

THIS issue concentrates on two important matters that affect everyone in Caversham. First, the poll tax, and the editors are very grateful to Robert Dimmick for spending time to give such a succinct resumé of its implications. Members of other political parties have been invited to comment in the next issue.

The second item is Bugs Bottom, which is the main subject of Watchdog's article this month.

POLL TAX AND YOU

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Dimmick is a member of Caversham Park Church, and is also a leading Labour councillor on Reading Borough Council, having been Chairman of the Health and Environment Committee since 1986. He is one of the few people who will pay about the same in Poll Tax as they would have done in rates. He says that his degree in mathematics comes in useful in trying to understand local government finance.

What is the Poll Tax?

MOST people know by now that the rates on houses and flats are being abolished from April 1, and that almost everyone over 18 will have to pay the Poll Tax (officially known as the Community Charge). If you didn't know, it's about time you did!

Local councils — in Caversham it's Reading Borough Council — will collect the Poll Tax to help pay for local services. Everyone in the Council's area pays the same amount, except those who get help to pay less — see "How to pay less". The bill in Reading will be £447 per person.

Reading Borough Council has to collect the money, but over four-fifths of it goes to Berkshire County Council; each council decides separately how much it needs.

Berkshire will spend this year £744 per person on services like:

- Schools, colleges and libraries
- Social services
- Major roads
- Disposing of rubbish
- Police

Reading's share is £165 per head, and it goes on such things as:

- Refuse collection and street sweeping
- Looking after homeless people
- Parks and open spaces
- Sports centres and the Hexagon
- Collecting the Poll Tax
- Local planning.

That adds up to £909 for each person. The difference — £462 — comes from rates paid by businesses and grants from the Government.

Who pays the Poll Tax?

Almost everyone over 18 is liable to pay the poll tax. If you are, you should be on the Community Charge Register, and you should have had a letter to tell you so.

There are a few exemptions for people who are severely mentally handicapped; in prison; permanently in hospital or a nursing home; at school after the age of 18; or some other groups. If you are on the register but think you are entitled to exemption, ring the Council's Helpline on 390825 between 9am and 4pm.

You still have to pay if you are a pensioner, or disabled, or a foreigner (except diplomats and visiting services).

Students only pay 20% of the standard rate, but they can't get any other benefit to help pay it.

Each person has to pay his or her own tax. But a husband can be made to pay the tax for his wife, or a wife for her husband. The same goes for unmarried couples living as husband and wife.

All this applies to the ordinary poll tax — officially "Personal Community Charge". There are two other kinds you might come across.

You will have to pay "Standard Community Charge" if you own a house that is empty for over 6 months (perhaps you can't sell it) or a second home or holiday home. The amount is twice the personal charge — £894 this year — in Reading; the rules are set by the Council for the area where the house is, and could be different in other places.

You may have to pay "Collective Community Charge" if you live in a hostel temporarily. The amount in Reading is £1.22 a day, which works out to £447 a year. The landlord should collect it with the rent, give you a receipt and pass the money on to the Council.

Poll Tax and tenants

If you're a private tenant and used to pay rates as part of your rent, your landlord ought to reduce the rent by that amount. But if he won't, you may not be able to force him to; get advice from the Housing Advice Centre, the Citizens Advice Bureau or a lawyer. You will have to pay Community Charge direct to the Council.

If you're a Council tenant, your rent card will probably show a lower amount despite this year's rent increase. That's because you will no longer pay rates and water charges with the rent. But don't spend the money — you must pay the Poll Tax to the Council and the water rates to Thames Water plc separately.

Poll taxes in history

The poll tax was often used in ancient times because it was convenient for rulers; they did not worry about what people could afford, just demanded the same from everyone. The taxes in the New Testament, like the temple tax (Matthew 17:24) and the tax imposed by the Romans (Matthew 22:21) could well have been poll taxes.

Colonial governments used poll taxes in their less developed colonies until this century. But the last time it was tried in England, in 1381, it was withdrawn after a popular revolt.

The word "poll" just means a head — a "red-poll" is a bird with red feathers on its head, and "polled" cattle have no horns. So a "poll tax" is the same amount per head, just as the "poll" in an election is counting the number of heads for each candidate.

Why the Poll Tax?

Supporters of the poll tax give reasons like these for bringing it in.

- * The rates are unfair, because a person living on his or her own can pay the same as a whole family of earners next door.
- * The rates are based on a valuation which is out of date and often inconsistent.
- * Only one person in a household pays rates; other people may demand or vote for expensive Council services thinking that they don't have to pay for them.
- * It is fair for everyone to pay the same, apart from those who are so poor that they need special help.
- * Council spending needs to be brought under control by making councils accountable.

How you pay it

You will get a Poll Tax bill for £447 for the whole year, or for a reduced amount if it applies, but you don't have to pay all at once. You can pay in ten monthly instalments or in two halves.

The easiest way, if you can, is by Direct Debit on a bank or building society account. £44.70 will be debited each month from May to February (or less if you get rebate or transitional relief). Get the forms from the Council at the Civic Centre, or ring the Helpline on 390825.

If you don't pay by Direct Debit, the Council can send you a book of ten payment slips. You can pay through the post or at the Civic Centre, or through a bank (but it may charge unless you have an account there).

ALWAYS make sure that your name, address and account number are given with each payment. If you don't, the Council will have no idea who paid the money. Most of the payments will be the same amount, so that won't help to trace you. If your payment goes astray you could have to pay twice.

If you are late paying an instalment, you may have to pay the rest of the Poll Tax in one go, unless there's a good reason for missing. See "Can't or won't pay".

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THE EDITORS WOULD LIKE TO WISH ALL READERS
OF THE NEWSPAPER A JOYOUS EASTERTIDE

TALKING POINT

By the Rev. Bill Carpenter

Vicar, St. Andrew's



ASLEEP OR AWAKE?

AMONG the many blessings for which I give thanks is a good night's sleep.

I scandalise the diet advocates by stating my belief that providing one has basically sound health, a person who eats well and sleeps well appears to live longer. Some would add that a life free from worry and stress is also necessary. I agree, but a worried person seldom sleeps well! This is all generalisation, but then who doesn't indulge occasionally?



There are many who do not realise that our good night's sleep consists of a number of phases. For the first quarter of an hour we are very deeply asleep, and it is difficult to wake us. After that our sleep becomes lighter, sometimes we are almost awake and we often dream. Then back into a deeper phase, and so on through the night (or day if you are a shift worker). The "phases" are times when different parts of our bodies are being regenerated and renewed. There will be times when muscle is being toned up, and others when the brain

is receiving attention.

So much for our medical lesson!



Lent, (contrary to popular belief), is NOT a time for Christians to go to sleep, though there may be some who think that they may like to! It is a time, however, for the process which sleep does for brains and bodies, to be performed on our spirits.

It is a process of renewal and regeneration. It cannot accurately be compared to overhauling the washing machine. We cannot go to the shop for spares. It is a time for fresh insights, for growth and a greater realisation of all we already have to be thankful for.



Just as we wake up in the morning refreshed and raring to go, we shall come to life with Christ at Easter to find that our relationship both with God and our fellows has lost all that staleness and tiredness of the night, and to follow him to the greatest light which he has promised to all his faithful soldiers and servants.

THE GUIDES IN CAVERSHAM. . . GOING, GOING, GONE?

As from Easter 1990, the Guiding Light in central Caversham and the Heights will be snuffed out unless a willing volunteer or volunteers can be found to run St Andrew's Guides. It is the only Company in these parts of Caversham and will be a great loss to the community if it closes.

The Guiding movement needs help. You don't have to be a Guider with ten years' experience of putting up tents, tying knots and making macramé hanging baskets, you don't even need to have been a guide or brownie, you just need to be willing to have a go. There are plenty of people who already run Guiding Groups who would be any too



willing to give advice and moral support.

The Guides (aged 10½-14½) meet on Fridays at St Andrew's between 7 and 9pm. If you are between eighteen and sixty and even slightly interested please ring either my District Commissioner, Sylvia Page, or myself. You won't be talked into anything you don't want to do. Please think about it. Caroline Croft 470560, Sylvia Page 477031.

THINKING DAY SERVICE

St John's Church, Caversham, saw the colourful service on February 18th held by Caversham East District Guides and Brownies to commemorate Thinking Day and Founder's Day. The service was conducted by the Revd Alan Wilson. The renewal of the Promises was led by the District Commissioner, Mrs Helen Holloway.

The theme of the service was friendship — friendship with in the Guiding community and with their neighbours, whatever their race, colour or creed. The collection for the Thinking Day Fund goes to help less fortunate Guides

Guiders are urgently required for St John's Guide company. If you are interested in working with 10/14 year olds this can be very rewarding voluntary job, and we should like to hear from you. No previous experience in the Guide movement is necessary as training will be given.

There is also a need for Guiders from other Brownie packs and Guide companies in the Caversham, Emmer Green and Caversham Park areas.

For further details please phone 477860 or 482386.

and Brownies.

February 22nd, Thinking Day, is the birthday of both Lord Baden-Powell, the Founder, without whom Scouting and Guiding would not exist, and his wife, Lady Olave.

CAVERSHAM CLERGY

ANGLICAN

The Rev Richard Kingsbury, Caversham Rectory, Church Road. Tel: 479130.
(Parish Office: Monday-Thursday 9.30-12.30 Tel: 471703)
The Rev Alan Wilson, St John's House, 9 South View Avenue. Tel: 471814.
Rev Bill Carpenter, St Andrews House, Harrogate Rd. Tel: 472788.
The Rev Nigel Hardcastle, 20 St. Barnabas Road. Tel: 478239.
The Rev Christine Allsopp, 25 Ilkley Road. Tel: 472070.

BAPTIST

The Rev Dennis Weller, 80 Balmore Drive. Tel: 478668.

METHODIST

The Rev Keith Saunders, 72 Highmoor Road. Tel: 472223.
The Rev John Boakes, 9 Woodlands Grove, Caversham. Tel: 482530.

UNITED REFORMED

The Rev David Clark, 41 Highmoor Road. Tel: 471909.

CAVERSHAM HILL CHAPEL

The Rev Chris Justice, 119 Peppard Road. Tel: 474529.
The Rev Michael Holmes, 8 Southview Avenue. Tel: 474138.

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The Rev Thomas Meagher, The Presbytery, 2 South View Avenue. Tel: 471787.
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The Rev Cecil Keane, 18 Peppard Road, Sonning Common. Tel: 723418.

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8.00pm Annual Meeting Caversham & District Residents' Association. Caversham Baptist Church

Week
1 - 7 April

Children's Society Week. Please help in house-to-house collection. Ring Lynn Baker 471262.

Tuesday,
April 24th

7pm Beauty Demonstration by Clarins and Fashion Show by Caronell Fabrics at the Berkshire Masonic Centre, Sindlesham in aid of Barnardos. Tickets £6 from Reading 474272.

Thursday,
April 26th

8.00pm Annual General Meeting of the Emmer Green Residents' Association at St Barnabas Church Hall, Grove Road, Emmer Green. The guest speaker will be Mr Geoffrey Filkin, Chief Executive of Reading Borough Council.

Saturday,
April 28th

10.00am-1.00pm Annual Household and Handyman Sale at St Barnabas Church Hall, Grove Road, Emmer Green.

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The newspaper produced by members of the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Free Churches of Caversham and Mapledurham for the local community.

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All contributions for May issue should be sent to Church House, by noon on Wednesday 4 April.

All advertising copy should be sent to Mrs E. Maule, 18 Albert Road, Caversham by 2 April.

The dates for June will be Monday 30 April and Wednesday 2 May.

The Editors wish to make it clear that the views expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the board.

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POLL TAX AND YOU

From page 1

What if I move?

If you move within Reading, you need to tell the Community Charge Registration Officer at the Civic Centre. There was a form with your notice of registration, but if you've lost it you should ask for a new one or write giving your name, your reference number, and your old and new addresses.

If you move to another area, then you will need to get taken off the register in Reading and put on in the new area. You need to write to the Community Charge Registration Officers both in Reading and in your new area. You will have to pay Reading 1/365ths of the annual charge for this area for each day you lived here, and the other Council 1/365ths of its charge for each day you lived there. Depending how much you have already paid to Reading, you could get a refund or a bill for the amount left to pay, and you will then have to pay the other Council the amount for the rest of the year.

In the same way, people who reach the age of 18 pay for the part of the year after their birthday. If someone dies, the people handling the estate should get a refund for the poll tax for the rest of the year.

You might think that moving is a good way of disappearing from the register and avoiding paying. Be warned — the next

time you use a local service and give your name and address, you might be traced — and that could lead to prosecution as well as having to pay up.

If you are entitled to Transitional Relief, you will lose it if you move.



How to pay less

There are two ways of getting your Poll Tax bill reduced.

TRANSITIONAL RELIEF is for people who paid little or no rates, to protect them against the cost of Poll Tax for the first three years.

COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFIT is for people on low incomes.

You could qualify for both of these.

TRANSITIONAL RELIEF comes in two kinds.

If you are married, AND you (or your partner) paid rates in 1989-90 (direct or through your rent), AND your rate bill was less than £348, AND you have not moved since, then the people in your family will have their total Poll Tax reduced by the amount by which the rates were less than £348 — the relief is divided up among the whole family equally. If you are single and your bill was less than £96 you get a similar relief, but very few people qualify.

This kind of transitional relief is given automatically. You should not have to apply, but call the Council's Helpline (390825) if you think

you qualify but don't get it.

If you live in someone else's household so that you (and your partner if you have one) did not pay rates, AND you are a pensioner or disabled, AND you have not moved, then you can get a reduction of up to £96. In this case you DO have to apply.

COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFIT can reduce your bill if your income is low. Your income is compared to an estimate of your needs, which takes into account whether you are married, any children you have, whether you are a pensioner, and other factors like being disabled.

If your income is less than your needs, then you will pay only 20% of the Poll Tax bill (£89.40 for a single person, £178.80 for a couple). If this applies to you, then you may also qualify for Income Support or other benefits from the Department of Social Security.

If your income is more than your needs, then the rebate is reduced by 15p for each extra pound; the least rebate you could get is £26, giving a poll tax bill of £421 for a single person or £868 for a couple.

If you have savings, they can affect the amount. Your income will be adjusted if you have more than £6,000, but if you have more than £16,000 you can't get benefit at all. Every adult in a

household should apply separately, except that couples are assessed together. So even if the parents are well off, a 19-year-old son or daughter on a low wage could qualify.

For **PEOPLE BELOW PENSION AGE**, this table gives some examples of the amount of "needs" estimated (the income level below which you get maximum benefit) and the amount of take-home pay from a job above which you would not get any benefit. This takes into account Child Benefit where appropriate.

Household	Needs	Max weekly pay
Single person	\$36.70	\$84
Couple, no children	\$57.60	\$155
Couple, children 10 and 14	\$95.55	\$179
Single parent, children 3 and 5	\$78.45	\$115

For **PENSIONERS**, this table gives the same details, but it takes into account State pensions and other benefits and gives the extra income you could have from other sources like a company pension.

Household	Needs	Max Income
Single pensioner under 75	\$48.50	\$44
Couple both under 75	\$75.55	\$88
Couple both over 80 and severely disabled	\$138.25	\$106

People who have been getting Housing Benefit or Rate Rebate should not have to apply again — the schemes are almost the same. But many people who did not qualify previously should apply now, because the Poll Tax is so much more than the rates were.

To apply, visit the Civic Centre or telephone 390824 between 9am and 4pm.



Can't or Won't Pay?

If you can't find the money to pay the Poll Tax, the first thing to do is to check you're getting all the reliefs and benefits you can.

See "How to pay less";

If that doesn't solve your problems, then you may well have other debts as well — perhaps you can't afford the mortgage either. It's best to get in touch with all the people you owe money to (including the Community Charge Officer) as soon as possible and explain the situation. You may be able to pay off the debts a little at a time, or get some of them delayed. But don't just leave it — you could lose your entitlement to benefits or even have legal action taken against you. Get in touch with the Helpline (390825) or the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

Some people are so angry at the unfairness of the new system or the size of their bills that they are thinking of refusing to pay at all, or only paying part. If you want to protest in this way and you're willing to take the consequences, then that is your decision. But you need to think hard first, and to know what could happen.

There are many ways in which the Community Charge Officer can collect the Poll Tax. He can prosecute if you don't register; he can sue you for the money; he can take it from your wages; he can seize your

property. If you don't pay up, then you could find that your name appears in court lists and you are blacklisted by credit reference agencies, making it hard for you to borrow money in future. If you don't register for Poll Tax, you could lose your right to benefit or relief. In an extreme case, if you still fail to pay, you could go to prison for up to three months.

The Pharisees asked Jesus whether people should pay an unpopular tax to the Roman occupiers. He said: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." (Matthew 22:21). You should not refuse to pay other debts until you are sure you have balanced your account with God, by giving your whole life and all you have for his service. St Paul also recommended paying taxes — see Romans 13:6-7.

My own view is that we should all pay, however little we like it. In future, a better system may be introduced that will cost some people more. We do not want to give them any excuse to refuse payment.



Where can I get help?

Reading Borough Council opposes the

Poll Tax believing it to be unfair, undemocratic and expensive to collect. However, they are obliged by law to collect it. They will make every effort to help you with any problems it brings and ensure that anyone entitled gets exemptions and rebates.

If you want to get any information, help or advice, or just need a form, you should visit the Help Desk at the Civic Centre or ring the Helpline on 390825. They're open from 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. Or write to the Help Desk at the Civic Centre, Reading RG1 7TD. For Community Charge Benefit, ring 390824 or visit the Housing Benefit section at the Civic Centre.

For advice about dealing with landlords, ring 390090 or contact the Housing Aid Centre at the Civic Centre.

You may also be able to get advice from the Citizens' Advice Bureau, the Department of Social Security or lawyers.



Why is the Poll Tax so much?

In 1989/90, the average rates per head of population were £270, and the

Turn to page 4

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POLL TAX AND YOU

From page 3

Government says that each Council should be charging a Poll Tax of £278. So why are you being charged £447?

The most important reason is that the Government has cut the national contribution, because it has underestimated how much Councils in this area need to spend. Its grant is based on a "Standard Spending Assessment", its own guess at what Councils need to spend, and is set so that if Councils spend that amount they will need to raise £278 in poll tax.

There are two groups of reasons why this assessment is too low.

For every Council in the country the assessment is too low because it assumes inflation is only 4% (costing you about £30 a head), and because it assumes that poll tax costs nothing to collect and that everyone will pay in full on the first possible date. The collection costs and an allowance for late and missed payments amount to £37 a head.

For Berkshire in particular, the assessment is even worse because it is based on a crude formula which takes no account of special local factors like the high price of land, higher pay in the area, the rapid rate of development, and the number of homeless people.

Berkshire and Reading are preparing to take legal action against the Government to get a more reasonable spending assessment.

In Reading, the total effect of all the changes is about £117 a head. If the rating system still existed and last year's rules for grants applied, the average rates might have been

about £330 per head.

This is still a significant increase. The biggest factor is inflation, but expenditure has increased by £71 per head for Berkshire and £30 per head for Reading. I don't have full details of why Berkshire is spending more, although I believe part of it is because last year's rates were not enough to cover what they spent.

For Reading Borough Council, £12 per head is the result of new legislation by the Government and reduced income from charges (such as planning fees and leisure centres). £5 per head pays for the rising tide of homelessness, £5 for the effects of last year's new investments (for example, emptying new litter bins) and £6 is because the Council is no longer drawing on balances to reduce them to an appropriate level.

Berkshire County Council always used to be regarded as a low spender — last year it had the seventh lowest rates in the country. Reading Borough Council has cut administrative overheads by £3m in the last four years. The high level of poll tax is a result of inadequate Government grants.

Changes to Council finances

The Poll Tax is just one of many changes beginning in April which change the way Councils raise and use money.

* **BUSINESS RATES** will still be paid on offices, shops, factories and other premises. But properties have been re-valued and the Government has set the rate level for the whole country. This is then divided up among Councils according to the population. Local

Councils now have no influence on how much businesses pay or how much the Councils themselves receive.

Reading rateable values are high, so most businesses in Reading will pay much more. But the Council gets less — down to £315 per head, from £583 last year.

* **GRANTS** from the Government are totally different, and they are now paid as one amount to cover spending by both Berkshire and Reading. Previously each council got a separate grant and decided its own rates level, but now it is impossible to say how much of the Poll Tax goes to each Council.

* **CAPITAL** rules have changed. Before this year, when Councils sold land, Council houses or other assets, they could keep the money to re-invest it in new developments. From now on, the Government is making them use half or three-quarters of it to pay off debt. It also puts strict limits on how much Councils can borrow for new building.

In 1989-90 Reading invested £36 million — a record amount because the Council knew it would lose the chance to invest from this year. This went on major repairs to Council housing (£9m), buying land and new housing (£9m), grants to housing associations and private owners (£5m), the Town Hall redevelopment (£2m), computers for the Poll Tax (£1m) and environmental improvements (£2m). This year, the most it can invest will be £13m, and that depends on how much land the Council can sell.

* **COUNCIL HOUSING** subsidies are changed. The

Government wants Council rents to rise nearer to the levels of private rented housing — even if tenants can't afford them, and if rents are more than it costs to run the houses. This year the rents are going up by £4.36 a week on average. From now on, the Council can't subsidise council house rents (Reading didn't anyway) but can be forced to increase rents and make a profit for poll tax payers.

Caversham residents tend to have larger houses than those in the rest of Reading, so they get of fairly lightly. The proportions paying more, by ward, are:

- Caversham (the older part of the area) 88.4%
- Peppard (Caversham Park and Emmer Green) 82.9%
- Thames (Caversham Heights) 77.2%

At the other extreme 95.5% of residents of Katesgrove ward, just south of the town centre, will pay more.

Who wins, who loses?

The Council has done careful studies into who gains and who loses from Poll Tax.

You may pay less under the new system if you are a single person in a medium to large house, or a couple in a large house. The Council has worked out that one adult in ten in Reading will save money — half of them will gain under £100.

You will probably pay more if you are in a small house, or if you are a couple in a medium-sized house, or if there are more than two people over 18 in your household. The Council has worked out that over 90% of people will be worse off, and over half of all residents will pay more than £200 extra each.

People who qualify for rebates and relief still are not fully protected. 68.5% of them are worse off — most of the rest are single adults. Nearly 40% of them will pay more than £50 extra. Of those who don't get Income Support, some will lose up to 8% of their household income. Every couple on benefit with an income under £50 will be worse off.

The few winners are people who have comparatively large houses. The many losers include most of the rest of us, but those who are hit worst are people in small terraced houses and those with large families — whether or not they are earning.

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ROSE MONDAY IN DUSSELDORF

Every year in towns and villages throughout Southern Germany the people celebrate the days before the onset of Lent with "Karneval" which culminates with a town or village official procession on Rose Monday, the day before Shrove Tuesday, and this year members of the Dusseldorf Anglo-German Club invited members of the Reading Dusseldorf Association to participate in the festivities.

Eleven of us touched down at Dusseldorf airport on Saturday, 24th February, at 10.30am to be greeted by our hosts in fancy costumes who proceeded to decorate us with coloured streamers. Most of our hosts had been our guests in Reading the previous year, and after introductory handshakes and kisses we were whisked off to our hosts' home for lunch.

SATURDAY

Our first event, on Saturday afternoon, was a visit to the town museum

where we enjoyed the services of an English speaking guide. Two sets of exhibits which caught my eye were a collection of paintings by schoolchildren painted in 1937 which had been miraculously preserved, and the gallery of modern paintings from the 1930s and 40s.

Saturday evening saw us, now attired in fancy dress or hats, attending the biggest of three Balls being held in Dusseldorf. Ours was called "The Hot Witches Night" which took place in the Stadhalle and was attended by three thousand people (the other two Balls had attendances of about two thousand each), nearly all wearing fancy costumes. It was a bit like the old Chelsea Arts Ball but much bigger, and despite the huge number of participants there was ample room for dancing to the music of a Big Band, a Rock & Roll Band, and two modern groups. It is some years since the writer last "jived" but he had not forgot-

by
Peter
Littlewood

ten his nifty footwork! The costumes were simply fantastic, and mention must be made of Martyn Allies, our Chairman, as Lord Neslon, and his wife, Lily, as Britannia, complete with helmet, trident and shield (Lady Hamilton did not appear to be present!)

SUNDAY

We started Sunday with "Brunch" at the Holiday Inn in Dusseldorf's town centre, and afterwards propelled ourselves through jostling crowds of the Street Carnival in the Konigsallee a street one kilometre in length. Here whole families paraded in their fancy costumes from the youngest to the oldest, while some groups had brought along their own mini floats to hold a goodly supply of liquid refreshment! Sadly the weather was wet, but this did nothing to dampen the good spirits of the

revellers. Nowhere amongst this huge crowd or at the previous night's Ball did I see one case of drunkenness!

After this exhilarating experience we retired to the homes of our hosts to enjoy an evening meal.

MONDAY

Monday, the day of the official gigantic procession for Rose Monday, dawned grey and wet, and then the gale struck! The first three huge floats to leave the shelter of the Stadhalle were simply blown away, and regretfully the procession had to be cancelled. The writer's hosts live in a fourth floor flat where the strength of the wind smashed to smithereens two large glass doors — indeed, I shall remember this day as the "Day of a Thousand Pieces"! However at other South German cities and towns the processions went ahead, and we viewed the events on TV. Not to be denied their Karneval, Dusseldorf hopes to stage their official procession

later in the year, possibly in May.

Dinner was taken in a delightful restaurant outside the town on the banks of the Rhine, after which we returned to our host's homes with the rain still pouring down, and the wind howling. Some parts of the town had suffered structural damage and several streets were closed.

TUESDAY

Tuesday morning we were awoken by thunder, lighting and hailstones, but when we arrived at Dusseldorf airport for the flight home the sun was shining!

Here I must mention the Karneval's slogan — "Von Nix, Kutt Nix" which roughly means "From Nothing, Comes Nothing".

Indeed it was a most enjoyable and remarkable weekend, and our thanks go out to our hosts the Anglo-German Club of Dusseldorf, and also to Martyn Allies for organising our trip.

COMMUNITY LUNCH

The Caversham Centre in School Lane was the venue for the second Community Lunch — a very appropriate place as Mrs. Mairwen Fantham was speaking on the work of the Reading Adult College and this was one of its 12 centres.

Early Plans

Mrs Fantham amused the guests by quoting from the "Caversham plan" of 1966,

revamped in the early 70's. A new road was to have been built and a new community centre, which would have included an enlarged new library. So much for early planning — indeed the first lectures of the Reading Adult College were held in the library!

Caversham Centre...

However, Mrs Fantham concentrated on what the

centre does now. The number and variety of the courses surely needs no full description to Bridge readers. Sufficient to say that the centre is used to capacity — mornings, afternoons and evenings as well as most Saturdays and often during school holidays. History, very popular, music, art appreciation and languages spring immediately to

mind and some of these courses are organised jointly by WEA and the University. There are courses specially for the handicapped and also literacy and numeracy schemes.

...and Arthur Legge Centre

This too is used by the centre and also by affiliated societies like artists, photographers (there is a dark room) gardeners,

keep fit and short mat bowls. There is a thriving craft centre.

The fact that 21,000 throughout Reading enrolled last year shows what a need is covered and all those appreciated and were glad to be reminded of the work Mrs Fantham and her colleagues undertake. They also thanked Kathy Munns, the Community Librarian, for organising the lunch.

OBITUARY — Maggie Kearey

Friday 2nd March saw the end of the long and happy life of Maggie Kearey who lived at 'Brooklyn' 73 Westfield Road for the last seventy-nine years. She was born in Wokingham and came to Caversham in 1905 at the age of seven, living first in Cromwell Road, then Prospect Street and finally in Westfield Road.

Originally her school had plans for her to be a school teacher, but instead she became a seamstress and dressmaker, this was after being a muni-

tions worker during the First World War. Her husband whom she met in school as a deskmate was a member of St John's Lower Caversham, and they were married at St Peter's in 1921. Subsequently he became a sidesman there. He died in 1972.

Maggie, with her strong character, continued to live a useful and happy life made possible by the attention of her family and friends and various social services. Apart from her weekly day trip to the 'Centre' where she

enjoyed the company of others and the challenge of using her hands in various handicrafts, she was housebound.

Quite recently two bogus water supply officials got into her house — on her birthday. Mercifully no harm as done and nothing stolen. Maggie told them quite definitely that they were not from South Water, and they were to 'get out'.

Her belief in the Christian faith was very strong and we should give thanks for her example.

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ROUND THE CHURCHES**St Andrew's
Fellowship**

St Andrew's Fellowship met on Thursday 8th February when a very interested gathering met to welcome back an old friend, the Revd Keith Sanders, Minister of Caversham Heights Methodist Church, who came to talk about "The American Connection". He spent a sabbatical leave in the States last year and shared his memories with those present.

Mr Sanders spoke of the immensity of the country which is further across from East to West than it is from England. He had a lot of mementos of his trip, including a magnificent stole with which he had been presented, and a copy of an original hymn book. Methodists outnumber Anglicans in America. Mr Sanders told how the Wesley brothers went to Carolina, though Charles came back to England after a short time as he was ill, John stayed on for two years. There had been

a strong Moravian influence on the Church there, and members were interested to hear that the Methodist Church in America still has Bishops.

The white churches were very affluent with large complexes of buildings, even having leisure centres and swimming pools, though the black ones had no air-conditioning which led to the congregation rather disturbingly fanning themselves. The churches were segregated. There was no circuit system as in this country, each church was on its own. Ministers were paid in accordance with the size of their congregations.

Mr Sanders did not feel that the TV Evangelist, so popular in the States performed a very worthwhile function.

The interest of those present was evidenced by the number of questions that followed.

**COMMUNION SUPPER AT
ST BARNABAS'**

After careful consideration, St Barnabas PCC have decided to try out an option recommended by the House of Bishops in their booklet, Lent, Holy Week, Easter. This suggests celebrating the communion service in the context of a meal. At first the idea seems strange. But once used to the idea it seems obvious. The last supper was after all a supper. For years the communion service was always celebrated as a meal. Suddenly, it is difficult to explain why, the Lord's Supper even stopped being a supper.

In New Testament times the communion services seem to have been like an American supper. Everyone brought their own food. Even then there were

problems. The rich didn't want to share their food. Some enjoyed the meal too much and were distracted from worship. When missionaries got to the northern barbarian lands (like England), discipline became very difficult. The supper part of the service was slowly dropped.

It wouldn't be practical to make the communion a supper every time. We think however, it will be a good idea to celebrate the communion this way on Maundy Thursday this year.

We will celebrate the service in the church hall. We will sit at tables in an open square. The sentence and greeting start the service. We will then have a soup course prepared by the men.

The service then continues to the bible readings and sermons. A main course is then eaten. Prayers and peace are followed by the third course. When this is finished bread and wine are taken and the Eucharistic prayer is said. The consecrated bread and wine is passed reverently round the table as at the last supper.

After the closing prayers we will sing a hymn as did the disciples and move off to the church to share the first five minutes of the watch together as it were in Gethsemane.

People will be invited to bring contributions of food. Naturally people will share fellowship and conversation during the various courses.

ST. MARGARETS NEWS**Lady Thurlow**

It is with great sadness we record the death in February of Lady Thurlow, whose home was the Old Vicarage, Mapledurham, and who worshipped at St Margaret's Church. We extend deepest sympathy to Lord Thurlow and all his family.

Dee Newman

On Sunday 14th

**ST PETER'S
WIVES**

A large number of members met in Church House in February to hear a talk on Monuments and Tombstones.

Many regarded this as a somewhat morbid subject, but it was in fact not morbid at all. It was a fascinating account of the history of tombstones. The speaker told how she had become interested in this subject and how she had visited many graveyards and cemeteries all over the country. It was interesting to discover that, as in most things, tombstones followed fashion trends and, even without reading the inscriptions, one could tell by the shape and ornamentation which period they came from. The material from which they were constructed also gave an indication of their origins. All in all, it was a comprehensive and fascinating account which was thoroughly appreciated by all who attended.

January, we sang "One more step along the road I go" as we expressed our love for Dee Newman and prayed for God's blessing on her new home at 12 Mowforth House, Woodcote. Dee has lived in Mapledurham for thirty years and been one of our most regular worshippers for sixteen years. She has done much to build up our community in many ways, not least by her quiet Christian witness. We know that she will continue to "Show forth in her life the fruits of God's grace" in her new community of Woodcote. Since leaving

Mapledurham, Dee has been visited by several friends. She is now happily settled into her lovely little flat which she shows everyone with great pride and joy.

The Barbours

Also leaving Mapledurham are Mike and Carol Barbour and their family. We are very sorry to bid them farewell for they have contributed a great deal to the community in so many ways and in spite of their short time here have made many friends. We wish them all every happiness in their new home near Alcester in Warwickshire.

**NEW GATES
FOR
ST JOHN'S**

After many years St John's iron gates rusted through, "where wind and water meet", and collapsed last summer. To commemorate their centenary year, St John's congregation have decided to replace them, with a brick pillar gateway. This will be in keeping with the new Vicarage which the diocese will build in brick.

If you, or your family, passed through the old gates at one of the most

important moments of your life, perhaps carried to your christening, or walked between them hand in hand after your wedding, or followed a member of an older generation to their funeral in the church where they worshipped — would you like to contribute?

If you would, you can send a contribution to: Don Vince, 1 All Hallows Road, Caversham. And we all say "Thankyou".

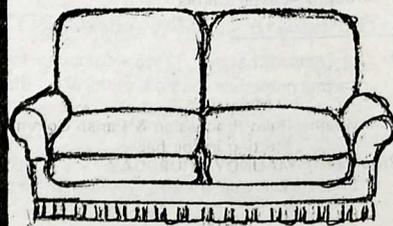
IN PRINT NOW

Nigel Hardcastle's last publication for the Church Computer Project is now out. It is a fifty-two page booklet entitled Church Publications and Computers. (ISBN 085169-1943).

The booklet describes the ways in which computers can be used by churches to help them produce publications of various sorts. The computer can produce the original copy of a publication by word-processing, desk top

publishing, or by typesetting from disc. These originals can then be copied by duplicating, photocopying or off-set litho. St Barnabas Emmer Green uses a desk top publishing programme on their computer for most publications. The results are then photocopied. Similar methods are used by St John's and St Andrew's.

The booklet costs £1.95 from the B.C.C. bookroom, 35 Lower Marsh Street, London SE1 7RL.

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SERVICES FOR HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

ANGLICAN

St Peter's

8th April - PALM SUNDAY

(palm crosses at all services)
8.00am—Holy Communion
9.15am—Holy Communion (sung)
11.15am—Morning Prayer
6.30pm—"THE CROSS OF CHRIST" sung by combined choirs of St. Peter's and St. Andrew's

HOLY WEEK - Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday

7.00pm—Holy Communion
12th April - MAUNDY THURSDAY
9.30am—Holy Communion (said)
8.00pm—Holy Communion (sung)
followed by stripping of altar and ALL NIGHT VIGIL before the altar of Repose

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

8.00am—Vigil ends with Liturgy and Administration of Holy Communion
12-3pm—THREEHOURS' DEVOTIONAL SERVICE.
Conductor: The Rev. Derek Spears

15th April - EASTER DAY

8.00am—Holy Communion
9.15am—Holy Communion (sung)
11.15am—Morning Prayer
6.30pm—FESTAL EVENSONG

St. Andrew's

8th April - PALM SUNDAY

8.00am—The Eucharist
9.15am—Family Eucharist (Sung, with procession)
11.15am—The Eucharist (all with distribution of palms)
6.30pm—Evensong

HOLY WEEK - Monday to Wednesday

7.15pm—The Eucharist with address

12th April - MAUNDY THURSDAY

8.00pm—Sung Eucharist with sermon

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

9.30am—Proclamation of the Cross with communion
11.00am—Children's Service

14th April - EASTER EVE

8.30pm—Vigil, Renewal of Baptismal Vows and Service of New Fire

15th April - EASTER DAY

8.00am—The Eucharist
9.15am—Family Eucharist
11.15am—Mattins
6.30pm—Evensong

St. John's

8th April - PALM SUNDAY

8.00am—Holy Communion (1662)
9.15am—Parish Communion (with procession of palms)
11.00am—Family Worship/Activities
6.30pm—Evensong

9th April - Monday

9.15am—Morning Prayer
10.30am—Eucharist at Bristow Court, Hartley Road

10th April - Tuesday

9.15am—Morning Prayer
2.30pm—Mothers' Union service in church

11th April - Wednesday

9.15am—Morning Prayer
7.30pm—Evening Meditation

12th April - MAUNDY THURSDAY

10.00am—Eucharist
8.00pm—Eucharist (at Gosbrook Road Methodist Church) followed by stripping of altars and Vigil back at St. John's

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

10.00am—Litany and Passion

14th April - Holy Saturday

7.30pm—Evening prayer and meditation

15th April - EASTER DAY

8.00am—Holy Communion (1662)
9.15am—Parish Communion
11.00am—Children's Eucharist
6.30pm—Easter Carols

St. Barnabas'

8th April - PALM SUNDAY

9.30am—Palm Procession & Parish Communion starting in the hall

12th April - MAUNDY THURSDAY

7.30pm—The Last Supper. Communion in the context of a meal as authorised by the bishops. The Watch in church till midnight

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

2.00pm—Proclamation of the Cross (no communion)

14th April - EASTER EVE

9.00pm—Waiting for the Risen Christ (The readings from the Vigil)

15th April - EASTER DAY

8.00am—Holy Communion (1662)
9.30am—Easter Liturgy (including the service of light and renewal of baptismal vows)

St. Margaret's

8th April - PALM SUNDAY

11.00am—Eucharist and distribution of palm crosses

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

9.30am—Meditations and Devotions on the Cross

15th April - EASTER DAY

11.00am—Sung Eucharist

Caversham Park Church

8th April - PALM SUNDAY

11.30am—Open-air service and witness, accompanied by the SALVATION ARMY BAND with distribution of palm crosses. Community Centre car park. (If wet, service in Youth Wing).

9th and 10th April - Monday & Tuesday

7.30-8pm—Meditation and prayer. 10 Northbrook Road.

11th April - Wednesday

7.30-8pm—Meditation and prayer. 1 Aldenham Close.

12th April - MAUNDY THURSDAY

7.30pm—1 Aldenham Close.
Agape Meal with readings, meditations, prayer and a symbolic Washing of Hands. (Names of those attending to be given in advance to Sybil Holbrook)

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

10-12 noon—Event for all ages, with worship, in the School

15th April - EASTER DAY

11.00am—Holy Communion, in the School

FREE CHURCH

Caversham Heights Methodist

8th April - PALM SUNDAY

11.00am—Morning Service and distribution of palms

12th April - MAUNDY THURSDAY

8.00pm—United service at Gosbrook Road

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

10.30am—United service

15th April - EASTER DAY

8.30am—Holy Communion followed by Church breakfast
11.00am—Easter Service
6.30pm—Easter Songs of Praise

Gosbrook Road Methodist

8th April - PALM SUNDAY

11.00am—Mrs. Nina Preston
6.30pm—Rev. John Boakes

12th April - MAUNDY THURSDAY

8.00pm—United service at Gosbrook Road

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

10.30am—United service at Caversham Heights

15th April - EASTER DAY

11.00am—Mrs. Jill Bramford
6.30pm—Rev. John Boakes

Caversham Baptist Free Church

8th April - PALM SUNDAY

10.30am—Family Worship.
Items by Gospel Singers
6.30pm—Evening Service

15th April - GOOD FRIDAY

10.30am—United service at Caversham Heights

15th April - EASTER DAY

10.30am—Communion Service
6.30pm—Easter Praise

St. Paul's URC

8th April - PALM SUNDAY

11.00am—Family & Parade Service

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

9.15am—Morning Worship
10.00am—Procession of Witness in town centre starting at St. James RC Church, the Forbury

15th April - EASTER DAY

11.00am—Morning Worship and Holy Communion
6.30pm—Evening Worship and Holy Communion

Caversham Hill Chapel

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

10.30am—Family Worship

15th April - EASTER DAY

10.30am—Family Worship
6.30pm—Easter Praise

Caversham Heights Christian Fellowship

(Meeting in Mapledurham Playing Fields Pavilion)

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

10.45am—Family Service

15th April - EASTER DAY

10.45am—Family Easter Celebration
6.30pm—Evening Worship at Caversham Hill Chapel

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS - Services as usual.

ROMAN CATHOLIC

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Penance Service, with Confessions, during week beginning April 1st. Details later.

7th April - St Anne's. Blessing of Palms at 5.30pm. Mass on Saturday.

8th April - PALM SUNDAY

St Anne's. Masses at 9.45am and 6.30pm.

Heights Chapel Mass at 8.30am
Blessing of Palms and Sung Mass at 11.15am

9th April - Monday

Mass at St Anne's at 9.00am

10th April - Tuesday

Mass at the Convent at 7.15am and at the Heights Chapel at 10.00am
First Confessions (St Anne's) at 3.45pm

11th April - Wednesday

Mass at St Anne's at 9.00am
Mass of Sacred Chrism at St Aloysius, Oxford at 8pm.

12th April - MAUNDY THURSDAY

Morning Mass at St Anne's at 9.00am.
EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER AT 7.30 AT ST ANNE'S, WITH THE WASHING OF FEET AND WATCHING AT THE ALTAR OF REPOSE.

13th April - GOOD FRIDAY

Stations of the Cross (St Anne's) 10.30am.
LITURGY OF THE PASSION AND DEATH OF OUR LORD AT 3pm (St Anne's). VENERATION OF THE CROSS AND HOLY COMMUNION.
Liturgy at the Heights Chapel at 6.00pm. Confessions after the Liturgy at St Anne's Day of Fasting and Abstinence. Collection for the Holy Places in the Holy Land.

14th April - HOLY SATURDAY

Confessions may be announced.
Recollection Day for RCIA Group.
VIGIL MASS OF EASTER, WITH BLESSING OF NEW FIRE, SERVICE OF READINGS, AND FIRST MASS OF EASTER WITH BAPTISMAL SERVICE.
The ceremony begins at 8pm.

15th April - EASTER SUNDAY

Masses at St Anne's at 9.45am and 6.30pm.
Masses at the Heights Chapel at 8.30am and 11.15am.

16th April - EASTER MONDAY

Masses at St Anne's and the Heights Chapel at 10am.

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ROUND THE CHURCHES**A BETTER TOMORROW
THE WOMEN'S WORLD****JUSTICE FOR ALL
DAY OF PRAYER**

"What a beautiful service". This was the reaction of the large congregation emerging from the Women's World Day of Prayer Service in St Anne's on Friday March 2nd. Women, and quite a few men, from many Christian traditions, packed into the church. They gathered to share in an inspiring and moving act of prayer. It was prepared this year by the Czechoslovak W.W.D.P. committee. Many of those present were thrilled by the thought that the service, with its theme of A Better Tomorrow, Justice for All, had been composed last year before the recent dramatic events in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

Much work had clearly gone into the preparation of the Caversham service by the local committee. The service

was led by Jackie Million of the host parish, with women from the other churches taking part at various stages.

First, following a short act of adoration, came prayers of confession. These considered our failures in bringing peace and justice to those around us. They asked for help in addressing human needs, both individually and as a community.

The scripture passage including Jesus' proclamation in the synagogue "The time has come when the Lord will save His people", was followed by meditations on its relevance in the world today. Voices spoke for oppressed women used for their bodies, for victims of racial prejudice, for mothers of famine-starved children, for fathers longing for the dignity of work, and for

creation itself, suffering the ravages of war and pollution.

Next came intercession, particularly for Czechoslovakia, and Thanksgiving for the work of the Holy Spirit in the world today.

This year's speaker was Monica Ball, the headmistress of St Joseph's Convent School in Reading. She spoke of her experiences as a young volunteer in the slums of Mombassa, of later educational missionary work in Malta and of her deep feeling for Czechoslovakia. A planned visit to friends there in 1968 was thwarted by the Russian invasion the night before she was due to cross the Austro-Czech border. She reminded us of the call made to the E.C. parliament in 1988 by Pope John Paul for reconciliation on three levels.

- of humanity with creation.
- of the people of Europe with their neighbours both within and outside the continent.
- of the individual with him or herself.

Miss Ball also spoke movingly of true freedom as being not the liberty to do as we want, but as we ought. As an example of how ordinary men, women and children can bring justice and peace she told a story about one of her own pupils. This thirteen year old girl, while visiting a former schoolfriend in Quito, Ecuador, was greatly moved by the plight of an orphaned two year old in need of a heart operation. Unfortunately no funds were available in Ecuador. Consequently on returning to England she galvanised the whole

school to collect £1,500 for the baby and to sponsor the orphanage. Miss Ball ended by quoting a prayer, 'Lord for yesterday, thank You, And for tomorrow, Yes'.

The worship concluded with a call to service and the symbolic joining of hands in final prayer. Over refreshments afterwards there was the chance to discuss the service and its implications. There was praise for the beautiful peaceful atmosphere of the church, for the singing, led by St Anne's choir, and particularly for the wording of the service itself.

Watch out for the posters for next year's service. The W.W.D.P. has a lot to offer to the people of Caversham.

L.M.

**ST PETER'S, CAVERSHAM AND
ST MARGARET'S, MAPLEDURHAM**

PARISH RETREAT 16-18th FEBRUARY 1990 "Retreat" for many people conjures up a picture of a gracious house set in rural tranquility, against a background of bird-song. The Royal Foundation of St Katherine is at Butcher Row, London E14, a mile or so from Tower Bridge with continuous, heavy, passing traffic and is within an area that includes old riverside warehouses converted into expensive apartments, shabby local authority blocks of flats and near to a ready-mixed concrete depot. In spite of all this, it is an oasis of peace and beauty.

The Foundation has a history of royal patronage (always vested in the Queen Consort, Regnant or Dowager) going back to 1261. The original site of the "spiritual and social sanctuary" lies now beneath the waters of St. Katharine's Dock marked by the Coronarium — an interdenominational open-air chapel between the Central Basin and the West Dock.

Charge of the Foundation is vested in the Community of the Resurrection working in association with the Community of the Sisters of the Church.

The site is occupied by a Georgian house (where the fathers live), a retreat house (bedrooms, common room and refectory), accommodation for the sisters, chapel, cloister, gardens and a car park.

Twenty-five members of St. Peter's and St.

Margaret's gathered on 16th February, together with Andrew Meynell (Vicar of Wendover, Bucks.), his wife, Caroline, and our own Reverend Christine Allsopp.

The programme for the weekend included: Chapel Services — these followed the customary times for Matins, Eucharist and Evensong, observed by the Community.

Retreat Sessions — attended by all "retreaters" and dealt with introductions and expectations; listening to God, ourselves and each other; sharing what we had learned; "glimpses of glory".

Worship — night prayers, Eucharist (in which parishioners took responsibility for the New Testament and Gospel readings and intercessions).

Afternoon Walk — an opportunity to see and study the neighbourhood.

Silence — at meals and from night prayers until breakfast.

Tour of the Georgian House — a chance to see the house interior and the beautiful wall paintings.

So what was it like, what impressions and effect?

Each individual will have taken to heart something different but, as seen by one person, perhaps the following might include some shared reactions: —

There was the nervousness in anticipation

of the weekend and the conviction that "I am not the right person to go on retreat"; the positive encouragement to recognise, and discard for two days, the responsibilities each had left behind; the sensitive and yet firm guidance throughout of Andrew and Christine; and emphasis on "being" rather than "doing"; the growth of trust and love for each other (remembering that many were strangers at the outset); unburdening to each other of worries and setbacks; mutual trust and confidence; learning to accommodate disparate views on life and belief; the gradual acceptance of, and pleasure in, silence and contemplation; an opportunity to study humility at work as the fathers and sisters waited on us at table; the realisation that the Community is in close touch with the problems and sufferings of those who live in the locality; shedding (by symbolic burning) of burdens, past and present; sharing a moving and beautiful, albeit simple, Eucharist.

The theme for the Lent Group is "Turning Points". For many, if not all of us, this Retreat was a turning point. Whatever we may be and do in the future, it is good to know that "we were there in February 1990."

Thank you to Richard Kingsbury, Christine Allsopp, Andrew Meynell and all my fellow retreaters.

**GOSBROOK ROAD
REVIEW**

In spite of the stormy weather the winter months have been busy at Gosbrook Road Methodist Church. The Women's Fellowship (Network) hosted the Circuit Women's Intercessions service and on a very windy and wet morning some 60 ladies attended.

Representatives from various churches led the service and the preacher was the Rev. John Boakes.

Still on a circuit level, 61 ladies from the church went with about 80 others to Staines to take part in the musical 'I Am', this was very well received by a packed church. Later in the month the musical will be taken to Southampton, Milton Keynes and Brighton..... spreading the gospel through song.

Still on a music level, we were very pleased to welcome two Christian dancers who had come all the way from Cornwall. They took part in both services in February, and their contribution to the services was beautifully presented and well received.

The Overseas missions weekend gave much food for thought. On the Saturday evening, Rachael Grubb led the meeting and we were taken on a trip to Thailand, learning about the plight of the refugees. On the Sunday Brian Bosier and friends led the morning worship, when many aspects of mission were

explored, and in the evening we were very pleased to welcome Rev. Dr. Leslie Griffiths to lead the worship, and as usual, our very good friend gave a thought provoking message. It was good to renew old friendships once again.

The young people in the Church have been busy with the Boys Brigade holding a successful 24 hour table tennis marathon. The Ambassadors Drum and Bugle Corps took part in the

National Westminster Festival of Youth Bands which took place at the Royal Albert Hall, and finally the Sunshine Girls had a trip out to the Hexagon to see 'Hans Andersen' performed by the Reading Operatic Society.

It was with great regret that we heard of the death of one of our most loyal members. Mrs Doris Eagleman died after a short illness, and her death was felt, and will be felt by everyone in the church for many years to come. Doris was a great church worker and had run and worked for the Church handicraft stall for many years. She also was a firm favourite with the children at the Toddler group, where she loved to sit with them and do puzzles and build bricks. She will be especially missed by her sister and brother-in-law Margaret and Harold Barker. She leaves a son Andrew and daughter-in-law and family.

BUGS BOTTOM WON'T GO AWAY

WAS taking legal action to save Bugs Bottom a lost cause from the word 'go', a waste of time and a waste of rate payers' money? The answer must be an emphatic 'No'. The Borough had a good chance of winning because they had a good case based on sound planning law. It would have been a failure of their responsibility to allow themselves to be trampled underfoot at that point. But standing a good chance of winning is not the same as actually winning, and in the High Court where the battle was finally fought out, it was the Secretary of State who won.

Whether he should have won is a different matter. Although at the time of writing there had not been an opportunity to study the detailed judgement, to the ordinary person it contains several disturbing features. The County Structure Plan, worked out and produced after extensive consultation, and confirmed by the Secretary of State himself, was apparently not after all of such importance that it could not be over ridden if the Secretary of State considered it to be justified regardless of what all the local planning authorities and the people who live in the County think.

Likewise, if the Secretary of State and his

RESIDENTS' VIEWPOINT by WATCHDOG

predecessors, who have never set eyes on the site, on the say-so of his Inspector, who indeed visited it but had no real knowledge of it, thought it would be improved by having 500 houses built in it, this, according to the judge, who also had never seen it (he had not even got a map or picture of it) was a view to which he was perfectly entitled and it would therefore not be set aside. It would appear that everyone is out of step except our Jack, the new recruit, and our Jack's view is the one that has prevailed.

Of course, the decision was made on legal grounds and legal grounds only, because that was the only course open, although the references to improving the valley and removing dead trees gives cause to wonder how far other issues may have coloured the judgement. Certainly it is the view of those who have followed this long saga that the Secretary of State's original decision was wrong on more than purely legal grounds. It is for this reason that they are determined to carry on the fight on as many fronts as possible.

Whether the Borough Council will be prepared

to take the matter further is something that only they can decide, after studying the detailed judgement. It is nevertheless important, whether or not it will save Bugs Bottom, that the Secretary of State is made aware of the intense hostility of people, not just to the decision, but to the way in which it was reached. It disregards the views of all the elected local councils involved. It pays no heed to the Government's professed commitment to protecting the environment. It disregards the Department's own advice not to override local planning decisions except in cases of urgent need.

This is all part of a much wider battle and to drop out of it at this point could well invite accusations of NIMBY. Naturally we fight more fiercely in defence of our own patch, but the quality of life all over the south-east is affected by what happens in other people's patches. Even without Bugs Bottom being built on, we are aware of these pressures as soon as we approach the river bridges. It is no exaggeration to say that the Royal County of Berkshire is being systematically raped and that Bugs Bottom is one of the victims. As long as it remains unbuilt on, we must keep up the struggle to save it.

For those who wonder why traffic has not been mentioned, it is because whenever it came up in the Court proceedings it was dismissed as irrelevant. This is because the case was being tried on purely legal grounds. It is a further indication that the Secretary of State's decision was wrong on more than legal grounds.

A NEW URBAN PARK

The architect for Higgs & Hill was, not naturally, delighted at the outcome of the High Court case. He said they were raring to start as soon as possible (they can't until they have detailed consent) and spoke enthusiastically of a major tree re-planting scheme, and the excitement of building the first new public park in Reading for half a century. "I feel absolutely confident", he goes on to say, "that at the end of the day the residents of Reading will want to live here and will enjoy

the forty-two acre park we are going to create". The judge too (who, remember, had never set eyes on the valley) said damaged trees and woodlands would now be properly managed, with a wedge of open land separating Caversham Heights from Emmer Green, and the whole development would be beneficial to residents.

What kind of judgements are these? The wedge already exists. There are some damaged trees, not uncommon in a natural environment, but mainly because with planning permission for building being sought, there was little point in managing and conserving the trees. These people (and that includes the Secretary of State) seem incapable of realising that the charm of the valley lies in its being a projection of countryside into an urban area. On either side of the bridle path there was farming and trees. The bridle path indeed gets muddy in wet weather but so do most country foot paths. We do not want to change all this for paved paths, regularly mown grass and what, without doubt, will be the most attractive housing estate for miles around.

Of course "at the end of the day", whenever that is, Reading citizens who have never known the valley as it once was, will think of it as rather a nice place in which to live, if they can afford it. What they will have lost is something irreplaceable. What they will have gained is more traffic choked roads.

MINDLESS DESTRUCTION

In spite of this great threat overhanging Caversham, life goes on in a myriad of other ways. It was pleasing to see the great gaps in the ancient flint and brick wall beside the Mount in St. Peter's Conservation Area being rebuilt and repaired. Time, weather and vandals had contributed to the damage, and for many lengths unsightly chain link fencing was all that separated passers-by from the edge of the cliff and that had been torn out by vandals. The man doing the job clearly took a pride and interest in his work and had even gone so far as to make suitably shaped coping bricks for the top of the wall, but

it was slow work if he was to make a good job of it, and each evening he had to leave it in an unfinished state. Each morning when he returned, vandals had broken up much of what he had done the previous day. This went on for several days until he was finally forced to abandon it as he was getting nowhere, and the price was being pushed up well beyond that quoted. If he had been given the chance to finish it, it would have reasonably vandal proof. Now the whole wall is vulnerable one more, and not only are we in danger of losing a characteristic feature of what was once a Chilterns village, but with the chain link fencing being regularly ripped out, that part of the Mount will be unprotected from the drop below.

It is thoroughly discouraging for the workman, who was doing a first rate job, and for the Borough Council who had set aside money to enhance this conservation area. There is no doubt that the damage caused by disaffected male youth is on the increase, and I suppose we all have our theories as to why this is.

STORM DAMAGE

Nature, alas, also destroys, which only makes human destruction seem all the more pointless. The storm force winds returned in February bringing down more trees and damaging roofs and walls. Scaffolding everywhere is a familiar sight, one lot being used to carry up the Library swan to its familiar place atop the clock turret. Flooding fortunately did not damage houses, though it caused road closures which caused Caversham and Reading's traffic to come to a complete standstill, causing heaven knows how many missed trains, planes, appointments etc.

Out in the country, trees have suffered badly. There were heavy losses along the bridle way at the Hardwick, and Bardolph's Wood and Newlands Copse in the Tokers Green area are both severely damaged. And now to cap all this, Higgs and Hill are proposing to come along and vandalise Bugs Bottom.

WHERE IT ALL HAPPENS

The community notice board in St. Martin's Precinct has been looking rather bare since the storms, as the winds

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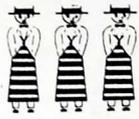
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Chazey W.I.

IN January members of Chazey W.I. enjoyed a most interesting talk by two local Government officers about Poll Tax. A veil of mystery was lifted when members were told how much they would be paying and what the money would be used for.

Dorothy Churcher was congratulated on getting to the finals of the B.F.W.I. Scrabble competition.

On the 10th, twenty-four members, with their spouses, enjoyed the annual movable feast. This event has taken place since the formation of Chazey and still proves very popular.

The Social Group enjoyed an Antiques Roadshow. Favourite items of china were evaluated by an "expert" and opinions given.

The end of the month

saw the commencement of a short embroidery picture course, which proved very popular last year. Once again Chazey members have had a busy month.

Caversham Community Association

THE members met on the 5th of February for an evening of friendly competition playing table games. Some members decided to play scrabble, card games or various novelty games whilst others formed teams to play shove ha'penny. Evelyn Cook was in charge of the 'Nearly New' stall, making a good job of selling the members' unwanted goods.

A Valentine Party was held the following week. The activities commenc-

ed with a Barn dance, followed by various games and a quiz. Small prizes were awarded to winning members throughout the evening. The Valentine card competition was won by Nancy Nelhams, Yvonne Milne and Dolly Usher won second and third prize respectively. The refreshments were in the form of an American supper, the members were asked to bring contributions to the refreshments, resulting in a variety of food. The evening ended with some party dances including the 'Birdie' dance.

Mrs. Helen Donaldson visited the club on the 19th February to lead the members in 'Keep Fit' exercises. Some visitors were also welcomed, who usually attend the Rivermead fitness classes. Mrs. Donaldson demonstrated movements which were both graceful and beneficial and the members were soon doing their best to emulate her, in time with a recorded musical accompaniment. Maida Feast, the Chairman, thanked Mrs. Donaldson for helping to make an enjoyable evening.

The month's activities ended with a visit from Mrs. Penny Feathers of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service. The members who attended, and braved the very high winds, enjoyed a very interesting talk from Mrs. Feathers on the various activities of the W.R.V.S. Formed in 1938, the service gave help in many ways to the civil population and, after the war, the organisation grew throughout Great Britain and now includes many men helpers. In Berkshire, today 2,000 volunteers help with Meals on Wheels, Luncheon Clubs, Darby and Joan Clubs, hospital canteens, prison and Magistrates Courts' canteens and also provide other community care to help people of all ages. At the end of the meeting the audience had a greater appreciation of the work of this praiseworthy organisation.

Caversham Heights T.G.

MRS MERYL Beek says she has talked about this walk often but for your correspondent at Caversham Heights Townswomen's guild's meeting it was a new experience. She described how the Ridgeway or Ridge Way forms part of the Icknield Way which leads to Peddars Way, a very old Pedlar's track in Norfolk. On the walk she and her husband made they joined the Ridgeway, now known in ordnance survey terms as a long distance footpath, at Streatley and walked to join the Wessex Ridgeway

which eventually arrives at Lyme Regis. They passed through Wantage, observed horses at Lambourn and the Uffington White Horse, reached Avebury, a very old centre, and the Fyfield nature reserve south of Marlborough. Another white horse is at Westbury, where there was formerly an older horse dating from Alfred's time. The high village of Ashmore in Dorset and Cerne Abbas were stopping places for bed and breakfast among others.

Battlesbury hill fort near Warmminster was only one of numerous others to be seen along the way. Walking early in the year they were glad of the comfort of tea and scones and a rest by the fire one wet afternoon and their other stops kept them refreshed. Who would like to explore these paths more? There were wild flowers in profusion and strip lynchets or ploughing lines economically used by the Saxons between Scratchbury hill fort and Heytesbury and elsewhere along the downs.

Lively Mr C Kirkby at social studies said he had gone to Zimbabwe a few years ago at a time when the dry season proved to be wet. He attended an auction where tobacco was being sold, saw hedges of crown of thorns, and a photo showed how plovers' eggs can be almost trodden on before being observed. He made interesting comments on life in Harare and elsewhere and showed photographs of the Victoria falls.

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easily strip off notices because of the difficulty of pushing drawing pins into its hard surface. Community boards are provided partly to discourage fly posting, which is illegal in the Borough, except for travelling fairs and circuses if fourteen days' written notice is given. In the case of St. Martin's, the steam fair which plastered the notice board on both

sides with notices was not actually breaking the law as this was not fly posting, but the notices nevertheless had to be removed, partly because it was sheer downright selfishness to use up the whole board, but mainly because St. Martin's Property Corporation have expressly forbidden the use of the board for commercial events.

They are in fact already making tetchy noises about its ap-

pearance and threatening to have it removed again. If they had looked at it in calmer weather they would have been impressed by the wide range of activities going on in Caversham and by the high standard of many of the notices. An art class for retired people has produced some particularly attractive posters. More recently a notice illustrated with an elegant bamboo design drew people's attention to an exhibition by the Caversham Group of Chinese Brush Painters.

Those who battled their way through Force 10 winds to the Arthur Legge Centre were rewarded by a charming exhibition of delicate Chinese painting using a different technique from that employed in Western painting. Moreover, you need to be in a calm and philosophical frame of mind to produce it. Anyone who is interested can find out more at the Caversham Adult Centre.

Another regular advertiser is the Reading Folk Song Club who gather every Sunday evening at eight o'clock on Piper's Island. They have a varied programme, and the addition of hot food and real ale provides an enjoyable evening for all folk song enthusiasts.

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the CLUBS

From page 10

Reading and District Gardeners' Mutual Improvement Association

THE Reading and District Gardener's Mutual Improvement Association holds meetings every two weeks on Wednesday evenings at 7.15pm in the Odd Fellows Hall, Oxford Road, Reading. Throughout the 'winter' months the Committee endeavours to arrange talks on broadly-based topics of interest to gardeners and, in the summer, excursions are held to visit gardens within a day's travelling distance. Two lecturers were heard during February: both were very well attended.

On February 4th the speaker was Mr Robert Mattock, a member of the famous family who have grown roses and won medals at the

Chelsea show for many years; his subject was "Roses for Special Occasions". Mr Mattock now has his own nursery in Abingdon and specialises in propagating and growing plants in containers, mainly roses, to be used, sometimes hired, for receptions, hotel functions etc., and to provide instant gardens in some areas. This was an unusual insight into the nursery trade and provided a most interesting evening.

During the summer of 1989 an excursion was arranged to visit a remarkable garden in Haddenham, near Aylesbury, in Buckinghamshire, owned and designed by the architect, Mr Peter Aldington who came to talk about his garden on February 28th. It was a welcome follow-up to the visit, particularly, of course, for the members who had been on the excursion and who, having seen the summer displays, could learn about the rest of the year there. Mr Aldington's talk was illustrated by his many slides of individual plants, groupings and colour-schemes.

Caversham Ladies Club

MRS HARWOOD, Chairman, opened the meeting which was well

attended despite warning of still more bad weather on the way. Club business was discussed and future outings decided on: Worthing in May, and Stow-in-the-wold in September.

The speaker for the afternoon was Mr Taylor who lives in Caversham. He had brought slides to accompany his talk, and what a lovely collection of slides was shown, views, shrubs, trees and so many wild flowers. What was surprising was that so many had been taken just on the outskirts of Caversham. It makes one wonder where our eyes are on our walks around the countryside!

Mr Taylor then showed slides of enlarged spiders' webs all shapes and sizes, some with raindrops still on them, so beautiful it did not seem possible that the common spider could produce such a beautiful thing. Many cameras will surely be out in force in the near future.

Next on slides came a trip to the island of Skomer off the Pembrokeshire coast of Wales, which is a national reserve for thousands of birds, kittiwake, puffins, razor bills, herring gulls, gannets. It's so encouraging that there are these sanctuaries for these birds to breed and live so that future generations will enjoy them as much as the present do.

Unfortunately time was catching up and so with many sounds of regret Mr Taylor brought his delightful slide journey to a close. Members were told though that Mr Taylor would be returning at a later date with a further selection of slides for them to enjoy.

Caversham Darby & Joan Club

IT'S been an interesting and informative time at the Club over the last six months. Mr. Frew's beautiful slides of Norway and Miss Tylers talk on "Meeting the Russian people" gave us fascinating insights into far away places and peoples. The second world war was vividly recalled for us by Mr. Kirby's slides of his war experiences in Italy and Mr. Allies slides of Iceland where he flew planes for Coastal Command in the 1940's. On another occasion Mr. Allies greatly enhanced our understanding of the Reading-Dusseldorf link when he came to explain its origin and

functions. Mrs. Beek showed us lovely slides of both local and distant woods in her talk entitled "Autumn Leaves". A demonstration of attractive Christmas Decorations by Mrs Haggarty — appropriately — in December was greatly enjoyed. Several jolly musical afternoons ensued when we were delightfully entertained by The Firtree Singers and Fred and Ralph. Our Autumn coach outing through the Oxfordshire country-side included a stop for an excellent lunch at The Carriers Arms Watlington, with tea at Pusey Gardens. A very good Christmas Luncheon was enjoyed at The White Hart, Nettlebed. A Pantomime fancy dress party was held the following week-in-house. The Rev. Keith Sanders' talk and slides entitled "With Wesley to America", Miss Tyler's topical talk on Armenia and Georgia and an afternoon of songs have already given us a good start to the New Year. We have yet to visit "in imagination" Turkey, Scotland and the House of Commons. There is Bingo once a month for the gamblers amongst us. Outings are being planned to Kingston Bagpuize House and gardens in the Spring and Littlehampton in the Summer. Meetings are every Wednesday at Church House 2pm. to 3-30pm.

Emmer Green T.G.

MR HARMS was the speaker at the February meeting of the Emmer Green Townswomen's Guild. His entertainment consisted of four beautifully organised audio-visual presentations. The first depicted a flower festival at St Nicholas Chapel, Bearwood, celebrating its golden jubilee and the centenary of the NSPCC. The second was about English Cathedrals with superb photography of the more interesting and unusual aspects of architecture. This was followed by the Chelsea Flower Show and the fourth was about Switzerland, a country familiar to Mr Harms through family connections. Using his sophisticated equipment Mr Harms was able to create lovely effects with slides merging into one another. Each sequence was accompanied by music and a commentary where applicable. The competition for Valentine's card was won by Mrs D. Sharman and the Guild said good-

bye to its treasurer, Mrs V. Havenhand, who is moving to Cheshire. She will be greatly missed, not only for her financial expertise but also as a good friend and colleague. She presented the guild with an extension lead in appreciation of all the happy times spent there. Mrs Rowsell was welcomed as a new member. Visitors and new members are always most welcome. Meetings are held on every second Tuesday of each month, 7.30pm at St Barnabas Church Hall, Grove Road, Emmer Green.

Maplewood W.I.

MAPLEWOOD members were welcomed by their President, Mrs Heather Baker, and with the business details over, were introduced to Mrs. T. Hayward who had brought along her treasure trove of "Eggshell Decorating After Faberge". Mrs Hayward displayed many exquisite examples of her craft which had been painstakingly covered and decorated and then fitted with a tiny hinge so that they could be opened to reveal a musical box in a duck egg or a jewel case in goose egg.

The Flower of the Month competition was won by Mrs Evelyn Harden with a pink camellia chosen from an outstanding display of a dozen different blooms brought into flowers by the springlike weather more reminiscent of May than February.

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