



Caversham Bridge

BRINGING JOY TO ALL

by Louise Hampden

FRONT GARDENS are the reason I love gardening, coupled with the fact that I didn't have a garden. Living in an upstairs flat with a young baby, I used to take daily walks around the streets of Reading's Cemetery Junction pushing the pram whilst looking into people's front gardens. While many of them were the size of postage stamps and grew nothing but weeds, others brightened theirs with hanging baskets, window boxes and pots of bright flowers. This gave me enormous pleasure and I vowed then, if I were so lucky as to ever have a garden, I would

always appreciate the space and do the same.

Many years later, and in the midst of a career in horticulture, I still love to look into front gardens, and I get enormous pleasure from the efforts of others. I truly believe that they contribute to my well-being and improve my mental health.

Front gardens are not just for people either – they can be a vital lifeline for our diminishing bee, bird and butterfly populations and, if planted, can create vital wildlife corridors through our towns and cities. For climate change too, plants help to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, so can make a small contribution to the reduction of global warming.

In my garden I have an eclectic collection of over forty containers which I faithfully plant up for winter, spring and summer colour. At this moment there are eight containers either side of my front door and these containers give pleasure to all comers, from posties to delivery drivers, family and friends. They also give me a welcome home.

If you can, this summer, enter our competition and see how your efforts can transform your front garden and make a difference to your community.



Winter Planters

photo L Hampden

SERVICE WITH A SMILE

by Phil Chatfield



THIS MONTH we have a number of items which touch on how we can help others. Our wellbeing article (p15) considers how giving helps us to think about other people and takes our thoughts away from our own concerns. This is not just about money, as giving time as a volunteer can be a rewarding thing to do, but many local charities are finding it difficult to recruit helpers. Paul Hunter from the Oxfam Music Shop in Reading writes about this for us (p8). Fairtrade Fortnight (p15) encourages us to think about the people who produce many of the commodities and crafts we buy year-round.

Giving pleasure to others is at the heart of our item on Front Gardens (above), and our new competition to brighten up our streets is introduced in this edition (p3). We look forward to seeing what you can do to bring a smile to passers-by using the space you have – no matter how small. Encouraging kindness at St

Martin's Primary is one of the attributes commented on in their recent OFSTED report (p6).

Local creative talent is celebrated in our Crafty Cuppa article which, this month, features local artist Liz Real (p11) and our Creative Caversham item on author Kate Poels (p12). Art and history combine in our Local Scene (p13) by Janina Maher and Martin Andrews, featuring the building known to most of us as Gardiners.

We have another of the occasional series from David Robson on issues related to estate planning (p14); this time looking at the role of an Executor of a Will. Our environment page (p9) looks at the issue of blocked drains, and the work of the Plastic Free Caversham group.

We do hope you enjoy reading the Caversham Bridge this month. We welcome contributions from our readers so, if you have something you would like to share, contact us at editors@cavershambridge.org or leave a message on our answerphone, 0118 328 2754.

INSIDE

Anna Clark introduces Messy Church – p4



Musical Memories – p8



Community Connections – Martin Haley – p11



What is normal?

THESE ARE risky days to be making predictions. But writing in January for the March edition of Caversham Bridge, there is a feeling we may finally be getting 'back to normal' - although I realise this is not the first time we have thought so in this pandemic. The idea of a summer with the pandemic more or less behind us is glorious, so we are thankful for the vaccine!

But it could be said the joy we will feel is akin to how we feel when we recover from an illness. A wonderful relief certainly, but are we actually no better off than if we had never been ill in the first place? Are we no further on than if the virus had never emerged? We speak of getting back to normal, but there's been a lot of water under the bridge since 2019. People have died, been bereaved, or suffered terribly from isolation. Equally, there has been great heroism, and countless acts of kindness. But even for those who have not been much affected, is it right to think that we are getting 'back on track', back to where we would have been had there been no virus?

The reality, of course, is there is no going back. When we think like that, it is probably only because in 2019 we didn't know dealing with a pandemic was going to be our future for the next two years. But such ups and



Talking Point – by Nigel Jones

downs and twists and turns are normal. If we think of the pandemic as a blip, an interruption, is it because we have an idea of progress which gives the illusion of life becoming ever smoother, healthier, and more affluent? Is this not, in fact, a myth?

In some ways this is true. The vaccine was developed faster than ever before. That's progress. There are fewer people in the world living in poverty than there were. But overall are people more enlightened or free or happy? Human life is, and always will be, a struggle. That is what is normal. The Bible was written in times when life was a struggle. We should be aware of context when looking to faith for answers, but Christianity takes for granted that life is hard.

I wonder whether the widespread belief in human progress is partly why Christianity is less popular than it was. People unconsciously think the answers to life's problems are found in science, technology and economic growth, and certainly many improvements are found there. But ultimately, no amount of progress will change the human condition of brokenness (or 'sinfulness'), or the Second Law of Thermodynamics (which states that disorder always increases; disorder is what leads to disease and death, since a healthy body is a highly ordered structure).

If we could accept this is the human lot, then maybe what we do in church and the message of the Christian faith would resonate more. If we want to be more whole, we need to do what God does, and learn to live with our human frailty.

*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: 0118 947 9505 rector@ctmparish.org.uk
Rev'd Penny Cuthbert Tel: 07825 331 810
Rev'd Andy Storch Tel: 07365 555 905

Contact: admin@ctmparish.org.uk or 0118 996 8836
Correspondence address: Church House, 59 Church Street,
Caversham RG4 8AX

Current services

St Peter's Church –
1st Sunday of the month:
8:00 BCP Holy Communion
9:30 Service of the Word with junior choir and potential for baptism
2nd and 4th Sundays 9:30
Holy Communion using existing service booklets, with adult and junior choir and Sunday Club
3rd Sunday
9:30 Holy Communion in a new, shorter format with junior choir
18:30 Sung Choral Evensong.
St John's Church Gosbrook Road Sunday services
8:00 Online CTM Youtube channel (stays available to watch anytime)
9:30 1st and 3rd Sunday Holy Communion, 2nd All Age Worship, 4th Service of the Word
Sunday Club for children on 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays
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: 0118 947 2788 www.standrewscaversham.org

Current services

St Andrew's weekly services are Sundays at 8:00 and 10:00. The 10:00 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
Wednesday 8pm Compline (in church/vicarage)

St Barnabas Emmer Green

David Howell (Churchwarden)
Email: churchwarden@saintbarnabas.org.uk

Current Services

1st, 2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays of the month at 9:30:
Parish Communion
1st Sunday of the month at 11:30: All Age Service
3rd Sunday of the month at 9:30: Service of the Word
Every Wednesday at 10:30: Midweek Communion

CAVERSHAM PARK CHURCH (LEP)

(United Reformed Church)
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 – Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road – 10:30 – (also available on Zoom – email: martin.beukes@methodist.org.uk for details)
Sunday – Caversham Methodist Church, Gosbrook Road – 10:30

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Current services

Sunday worship is at 10:30 each week
A link is placed later on Sundays at:
www.cavershambaptistchurch.org.uk
and on YouTube channel
www.youtube.com/user/CavershamBaptist where the recorded service is shown.

GRACE CHURCH

(formerly Caversham Hill Chapel)
Pastor Keith Saynor
Tel: 0118 947 4529 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
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Tel: 0118 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: 0118 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.

Our churches are open with some restrictions in place. Most have a range of on-line services, house groups and social meetings, using Zoom and YouTube. For current information, see the websites 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 April 2022 issue should be submitted by 1 March and for the May 2022 edition by 1 April. These should be e-mailed to: editors@cavershambridge.org

Dates for advertising copy are 1 March for the April 2022 issue and 1 April for the May 2022 issue. These should be e-mailed to: advertising@cavershambridge.org

BRIGHTEN UP YOUR STREET THIS SUMMER

by the Editors

THE CAVERSHAM BRIDGE is launching a competition to brighten up our neighbourhoods. Can you make a difference and plant up a few containers to bring interest and excitement to your front garden?

Individuals, groups of neighbours, or even a whole street, can enter, and you can use any kind of container. Let your imagination

run wild - you can upcycle old pallets, paint up and plant tyres, use classic containers and hanging baskets, tin baths or even kitchen colanders. We want to see how inventive you can be in the use of containers and what you fill them with - which could be flowers, vegetables, wild flowers or any other type of plant.

You have until the end of June to enter, and judging will take place in late July. The judges will include Louise Hampden who writes on gardening for the Caversham Bridge, Jackie

Biddle from the Playhatch Garden Centre and one of our editors.

The entry must be visible from the pavement – both for judging but, more importantly, to bring a smile and pleasure to passers-by. Prizes will include vouchers for Playhatch Garden Centre donated by British Garden Centres.

To enter, register by e-mail to editors@cavershambridge.org including the words Competition Entry in the title, or by letter to Caversham Bridge Planter Competition, Church House, Church Street, Caversham.

A THRIVING CLUB

by F Smith

CAVERSHAM BOWLING CLUB, in Albert Park, Albert Road, is celebrating its centenary in 2022. Each year, the Club raises funds for a nominated charity. Last year they raised £889 for a local gardening for health charity, THRIVE, based at Beech Hill, south of Reading.

THRIVE have a team of social and therapeutic horticulture-trained therapists who work with dedicated volunteers to support a wide range of people including:

- those living with a physical or learning disability
- people with mental health support needs

- people who may have sensory loss or autism
- people with age-related conditions such as dementia, heart problems, diabetes, or stroke survivors
- young people who have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties

The Bowling Club's President, Margaret Taylor, presented a cheque at their Annual General Meeting in January to Stacey Lewis from THRIVE. The Club's charity for 2022 is Camp Mohawk, a day centre for children with special needs and their families near Wargrave.

The club play from April to September, and are always looking for new members. As part of their centenary celebrations, they will be hosting a number of events this year, including a Berkshire v Northamptonshire match.

For information on the Bowling Club, visit their website, www.Cavershambowlsclub.org.uk

To learn more about the work of THRIVE, the charity, see www.thrive.org.uk

And Camp Mohawk at www.campmohawk.org.uk



Stacey Lewis and Margaret Taylor

photo H Walmsey

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For further information and/or an application pack email admin@ctmparish.org.uk

Closing date: 12 noon on Monday 28 February 2022
Interviews: Thursday 10 March 2022 in Caversham

Launching Messy Church!

by Anna Clarke

WHAT DO you think of when you hear the word 'church'? A building? Old people? Pews? Well, that's about to change as we discover MESSY CHURCH!

The team who formerly ran the Amersham Road Cooking Club (ARCC), alongside other volunteers from Churches Together in Caversham, are launching Messy Church on Sunday 27 February. It will run from 16:00 to 18:00 at The Weller Centre, and people of ALL AGES are invited! It is important though that every child or young person attends with a parent or guardian.

Messy Church is Christ-centred, for all ages, and based on creativity, hospitality and celebration. We start with a whole range of different activities, including crafts and games. We then join together for a short time to hear a Bible story and sing a song. Finally, we share a meal together.

At our February session we'll be exploring the theme of Lent.

You can expect lots of fun crafts, a pancake tossing competition (I wonder whether the adults or children will be better...) and of course, pancakes to EAT!

There will be three taster sessions this academic year and, if they are popular, we will aim to run a session every month from September 2022. Dates of future sessions are: Sunday 27 February, Sunday 10 April, and Sunday 19 June.

All sessions are free of charge and no advanced booking is required. However, Covid restrictions remain in place at The Weller Centre, meaning that numbers will be limited. For that reason, we will admit people to the building on a first come, first served basis.

How can you get involved? Well, that's up to you... come along on 27 February and join in the fun, invite a family you know who live near The Weller Centre, join the volunteer team, or pray!

If you have questions or want to find out more, contact:
anna@ctmparish.org.uk



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WHAT'S ON

IF YOU have an event planned, please send details to editors@cavershambridge.org We need to receive these no later than the 10th of the month before the event for inclusion in the printed paper. Later submissions can be included in our online What's On, which is updated regularly. To see what has been added check: cavershambridge.org:5154/local-info/whats-on

Caversham Library opening: 09:00 -17:00 Tuesday and Friday, 13:00 – 19:00 Thursday and 10:00 –15:00 Saturday www.reading.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/all-libraries/caversham-library

January – Exhibition of small artworks – Geo Café, Prospect Street. Every day except Tuesdays. Works by Caversham artist Liz Real (www.lizreal.co.uk) and fellow Reading Guild of Artists member Jane Somner (www.janesomner.co.uk). 10% of sales will be donated to Launchpad Reading <https://launchpadreading.org.uk>

Mondays – Caversham Park Bridge Club – at the Milestone Centre, 19:15 for 19:30 start. Phone Lin 9477820 for further information.
www.bridgewebs.com/cavershampark

Tuesdays – Babies and Toddlers – 10:00 -11:30 – Gosbrook Road Methodist Church – all welcome

Tuesdays – Riverate Choir – 19:30 in term time – Caversham Heights Methodist Church, Highmoor Road. Enjoy singing together. For details see <http://riverate.com>

Thursdays – Community Café – 14:00 – 16:30 Mapledurham Pavilion, hosted by Warren and District Residents Association For details see: <https://wadra.org/community-hub-cafe>

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

Wednesday 2 March – Walk at Grey's Court – 5.5 miles 10:30 start - Pang Valley Ramblers. One of several walks in their programme. See www.pvramblers.org.uk for details.

Wednesday 2 March – Rosehill WI – 14:00 St Barnabas Hall. Guest speaker Nick Brazil with a talk entitled "Artistic Footprints Mapledurham to Reading."

Friday 4 March – Bereavement Café – monthly drop-in for the bereaved 14:00 – 15:30, St Barnabas Parish Centre, Emmer Green, RG4 8RA First Friday of the month. All welcome. Contact Gillian Wilson 0118 947 8772 for information.

Saturday 12 March – 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. www.cavershamcrafts.co.uk

Thursday 17 March – Caversham WI meeting – 19:30 Church House (next to Waitrose). Monthly every 3rd Thursday of the month. New members welcome. Email: cavershamwi@berkshirewi.co.uk Secretary: Joy Kennedy on 07786 642424

Saturday 19 March – Sale of craft items – 14:00 – 16:00 - Fabric remnants, wool etc - The Craft Club at the Weller Centre. Contact Pam at pamch23@gmail.com or on 07986 905784

Saturday 26 March – the Reading Abbey Formulary – The 2022 Brian Kemp Memorial Lecture by Dr Fredrica Teale, University of Southampton - 14:30 Friends of Reading Abbey - Abbey Baptist Church For details see www.readingabbey.org.uk

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

Until the application for **Reading Golf Club** (211843) is considered at planning committee, comments can still be sent. No date has yet been notified. We are told that the previous application (210018) is now the subject of an appeal though this is unlikely to be heard before a decision on the later application. The plans for **Caversham Park** (21072) will now require an Environmental Statement to accompany a formal planning application. Historic England has expressed concern that there may be a significant impact on the historic environment in terms of the residential development within the Grade II Registered Park and Garden and the conversion of and development in the setting of a Grade II country house. The application for vehicular access to the **Moorings, Mill Green** (210544) was refused by the planning committee on environmental grounds. Permission has been granted for some reduction of the **Holm Oak** (211915) outside Costa in St Martins Square.

CADRA expressed concerns on the plans for the **Riverside Academy** (212061) on Richfield Avenue and asked for a more ambitious approach to mitigation of climate change, to the establishment of a largely car free school and for better landscape screening. We were pleased to see that the Design Panel expressed similar concerns. The Aviva plans for **Reading Station Park** (200328 - TGI Friday through to the Range) are the subject of appeal regarding the delay in reaching a decision. In preparation for the appeal, the Planning Committee is to determine the decision it would have reached. Find all the links from the Latest Planning List at www.cadra.org.uk

281 residential roads are being surfaced with micro-asphalt, starting on 8 February through to late April / early May. You can search www.reading.gov.uk for **Residential Road Improvements**.

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For your bookshelf...



Welcome to 'Fourbears Reviews' where we briefly review a couple of titles chosen from our bookshop 'Fourbears Books' on Prospect Street. It's been lovely to see so many of you visit the shop recently and, with so many new releases in the coming months, it's definitely worth popping in to see what's new. We're always happy to order books in if we don't have them in stock.

by Alex Forbes

THE THIRD OF March is World Book Day! It's one of our favourite times of the year. Children can bring their World Book Day vouchers to the shop and exchange them for a free book. Bookshops don't make any money from this initiative; it's booksellers' gift to their community, as we truly believe reading for pleasure is so important and there are so many great books out there.

This month we start with 'Boy' by Roald Dahl, which was my favourite book as a child. Tagged as the Dahl autobiography, it's maybe one of his slightly lesser-known titles, although still a bestseller and brilliant for children aged 9+. Filled with hilarious anecdotes, it's amazing to see how much happened to Roald Dahl as a child. Highlights for me were certainly the prank they played on the 'beastly' Mrs Prachett in her sweet shop. Often funny, sometimes more serious, but you feel transported to his youth as you relive all the scenarios and situations Dahl finds himself in.

Whenever I start talking about books in the shop it probably won't be long before I



Boy, bear, rabbit?

photo A Forbes

mention Antti Tuomainen. Simply, I'm a fan of his books. They never take themselves too seriously, and I'm often chuckling along with the slightly different view of the world Antti's characters typically have. My pick this month is 'The Rabbit Factor'. Henri, an insurance mathematician, loses his job and inherits an adventure park from his deceased brother on the same day. However, there are plenty of issues with the adventure park, as Henri soon discovers. Henri's approach to dealing with the issues is exactly as you'd imagine an insurance mathematician would deal with them, and that doesn't work. Antti has the perfect blend of humour and emotion in both his characters and story-telling. It's a light read and one that will have you smiling throughout.

Thank you for reading, and hopefully we'll see you in the shop soon. Happy reading!

REWARDING KINDNESS by Kay Tilling



All aboard to celebrate

photo St Martins School

STAFF, PUPILS and parents at St Martin's are celebrating after receiving a glowing report in a recent OFSTED inspection. The school has been graded 'good', and the inspector commented on the children's positive behaviour and kindness to one another. During the inspection, there was a strong focus on reading and maths. The inspector found that these areas were well taught and that teachers were good at identifying areas where the children needed additional support. She particularly noticed how much the children enjoy reading, and looked forward to story time each day.

Erika Kirwan, Headteacher, was delighted when she received the report. "We are pleased to say that the inspector fully agreed with our self-assessment, and felt that the priorities identified in our school development plan were appropriate. This is a very positive endorsement of the governance and leadership of the school. We have already started working on the areas for development that have been recommended."

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Books, music and more

by Paul Hunter

MANY CAVERSHAM residents will already be familiar with the Oxfam shop on Prospect Street. The volunteer team there presents an excellent selection of fair-trade goods and donated items: prominently fashion and accessories, along with an impressive selection of books and recorded music from their dedicated media department on the first floor.



Oxfam Music Shop, Duke Street photo P Hunter

If venturing into Reading town centre, discerning readers and listeners will be delighted to discover that the charity also has two specialist shops, dedicated to books and music.

On Market Place, the Reading Oxfam bookshop is a required destination for book-lovers in Berkshire. They will find curated there an impressive selection of classic and contemporary fiction, genre fiction, history, children's books, art books, and the full spectrum of academic literature.

A few steps south on Duke Street, you find Oxfam Music. Reading is lucky enough to enjoy a curious rarity: a charity shop exclusively dedicated to selling donated music products. Anyone with an interest in music will discover a treasure trove, whether you are a keen record collector, a musician looking for new repertoire on printed sheet music (or even a new instrument), or simply a garden-variety music lover.

Since its opening in 2004, the shop has been closely connected with the live music scene in the area. The shop had a fund-raising residency at the Rising Sun Arts Centre where it hosted monthly band nights, and there have been numerous in-store performances at the shop over the years. Everything from Brazilian Jazz guitarists



Inside the shop

photo P Hunter

to Heavy Metal. And, notably, a book reading by the celebrated Rock author Barney Hoskyns and a packed acoustic show by hitmakers, My Luminaries.

The music shop is currently making a huge push to re-emerge following the limitations of the Covid-19 constraints. Anyone who has four hours to spare, loves music and who is interested in joining the team is encouraged to pop in and pick up an application form. Likewise anyone who is keen to help the charity by donating records, CDs, tapes, hi-fi, instruments, printed music or comics. Details on how to arrange donations can be found by phoning the shop on 0118 956 1598.



MUSICAL MEMORIES

by Edward Bradley

MUSIC COMES into my life a great deal, as I'm sure it does with a great many people. Mostly it is my own choice, such as listening to Classic FM when I get up, or playing CDs as I sit at my computer. But far too often it is an 'ear bashing' with background music on TV programmes.

I have never been able to read music. This is not good considering I was born and bred in Reading, where John of Fornsete, monk of Reading Abbey, is thought to have composed 'Sumer is icumen in', the oldest known canon* and six-part composition. I am unsure what canons and six-part compositions are, but I know it is a nice song. We had music

lessons at school, but they weren't for me and, as for singing, that sort of thing was for the girls. Why spend time on music when there are important things to do like football and cricket?

But isn't it odd how music brings back memories. Very occasionally I hear an exceedingly old recording of 'The Donkey Serenade' sung by Allan Jones. Immediately my mind goes back to my childhood, when I stood with my dad by the riverside at Reading Bridge to watch a one-legged man climb a tall tower, set himself alight and then plunge into a tank of water. Of course, the music they played was 'the Donkey Serenade'. It was imprinted on my brain.

Another distant memory, which I hope wasn't a dream, was of the band of the Royal Berkshire Regiment playing the '1812 Overture' as they proudly marched through the Forbury Gardens.

Those were the days when we tuned into the wireless to listen to Billy Cotton's Band Show and Henry Hall's guest night. My older brother enjoyed Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra, but our Dad couldn't stand 'crooning' because it wasn't proper singing.

No doubt he preferred Richard Tauber or perhaps Anne Zeigler and Webster Booth who always seemed to be warbling away some time during every weekend. Then there was Semprini, who introduced his music programme of "old ones, new ones, loved ones and neglected ones", and Albert Sandler and his Palm Court Orchestra - such smooth music. There were songs like 'Mairzy doats and dozy doats and liddle lamzy divey' and 'I've got a lovely bunch of coconuts'. They were a bit rubbishy - but we all sang along.

Then into my world came the big band music of Ted Heath and Stan Kenton, and my music perspective changed - what about you?

*canon: a type of strict imitation created by strict echoing between a melodic 'leader' and subsequent 'follower(s)'.



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The three Ps

THAMES WATER has been running some amusing TV adverts with a serious message in recent months. Every day they deal with around 200 sewer blockages, many of them the consequence of people using their toilets and sinks for waste disposal. The biggest offenders are wipes, condoms, sanitary products, cotton wool, and dental floss. They ask us to remember the 3Ps rule when it comes to what's flushable: 'Pee, Poo, Paper. Nothing else'.

They suggest trying alternatives for wet wipes and sanitary products, as there are plenty on the market now. One common myth is that the 'flushable' products marketed by many companies are safe to put in the loo. But these wipes contain plastic, so they won't break down the same way as toilet paper does. Although they'll disappear when you flush, they won't completely leave your drains. So pop them in the bin to be safe. The only wipes you can flush safely are

ones with the 'Fine to Flush' mark, as they've been designed to break down in the drain.

Thames Water also provide advice on kitchen waste, asking us to ensure it is scraped into the bin. If it's more of a 'liquid' food like gravy, use kitchen roll or newspaper to soak it up, then put it in the food waste bin. Cooking fat and oils will eventually turn solid and build up in your pipes. Instead of pouring them down the sink, collect them in a container like a jam jar or yoghurt pot. Leave them to cool, and once they've set, scoop them out and pop them in the food waste bin.

60% of sewer flooding in homes is caused by blockages. Thames Water say, "Our ongoing mission is to raise awareness of this issue to help you prevent blockages and sewer flooding at home."

For information on the 'Fine to Flush' mark, see www.wrcplc.co.uk/successful-fine-to-flush

To watch the advert on YouTube (and sing along as well!) see <https://youtu.be/9iQs24mkTYY>

Phil Chatfield – based on Thames Water Facebook postings.



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PLASTIC FREE COMMUNITIES
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THE PLASTIC FREE PLEDGE

Making connections

by Charlotte Armitage

CLIMATE CHANGE can be a lofty concept, and it's hard to know how we can make a difference in our everyday lives. Most of us are used to switching lights off when not needed, rinsing items for recycling, and taking our own bags to the supermarket. But if you want to do more, one simple thing would be to recommend a local community or not-for-profit group to be a community ally of the grassroots environmental group, Plastic Free Caversham.

Plastic Free Caversham, founded in 2019 by local business owner Anne-Marie Evans and Deputy Mayor Cllr Ayo Sokale, aims to work alongside local residents, businesses and schools to assist them to become more sustainable and to reduce their reliance on single-use plastics.

You may have seen them last summer at the Caversham Artisan & Farmers market, raising funds for a water refill station in central Caversham through the sale of bamboo cups. Together with a Just Giving page, this has generated over £600. The group are now in the final stages of discussion with key partners to make the water refill station a reality.

The group is also very close to gaining accreditation from environmental charity Surfers Against Sewage, with a range of local businesses and community

groups putting themselves forward as supporters. Many Caversham businesses have already lent their support, including pubs, cafés and shops. The latest business champions to join are Made by Tamalia, Beam WellBeing and Gardeners' Homecare.

The final piece of the puzzle is to recruit a few more community allies. And this is where you can help. Allies could be local churches and youth groups, hospitals, libraries, schools, nurseries, brownie, guide and scout groups, or colleges. Current supporters include Hemdean House school, Reading Youth Council and The Weller Centre. If you have a connection to a community or non-profit group with links to Caversham, all they need to do is:

- Remove a minimum of three single-use plastic items, swapping them for sustainable alternatives
- Spread the word about Plastic Free Caversham's actions
- Raise awareness of the enormity of the single-use plastic problem

To make a recommendation, or to find out more, please contact Anne-Marie Evans on:

annemarieev@gmail.com or message the group on Facebook or Instagram.



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TRYING

by Les Cooper



I HATE TO undermine your confidence in my garden knowledge, but there are a number of vegetables I have never grown. Over the years, I have tried quite a few things with varying results. I have the right soil for parsnips and the wrong soil for carrots. I have successfully grown swedes, although I hate the darned things because, during my two years in the Royal Air Force, the cooks served up plates of the ghastly orange mush. It was horrible. On the plus side, I am quite good at growing beetroot, sweet corn and onions, but on the minus side, not very good at celery.

Now this year, when I am attempting to grow things in a more 'cottage garden' way, I think I should be more adventurous, and in my seed catalogue, I have noticed a couple of vegetables that perhaps I ought to try. They are globe artichoke and spinach. One slight reservation is I have never eaten either of them! People tell me spinach has a strong flavour and I will probably cop out of actually eating any, but I like the look of it and it did give Popeye his strength.

I must mention that for years I have been a fan of the 'expert' books by Dr D G Hessayon, and I always turn to my tattered Vegetable Expert for guidance. The advice for the globe artichoke begins well, with the news that this "handsome, thistle-like plant is more at home in the herbaceous border than in the vegetable plot". Just what I want! Then, growing four feet high, "its arching silvery leaves provide an attractive floral display". Excellent!

But wait a minute, it then tells me the globe artichoke must never be allowed to bloom. What? Am I not expected to have flowers in my cottage garden? No, apparently the ball-like heads are to be cut off before the fleshy scales open. Next, these buds then have to be soaked in salt water for a couple of hours, rinsed, boiled until tender and served with butter.

To further attract me, I read that it is a fussy plant that needs good soil, watering and feeding. Finally, I notice that in its first year a few small heads will appear, but they mustn't be allowed to develop, but cut off and thrown away.

I do like the look of artichokes and I will try to grow a couple, but only for the flowers. I

have chosen a variety called 'Violetta di Chioggia' that has supposedly particularly decorative blooms. As for the spinach? Well, perhaps not this year.



Violetta di Chioggia

Grow your own cut flowers

by Louise Hampden

MARCH IS a month full of hope and imagery - planning borders full of bloom and sowing seeds. With garden centres bursting with baby plants now, a word of warning. Unless you have a heated greenhouse, don't be too quick to buy and plant outside for at least another month.

But there is one plant which you could sow in pots for which you don't need either a greenhouse or a warm windowsill, and which will give you an abundance of flowers for picking to take indoors: sweet peas. And they have been around since 1699, when a Sicilian monk sent a few seeds to our shores. Since then, breeding

has produced hundreds of different varieties in various colours and sizes. But I like to grow them for their simplicity and scent.

You need to get a move on though, and sow them now for flowers in June. I have found the secret of success is to sow three seeds to a small pot, water them in and, within a couple of weeks, you will see them sprout from the soil. Don't let them dry out and, as the weather warms, their growth will speed up. Once they produce their first tendrils to start climbing, pinch them back an inch and they will produce new shoots and soon become stocky.

In my garden I have a couple of obelisks where they can be planted, but equally they are happy growing up a willow or hazel wigwam. Last summer I even grew them alongside my climbing french beans. Plant the pot out in its entirety as they don't like having their roots disturbed. Keep tying them in until they are happy scrambling on their own and, within a few weeks, you will be picking your own flowers for the house.



Sweet Pea 'Matucana'

A couple of my favourites are 'Midnight Beaujolais', for its deep dark colour, and 'Matucana' for both its bi-coloured purple and maroon flowers and the strongest perfume of most sweet peas.

You must pick them every couple of days, as they will stop flowering if you let them go to seed. Since working from home, this has become one of my favourite morning activities. There is

nothing better than taking a small home grown posy indoors and placing it on your desk to enjoy, and a bunch of sweet peas makes a lovely gift too.



Sweet Pea 'Midnight Blue Beaujolais'

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Community Connections

by Caroline Gratrix

This month we learn something about local resident Martin Haley.



Martin Haley

photo C Gratrix

MARTIN'S BACKGROUND is in marketing, working for a long time at BMW. Fifteen years ago, he started a new venture with his sister-in-law to deliver medical education to GP doctors - RED WHALE.

Prior to Covid, they trained around 20,000 GPs face to face across the UK each year. When the pandemic hit, and at a time when clinicians' services were more vital than ever, they had to rethink their delivery completely given the restrictions on large group events.

Martin had audio production experience from his days in a band whilst at university. He used those skills to help set up a film and recording studio at The Enterprise Centre at Reading University, from where Red Whale's medical education can be accessed across the world.

Red Whale qualified for a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) as part of a government business investment scheme. This was a huge help in expanding the company's move into video production. The scheme monitors the success of its investments, and Red Whale were delighted to come first out of the 800 KTPs in 2021.

Let's find out a little more about Martin and how he feels about our community...

How long have you lived in Caversham?

Since 1998 – 23 years.

Where are your favourite places to eat, drink and shop in Caversham?

Eat – Bina Tandoori

Drink – Alto Lounge

Shop – Waitrose

How do you think we can all be eco-friendlier in RG4?

Walk or cycle or even run to work!

Being part of a community reaps a wealth of benefits, how would you strengthen our sense of community in Caversham?

Try and use what limited skills I have to help others.

If you could bring anything to Caversham, an event, an experience, a shop, what would it be?

A massive open air Billy Graham style bible teaching event on Westfield Park!

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A Crafty Cuppa – with Liz Real

by Ruth Martin

A GLANCE THROUGH Liz's Instagram pictures shows you how the nature-inspired art depicts the world around her: a view from her kitchen window perhaps, or a local landmark. She effortlessly portrays the everyday (even recycling bins are given centre stage!) in new and beautiful lights.

I met up with Liz as she worked on her latest project – a display of local artwork in Caversham's lovely Geo Café. The owner, Keti, approached Liz with the idea in the autumn following a refurbishment of the café. "She had a blank wall and a vision of sharing the work of local artists with the community", Liz explained. Keti and Liz also shared a passion for helping the homeless. Liz is a volunteer for Launchpad, and Keti is inspired by the artist Pirosmanni from her home country of Georgia, a renowned painter who died homeless. So, with a donation to Launchpad for every sale, the vision became a reality. Every few months Liz refreshes the wall to give the customers of Geo Café something new to admire!

Liz comes from a family of artists, and has obeyed her mother's instruction 'never to give up on your art!'. Regularly exhibiting with the Reading Guild of Artists has meant she has challenged herself to create

new artwork for their twice-yearly displays, and being a member of the exhibition team has taught her a thing or two about what makes a well-curated display.

Another result of lockdown for Liz was her foray into opening her garden as a pop-up art venue on the first Wednesday of each month. She now hosts a variety of local makers and creators to her aptly named 'Art in the Arbour', events that are a draw for locals seeking something unique. "It was important to me to donate a percentage of the sales to Launchpad of course", Liz told me. "Creating a sense of community was also key, though the weather was terrible for the first one!" Luckily the rain seems to have stayed away for subsequent garden sales, and it certainly hasn't dampened her spirits. Find Liz at @lizreal2 on Instagram and @lizrealart on Facebook



Liz Real

photo P Davies



A WAY WITH WORDS

Local author Kate Poels talks to Elestr Lee about the books she has published and her mission to help others to enjoy the art of story-telling

KATE POELS always knew she wanted to work with children and young people. Having grown up in Herefordshire, she trained to be a nurse and worked at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London. Then she retrained to be a teacher at the University of Reading, and moved to Caversham 14 years ago, teaching at Caversham Primary School. However, it was around ten years ago that she realised her real ambition – guiding children to unleash their creative writing potential.

“I really want them to run with their ideas,” she enthuses. “It’s great to be able to get away from the ‘rules’- I am there to allow them to unlock their creativity.”

Kate herself always loved writing

as a child, making up little books of her own about the adventures of the two characters she invented, called Gobbledy and Gook. Nursing, and then primary school teaching took over – however, during her maternity leave following the birth of her second daughter, she wrote her first novel.

“I have completed 18 manuscripts so far – both for children and for adults. I write all sorts of stories; at the moment I am working on a dark murder mystery for adults, and my favourite is a children’s adventure, set in the second world war. I read very widely myself, and I think that’s why I like to write in such varied genres.”

So far, Kate has had three children’s books published – her first, *Zachary Mackerel: Meanie In A Bottle*, appeared in 2014, while *Mima Malone, the Mad Bad Inventor* was her first ‘lockdown’ publication. “I self-published *Zachary Mackerel*,” she explains. “Then I had an agent, and *Mima Malone* got a long way through the editorial process before the publisher pulled out. This also happened with *Pie Rats*, but I published them anyway, as so much work had already been done together with the editors. I wouldn’t have wanted to publish without that input.”

While Kate’s first two books are available to purchase through Amazon, *Pie Rats* is available from Caversham’s independent bookshop Fourbears, while she also distributes her work

through schools and at craft fairs. Kate is also very busy delivering online courses to children via Zoom, organised by Author In Me, as well as travelling the country to visit schools, inspiring children to develop their own creative writing.

“Due to the curriculum, teachers have been less and less able to let children use their imagination – the ‘rules’ of writing have become suffocating. Authors such as myself are invited in to do ‘author talks’; and to reassure them that it doesn’t matter if they get a spelling wrong.”

“You don’t want to see children’s ideas stifled!” Kate explains. “These visits are really popular. Sometimes the day is built around a topic the children are studying, for example the Egyptians. Or else I might do a talk to each key stage, then I go into classrooms and the children splinter off into smaller groups. We work on word building; I give them the building blocks for their own work.”

Locally, Kate offers regular creative writing classes in Caversham, at the creativ.spaces studio in Marsack Street. “I run six-week courses, for groups of no more than eight children in term time, or up to 10 in the holidays. Half of these courses are writing for fun, but I also offer 11-plus coaching courses, as creative writing is now part of the test,” she adds. Courses normally sell out, and she is pleased to see children returning even after completing their first six-week course.

Her next project is to start creative writing classes for adults, which will also take place at creativ.spaces. “We are researching to see if this would be better positioned as a daytime course, or in the evenings, and how this can fit into the calendar – the studio is in such demand. Keep an eye on my website for news on this!”

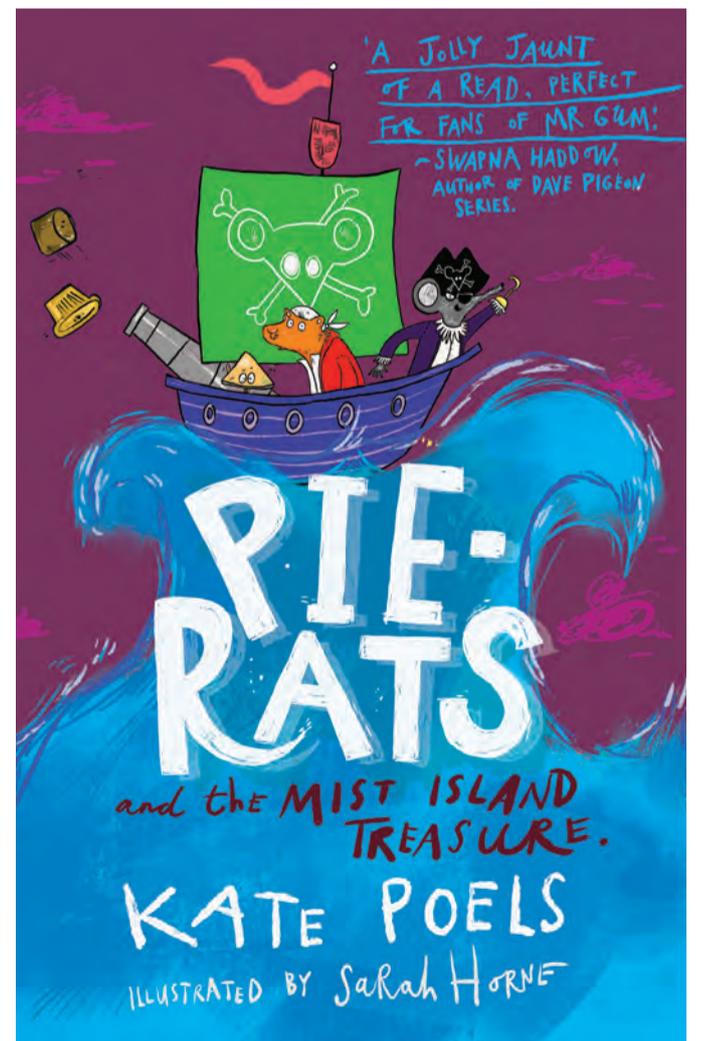
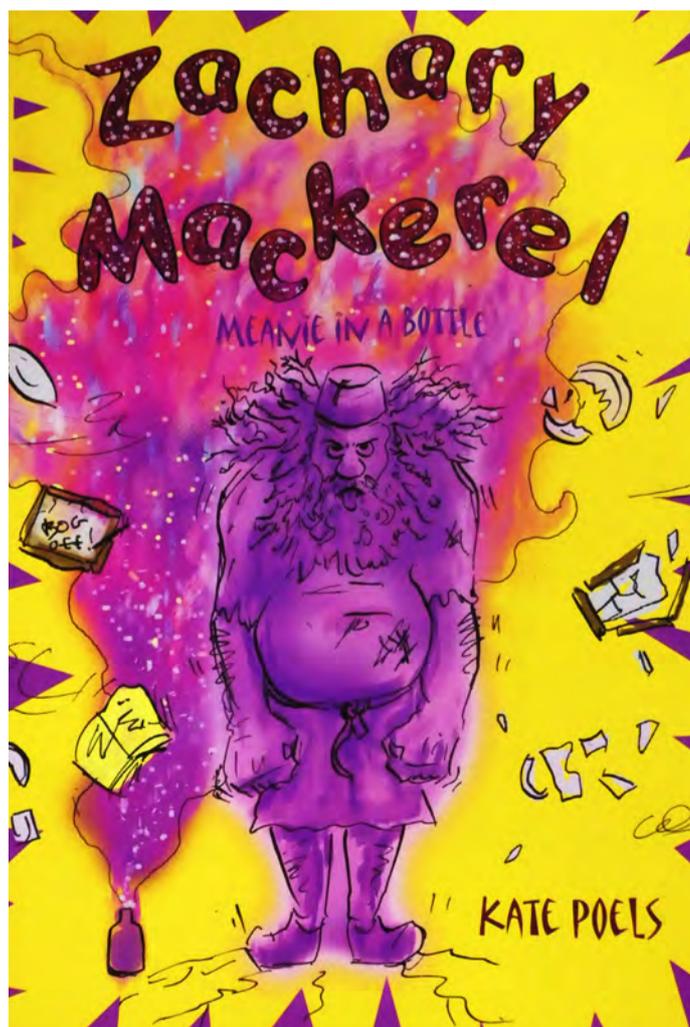
Kate foresees a very busy year ahead, as she juggles ideas for her



Above: Kate with the children at workshop photo K Poels
Below: Pie Rats cover photo S Horne
Below left: Zachary Mackerel cover photo P Chatfield

own forthcoming novels, and prepares for her creative writing classes, as well as encouraging her own daughters, both pupils at Highdown. “The elder devours books – while the younger is more of a scientist and rugby player,” she says. And she remains delighted at the response to both her published children’s books, and to her creative writing initiatives. “It is so important – and children have such fantastic imaginations.”

Find out more: www.katepoels.co.uk



Church Street Cottages



Drawing by Janina Maher

www.janinamaher.artweb.com

DATING FROM the seventeenth century, numbers 6, 8 and 10 Church Street are some of the oldest domestic buildings in Caversham. They were originally small cottages that were probably thatched. Many generations have occupied the buildings, and it is fascinating to imagine their way of life, the living conditions and the historical events affecting the residents' lives. It is remarkable to think that the cottages were standing during

the reigns of Charles I and II and the Civil War. Having survived so many centuries of change, the buildings now have to withstand the thundering traffic that passes by today.

In June 1910 the cottages suffered from flooding, and a photograph exists showing a donkey and cart plodding through the water passing by the sign for J Soper, Chimney Sweep, who occupied number 6 and was still in business in 1921. In that year, number 8 was occupied by a Samuel Young, and number 10 by 'Lewis Bros., builders, carpenters and undertakers'. In Mary Kift's book *Life in Old Caversham*, it appears it was occupied by a wheelwright, who also acted as the local undertaker before the Lewis brothers. Number 4 belonged to Joseph Green who ran an upholstery business, but also made coffins for the wheelwright. Next to Mr Green was a large grocery store owned by Baylis and Co with two horse drawn delivery vans driven by Mr James and Mr Wiggins (now the 'Spice Oven' restaurant).

Janina Maher's drawing shows the buildings today which are mainly occupied by Gardiners Homecare. Established by Dorothy Gardiner in 1968, the company has been an agency for carers for well over fifty years, providing essential support for local residents in need. Today the business is still in the family and run by Dorothy's grandson John-Joe Cottam. Such services have never been so vital to us all and, over the past two years of Covid, we have been very grateful for their care.

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First Impressions Matter

Are you a LinkedIn Lurker?

by Laura Harmsworth



If you are, and you're job seeking, you need to stop being a lurker and become an engager!

A HIGH PERCENTAGE of jobs (I've seen 70% quoted in several places) are secured through networking, rather than an advertised role. LinkedIn is a fantastic place to network and is often underutilised by jobseekers. There are over 30 million employers on LinkedIn and over 20 million open job opportunities.

My key point in this article is that your LinkedIn profile is different from your CV. Your CV is tailored to a specific role, but your LinkedIn profile speaks to many potential employers. You can add so much more to your LinkedIn profile, including a bit more personality - your summary is the place to do this. You can add colour, emojis, presentations, links to articles...

LinkedIn enables you to add up to 50 skills to your profile, get these skills endorsed, and ask for recommendations.

LinkedIn brings your career history to life!

Your photo, headline and summary must be strong and engaging.

Attain all-star status to be found by more people and recruiters.

Expand your network, connect with people you know and don't know, follow companies, join groups.

Interact with your network - like, comment, share, post, recommend.

Check your feed daily.

It's a good idea to keep your profile updated and remain active on LinkedIn even when you're not job seeking - you never know when you might need your network, or they might need you!

I'll be going into a bit more detail on LinkedIn next month as it's such an important part of your job search. In the meantime, if you'd like a fantastic free guide on setting up LinkedIn and getting active on it, send me a message!

You can follow Laura on:

www.facebook.com/CavershamCVWriting

or on LinkedIn, where she posts tips and articles:

www.linkedin.com/in/lauraharmsworth

Her website is: www.cavershamcvwriting.co.uk

Email Laura at contact@cavershamcvwriting.co.uk



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.

WE HOPE our articles on Estate Planning have helped you to better understand how to ensure your family and loved ones are protected when you are gone. This month the spotlight is on the Executor of your Will.

When writing a Will, you will state who you want to execute the Will on your death. The person or persons appointed are called the Executor(s). It is your choice who to appoint. It is often a spouse or child, either on their own, or with the help of a professional service, friend, or another family member.

An Executor must carry out certain tasks and duties to fulfil legally the obligations of executing the Will and your wishes within it. Depending on the size and complexity of your Will, there may be many tasks to carry out or to be organised with other family members. This can include:

No simple task – the Executor

- Obtaining a copy of the medical certificate and then registration of the death
 - Ensure any last wishes such as organ or body donations are carried out
 - Obtaining the Will of the Deceased
 - Locate all the heirs and beneficiaries
 - Value all assets and liabilities of the estate
 - Open a separate executor bank account to deposit money collected
 - Notify all businesses of the death, e.g. Utility Companies, Credit Card Companies, Banks, Council Tax Offices, Social Security etc
 - Make sure that all the Deceased's debts are settled
 - If there are minor or dependent children, the Executor could be responsible for arranging their care and placement
 - Calculate and declare the value of the estate to HMRC on an Inheritance Tax return
 - Pay the Deceased's Tax and any Inheritance Tax due
 - Apply for Probate
 - Distribute the contents of, and ensure distribution to any Trusts established within the Will
 - Produce a full set of accounts for the Beneficiaries showing the estate assets and liabilities, administration income and expenses and how the estate has been distributed
- And be aware, if the Executor forgets to settle a liability before distributing the assets, he or she will be **personally** liable for the debt.
- Acting as an Executor is a tough job. You should consider carefully who to appoint. It is a time-consuming task, which carries both personal and legal liability. It can be onerous at a distressing time for relatives, and there is always the risk of divisions causing problems with beneficiaries.
- You or I can achieve the obligations and tasks for an Executor. However, it is a big responsibility and can take up long hours and, let's be honest, it is not a task that many get thanked for. This is especially so if there is the possibility of an unhappy family member not named in the Will or who has received less than they expected.
- If you have someone in mind to be your Executor, discuss it with them. Make sure they understand what the role involves and discuss the option of involving a professional executor service to help and support them.

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CHOOSE THE WORLD YOU WANT



by Phil Chatfield

FOR TWO WEEKS each year at the end of February and beginning of March, thousands of individuals, companies and groups across the UK come together to share the stories of the people who grow our food and drinks, mine our gold, and grow the cotton in our clothes - people who are often exploited and underpaid. The annual two-week festival was established in 1995 by the Fairtrade Foundation. It brings together people and groups from all over the UK to raise awareness of trade justice and to celebrate craft producers and farmers from around the globe.

This year, the focus of Fairtrade Fortnight is climate change and the growing problems this poses to farmers and workers within the Fairtrade community. The two-week period will

highlight the facts: climate change is a huge challenge for farmers and workers in countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Honduras, yet these are the countries who have contributed least to the causes of climate change. Droughts, crop disease, floods, heatwaves and shrinking harvests are among the challenges they face.

A number of local events and sales of Fairtrade produce are planned in our area. The Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC) in London Street has produced a leaflet with information of sales and events in Reading. This includes details of sales at several of our local churches, including St Andrew, St John's and Caversham Park.

Look out for displays in our local shops, as many sell Fair Trade products, including the True Food Co-op in Emmer Green, Co-op Stores on the Henley Road and Brians Avenue, and Waitrose. The World Shop on London Street in Reading sells both Fair Trade produce, such as teas, coffees and chocolate, and a wide range of crafts produced by artisans who are paid fairly for their skills.

For copies of the RISC leaflet, contact admin@risc.org.uk or check their website, <https://risc.org.uk>.

For more information about Fairtrade Fortnight, check the Fairtrade Foundation website: www.fairtrade.org.uk/Get-Involved/Current-campaigns/Fairtrade-Fortnight

You can also find Reading Fair Trade on social media:

Facebook: @ReadingFT Twitter: @FT_Reading



Going on giving...

ANNE FRANK said, "No-one has ever become poor by giving." She was around for only 15 years but left a lasting gift to the world. Giving is the act of parting freely with something and offering it to someone or something beyond ourselves; a stranger, friend, family member, a charitable organisation, our local community or the wider community. It can involve parting with material things like money and gifts, or immaterial things like our time, skills, knowledge, enthusiasm, passion and kindness. In practice, giving can look like a number of things – it could mean supporting a friend with a problem, donating clothes or unused items to a charity, volunteering our time for a cause we care about, or simply making an effort to make more time for the people we care about.

The benefits of giving for our mental health and our sense of wellbeing are numerous. As social creatures, we benefit from engaging with other people at a meaningful level. Giving to others promotes a sense of trust and cooperation in our relationships. Through this, we strengthen relationships with others, making them more positive, and this is key to good mental health. When we give to others, we don't only make them

feel closer to us; we also feel closer to them. Through cultivating gratitude in everyday life, by showing the people around us that we care, we increase our own positivity about the world and those around us.

At a more scientific level, studies have shown that giving has an in-built effect on our mood. Evidence from neuroscience suggests giving activates the 'reward' area of our brains, meaning we experience intrinsically good feelings when we give to others. What's more, giving is contagious. When we give to others, there is a knock-on effect. The people who receive are more likely to act kindly and give to others and, as a result, promoting happiness and improving our wellbeing.

Giving doesn't just provide benefits to our relationships or provide us with immediate psychological rewards to our moods. Giving can really help us gain a healthier perspective about the world around us. Giving to others helps us to think about other people and takes our thoughts away from our own concerns and see the "bigger" picture.

In the absence of visits to see our families in India, we have found with every small measure of giving, we have received much solidarity from others, which has helped and healed the wounds of such a forced separation.

And Anne Frank was right; we are only richer for it, all of us!

THE CHALLENGE SOLUTIONS:

(From left to right) locks, velocity, dresses, bead, tresses, speed, hair, **hare**, race, bare, embrace, dare, cuddle, naked, dace

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