*, as they are often known, are a truly outstanding foliage plant which have experienced something of a resurgence among the indoor gardening community. Favoured for their large, paper-thin, and highly ornate leaves, caladiums are deserving of attention and can give the impression of cut flowers.

Caladiums are native to Central and South America and so are accustomed to warm and humid weather. In the UK, Caladium bulbs can be sourced in late winter and are often shipped to order with the arrival of Spring, ready for planting. For the less confident plant parent, the fully-fledged plants first make an appearance in good garden centres in late Spring and early Summer.

A dizzying number of varieties are available, each with a unique blend of hues, speckles and veins, ranging from deep red to translucent white. These tropical plants can be kept successfully as houseplants, as well as being planted out in the garden in pots or beds. The key to their success is shade! Too much bright sunlight will scorch and burn the delicate leaves.

This year I've been growing my own caladiums from bulb, and they are surprisingly easy to grow! You need temperatures of around 20 degrees Centigrade to wake the bulb from dormancy. It's also a good idea to snip off the rather unimpressive flowers, which allows the plant to concentrate its energy in the production of those fabulous leaves.

Sadly, caladiums are tender plants and they will fade as temperatures cool, though your caladium bulb can be overwintered ready to plant anew the following year.

Facebook and Instagram @midribplants

Website: midribplants.selz.com

Find Midrib at the Caversham Artisan & Farmers Market



photo J Winston-Silk



by **Ruth Martin**

In her latest article for the Caversham Bridge, Ruth Martin, who runs Cucumber Wood Candles, interviews local painter, Gunja Bhatt, over a cup of coffee.



A Crafty Cuppa – with Gunja Bhatt

I'VE ALWAYS been drawn to blues and greens, so when I set eyes on Gunja Bhatt's coaster paintings, I knew I'd found a kindred spirit! With a few reds thrown in here and there, Gunja's palm-sized pictures painted on small wooden coasters bring to life exotic lands and favourite foods from her upbringing in India, plus landscapes near and far.

Gunja, her husband and six-year-old son moved to Reading after a few years of living and working in the US. "We relocated in the middle of the pandemic and don't have a car, so we soon got to know the beautiful stretch of the River Thames on our doorstep," Gunja explained. Living beside the water, between the Caversham and Reading Bridges, she has been able to draw upon this peaceful vista in the creation of her

artwork. "I always have a sketchbook with me," Gunja told me, "I like to be productive and have become passionate to follow the Plein Air style of painting, where you paint outdoors as much as you can."

Gunja graduated in 2009 with a Masters in Illustration, Visual Arts from Maharaja Sayajirao University in India, and gained success in the animation industry for film and TV. Gunja has also been commissioned to illustrate several children's books, most recently 'Always Here' by Kristina Loudon, as well as having her work displayed in an exhibition at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading. Anything new in the pipeline, I asked? "Yes, I'm really excited to be launching a new website selling my coasters and other original artworks. I am also working on a colouring book, mainly with animal and



Gunja Bhatt

photo G Bhatt

bird illustrations, which I'm hoping to bring out at the end of the year." She is being purposely vague on the launch of the colouring book as child number two is due in October! It was such a joy to chat to Gunja over a virtual cuppa, and I left her to pick up her paint brushes to finish her work before collecting her son from school. Although actually the painting continues, as it's his favourite hobby too!

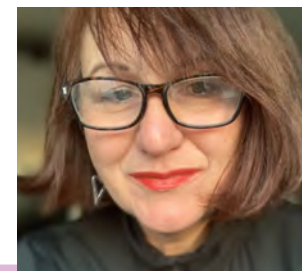
Find Gunja on Instagram at [@artist.gunja](https://www.instagram.com/artist.gunja)



Community Connections

by **Caroline Gratrix**

This month, we learn something about local resident **Jacopo Lanzoni**



Jacopo Lanzoni

photo C Gratrix

JACOPO CAME to the UK from his native Italy 13 years ago on a scholarship to study. He has a PhD in Applied Mathematics from UCL, and works as a lead software engineer in London.

I first became aware of Jacopo when he started to post about his weekly litter picks in and around Nire Road and the Amersham Road estate. He is one of those amazing

people who put themselves out there to make the environment better for themselves and the people around them.

Good deeds attract good people, and Jacopo now has a regular group of 25 litter pickers who join him weekly to keep the local area clear and tidy. In fact, the group grew so quickly that he had to go out and buy litter picking devices and bags from his own pocket, as the council had provided him with only limited resources.

Jacopo works with the council to arrange for the rubbish bags to be picked up weekly. He is also campaigning and negotiating with them to open a strip of woodland that is currently fenced off. He wants to use the old branches to line some footpaths through the woodland for dog walkers, walkers and runners.

If you're interested in volunteering for an hour or two to join him litter picking, you can find him on the Facebook page for the Caversham RAYS group.

What a fantastic community hero, thank you for picking Caversham to live Jacopo!

Tell us a bit about you.

How long have you lived in Caversham?

I have lived in Caversham for four years. I rented a house on Gosbrook Rd for one year, then bought my first home in Nire Road.

What's your favourite thing about Caversham?

I love how green Caversham is, and its numerous independent shops. Unfortunately, we have also some excellent restaurants, and this is not helping me getting those washboard abs I wanted for summer 2021 (and 2020, 2019, ...).

Caversham's best coffee shop?

The Geo cafe on Prospect Street; great coffee and friendly with genuine atmosphere.

Where to eat in Caversham?

Well, I admit there may be a conflict of interest here, but we have two excellent Italian restaurants in Quattro and Papa Gee. I eat their food on a weekly basis.

Where to shop in Caversham?

My favourite shops are Geo Café, the

Emporium, and the hardware store Homecrafts. Being also a big fan of charity and recycling, I can often be found in one of our numerous charity shops, Age UK, Thames Hospice and - my favourite - Oxfam.

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

A volunteer's centre, a place where anyone with an idea to help the community could go and find experience, help, support and the tools to make it happen: a place where ideas become reality.



Jacopo Lanzoni with volunteers

photo C Gratrix

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DRAWING ON MINDFULNESS AND LIFE'S INSPIRATIONS

*If you see someone quietly sketching while enjoying coffee in a Caversham café, it may well be **Mary Phelan**. She tells **Elestr Lee** why drawing and painting play such an important part in her life*

PEOPLE WITH busy lives need to find some way of balancing life's pressures. Some may enjoy sport or physical activity, but for others a creative outlet is the perfect solution.

Mary Phelan, who grew up in Stockport near Manchester, trained and has worked most of her life as a social worker. But art – both drawing and painting – has always been there for her, and now more than ever it is how she finds refuge from the stresses of everyday life.

Mary was educated at a grammar school, where the attitude was that art was what you did if you weren't academic; she was encouraged to concentrate on science and mathematics, not drawing and painting. She studied sociology at Warwick, then qualified as a social worker and moved to London, and then 25 years ago, here to Caversham. She has no formal training as an artist, but has worked at her craft all her life.

"I have always painted, and I go to life drawing classes both in London and here every week if I can," she says. "It's something I have always done, and the thing I most enjoy doing."

Mary explains that at the life drawing classes she attends,



As well as people, Mary also paints portraits of dogs



Mary's design for husband Robin's latest poetry book

the artists – perhaps ten or twelve people – aren't led by a teacher, although the artists do compare notes on their drawings. "It's fascinating, as we are drawing the same model, but at the end everyone's work can be completely different! I am always inspired by life drawing – people's bodies are so beautiful, and so different," she adds.

Not surprisingly, Mary is commissioned to produce portraits, often in charcoal or pastels. But she also likes painting, using both oils and water colours, and is inspired by local scenes such as St Peter's churchyard and the huge gates to Caversham Court, as well as countryside around Caversham and beyond.

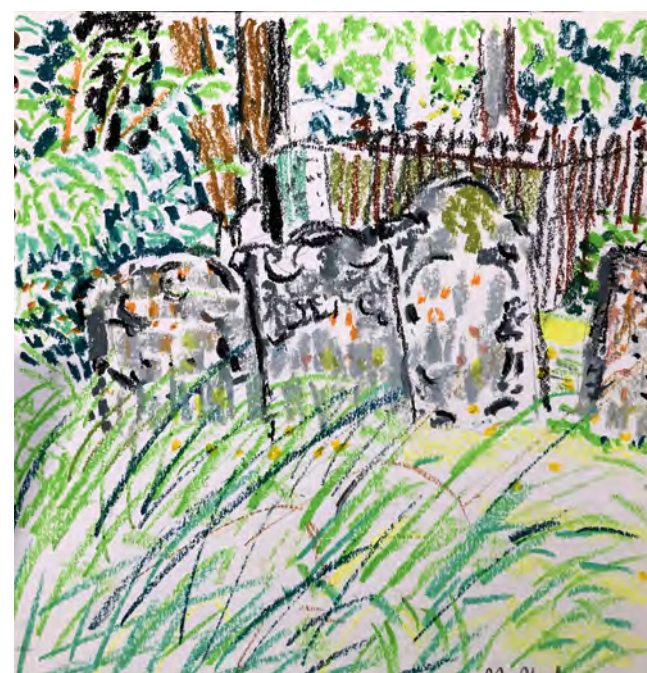
"Usually I work on commissions, which I enjoy. You are asked to do things you have never thought of," she explains.

Arts trail – the early days

Mary began exhibiting her work in the early days of 'arts trails' in Caversham – "It started off in Patrick Road, but then as Lauren Denney got involved, it got bigger. Nowadays the arts trail would be my main way of exhibiting, though I may also go to Bix, and the Christmas event at St Andrews," she says.

With the pandemic putting a stop to the arts trail this year, Mary has kept herself busy, producing the art work for the cover of *Cafferty's Truck* (Dempsey & Windle), the latest book of poetry by her husband, Robin Thomas. She has enjoyed producing a series of small water colours. "Producing small pictures is so mindful, I would recommend it to anyone," Mary advises.

As well as working on her commissions at home, Mary loves to draw out of doors. "I like to sit and draw. People worry about doing this – I would say, don't even think



Local scenes inspire, such as St Peter's Churchyard

what the drawing you are doing is going to look like. Drawing helps you to be really present, taking notice of what is there in front of you. The pleasure of drawing is what you see in the moment. It really doesn't matter what the picture you produce looks like!"

Mary is missing the social aspect of the arts trail and doesn't spend much time promoting her work on Facebook or other social media. "I want to see pictures 'live', there in front of me. When we have the arts trail it is such a social thing, we get to meet so many interesting people."

She is concerned that the expressive arts – whether art, drama, or music – are being downgraded in state education when, as she believes, they should be more important than ever. "Discovering the expressive arts means having something you can take with you throughout life," she points out.

Such misgivings aside, Mary loves the way Caversham has changed so positively in the time she has been living here. "When we first came to Caversham, it was so quiet! I remember sitting in Warings with my daughter Caitlin, when we might be the only people there. But now, Caversham has transformed. My husband Robin has found other poets, I have found other painters. Once the arts trail re-starts it will be like starting from scratch. I hope that people appreciate it more than ever. It is such a community event!"



Caversham Court Stables

all photos: Mary Phelan

JANINA MAHER'S drawing this month is a charming celebration of the facades of three businesses in Prospect Street in the heart of Caversham. The restaurant, Quattro, is a popular favourite and was originally opened in the 1980s; the coffee and cocktail bar, Chapter, and the Fourbears Bookshop are very welcome relative newcomers – their premises, however, date back to the nineteenth century. One of my own treasured books is a copy of Smith's Directory of Reading for the year 1921 and it records that exactly one hundred years ago number 14 (Quattro) was Milward & Sons, bootmakers, number 18 (Chapter) was Talbot Sisters, confectioners and refreshment rooms, and number 20 (Fourbears Bookshop) was a tobacconist, stationer and newsagents owned by Edwin James Menday.

The bar, Chapter, is very appropriately named, as older residents will remember it as the much loved and missed Caversham Bookshop which then became Wordplay – thankfully we now have a local bookshop back again next door. Even further back, the shop was a branch of the bakers Parslows. Businesses come and go in high streets, especially in these difficult times, but Caversham has a wealth of individual and characterful shops and places to eat and drink, and we should encourage



Drawing by Janina Maher www.janinamaher.artweb.com

more. It would be marvellous if the people of Reading did one kind of shopping in the big multiple stores in the town centre and then strolled over the beautiful

pedestrian bridge, across the meadows, to enjoy a gentler kind of shopping in the smaller specialist shops, restaurants and cafés in Caversham.

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All together now...

by Lorraine Briffitt & Annie Willmot

A BETTER Reading, for everyone. It's hard to imagine that anyone local wouldn't find themselves aligned with our vision at Connect Reading. We love our town, and we want to create a long-lasting and positive impact within our local community.

Connect Reading began in 2003 as the Reading Business Community Partnership, established by local businesses to broker relationships and resources between charities and businesses. Over the years our remit has grown; we're now Connect Reading and we have over 100 members from businesses, non-profits and charities, statutory organisations and the education sector.

Every day at Connect Reading looks different: from redistributing 1,500 bottles of handwash to 14 charities to helping organise a team day for a local business, the common denominator is meeting actual need. We get to know

our members, helping them to make meaningful connections. We do this in many ways - through monthly member networking, member newsletter, online member spaces and a resource exchange. We also try to make sure we stay in the know about Reading! We give members multiple opportunities to showcase their work, as well as shouting about them on social media. Since 2003, we have helped our members broker over £2.5 million worth of in-kind support, including almost £50k during 2020.

...generous donations of local business...

Due to the pandemic, many of last year's activities moved online. However, we were thrilled that we could still give 1,500 Christmas gifts and 1,000 Easter Eggs to local charities, thanks to the generous donations of local businesses and the people of Reading. We also managed to run Reading RESCUE, our environmental clean-up event, encouraging people to get out and clean up their local community.

So ... we'd love to connect. Get in touch if you'd like to know more about us!

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by **David Robinson**

David Robinson is Director of Templar Estate Planning – a specialist Will writing and Estate Planning provider based in the heart of Caversham within Church House.



BE PREPARED

Lasting Power of Attorney explained

SADLY, LIFE CHANGING events happen to people every day. Are you as well prepared as you could be? If for any reason you were unable to make decisions about your health and welfare or financial affairs, who would do so for you?

A Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) is a legal document where you appoint one or more trusted people as attorneys to act or make decisions on your behalf if you suffer temporary or permanent physical or mental incapacity. In such circumstances, having an LPA in place ensures your wishes are carried out by someone you trust who has your best interests in mind. I hope this information will help you understand about LPAs and why you should have them.

There are two types of LPA. We recommend setting up both at once:

Health and Welfare LPA

This covers decisions about simple matters such as your daily routine of eating, washing and dressing, through to medical care and life sustaining treatment.

Property and Financial Affairs LPA

This deals with financial and property affairs, such as managing your bank accounts or investments, rental property, paying bills and claims for benefits or pensions.

When should I set up an LPA?

You must have mental capacity to set up an LPA, so I recommend you do so as soon as possible. An application can be completed promptly, but may take some weeks to be officially approved and registered by the Office of the Public Guardian. The LPA does not have to be used immediately, but it will be ready and prepared if it is needed.

What happens if I don't have LPAs?

Without LPAs, a family may be unable to access or manage the finances of an incapacitated loved one. With the loss of capacity, it is too late to register an LPA. Relatives will need to apply for 'Deputyship', which can be a lengthy and expensive process. Once you have Deputyship, you then need to deal with ongoing costs and relationships with the Courts, which can hinder your requirements.

How do I set up Lasting Powers of Attorney?

There are two routes. You can do it yourself or get a professional to complete it for you. For the DIY route you will need to complete the forms (from the [gov.org](https://gov.uk) website). Make sure you follow the instructions carefully. Have it witnessed and then submit to the Office of the Public Guardian with the relevant payment. Incorrect forms will be returned and you may have to pay the fees again.

As an alternative, a professional such as an Estate Planner or a solicitor will take your details, complete the forms and ensure they are witnessed both appropriately and correctly. They then register the LPAs for you and deal with any further correspondence from the Office of the Public Guardian.

Whichever route you choose, I recommend you get LPAs in place. This can save you and your loved ones a lot of time, money and effort at a difficult time.



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First Impressions Matter

How to show off your achievements on your CV in 3 steps

by **Laura Harmsworth**



ACHIEVEMENTS ARE a key part of your CV and prove you have the skills and abilities the recruiter is looking for and that you can deliver results. Can you solve their problems, impact the bottom line, increase efficiency, decrease costs, and improve customer service?

Many CVs read like job descriptions, with responsibilities and no achievements, often because people cannot think of achievements or they don't want to appear arrogant. Don't worry that by adding your achievements you're overselling yourself - by quantifying them, they are proven i.e., not just your opinion, and I'll show you how to do this.

1. Gather your achievements

Examples: positive feedback received, awards, targets achieved, things you have implemented/actioned which have saved a company money/time/resources or have increased profits/customers/sales/enquiries, how you have overcome a challenge.

2. Brainstorm

Write as much as you want on each achievement using the STAR technique (Situation, Task, Action, Result).

3. Refine

- Turn each achievement into a succinct sentence or two.
- Lead with the result, to grab attention, then follow with actions taken.
- Start with a positive action verb e.g., increased, implemented, developed, improved, won.
- Quantify where possible e.g., percentages. If your achievements aren't measurable, consider things such as the number in your team, number recruited, how you developed a client relationship, contracts renewed, specific projects (objective, results), how often you do a task, save time, streamline a procedure, negotiate a discount, present to an audience of xx, fines avoided, up to date records, met audit requirements.

Top Tip

Keep a 'base' CV with all your achievements on, then tailor a copy of it for each role, selecting the most relevant achievements for that role.

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Email me (contact@cavershamcvwriting.co.uk) for my free achievement tracker, a fantastic tool to help you with the above process, including an example.

You can follow Laura on:

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Get Jamming with Sarah Roy – The Jam Lady

Blueberry and Lemon Jam



PEOPLE OFTEN tell me they don't like jam because it's too sweet. This month's recipe is great if you prefer more sour and tart tastes on your bread! It should make around 5 jars and will keep, unopened, in the cupboard for up to 12 months. Once opened, keep in the fridge for up to 4 weeks, if it lasts that long!

Ingredients:

1kg blueberries – fresh or frozen
2 lemons – rind and juice
1kg jam sugar (or 1kg granulated sugar with a sachet of pectin added)

Method

1. Wash the jars and lids in hot water. Put into a warm oven (175°C) for 15min to sterilise them. Put a saucer into the freezer.
2. Grate the rind from the lemons and extract the juice. Mix in with the blueberries in a large pan.
3. Stew down the fruit using a masher to break down to a pulp.

4. Stir in the sugar until it dissolves. Bring to a rolling boil.
5. When the mixture thickens, test the setting point by spooning a teaspoon of the hot jam onto the cold saucer. If you push your finger along the plate and the jam wrinkles on the top then it is ready. If not, keep on boiling and test again in a few minutes.
6. Once ready, ladle into the hot jars right to the top and firmly seal the lids. As the jam cools, a vacuum is created and the jam is preserved.

Perfect for breakfast on freshly made sourdough, crumpets or croissants. Enjoy!

Follow Sarah on Facebook at:
www.facebook.com/thejamladycaversham



Understanding immunity

This month we have a new writer who will be looking at wellbeing each month. **Ami Roy** is a yoga teacher who lives in Caversham and was the subject of our April 2021 Community Connections feature. In her first article for the Caversham Bridge, she looks at immunity.

JUST AS wellness and wellbeing became buzzwords over the past decade, in this past year or so, immunity has become another buzzword in response to the events of the coronavirus pandemic. As we start sharing this wellness column, it might be interesting to explore what immunity means, to understand better how we may make choices which improve or hinder the body's immune response; and also to marvel at the innate intelligence of the bodies we live in.

Immunity can be defined as a complex biological system endowed with the capacity to recognise and tolerate whatever belongs to the self, and to recognise and reject what is foreign (non-self).

The immune response is broken down into innate immunity, which we are born with, and adaptive immunity, which we acquire following disease exposure.

Innate immunity, also known as genetic or natural immunity, is the defence system that we were born with. It protects us against antigens, and keeps harmful materials from entering our bodies, for example the cough reflex, enzymes in tear ducts and skin cells, mucus, stomach acid and so on.

Adaptive immunity, also referred to as acquired immunity, is a targeted response from the body to a specific pathogen. It is not immediate, and it may not always last throughout our lifespan. The body creates specific antibodies and cultivates immunological memory.

It is thanks to immunological memory that we can vaccinate against specific infectious diseases. The body remembers to respond to the hostile antigens and creates a protective response.

All around the world, scientists are asking questions about how we can build long term immunity against the coronavirus and also questions about herd immunity.

In future columns, I'll explore some of the ways in which exercise, sleep, rest, play, music, moods, and more, influence our immune systems and how both individual health and the collective health of our communities will impact our world as we walk through it.

WORD PUZZLE ANSWERS:

(From left to right) shape, pace, farm, hurry, form, race, warm, sun, run, heat, bun, peat, cake, cheat, ton.

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